

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In March, China has the presidency. It will have three signature events. The first is a debate on [countering terrorism and extremism](#) in Africa. Potential briefers are Secretary-General António Guterres and Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat. The second is an open debate on “Upholding [Multilateralism](#) and promoting political settlement of disputes”. The anticipated briefers are Guterres, General Assembly President Tijjani Muhammad-Bande and the President of the International Court of Justice, Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf. The third event is a debate on “UN [peacekeeping](#) operations: Better capacity building, more safety and security”. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare are expected to brief.

Several meetings on [Sudan](#) are expected. The Council is likely to adopt a resolution establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID by 31 March. Prior to this, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, followed by consultations. In addition, the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia), will provide the quarterly briefing on the committee’s work.

Other meetings on African issues include:

- [DRC](#), on the Secretary-General’s most recent report on MONUSCO;
- [Libya](#), on the Secretary-General’s report on UNSMIL and an update from the chair of the

1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;

- [South Sudan](#), an update on UNMISS and the renewal of the mission’s mandate; and
- [Somalia](#), the renewal of the mandate of UNSOM.

The Council will have the monthly briefing and consultations on [Yemen](#). It will also receive the monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation, the political process and the use of chemical weapons in [Syria](#).

There will be a briefing on developments in [Iraq](#) and on the two latest Secretary-General’s reports—on UNAMI and on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Other Middle East issues that will be considered include:

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

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

A briefing of the [1540 Committee on non-state actors and weapons of mass destruction](#) is also anticipated during the month.

There will also be the quarterly debate on [Afghanistan](#).

## In Hindsight: The Evolving Role of the Three African Members in the Security Council’s Work on Africa

Among the Security Council’s ten elected members, the three African states—currently Niger, South Africa and Tunisia—constitute a group with some unique features that translate into how these countries work within the Council. They come from the continent whose conflicts have

occupied between half and three-quarters of the Council’s time during each of the past 25 years, and that hosts most of the Council’s mandated peace operations. The three states from the continent have also (with the exception of Morocco until 2017) all been members of the same regional

27 February 2020  
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## In Hindsight: The Evolving Role of the Three African Members in the Security Council's Work on Africa

organisation, the African Union (AU), and prior to that, its predecessor, the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The role of the African members of the Council has evolved, from members' initiatives in their national capacities (in the 1990s, for example, six of the nine visiting missions undertaken by the Council were led by an African member) to more recently taking coordinated positions on several African issues.

Following the launch of the AU in 2002 and the subsequent establishment of its Peace and Security Council (PSC), the PSC became the first international body with which members of the Security Council established regular interactions. Through a joint initiative of South Africa and the UK, in 2007, the Council started the practice of holding annual meetings with the PSC, alternating between the two organisations' respective headquarters in Addis Ababa and New York. After an initial period largely focused on the process and modalities for the meetings themselves, these interactions became increasingly substantive, with the meetings considering conflicts of shared concern to the two bodies.

In January 2002, six months before the AU was launched, Council president Mauritius set the path for developing the Security Council's new practices in its work on Africa. It organised an open debate on the "Situation in Africa", with a focus on the UN relationship with the continental organisation. The background note (S/2002/46) pointed out that although the Council had been busy with conflict situations in Africa, it was not "getting the desired overall results". The note stressed the need for UN and OAU actions to complement each other. Within days, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2002/2) outlining measures and recommendations that created a framework for the Council's approach to Africa that remains relevant. In addition to addressing measures aimed at preventing conflict in Africa and calling on the UN system to intensify its cooperation with the African continental organisation, the presidential statement also signalled the plan to establish an ad hoc working group to monitor the implementation of recommendations made during the meeting. As a result, the Council established its Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution

in Africa (the Ad Hoc Working Group).

The Ad Hoc Working Group deserves a closer look in respect of the role it has played in shaping Council approaches to some African issues, and its potential for developing further positions. Its distinctive feature, among all other Council subsidiary bodies, is that it has always been chaired by an African member. Its activities during a given period largely hinge on the direction from the chair. The Ad Hoc Working Group was very active in its initial years, putting forward several recommendations and initiatives on specific situations (such as Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and the Great Lakes region).

More recently, it has focused on the management of the Security Council's relationship with the AU PSC, especially the annual consultative meetings. The country-specific focus disappeared for more than a decade, but was revived in 2018, during Ethiopia's chairmanship, with meetings on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic. The Ad Hoc Working Group has the potential to contribute to elaborating and achieving specific policy goals with respect to African countries or regional situations, although it remains to be seen whether a focus on specific situations continues and how it feeds into the work of the Security Council.

As the penholder system took root around 2010, the African members, some of whom had previously served as co-leads on African files, began seeking other ways to play a role on African issues and also to press for the PSC's policy decisions to inform Security Council decision-making. Following intense diplomacy by African members of the Council, led by South Africa, the Security Council adopted, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, resolution 2046 in May 2012, expressing full support for a PSC decision on the situation between Sudan and South Sudan and incorporating its key elements into the resolution's operative paragraphs.

Rwanda, which joined the Council in 2013, continued efforts to have the PSC's concerns and positions taken into account and addressed by the global peace and security body. In this context, it sought working methods that could enhance cohesion among the three African Security Council members.

This process led to a December 2013 brainstorming session during an AU High

Level Seminar on Peace and Security, held in Algiers. The participants included the three African members of the Security Council, the chair of the AU Peace and Security Council, representatives of the AU Peace and Security Department, and AU special envoys to different regions of Africa. The outcome of the meeting was the establishment of the group of the three African Council members as a caucus and a means of connection between the Council and the AU PSC on issues of common concern. It may have been the moment when the term "A3" was coined for the three African members.

In the period since, the A3 have jointly been able to influence the Council's approaches to Africa on several occasions. Their leverage has been particularly significant when they act with an explicit or implicit mandate from the PSC. Unity among the three members on African issues, backed by the continental organisation's position, has on some occasions been key to persuading permanent members. The A3 have also developed several new practices. In 2019, these actions included:

- joint media stakeout appearances. The three African permanent representatives have acted on a shared sense of urgency to convey a message when the Council as a whole was not in a position to do so (for instance, on 6 June on the decision of the AU to suspend Sudan's membership and on 20 November on the urgent need for international action in support of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel);
- a joint statement, in May during an open debate on protection of civilians (delivered by South Africa); and
- a joint visit in the summer to Washington, DC, to lobby policymakers on the issue of UN funding for AU peacekeeping.

Unity on all substantive issues has not always been the case among the A3, given the differences in political priorities among the 55 nations comprising the AU. There have been Africa-related votes in which one or two A3 members abstained, including on issues such as Western Sahara, some African sanctions regimes, or Burundi. Yet the joining of forces on issues where there is consensus and especially on those where the PSC has articulated a position is a strategic step.

## Status Update Since our February Forecast

### Counter-terrorism

On 4 February, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee was briefed by Yuliya Denissenko, an independent expert on preventing and countering violent extremism and the director of a Kyrgyzstan-based NGO, “Asia Group Foundation”, on her work on rehabilitation and reintegration in Central Asia with returning and repatriated foreign terrorist fighters and associated family members. On 7 February, the Council was briefed by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), and Michèle Coninx, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), on the Secretary-General’s tenth strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh). Mona Freij, a Syrian civil society activist, briefed the Council on her experience in her hometown of Raqqa, Syria, via video-teleconference from Istanbul (S/PV.8716).

### Myanmar

On 4 February, Security Council members met in consultations for a briefing on Myanmar from Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific. The meeting was requested by Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, the UK and the US, and was triggered by the Secretary-General’s 24 January letter conveying the notice of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) order indicating provisional measures in the case concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (*The Gambia v. Myanmar*). Members also referred to the Independent Commission of Enquiry final report that had been submitted to the Myanmar government on 20 January. A number of Council members urged Myanmar to comply with the provisional measures indicated by the ICJ and to address the root causes of the conflicts in Myanmar. Members also referred to the need for Myanmar to create conditions for and facilitate a voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of the Rohingya to Myanmar.

### Small Arms

On 5 February, the Council was briefed on the Secretary-General’s sixth biennial report on small arms (S/2019/1011) by Izumi Nakamitsu, High Representative for Disarmament

Affairs (S/PV.8713). She stressed that small arms continue to facilitate a vast spectrum of actions constituting violations of human rights, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. A civil society representative, Damien Spleeters, Deputy Director of Operations of Conflict Armament Research, also briefed the Council.

### OSCE

On 6 February, the Security Council heard a briefing (S/PV.8714) from Albanian Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Edi Rama, the current Chairperson-in-Office for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). He updated the Council on developments in the OSCE’s area of operation, including in eastern Ukraine, Georgia and Transdnistria. He also discussed Albania’s priorities as chair of the OSCE for the upcoming year, such as promotion of the freedom of expression, combating violence against women, and eradicating corruption.

### UNOWAS

On 11 February, the Council adopted a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2020/2), which called on national stakeholders in Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Mali and Togo to work together to facilitate the timely preparation for, and holding of, genuinely free and fair, credible, timely and peaceful elections that are scheduled during 2020.

### Israel-Palestine

On 11 February, the Council held a briefing to discuss President Donald Trump’s newly released “Vision for Peace” for Israel and Palestine (S/PV.8717). Secretary-General António Guterres, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon, and UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov were among the participants. Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Defence Philippe Goffin presided over the meeting.

On 24 February, the Council received its regularly scheduled briefing from Mladenov (S/PV.8730). He shared his considerable concern over the increase in violence, in particular a series of confrontations which began on 23 February at the Gaza border between Israeli Defense Forces and

alleged members of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, involving the firing of rockets from Gaza. Israel responded with strikes on Palestinian Islamic Jihad targets south of Damascus. Mladenov called for an end to rocket firing. After the briefing, Council members continued the discussion in closed consultations. Following consultations, the president of the Council read press elements that had been agreed on by Council members.

### Guinea-Bissau

On 11 February, in a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel, the Council welcomed Guinea-Bissau’s holding of the presidential election at the end of 2019, and urged all national stakeholders to ensure a peaceful implementation of the election results (S/PRST/2020/2). On 14 February, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.8724) and consultations to consider the Secretary-General’s report on developments in Guinea-Bissau (S/2020/105). Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) Rosine Sori-Coulibaly and the chair of the Peacebuilding Commission’s Guinea-Bissau configuration, Ambassador Ronaldo Costa Filho (Brazil), briefed. At press time, the Council was expected to adopt a resolution on 28 February that renews the mandate of UNIOGBIS until 31 December 2020.

### Children and Armed Conflict

On 12 February, the Security Council held a high-level briefing on “Integrating child protection into peace processes to resolve conflict and sustain peace” (S/PV.8721). The meeting was presided over by Belgium’s foreign minister, Philippe Goffin. Belgian King Philippe and Queen Mathilde were in attendance. Secretary-General António Guterres launched the “Practical Guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict”. In his briefing he highlighted the grim situation for children affected by conflict and stressed that children have no role in conflict and that leaders need to do everything in their power to protect them. The other briefers were the AU Peace and Security Commissioner Smail Chergui (by video teleconference) and Jo Becker, chair of the advisory board of the NGO network Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict. The Council adopted a presidential statement

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(S/PRST/2020/3) that stressed the need for a broad conflict prevention strategy that addresses the causes of conflict in order to protect children. It renewed its call on member states and relevant parties to integrate child protection provisions into all peace negotiations and ceasefire and peace agreements. The Council also renewed its call for the protection and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict to be prioritised in all post-conflict recovery and reconstruction planning, programmes and strategies.

### Mali

On 12 February, the Mali 2374 Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to discuss the mid-term report of the Mali Panel of Experts. Following this discussion, the committee held a meeting with regional states.

### Transitional Justice

On 13 February, the Council held an open debate on “transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations” under the peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda item (S/PV.8723). The meeting, initiated by Belgium, was presided over by the country’s foreign minister, Philippe Goffin. The briefers were Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights (via VTC); Francisco de Roux, President of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition of Colombia; and Yasmin Sooka, Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa, Trustee of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre, and Chair of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan. Belgium circulated a concept note ahead of the debate (S/2020/98).

### Ukraine

On 18 February, the Council held a briefing on the situation in Ukraine (S/PV.8726). Russia requested the meeting to mark the fifth anniversary of the “Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements”, also known as the Minsk II agreement, adopted on 12 February 2015, and to discuss its implementation. The Council received briefings from Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; Heidi Grau, Special Representative in Ukraine of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Chairperson-in-Office (via VTC); and OSCE

Special Monitoring Mission Chief Monitor Halit Çevik (via VTC). The briefers emphasised the need for full implementation of the Minsk agreements including the establishment of the permanent ceasefire. Most Council members reiterated these points as well.

### Haiti

On 20 February, the Council held a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (S/PV.8729). Special Representative Helen La Lime and Marie Yolène Gilles, the Executive Director of the civil society group Fondasyon Je Klere, briefed via video-teleconference. La Lime highlighted the political impasse and called on Haitian leaders to “rise to the occasion” to find a resolution. Gilles stressed that Haiti is facing systematic and grave violations of human rights. Gilles made several recommendations to the UN, including fighting corruption and auditing the police force in order to make it more credible. All Council members called for political dialogue and accord in order to solve the impasse. The Dominican Republic reiterated that it thought the withdrawal of the peacekeeping mission in Haiti had been premature.

### Central African Republic (CAR)

On 20 February, the Security Council held a briefing (S/PV.8728) on the latest Secretary-General’s report (S/2020/124) on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA Mankeur Ndiaye briefed the Council. Ambassador Olof Skoog, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN; Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), chair of the Peacebuilding Commission’s CAR configuration; and Matias Bertino Matondo, AU Special Representative and head of the AU Office in the Central African Republic, also briefed. Consultations followed the public session.

On 27 February, members of the Security Council agreed on a press statement, welcoming the progress made in the past year to implement the Political Peace Agreement in the CAR and calling on all parties in the country to fulfil their commitments under the agreement. The statement condemned violations of the peace agreement and acts of violence perpetrated by armed groups and expressed concern at a recent campaign

of disinformation and incitement to hatred against MINUSCA. Council members further called on the CAR authorities to ensure the holding of inclusive, free and timely elections in 2020 and 2021.

### Arria-Formula Meeting on Reprisals Against Women Human Rights Defenders

On 21 February, Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany and the UK co-hosted an Arria-formula meeting entitled “Reprisals against women human rights defenders and women peacebuilders who engage with the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies”. Briefers were Ilze Brands Kehris, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and head of the New York office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Madeleine Rees, the Secretary General of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom; and Shalini Eddens, the Director of Programs of the “Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Human Rights”.

### Somalia

On 24 February, the Council was briefed on the situation in Somalia by James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNSOM; Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and head of AMISOM; and Dan Smith, Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (S/PV.8731). Speakers stressed the numerous 2020 priorities, especially the elections, and the need for support from the international community, and urged bold action by Somali stakeholders. On 27 February, Ambassador Marc Pecteen de Buytsverve (Belgium), chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, briefed the Council on his recent visit to the region.

### Non-proliferation

On 26 February, the Council held a briefing on non-proliferation with a specific focus on supporting the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) ahead of the 2020 review conference (S/PV.8733). High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu and President of the NPT Review Conference Gustavo Zlauvinen briefed the Council. Germany’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas was present at the meeting. Council members



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issued a press statement (SC/14126) in which they expressed support for the NPT and signalled their readiness to work together and join efforts to achieve a successful outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

### Burundi

On 26 February, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue on Burundi. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bin-tou Keita brief on the situation in Burundi

ahead of elections to be held on 20 May. Burundi was invited but did not attend. Kenya and Rwanda attended the meeting.

## South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

On 22 February, the Transitional Government of National Unity was established in South Sudan, marking the start of a 36-month transitional period ahead of the holding of elections, in accordance with the terms of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) signed on 12 September 2018. Riek Machar was sworn in as First Vice President, followed by four other vice-presidents. At the ceremony on 22 February, President Salva Kiir remarked: "This action signifies the end to the war. Peace has come, and it has come to stay". Machar pledged to work with Kiir during the upcoming 36-month transitional period to implement the R-ARCSS. "For the people of South Sudan, I want to assure you that we will work together to end your long suffering," he said.

According to the terms of the R-ARCSS, 12 May 2019 was to mark the end of the eight-month pre-transitional period and the start of the 36-month transitional period, with elections to be held 60 days before the end of the transitional period. The deadline for the end of the pre-transitional period was extended for a second time until 22 February so that critical outstanding pre-transitional tasks specified under the R-ARCSS could be completed. These include the cantonment and training of a unified army and agreement on the number and boundaries of states. To date, many pre-transitional tasks remain outstanding, although on 15 February the parties were

able to reach a compromise on reducing the number of states from 32 to 10.

Leading up to the 22 February deadline, several key actors expressed the need for progress in the peace process. At a press conference on 8 February, while attending the 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, the Secretary-General told the leaders of South Sudan: "You do not have the right to continue a confrontation when your people are suffering so much. It's time for South Sudanese leaders to agree to cooperate". On 9 February, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) adopted a communiqué that expressed appreciation for mediation efforts by regional special envoys from IGAD and South Africa in an attempt to resolve the number and boundaries of states and stated that further extension of the pre-transitional period "is neither desirable nor feasible at this stage of the peace process". On 11 February, the members of the Troika on South Sudan (Norway, the UK and the US) issued a statement encouraging the parties to reach consensus on a way forward on the number of states.

The overall level of political violence remains lower than prior to the signing of the R-ARCSS, and the ceasefire continues to hold across most of the country. However, ethnic and intercommunal violence has continued, along with sporadic clashes between government and opposition forces in some parts of the country. The human rights, humanitarian, food security and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormous impact on civilians.

The mandate of UNMISS was last renewed on 15 March 2019 with the adoption of resolution 2459, which maintained the overall ceilings of 17,000 troops and 2,101

police personnel. The four core elements of the mandate remained largely unchanged, namely protecting civilians, creating the conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, monitoring and investigating human rights, and supporting the peace process. However, resolution 2459 added language calling on the mission to "support the facilitation of the safe, informed, voluntary, and dignified return or relocation of [internally displaced persons] from United Nations protection of civilian sites, in coordination with humanitarian actors and other relevant stakeholders, and within existing resources". Regarding support for the peace process and implementation of the R-ARCSS, resolution 2459 included language specifying "advice or technical assistance, within existing resources" as part of the mission's mandate.

The Council was last briefed on South Sudan on 17 December 2019 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and head of UNMISS David Shearer and Ambassador Joanna Wroniecka (Poland), then chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

### HUMAN RIGHTS-RELATED DEVELOPMENTS

The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan conducted its eighth mission to the country from 3 to 9 February. In Juba and Bentiu, the commissioners met with internally displaced persons, community leaders, and civil society organisations, including women's organisations. They also met with government officials, UN agencies, and UNMISS staff. "Since our visit to South Sudan last August, there has been a marked increase in incidents of armed and localized conflict, particularly in Yei and Maiwut," said Commission Chair Yasmin Sooka at a press conference on 7 February. "Beyond armed conflict, the lack of progress on cantonment and deplorable conditions at cantonment sites, and forced recruitment including of children may all be directly tied to a lack of good faith shown by

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2459 (15 March 2019) extended the mandate of UNMISS for one year. Security Council Presidential Statement S/2019/11 (8 October 2019) was a presidential statement focusing on the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Secretary-General's Report S/2019/936 (11 December 2019) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8689 (17 December 2019) was a meeting on South Sudan. S/PV.8484 (15 March 2019) was the meeting to adopt resolution 2459.

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## South Sudan

signatories to implement the [R-ARCSS]," she added. The commission also noted that the National Security Service was harassing, threatening, and intimidating activists and civil society representatives. The commission expressed its concern at the limited progress made on the establishment of the hybrid court; the commission for truth, reconciliation and healing; and the compensation and reparation authority, as required under the R-ARCSS. During its 43rd session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 9 March with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan and consider its report (A/HRC/43/56).

### Women, Peace and Security

At the 17 December 2019 Council briefing, Shearer reported that "while sexual violence remains a terrible problem, the 295 victims recorded in 2019 are substantially fewer than the almost 1,300 reported in 2018". Ambassador Wroncka expressed her sadness over the fact that sexual violence "against women and girls, in particular" continues to be a marker of the civil war in South Sudan. She showed particular concern over a lack of accountability. In his 11 December report, the Secretary-General called sexual violence one of "the main threats to civilians" in South Sudan. He further stressed that conflict-related sexual violence continued to be used by the conflict parties. The South Sudan National Police Service is listed in the annex of the Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence as one of the conflict parties "that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Security Council agenda". To address this, an action plan was launched on 19 November 2019 with the support of UNMISS, containing commitments to implement targeted actions for the next three years. With regard to the 35 percent quota for women in the formal implementation and monitoring mechanisms of the R-ARCSS, UNMISS

continues to promote women's participation in cooperation with women's groups and organisations. The Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism and the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission are the only mechanisms that meet the quota. Women make up only 18 percent of members of national institutions.

### Key Issues and Options

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

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

- increasing the flexibility of the mission's political strategy and responsibilities to support the peace process and regional efforts;
- increasing the effectiveness of protection efforts beyond protection of civilians sites;
- further strengthening language for the mission to intensify its presence and active patrolling in areas at high risk of conflict;
- increasing mediation and community engagement to foster sustainable local and national reconciliation; and
- further strengthening the mission's role in creating the conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

### Council Dynamics

While there have been recent positive

developments in the peace process, the security situation remains fragile. In light of this, Council members believe that the protection of civilians, the facilitation of humanitarian access, and human rights monitoring should remain core elements of the UNMISS mandate. While members agree on the importance of the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity on 22 February, many members share concerns over the need to fully implement the R-ARCSS as well as the need for durable peace. In this regard, it is likely that they will be in favour of language seeking to encourage UNMISS to continue to provide advice and technical support to the peace process.

Resolution 2459, extending the mandate of UNMISS last year, was adopted with 14 votes in favour. Russia abstained, in part because of its opposition to the resolution's only noting the R-ARCSS rather than welcoming it. Ahead of the adoption, Russia, China and South Africa broke silence in relation to various issues. Language referring to the sanctions regime, and the arms embargo in particular, was contentious during negotiations. Russia and China also opposed aspects of the resolution dealing with sexual and gender-based violence and human rights issues. (See our What's in Blue story of 14 March 2019.) It is possible that these areas may once again be contentious during the upcoming negotiations to renew the mission's mandate.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan. Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy (Viet Nam) chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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## Iraq

### Expected Council Action

In March, the Council expects to receive a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the most recent developments in the situation in Iraq

and on the two latest Secretary-General's reports—on UNAMI and on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

UNAMI's mandate expires on 31 May 2020. The mandate of the UN Investigative

Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) expires on 21 September 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

Widespread popular protests in different parts of Iraq, including Baghdad, started

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2490](#) (20 September 2019) extended the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. [S/RES/2470](#) (21 May 2019) extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2020. [Secretary General's Reports S/2020/140](#) (21 February 2020) was the latest report on UNAMI. [S/2020/133](#) (20 February 2020) was the Secretary-General's 25th report on missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. [S/2020/95](#) (4 February 2020) was the Secretary-General's tenth report on the threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh to international peace and security and the range of UN efforts in support of member states in countering the threat. [S/2019/984](#) (23 December 2019) was the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Iraq. [Security Council Letters S/2020/53](#) (20 January 2020) was the 25th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team supporting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh Committee. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8676](#) (3 December 2019) was a meeting on Iraq. [Sanctions Committee Documents SC/14068](#) (2 January 2020) was a press release on the removal of 15 entities from the sanctions list. [S/2019/963](#) (18 December 2019) was the annual report of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee.

in early October 2019 and have continued with varying intensity. Protesters are voicing long-standing demands regarding basic services and infrastructure, which are lacking as a result of government neglect and failure to reconstruct the country, and overall corruption. Protests with similar demands have occurred sporadically over the past years. This time, protesters also seek structural change, including amendments to the constitution and the electoral system and an end to outside influence in the country. Briefing the Council on 3 December, Hennis-Plasschaert said that “events spun out of control on the very first night of the demonstrations, with authorities immediately resorting to excessive force”. In a 13 December press statement, Council members “expressed grave concern” over violence against protesters in Iraq. In a 17 February press release, Hennis-Plasschaert strongly condemned the use of hunting guns against protesters, which had caused high numbers of casualties. According to the latest Secretary-General’s report on UNAMI, violence in the context of the protests resulted in at least 457 deaths and 9,132 injuries between the start of the protests and 26 January. The report further suggests that if injuries caused by the excessive use of tear gas were to be included, the number of injured people might exceed 21,000. In this latest report, the Secretary-General calls human rights violations in relation to the protests a “grave concern”.

On 1 February, Iraqi President Barham Salih appointed Mohammed Tawfiq Allawi, a politician with cabinet experience, as the new Iraqi Prime Minister. The protesters have reportedly rejected the nomination. One of the protesters’ demands is a government of independent figures without any previous government or legislative experience or affiliation since 2003. According to the Iraqi constitution, the Prime Minister-designate has 30 days to form a new government.

US facilities continue to be targets of rocket attacks, including a 16 February attack on a base used by the US-led Global Coalition against Da’esh. Apart from the 8 January attack, no one has claimed responsibility for the attacks to date. On 3 January, Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards’ Quds Force, was killed by a US strike near the Baghdad airport. On 5 January, the Iraqi parliament adopted a resolution calling on foreign troops to leave Iraq.

In a 6 January letter to the Council president, Iraq condemned the attack as violating “the sovereignty of Iraq and the principles of international law”. In a 9 January letter, the US argued that it had acted in self-defence. On 8 January, Iran retaliated by striking a base in Iraq, injuring approximately 100 US troops, according to media reports. In his latest report on UNAMI, the Secretary-General expresses his deep concern over the “impact of increasing regional tensions on Iraq”.

The 23 December 2019 report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq described “disturbing trends and patterns of grave violations committed against children, notably high numbers of verified child casualties”. These are caused by both “extreme violence” committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) and “military operations by parties to the conflict”. The report counts grave violations against 2,114 children between July 2015 and July 2019.

A January report by UNAMI and the OHCHR on the administration of justice in Iraq focused on trials under the Iraqi anti-terrorism laws. On the one hand, the report noted a “consistent pattern of well-organized trial proceedings”. On the other hand, the report found that “basic fair trial standards were not respected”. Such concerns included, inter alia, a disadvantaged defence in comparison to the prosecution, reliance on confessions allegedly produced under torture, and prosecution under an “overly broad and vague definition of terrorism and related offences”.

According to the 25th report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team supporting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da’esh Committee, ISIL “has begun to reassert itself” in Iraq.

The Secretary-General’s tenth report on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security, and the range of UN efforts in support of member states in countering the threat, said that ISIL has around 4,662 fighters in Iraq, according to numbers from UNAMI.

A February report by UNAMI and the OHCHR on the right to education with a focus on the consequences of the effects of ISIL territorial control in Iraq concluded that ISIL territorial control has consequences on access to education to this day and has created “a marginalised generation of children and young adults, many of whom are or will be entering adulthood without any

post-primary schooling”.

At press time, the UN’s 2020 humanitarian response plan for Iraq of \$519.8 million was funded at 1.2 percent, with \$513.6 million outstanding. According to the latest Secretary-General’s report on UNAMI, there are about 1.4 million internally displaced persons in Iraq as at 31 January 2019.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

The special rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, visited Iraq from 15 to 23 February to assess the human rights situation of the 1.4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the country. She visited Baghdad, Erbil and other locations hosting IDPs. At press time, she was expected to issue a public statement on her preliminary conclusions.

## Key Issues and Options

Depending on political developments, an immediate option for Council members would be to issue a statement voicing support for the progress in forming a new government and potential subsequent steps towards meeting some of the protesters’ demands.

As chair of the 1518 Iraqi Sanctions Committee, Estonia could continue seizing the momentum and political will of Council members and the Iraqi government to further advance the delisting of entities and follow up on concrete proposals on the unfreezing of Iraqi assets.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI, Iraq’s post-ISIL reconstruction needs, and the positive developments in Iraq-Kuwait relations.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, as evidenced by the killing of Soleimani and the Iranian retaliation. The Iraqi government routinely states that Iraq has no intention of taking sides and becoming a theatre for regional and Iran-US tensions. Iraq is also affected by the conflict dynamics in neighbouring Syria, including the issue of the 30,000 Iraqi nationals currently in the al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria.

Turkey continues to have troops stationed in Iraq, over Iraq’s objections.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general, and the UK is the penholder on Iraq-Kuwait issues and UNITAD. Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia) is the chair of the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee.



# Syria

## Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council expects to hold its monthly meetings on political issues, the humanitarian situation, and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

## Key Recent Developments

The security and humanitarian situations in north-west Syria continued to deteriorate in February, as the Syrian government and its allies carried out a military offensive to retake control of parts of Aleppo and Idlib. This led to large-scale displacement, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights estimated that at least 100 civilians were killed in aerial and ground-based attacks in north-west Syria from 1 to 16 February. During his 19 February briefing to the Council, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock reported that over 90 percent of these attacks occurred in areas not controlled by the government. The Council-designated terrorist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham remains a major presence in Idlib, and Russia and Syria have repeatedly said that they are fighting terrorists in the north-west.

There were several deadly clashes in February between Turkish forces and Syrian government troops in Idlib. The Turkish army has been in Idlib since it was established as a “de-escalation zone” through the Astana process in September 2018. On 3 February, an attack by Syrian forces on a Turkish convoy resulted in the deaths of eight Turkish soldiers. On 10 February, five Turkish troops were killed in an attack by Syrian government forces on an observation post. Turkish forces responded in both cases by firing on Syrian government forces. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan claimed that 30 to 35 Syrian troops died in the Turkish military’s response on 3 February, but reports of the death toll have varied. Turkey also reinforced its troop presence in Idlib in February.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and UN Secretary-General António Guterres issued statements regarding the situation in the north-west on 17 February and 18 February, respectively. Calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities, Bachelet expressed “horror at the scale of the humanitarian crisis in north-west Syria”, referring to UN estimates that over

900,000 people (mostly women and children) have been displaced since 1 December 2019 while 298 civilians have died in the conflict in Idlib and Aleppo so far in 2020. Guterres similarly called for an immediate ceasefire. Expressing alarm at the suffering of civilians, he observed: “Young children are dying from the cold. Hostilities are now approaching densely populated areas. People are on the move in freezing temperatures in search of safety, which has become even more difficult”.

The political process has been in a stalemate for several months. When the Constitutional Committee convened in Geneva from 25 to 29 November 2019, 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 side maintained that these issues could be addressed but not outside the context of the constitution. At press time, this impasse had not been broken.

A briefing was held on the situation in Idlib on 6 February at the request of France, the UK and the US. Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock briefed. Pedersen said that “a nationwide ceasefire alongside a cooperative approach to combating terrorism, full respect of Syria’s sovereignty and a credible and inclusive United Nations-facilitated political process”, as outlined in resolution 2254, “remains the only path to end the conflict”. He expressed strong concern about clashes between Syria and Turkey inside Syria, saying that this “suggest(s) the very real prospect of conflagration in the immediate region, as well as far beyond”. Lowcock echoed Pedersen’s call for a nationwide ceasefire and “serious international effort to cooperate on Idlib”.

Pedersen and Lowcock again briefed the Council on Syria during the scheduled monthly meeting on the political track on 19 February. Pedersen (briefing via video teleconference) said he could not report any progress in ending the violence in north-west Syria or in reconvening the Constitutional Committee since his last briefing to the Council two weeks earlier. He also referred to an uptick of Islamic State in Iraq and the

Levant (ISIL) activity in north-east Syria. Lowcock said that from 13 to 16 February, 160,000 people had fled from the fighting in north-west Syria. He added that “it is incumbent on all parties to protect” the displaced.

When the Council renewed the mechanism for cross-border aid delivery into Syria through resolution 2504 of 10 January, the Al Yarubiyah border crossing (on the Iraq/Syria border)—which had been authorised in previous resolutions on this issue—was not included as part of the aid mechanism. Nonetheless, the resolution asked the Secretary-General to report to the Council on alternatives to Al Yarubiyah by the end of February.

At press time, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ursula Mueller was expected to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria on 27 February. The report on alternative modalities to the Al Yarubiyah crossing was expected to be discussed at the meeting. The report, released on 21 February, said that “from a security and logistical perspective, in the current context, the Tal Abyad border crossing would constitute the most feasible alternative to the Al Yarubiyah border crossing”.

The Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria briefed Council members on 19 February on children’s rights in Syria in an Arria-formula meeting organised by Estonia, Germany and the UK. The briefing focused on the Commission’s January report, titled “They have erased the dreams of my children”: children’s rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/HRC/43/CRP.6) The report describes the killing and maiming of children and attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, during the conflict in Syria. It notes the conditions that children have faced in detention, including sexual violence, torture and beatings. While referring to abuses committed by government forces, it also describes sexual violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, and public executions, among other crimes, perpetrated against children by ISIL. During the Arria-formula meeting, the chair of the Commission, Paulo Pinheiro, said that a whole generation of children had been traumatised by the war.

## Human Rights-related Developments

On 7 February, the spokesperson for the High

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2504 (10 January 2020) renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through two border crossings (Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa) for six months. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) focused on the political situation in Syria. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8727 (19 February 2020) was on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. S/PV.8715 (6 February 2020) was on the situation in Idlib. Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/139 (21 February) was on the review of alternative modalities for the Al Yarubiyah border crossing.



# Syria

Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over “the sharp increase in hostilities in northwest Syria and the blatant disregard for protection of civilians”, adding that “fighting in southern and eastern Idlib and in western and southern Aleppo continues to kill and injure scores of civilians and displace hundreds of thousands of others.” On 10 March, during its 43rd session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and consider its report (A/HRC/43/57).

## Key Issues and Options

An overarching key issue is how the Council can find an effective way to address the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in north-west Syria and help the parties participating in the Constitutional Committee to reinvigorate the stalled political process. Several members have expressed support for the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen. One option would be for the Council to urge the Secretary-General to play an enhanced good offices role by supplementing Pedersen’s efforts and engaging in determined dialogue with all the relevant parties.

The Council could also make an appeal for enhanced financial contributions to support OCHA’s humanitarian plan for Syria, given the increased needs for support outlined by Lowcock in his 19 February

briefing to the Council.

The Board of Inquiry established last year by the Secretary-General to investigate attacks on facilities in north-west Syria on a “deconfliction” list that included health facilities is expected to finalise its internal report this month. The Council could ask the Secretariat for a briefing on the board’s findings in a closed format to allow for a frank dialogue and exchange of views.

The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Investigation and Identification Team (IIT)—established to identify perpetrators of chemical weapons attacks in Syria following a June 2018 decision of the Conference of States Parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)—may also finalise its report in March. The Council could discuss this report with the OPCW in a private-meeting format. While Council members often meet on chemical weapons issues in Syria in closed consultations, non-UN officials and non-Council members are not permitted to participate in closed consultations. That is not the case with private meetings, the format used when the Council discussed the use of chemical weapons in Syria with Fernando Arias, the OPCW’s Director-General, on 5 November 2019.

## Council Dynamics

Sharp differences continue to define Council engagement on Syria. On the one hand, the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and others tend to condemn attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure by the Syrian government and its allies. They also maintain that the Astana format—which established Idlib as a “de-escalation” zone – has failed. In contrast, China and Russia tend to underscore the importance of eliminating the threat of terrorism in Syria. In this regard, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) said at the 6 February meeting that “Syrian citizens...have been taken hostage by the terrorists running rampant” in Idlib and noted that resolution 2254 “directly states that there is a need to combat terrorism”. Russia further maintains that its military operations are proportional and discriminate and that terrorists in Syria use civilian infrastructure in an effort to protect themselves.

There is growing concern among a number of members about the clashes between Syria and Turkey in Idlib and the potential for these clashes to escalate into a broader conflict.

Belgium and Germany are the humanitarian penholders on Syria.

# Libya

## Expected Council Action

In March, 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.

UNSMIL’s mandate expires on 15 September 2020, measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya expire on 30 April 2021, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions

Committee expires on 15 May 2021.

## Key Recent Developments

Libya’s capital, Tripoli, has been the scene of fighting for over ten 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 internationally recognised and UN-backed 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. Yacoub El Hillo, Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Libya, said during a 17 February video teleconference for UN correspondents in New York that this protracted conflict was affecting civilians “on a scale that Libya has never seen before”, noting that 150,000 people have been displaced since April 2019.

The proxy dimension of the Libyan conflict keeps intensifying in breach of UN sanctions. Reportedly, Turkey and Qatar support the GNA militarily while Egypt, Jordan, Saudi

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2510](#) (12 February 2020) endorsed the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). [S/RES/2509](#) (11 February 2020) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 May 2021 as well as the measures related to the illicit export from or illicit import to Libya of petroleum until 30 April 2021; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). [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. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/41](#) (15 January 2020) was the latest report on UNSMIL. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8722](#) (12 February 2020) was the adoption of resolution 2510. [S/PV.8719](#) (11 February 2020) was the adoption of resolution 2509. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/914](#) (9 December 2019) was the latest final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

# Libya

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates provide military support to the LNA, and different Chadian and Sudanese armed groups support both sides. According to Libyan and US officials, mercenaries of the Russian military company Wagner Group are also involved on the ground in support of the LNA.

In July 2019, Salamé proposed three steps to end the conflict: a truce, a high-level conference of “concerned countries”, and a “Libyan meeting of leading and influential personalities from all over the country”.

On 8 January, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called for a ceasefire in Libya starting on 12 January. An attempt to have both the head of the GNA, Fayeze Al-Sarraj, and Haftar sign a ceasefire agreement in Moscow on 13 January failed, with Haftar leaving Moscow without signing.

On 19 January, high-level representatives from Algeria, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, the Republic of the Congo, Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, the US, and high-level representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the League of Arab States adopted conclusions at the Berlin Conference on Libya on six areas (“baskets”) related to the conflict in Libya. The conference represented the second of Salamé’s three steps. With these conclusions, the participants committed to refraining from “interference in the armed conflict or in the internal affairs of Libya” and urged all international actors to do the same. They further called upon the United Nations “to facilitate ceasefire negotiations between the parties, including through the immediate establishment of technical committees to monitor and verify the implementation of the ceasefire”.

The Berlin Conference participants also called on the Council to impose “appropriate sanctions on those who are found to be in violation of the ceasefire arrangements and on Member States to enforce these”. Regarding the arms embargo, participants committed themselves “to unequivocally and fully respect and implement the arms embargo” established by the Council and called “on all international actors to do the same”. The

participants further agreed to establish an International Follow-Up Committee (IFC) to coordinate efforts to implement the conclusions. Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj, head of the GNA, and Haftar were both in Berlin but not formally a part of the conference. Shortly before the conference, forces allied with the LNA effectively shut down nearly all of Libya’s oil fields and terminals, leading to massive revenue loss for the Libyan state. The oil fields and terminals remain blocked.

UNSMIL began to work on the six baskets before the conference. The six baskets are political; economic and financial; security; arms embargo; international humanitarian law; and international human rights law matters. Sarraj and Haftar have each nominated five representatives for the 5+5 Libyan Joint Military Commission (part of the “security” basket). The first round of talks of the 5+5 commission started on 3 February in Geneva, with Salamé conducting shuttle diplomacy between the two parties. Its second round started on 18 February. The day after, the GNA announced it was suspending its participation in the talks, following an LNA attack on Tripoli’s port. At press time, the talks had continued and the second round of the talks had concluded.

On 11 February, the Council adopted resolution 2509, renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 May 2021. The resolution further renewed until 30 April 2021 measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. The resolution included new language related to the illicit import of petroleum to Libya. Russia abstained in the vote, saying that “the negative impact of importing oil products is not that obvious for the Libyan economy.”

On 12 February, the Council adopted resolution 2510, endorsing the conclusions of the Berlin conference. Russia abstained, explaining after the vote that “we still do not have a clear understanding of whether all Libyan parties are ready to implement that decision”, referring to the conclusions. The UK, on the other hand, emphasised that “the Security Council does not act only when parties ask it to act. The whole point of having

the Security Council is that it can step into a situation and make its own decisions”.

On 26 February, German foreign minister Heiko Maas and Salamé briefed Council members in consultations on the first meeting of the IFC.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 18 March, during its 43rd session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Libya, including on the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to support the efforts of the GNA to prevent violations and abuses of human rights and ensure accountability for such crimes (A/HRC/43/75).

## Key Issues and Options

An ongoing issue is the military conflict, which threatens to deepen long-standing political and economic divisions between different parts of Libya, contributing to the overall instability of the country. Council members will continue following closely the progress made by Salamé in his proposed three steps and in implementing the six baskets of the Berlin conference conclusions. Council members are eager to see a permanent ceasefire between the parties to enable further progress on the Berlin conference conclusions.

In the longer term, a Council visiting mission to Libya or a visit by the Libya Sanctions Committee covering the whole country could be considered.

## Council Dynamics

Libya continues to be a divisive issue within the Council, as evidenced by statements made after the votes on resolutions 2509 and 2510. 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.

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

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## Counter-terrorism

### Expected Council Action

In March, China, the Council's president, is planning a debate on countering terrorism and extremism in Africa under the agenda item of "peace and security in Africa" to discuss the need for comprehensive multidimensional approaches in combating terrorism and violent extremism in Africa. Possible briefers may be Secretary-General António Guterres and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat (the latter most likely via video teleconference). Interested African member states are likely to participate in the debate.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

In February, the Council was briefed by Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT) and Michèle Coninsx, the Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) on the Secretary-General's tenth strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'esh). Voronkov noted that in his previous briefing he reported a noticeable increase in ISIL- and Al-Qaida-linked recruitment in West Africa. He said the situation had deteriorated further and that this trend was of greater concern today as "the Islamic State's West Africa Province in the Lake Chad basin reinforces its links to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara". During the same briefing, Coninsx observed that CTED's recent assessment visits to Africa had noted the lack of mechanisms to "address radicalization within correctional facilities, ineffective training of officials to

manage violent extremist detainees and the absence of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for prisoners upon release".

The Council was also updated on "unprecedented terrorist violence" across West Africa and the Sahel by UN Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Mohamed Ibn Chambas during his January briefing on peace consolidation in West Africa. In presenting the Secretary-General's latest report on UNOWAS, Chambas emphasised that since July 2019, the region has experienced a surge in terrorist attacks against military and civilian targets. Significantly, the geographic focus of terrorist attacks shifted from Mali to Burkina Faso and also threatened coastal states in West Africa, according to Chambas. Casualties from terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have risen five-fold since 2016, with more than 4,000 deaths reported in 2019 compared with an estimated 770 deaths in 2016. Chambas stressed that terrorism, organised crime and intercommunal violence are often intertwined, particularly in areas where there is weak state presence, and extremists provide safety and protection to populations in exchange for loyalty.

### Key Issues and Options

The regional counter-terrorism Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S, made up of units from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger)—which has carried out some successful operations—faces persistent challenges in securing financial and material resources, which prevents it from becoming fully operational. Similarly, the region's states are also confronted

by the need to allocate part of their national budgets to counter-terrorism, which would divert funds from social services and development efforts.

An issue is how to address violent extremism and terrorism in Africa in a more holistic manner. Besides West Africa, there are concerns about terrorist activity in other parts of Africa including Somalia and Libya. A continent-wide approach to the phenomenon could be discussed during the debate.

The Council has also recognised the terrorist threat posed by radicalised prisoners and the need to address that threat. Resolution 2482 (2019) on the nexus between terrorism and organised crime states that prisons can be settings where both radicalisation and rehabilitation can occur. The Council may want to encourage member states to develop specific strategies to address and counter terrorist narratives within the prison system, as well as to organise periodic meetings on how to assess and manage the risk posed by radicalised prisoners and support them following their release to avoid recidivism.

### Council Dynamics

Council members share concerns about the spread of terrorism and organised crime in Africa, including previously unaffected regions, and its impact on civilians. However, since most members in principle do not consider UN political missions and good office engagements to be appropriate for conducting counter-terrorism activities, they may be interested in exploring what the regional and sub-regional organisations, as well as African member states participating in the debate, may suggest in this context.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In March, the Council is expected to hold its monthly briefing on Yemen with Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and a representative of OCHA. General Abhijit Guha, the head of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), is expected to brief during consultations. UNMHA's mandate

expires on 15 July 2020.

### Key Recent Developments

Following several months of relative calm, heavy fighting resumed in mid-January between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group in the Nihm district and in Al-Jawf, Marib and Sa'ada governorates.

The escalation has included a considerable increase in airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition backing the government. It has also featured Houthi cross-border aerial attacks against Saudi Arabia, which had completely ceased after late September 2019. Following the Houthis' downing of a Saudi fighter plane on 14 February, Saudi airstrikes that

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2482 (19 July 2019) was on the nexus between terrorism and international organised crime. Secretary-General's Reports S/2020/95 (4 February 2020) was the tenth report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8716 (7 February 2020) was a briefing on the tenth report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh). S/PV.8698 (8 January 2020) was a briefing on peace consolidation in West Africa. S/PV.8605 (20 August 2019) was a briefing on the ninth report on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh).



# Yemen

were widely seen as retaliatory killed as many as 31 civilians in Al-Jawf on 15 February, according to a statement by OCHA.

Despite the escalation, the first medical flights transferring patients out of Sana'a for treatment abroad brought a total of 28 people to Egypt and Jordan on 3 and 8 February. An agreement to open the UN-operated air bridge out of Sana'a airport, which had been closed to civilian air traffic since August 2016, was announced by the coalition in late November 2019. The parties to the conflict participated in a meeting of the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Prisoner Exchange Agreement from 10 to 16 February in Amman and agreed on a detailed plan to complete the first large-scale exchange of prisoners, according to a joint statement by the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

At an 18 February Council briefing, Griffiths sounded a sombre tone over the escalation, stressing that progress achieved during the latter part of 2019 was “at grave risk of being undone”. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock reiterated the importance of a nationwide ceasefire to avoid the risk that violence might spiral out of control. Lowcock also raised new alarms about Houthi restrictions on aid operations that, he said, were not consistent with humanitarian principles, describing the situation as “unacceptable”. He said that he hoped the Houthis would implement recent announcements to drop a proposed two per cent tax on non-governmental organisations and to fulfil a long-standing agreement with the World Food Programme on biometric registration. Lowcock warned that donors might suspend funding if they do not believe aid is going to the intended beneficiaries.

Lowcock and Griffiths both stressed the need for a UN assessment mission to finally gain access to the moored SAFER oil tanker off the Ras Isa oil terminal, which risks causing a catastrophic oil spill in the Red Sea. Lowcock and Griffiths further recalled that the medical air bridge out of Sana'a must be able to run flights regularly, as thousands of people require treatment abroad. In consultations, Council members were briefed by General Guha of UNMHA.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

At the 18 February Council meeting, the chair of the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Inga Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), briefed on the work of the committee, covering its activities since the last briefing by the chair on 15 May 2019. She noted the committee's consideration of Panel of Experts' recommendations from its 2019 reporting and final report in January. King called on the parties to the conflict to investigate and prosecute members who violate international humanitarian law (which was one of the Panel recommendations to the committee). According to King, the committee also recently considered a request by Khalid Ali Abdullah Saleh to delist his father, former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who died in December 2017, but said that the committee had not approved the petition.

On 25 February, the Council adopted resolution 2511, renewing asset freeze and travel ban sanctions until 26 February 2021 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 28 March 2021. (The targeted arms embargo against the Houthis is open-ended). This followed a difficult negotiation, with 13 members voting in favour, while China and Russia abstained.

Regarding the arms embargo, the US detained a dhow – a traditional ship – in the Arabian Sea on 9 February that it said was transferring Iranian arms, including anti-tank and surface-to-air missiles, to the Houthis. During the Council's February briefing on Yemen, US Ambassador Kelly Craft said evidence from the seizure had been made available to the UN.

## Key Issues and Options

The military escalation is threatening to severely undermine progress made towards resuming peace talks during the latter part of 2019. Critical issues for the Council include how to support de-escalation efforts, restart negotiations for a political settlement to the conflict, and further implement the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement between the government and Houthis and the November 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the government and the separatist Southern Transition Council.

The humanitarian crisis—the largest in the world, with 24 million people requiring assistance—remains severe. OCHA usually briefs on five key priorities to mitigate the situation: the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, a fully funded aid operation, support for Yemen's economy, and the need for a political solution.

Council members are likely to monitor and be prepared to react further to developments, having called “for an immediate cessation of

these hostilities” in a 30 January press statement. The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement reiterating this call and emphasising the need for the parties to return to the negotiating table. Regarding the humanitarian situation, in resolution 2511 renewing the sanctions, the Council expressed serious concern over hindrances placed on delivering assistance, singling out increased interference in Houthi-controlled areas and emphasised the need, without delay, for UN access to inspect and maintain the SAFER oil tanker that is located in the Houthi-controlled north. A next step may see donor countries suspend funding for aid operations if Houthi interference or restrictions continue.

## Council Dynamics

Council members have been quite united on Yemen. At the 18 February session, they called for the parties to de-escalate and emphasised the importance of restarting peace talks. Moreover, while the session had initially been scheduled solely as consultations, it was apparently decided to include a public session to raise widespread concerns about increasing Houthi interference with humanitarian operations and failure to allow the UN assessment mission to gain access to the SAFER oil tanker.

Council unity was strained during negotiations on the sanctions resolution. Differences included whether to refer to the Panel of Experts' findings that the Houthis have continued to receive arms with characteristics similar to those produced in Iran. The US, in particular, at times seeks to highlight what it perceives as Iran's destabilising role. This has been a red-line for Russia, which it described last month as being counter-productive.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2511 (25 February 2020) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. S/RES/2405 (13 January 2020) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2020. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8725 (18 February 2020) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/14094 (30 January 2020) called for an immediate cessation of the hostilities that had broken out since mid-January in northern Yemen. Sanctions Committee Documents S/2020/70 (27 January 2020) was the final report of the Yemen Panel of Experts.

# Lebanon (1701)

## Expected Council Action

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

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

## Key Recent Developments

Lebanon is experiencing one of the worst economic and political crises in its recent history. Economic growth has been stagnant for years, resulting in widespread unemployment and a mounting public debt crisis. For almost five months, Lebanon has been engulfed in countrywide anti-government protests, which on 29 October 2019 brought down the government of Prime Minister Saad Hariri. United in their demands for a new technocratic government and better living conditions, the protesters were made up of all ethnic and religious groups across the social and economic spectrum.

The Lebanese political leadership system is based on sectarian quotas, whereby the post of prime minister must be occupied by a Sunni Muslim, the presidency by a Maronite Christian, and the speaker of the parliament by a Shi'a Muslim. In December 2019, after consultations with parliamentary political blocs, Lebanese President Michel Aoun designated Hassan Diab as the prime minister, in charge of forming a new government. A career academic, Diab has not been affiliated with any political party in Lebanon and has described himself as a technocrat. Diab received little support from Sunni political blocs in the parliament while obtaining strong backing from Christian and Shi'a groups, including Hezbollah.

Meanwhile, the countrywide protests have continued, and turned more violent for several days beginning on 18 January when security forces clashed with protesters in Beirut. According to media reports, more than 400 people were injured. On 21 January, Diab formed a new government consisting of a cabinet of 20 ministers. The Future Movement, led by former prime minister Hariri, and some other parties refused to participate

in the new government. Diab, who has labelled the new government as technocratic, has vowed to address the protesters' demands. Critics have argued that the new cabinet is heavily influenced by Hezbollah-allied parties and lacks true political independence. The public demonstrations have continued, with protesters showing dissatisfaction with the new government.

In an 11 February vote of confidence, the parliament backed the government and its reform agenda. Protesters tried to prevent the vote and to block the lawmakers' access to the parliament. Security forces used tear gas and water cannon to disband the protesters, resulting in over 300 persons injured. On 12 February, the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) issued a statement calling on the new government to undertake necessary reforms and address the needs of the Lebanese people. ISG is composed of the UN, the governments of China, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK and the US, as well as the EU and the Arab League.

With the country on the brink of economic collapse amid massive public debt, rising unemployment, and slow growth, addressing Lebanon's economic situation will be one of the main priorities of the new government. Lebanon has been under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to implement reforms, which are also a condition for its access to the more than \$11 billion pledged at the 2018 Paris donor conference, which focused on infrastructure investments and economic development.

## Key Issues and Options

The Council is facing a number of interrelated issues on Lebanon. The ongoing political instability coupled with the deep economic crisis has the potential to undermine the already fragile security situation in the country. The growing concern for the Council is how to address the political instability and prevent further deterioration of security.

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

armed groups in Lebanon.

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

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, Lebanon currently hosts over a million Syrian refugees. In this regard, the Council could consider requesting a briefing by UNHCR on how member states can help enhance services for refugees.

## Council Dynamics

There is a strong consensus among Council members in their support for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. In this context, the Council has also stressed the critical role of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in addressing security challenges in the country.

Council members hold different views on the security dynamic in the region and the role of the mission. Over the past several years, these differences have been especially evident during negotiations on UNIFIL's mandate renewals. The US has taken the view that the mission should play a more active role in confronting the threats the US considers most serious in this context—those posed by Iran, Hezbollah, and the proliferation of weapons in southern Lebanon. The US has argued that the mission's role should be reconsidered, given that UNIFIL is unable to fulfil part of its mandate because it lacks access to parts of its area of operations. The US entered the latest mandate renewal negotiations advocating a significant reduction of the troop ceiling and a comprehensive strategic review of the mission. These proposals encountered strong opposition from most Council members.

Other members—including France and Russia—have emphasised that no changes should be made to the mission's mandate. These members are cautious about changing the mandate because of the potential impact on the fragile calm that has been maintained in southern Lebanon for over a decade.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2485 (29 August 2019) renewed UNIFIL's mandate for another year and asked the Secretary-General to conduct UNIFIL's assessment by 1 June 2020. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) expanded UNIFIL by 15,000 troops and expanded its mandate. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory, and free and fair presidential elections. Secretary-General's Report S/2019/889 (18 November 2019) was on the implementation of resolution 1701.**

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## Lebanon (1701)

The US has also raised concerns about the growing influence of Hezbollah in the

Lebanese political structures. This issue has become more prominent in light of ongoing

tensions between the US and Iran. France is the penholder on Lebanon.

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## Non-Proliferation (1540 Committee)

### Expected Council Action

In March, the chair of the 1540 Committee, Ambassador Dian Triansyah Djani (Indonesia) is scheduled to brief the Council on the work of the committee, which deals with the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The mandate of the committee expires on 25 April 2021.

### Background

Adopted in 2004, resolution 1540 aims to address a concern that non-state actors might use weapons of mass destruction for terrorist purposes (individuals and sub-state groups are not covered under existing treaties dealing with nuclear, chemical and biological weapons). It requires all states to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems. Furthermore, it requires states to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such weapons.

The mandate of the 1540 Committee, which was last extended by resolution 1977 in 2011, calls for the committee to conduct a comprehensive review of the resolution's implementation before the mandate expires and to submit to the Council a report containing conclusions of the review. In addition to its day-to-day activities, during 2020, the committee will likely maintain a strong focus on activities related to this comprehensive

review. One of the more notable events planned in the context of the 1540 review process this year will be open consultations in June in New York. UN member states, international and regional organisations, and civil society will be able to take part in this meeting.

Following the completion of an earlier review of the implementation status of resolution 1540, in December 2016, the Council adopted resolution 2325, which called for further efforts to strengthen implementation. In addition, resolution 2325 clarified the reporting cycle by deciding that the 1540 Committee would brief the Council in the first quarter of each year in addition to providing the annual joint briefing with the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee.

In March 2019, Ambassador Djani briefed the Council on the work of the committee. While noting that effective implementation of resolution 1540 required constant efforts at national, regional and international levels, he emphasised that substantial progress had been made. In May 2019, Djani delivered a joint statement on behalf of the chairs of the three terrorism-related committees. He said that these committees share a common understanding of the threats posed by terrorism, particularly emphasising ISIL, which

notwithstanding its military defeat in Iraq and Syria is still an organisation with centralised leadership that operates globally.

On 23 December 2019, the committee published a report on the review of the implementation of resolution 1540 that detailed the committee's activities during 2019. The committee held three formal and six informal meetings during the year, and continued outreach activities in an effort to achieve universal reporting on the implementation of resolution 1540. By the end of 2019, 184 of the 193 member states had submitted such reports. In 2019, the committee visited four countries (Chile, Kuwait, Madagascar and Togo) to discuss the implementation of resolution 1540.

The committee held its first formal meeting this year on 19 February during which the Chair briefed the chairs of the regional groups on the ongoing activities related to the comprehensive review of resolution 1540. The programme of work, which has been agreed by the committee, had not been published at press time. Usually, the programme of work is organised around four main themes: monitoring and national implementation, assistance, cooperation with international organisations and other relevant UN bodies, and transparency and media outreach.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2325 (15 December 2016) was a resolution focusing on better implementation of resolution 1540. S/RES/1977 (20 April 2011) renewed the mandate of the 1540 Committee for ten years. **Other S/2019/986** (23 December 2019) was the annual report on the work of the committee.



# Sudan (Darfur)

## Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council is expected to make a decision regarding the drawdown and exit of the UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Council is likely to adopt a resolution establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID by 31 March, in accordance with resolution 2495. Prior to this, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the special report of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, also mandated by resolution 2495, followed by consultations. The chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia), will provide the quarterly briefing on the committee's work.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 31 October 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

On 31 October 2019, the Security Council adopted resolution 2495, extending the mandate of UNAMID until 31 October, as requested by Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok in a 22 October 2019 letter to the Secretary-General. The resolution, which decided that UNAMID will maintain its troop and police ceilings until 31 March, said that after 31 March, the Council will decide on "courses of action regarding the responsible drawdown and exit of UNAMID" and "adopt a new resolution at the same time, establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID". The resolution also requested the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to provide the Security Council with a special report by 31 January, including an assessment of the situation on the ground, an update on the peace process, information on the status of UNAMID team sites previously handed over to the government, recommendations on the appropriate course of action regarding the drawdown of UNAMID, and options for a follow-on presence to UNAMID. On 31 December 2019, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council asking for a one-month extension for the submission of the special report, to 28 February, to allow for further consultations at a high level with the AU and the Sudanese authorities.

On 27 January, Prime Minister Hamdok

sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting "the UN to seek a Security Council mandate to establish, as soon as possible, a Chapter VI peace support operation in the form of a special political mission with a strong peacebuilding component...[covering] the entire territory of Sudan". The letter stressed the urgent need for "capacities for good offices and mediation support". It also outlined six areas in relation to the mandate of such a special political mission.

The overall security situation in Darfur remains largely unchanged but precarious because of the destabilising activities of several actors that exacerbate insecurity, threaten civilians, and risk inter-communal violence, including through acts that may be of a criminal nature. On 8 January, Council members met under "any other business" to discuss the situation in Darfur. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita briefed members on incidents related to intercommunal violence in West Darfur that resulted in the death of several dozen civilians and on the looting of UNAMID's former headquarters in South Darfur. Following the meeting, the president of the Council, Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy (Viet Nam), delivered elements to the press condemning these two incidents.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 14 January, the Council received the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. The report, covering March to December 2019, found that although there have not been any large-scale outbreaks of violence, the security situation in Darfur has been characterised by an increase in localised security incidents, including intercommunal skirmishes; militia attacks on civilians; tensions in major camps for internally displaced persons; clashes in the Jebel Marra area between security forces, allied militias and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid; and several attacks on UNAMID and humanitarian agencies. Various human rights violations and abuses continued unabated, the report said. During the reporting period, the government of Sudan continued routinely to violate the arms embargo by transferring weapons to Darfur while a lack of cooperation between the government of Sudan and other governments in the region made monitoring and implementation of the travel ban and asset freeze challenging, according to the report. On 11 February, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2508, extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 12 March 2021.

## Women, Peace and Security

The Panel of Experts' final report on Sudan describes incidents of violence against women, girls and boys in locations near camps for internally displaced persons. The report says that the patterns of those incidents indicate "that rape is increasingly used in the fight between nomads and farmers over access to land in several areas in Darfur." Survivors of such violence identified the perpetrators as herders and members of security forces. Even when perpetrators were identified, however, no arrests were made in the majority of cases, the report said.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to assess the situation in Darfur and the impact of the broader political situation in the country. Another issue is assessing the potential effect of troop reductions on the security and human rights situations. A related issue is assessing options for a follow-on presence to UNAMID.

One option would be for these assessments to be informed by the findings and recommendations of the special report requested in resolution 2495 and by the letter from Hamdok requesting the establishment of a special political mission.

## Council Dynamics

The issue of the scope and pace of UNAMID's drawdown, reconfiguration, and eventual exit has been contentious among Council members in the past (see our What's In Blue stories in 2017, 2018 and 2019). In comparison, negotiations on resolution 2495, which extended UNAMID's mandate for one year, were relatively smooth, notably because of the 22 October 2019 letter from Hamdok requesting such an extension. Council members are expected again to take into account the views presented by Hamdok in his 27 January letter, including the request for a special political mission.

Following the adoption of resolution 2495 on 31 October 2019, Germany said that "a transition has to be informed by the conditions on the ground, which we should consider carefully before making our next decision on the drawdown of UNAMID". On the other hand, the US said it "fully expects this to be the final extension" of UNAMID and "supports a follow-on UN mission with a countrywide mandate to continue assistance

**UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2508 (11 February 2020) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts for one year. S/RES/2495 (31 October 2019) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 31 October 2020. Secretary-General's Report S/2019/816 (15 October 2019) was the special report on UNAMID. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8718 (11 February 2020) was a meeting to adopt resolution 2508. S/PV.8654 (31 October 2019) was a meeting to adopt resolution 2495. S/PV.8643 (17 October 2019) was a briefing on UNAMID. Security Council Letters S/2020/77 (27 January 2020) transmitted the letter from Hamdok to the Secretary-General. S/2020/72 (31 December 2019) was from the Secretary-General, requesting a one-month extension for the submission of the special report, to 28 February. Sanctions Committee Document S/2020/36 (14 January 2020) was the final report of the Panel of Experts.

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## Sudan (Darfur)

to the new Sudanese government”.

Following the adoption of resolution 2508 on 11 February, China asserted that the “current situation in Darfur remains largely stable, and the region is in a critical period of transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding” and that the “Security Council and the

international community should...respect the leadership of the Sudan on the question of Darfur, strengthen communication and coordination with the government of the Sudan and carefully listen to its views and suggestions”. Russia said that “the situation in Darfur is steadily normalizing” and noted

“the generally positive dynamics in the military and political situation”.

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

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## Open Debate on Multilateralism and the Political Settlement of Disputes

### Expected Council Action

In March, Council president China will convene an open debate titled “Upholding Multilateralism and Promoting the Political Settlement of Disputes”, under the agenda item “Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief at the debate. Representatives from the office of the President of the General Assembly and the International Court of Justice may also brief. At press time, no outcome was anticipated.

### Background

The open debate in March recalls the open debate spearheaded by China during its November 2018 presidency on “Strengthening multilateralism and the role of the United Nations”. At that meeting, Secretary-General António Guterres warned about the eroding effects of the decline in trust among nations, while stressing that the “crises in Syria, in the Middle East peace process and elsewhere have shaken popular faith in the potential of the international community to deliver solutions”. He added that to strengthen multilateralism, the international community must reinforce its commitment to the UN Charter, and UN bodies should seek further cooperation with regional organisations and civil society.

The March debate might build on previous Council meetings which focused on the UN Charter. China convened a ministerial-level open debate during its February 2015 presidency 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. On 9 January, Viet Nam convened an open debate on “Upholding the United Nations Charter”. In a presidential statement adopted during that meeting, the Council reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations.

### Key Issues and Options

The upcoming 75th anniversary of the UN’s founding provides a context for the open debate. China views the debate as an opportunity for Council members and the wider UN membership to consider how member states can work together to strengthen the UN Charter. Possible topics for discussion include ways to ensure the upholding of the UN Charter, including by cooperation with regional organisations; means of addressing transboundary challenges, such as terrorism and risks to cybersecurity; and ways in which the Security Council can respond to threats to international peace and security through collective action.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Member states may reiterate the perspectives on multilateralism expressed during the November 2018 open debate. At that debate, many members agreed that such issues as climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, mass migration, and the spread of diseases have consequences beyond the scope of one state and therefore can only be resolved by joint efforts. Some referred to peacekeeping operations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as positive examples of multilateral cooperation and highlighted the need to adhere to the UN Charter and to increase cooperation with regional organisations.

Council members are likely to diverge with regard to their interpretation of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. At the November 2018 debate, China and Russia stressed the importance of upholding the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of states. Other members, particularly France, the United Kingdom and the United States, emphasised that state sovereignty should not prevent the Council from acting in situations such as Syria and Myanmar nor should it be used as a shield against taking measures to protect civilians from human rights violations.

Another topic that may be raised by members is the challenge to multilateralism posed by the persistent divisions among the permanent members of the Security Council and the perceived retreat from multilateralism by some countries, especially the US. At the November 2018 debate, Ambassador Nikki Haley, then the US permanent representative, said that there were times when the US had come to the conclusion that “multilateralism has been a bad deal for the United States and that we could be more effective by advancing our principles and interests on our own”. Several members, including Russia and France, criticised the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the Iran nuclear deal, and the UN Human Rights Council. European members referenced the EU as an example of a successful

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON MULTILATERALISM** [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/1](#) (9 January 2020) was a presidential statement adopted during the ministerial-level debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”. [Security Council Letters S/2020/1](#) (31 December 2019) was a concept note circulated by Viet Nam ahead of the debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”. [S/2018/982](#) (1 November 2018) was a concept note circulated by China for the open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: strengthening multilateralism and the role of the United Nations”. [S/2015/87](#) (3 February 2015) was a concept note circulated by China for the open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: reflect on history, reaffirm the strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN”. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8699](#) (9 January 2020) was a ministerial-level open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”, held ahead of the 75th anniversary of the UN Charter. [S/PV.8395](#) (9 November 2018) was an open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: strengthening multilateralism and the role of the United Nations”. [S/PV.7389](#) (23 February 2015) was a ministerial-level open debate on the UN Charter, marking the 70th anniversary of the UN’s founding.

## Open Debate on Multilateralism and the Political Settlement of Disputes

multilateral model while the UK emphasised that it would remain an active participant in world affairs even after it left the EU.

During the March debate, speakers might take the opportunity to support

multilateralism and emphasise the benefits of international agreements and mechanisms in promoting a more secure international order. Members may also refer to possible reforms in the UN system that can address challenges

to multilateralism, such as the suggestion to reform the permanent members' use of their veto power at the Security Council.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

### Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's most recent report on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The MONUSCO mandate expires on 20 December. The 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) sanctions regime expires on 1 July.

### Key Recent Developments

On 19 December 2019, the Security Council adopted resolution 2502 renewing MONUSCO's mandate for one year. The resolution went through several rounds of negotiations before it was adopted unanimously. It maintains the dual strategic priorities of the mission: protection of civilians and supporting the stabilisation and strengthening of DRC state institutions. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to work with the DRC government to create an exit strategy for the mission, to be proposed to the Council no later than 20 October. Resolution 2502 decreased the troop ceiling from 16,215 military personnel to 14,000 military personnel and increased police personnel from 391 to 591. It maintained the numbers of military observers and staff officers. It also included a line stipulating the increase "of an additional 360 personnel of formed police units provided they are deployed in replacement of military personnel". Because of members' divergent views on the continued efficacy of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), language was added to further stress the FIB's alignment with MONUSCO's overall mandate, "underlin[ing] that the entire MONUSCO force, including the Intervention Brigade, must prioritise the implementation of its protection of civilians mandate". The FIB's future will be a recurring

issue in any mandate renewal.

An informal interactive dialogue, requested by the US, was held on 14 January. Its stated goal was bringing together various stakeholders to discuss how to support the DRC government in its efforts to stabilise the eastern region. Security Council members, Special Representative and head of MONUSCO Leila Zerrougui, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region Huang Xia, and member states from the region also participated. President Félix Tshisekedi has been active in trying to increase cooperation and transparency between the DRC and its neighbours. Tshisekedi led several visits and attended regional conferences with neighbouring countries and has apparently stressed the need to "build bridges, not walls" with the DRC's neighbours. Within the first six months of his term, Tshisekedi travelled to Angola, Burundi, Kenya, Namibia, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Among the ideas discussed was a unified strategy for these countries to address the issue of armed combatants in the DRC. The details remain uncertain and could range from information-sharing to coordinated military operations.

Eastern DRC remains volatile, especially since the Forces armées de la république démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in October 2019 launched a new offensive against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed group that originated in Uganda. In November and December 2019, Council members held two meetings in consultations to discuss the increase in violence, including public backlash against MONUSCO that involved destruction of MONUSCO property. The FARDC operations have continued into 2020, and the recent instability has contributed to a worsening of the humanitarian situation in an already fragile region.

Council members met on 20 January, under "any other business" to discuss the independent assessment report, prepared by Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, on the protection of civilians and neutralisation of armed groups in Beni and Maba-sa Territories. Cruz travelled to eastern DRC in December 2019 in response to criticisms of MONUSCO's fulfilment of its protection of civilians mandate. The report, released on 16 January, made several recommendations for how the UN could improve its role in the protection of civilians in those two territories. Prime among them was the call for more proactive, effective, and mobile actions by MONUSCO which, the assessment suggests, would require more operational intelligence and a stronger relationship with the FARDC. In general, Council members were receptive to Cruz's assessment. The UN Department of Peace Operations will use the assessment's recommendations to develop an action plan for implementation in the coming weeks.

In addition, Ebola remains a worrying issue in this area. By February, the Ebola outbreak had surpassed 3,300 confirmed cases and more than 2,250 deaths in the DRC since August 2018, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). WHO released a statement on 12 February that, while noting "an overall encouraging trend in case incidence and geographic spread", confirms that it will continue to designate Ebola as a public health emergency of international concern. According to the statement, WHO was worried that if the designation was withdrawn there might be "adverse consequences for the response efforts through diminishing focus". Additionally, an ongoing measles epidemic has killed over 6,000 people since the beginning of 2019.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2502 (19 December 2019) renewed the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2020. S/RES/2478 (26 June 2019) renewed the 1533 sanctions regime until 1 July 2020. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8692 (19 December 2019) was the meeting during which resolution 2502 was adopted, renewing the mandate of MONUSCO. S/PV.8688 (17 December 2019) was the annual briefing by outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. Sanctions Committee Documents S/2019/974 (20 December 2019) was the midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



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# Democratic Republic of the Congo

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 10 January, the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC released a report describing killings, rapes and other forms of violence that may amount to crimes against humanity chiefly committed by the militant Lendu armed group targeting the Hema community in the far north-eastern province of Ituri over the preceding two years. The violence resulted in at least 701 deaths, and mass displacements. On 29 January, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet released a statement following her five-day visit to the DRC, including to Ituri, saying “the abuses inflicted on the Hema have been horrific” and that “displacement on that scale would be front-page news in many other parts of the world”. The High Commissioner also met with Tshisekedi and other officials during her visit. During its 43rd session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on the DRC on 17 March, during which it will consider oral updates by the High Commissioner and the team of international experts on the situation in Kasai.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 2 December 2019 the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee met to consider the midterm report of the Group of Experts on the DRC, with Ambassador Mansour Ayyad Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) in the chair for the final time. Additionally, he spoke on 17

December during the annual briefing by outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. In his summary of the work of the committee, he highlighted his visit as chair to the DRC in May 2019. He also noted that the committee had briefings from the UN Mine Action Service, the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Since 1 January, Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger) has chaired the committee. The first meeting under his leadership was held on 21 February.

## Key Issues and Options

With MONUSCO’s mandate renewed until December, the Council will continue to monitor the situation on the ground, especially the ongoing violence and the Ebola outbreak. The Council is expected to assess the role and future of MONUSCO ahead of the next renewal of the mission’s mandate in December. Before then, several reports are expected that will further inform Council members’ decisions on the way forward.

Ahead of any additional mandate changes in December, Council members could choose to conduct a visiting mission to

the DRC in order to have conversations with local stakeholders about the future of MONUSCO. This could also help the DRC and the Secretary-General in their elaboration of the requested withdrawal benchmarks before 20 October.

## Council Dynamics

Despite differences on the best way to proceed with the future of MONUSCO, in the end Council members were able to come together and pass resolution 2502 unanimously. In general, Council members have maintained an optimistic view of the DRC’s political situation, with most of their concern focused on violence in the east and Ebola.

The March meeting will be the first opportunity for the five new elected members of the Council—Estonia, Niger, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Viet Nam—to express their opinions publicly as Council members on the situation in the DRC.

The penholder on the DRC is France. Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

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# Peacekeeping

## Expected Council Action

As one of the signature events of its presidency, China is organising a debate on “UN peacekeeping operations: Better capacity building, more safety and security”. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare are expected to brief. A product, such as a resolution or presidential statement, is anticipated.

## Background and Key Recent Developments

A report commissioned by the UN Secretariat, *Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers: We need to change the way we are doing business*, was published in December 2017. The report responded to the rise in UN peacekeeper fatalities that had taken place since 2013 as a result of violent incidents. Prepared by a team headed

by Lieutenant General (ret.) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, it concluded that a change of mindset and break from a certain “Chap-ter VI Syndrome” are needed to adapt to the new contexts in which the UN flag no longer offers the “natural” protection that leads peacekeepers to deploy without a full appreciation of security risks and the operational approach needed to address them.

The report argued that a more proactive posture would contribute to the credibility of peacekeeping operations and their ability to protect civilians and their own personnel. It also maintained that enhancing the capacity of peacekeepers with better training and equipment was an important way to improve their safety and security. (The report did not address peacekeeper casualties resulting from accidents or illness, which constitute the majority of deaths in peacekeeping missions)

On 28 March 2018, Secretary-General

António Guterres highlighted the urgent need for “a quantum leap in collective engagement” and announced the launch of “Action for Peacekeeping” (A4P), an initiative aimed at renewing political commitment to peacekeeping operations. To date, over 150 member states and four regional organisations have endorsed the A4P’s “Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations”. One of the eight thematic areas in the declaration is “improving the safety and security of peacekeepers”. In this regard, the A4P initiative commits its supporters to “take all appropriate measures to bring to justice perpetrators of criminal acts against UN personnel”, and notes “efforts to improve continually medical, technical and logistical support in peacekeeping operations”. Members signing the declaration furthermore “commit to provide well-trained and well-equipped uniformed personnel” while emphasising “the need for

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UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2436](#) (21 September 2018) was on peacekeeping performance. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/4](#) (7 May 2019) was on peacekeeping training and capacity-building. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8612](#) (9 September 2019) was on peacekeeping performance. [S/PV.8521](#) (7 May 2019) was on the safety and security of UN peacekeepers.

# Peacekeeping

increased funding to better support training”.

On 7 May 2019, at the initiative of Indonesia, the Council held an open debate on “Investing in peace: improving safety and performance of United Nations peacekeepers”. Secretary-General António Guterres; the force commander of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Lieutenant General Elias Rodrigues Martins Filho; and the director of the Challenges Forum International Secretariat, Björn Holmberg, briefed. Guterres updated the Council on measures to strengthen training and capacity-building with regard to UN peacekeeping. He described casualty evacuation training and crisis management exercises in specific missions, as well as pre-deployment training on countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs). During the debate, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2019/4) in which it recognised “the added value that the (A4P) Declaration...has in relation to training and capacity building”.

On 9 September 2019, the Council held a debate on peacekeeping reform at Russia’s initiative. During his briefing, Lacroix spoke about the efforts of UN peace operations to help facilitate the pursuit of political solutions, the importance of prioritised and sequenced mandates, and initiatives to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers. He maintained that improved and context-specific training was important for enhancing the security of

peacekeepers. He also noted that peace operations had “embarked on an ambitious programme of health reform to formally establish a chain of reliable and safe care from the point of injury to the hospital” and that UN peace operations in Mali, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were working to improve medical and casualty evacuation policies.

The number of peacekeeping fatalities has decreased in the last two years, from 134 in 2017 to 95 in 2018 and 87 in 2019.

## Key Issues and Options

An ongoing key issue is the importance of equipping and training peacekeepers in a way that enhances their performance and their safety and security. In this regard, in pursuing a potential product, the Council could:

- emphasise the link between capacity building and the safety and security of peacekeepers;
- highlight the importance of contributions such as helicopters, medical support, rapid reaction forces, counter-IED technology, and other resources helping to promote peacekeeper safety and security;
- encourage initiatives such as the “light coordination mechanism”, through which member states provide pre-deployment training and equipment to troop-contributing countries; and
- underscore the efforts that have been made to improve medical evacuation in

high-risk environments.

Another key issue is how to address the high number of peacekeeping fatalities as a result of accidents or illness. According to the Department of Peace Operations, through 31 January 2020, 3,911 UN peacekeepers have died since 1948 as a result of accidents (1,346), illness (1,255), malicious acts (1,038), or other causes (272). Members could request the Secretariat to produce options for ways to reduce the peacekeeping fatalities resulting from accidents or illness in a potential outcome.

## Council Dynamics

There is a high degree of unity within the Council concerning the need to improve the safety and security of peacekeepers and the key role of training and capacity building prior to and during their deployment. China’s interest in this topic may reflect the fact that it is the 10th leading contributor of UN peacekeepers and the leading contributor of such personnel among permanent Council members.

Views differ in the Council and among the wider membership over how to improve peacekeeping performance. Some Council members have prioritised increased accountability for under-performance, while others, including some troop contributors, have argued for broadening the focus of these discussions, underlining that performance and security cannot be delinked from other factors related to mandate formulation.

# Somalia

## Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council is due to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM), which expires on 31 March. The authorisation of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) expires on 31 May and the Security Council’s Somalia sanctions regime expires on 15 November.

## Key Recent Developments

Somalia’s lower house of parliament passing an electoral law on 28 December 2019 is one of the first steps in organising elections for late 2020 or early 2021. These long-awaited elections are seen as a critical turning point for the future of Somalia. Somalia’s international partners—which include AMISOM, Australia, Denmark, Djibouti, Egypt, the EU, Finland, Germany, the Intergovernmental Authority

on Development (IGAD), Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, Norway, Sudan, Sweden, Turkey, the UK, the UN and the US—released a communiqué on 28 January reaffirming their commitment to supporting preparations for federal elections and urging parliament to take action on the electoral law. On 2 February, the upper house of Somalia’s parliament approved the law. On 21 February, Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2498 (15 November 2019) extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2020. S/RES/2472 (31 May 2019) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2020 and authorised reductions to achieve a maximum level of 19,626 uniformed AMISOM personnel by 28 February 2020. S/RES/2461 (27 March 2019) renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 March 2020. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/121** (13 February 2020) was the most recent Secretary-General’s report on Somalia and UNSOM. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8731** (24 February 2020) was the briefing by Special Representative and head of UNSOM James Swan. **Security Council Press Statements SC/14067** (29 December 2019) condemned the deadly terrorist attack of 28 December 2019 at the Ex-control Afgoye Junction in Mogadishu. **SC/14034** (25 November 2019) noted the 21 November 2019 Council meeting about Somalia and called on all key actors and institutions in Somalia to set aside their differences and engage constructively in discussions about upcoming elections. **Sanctions Committee Document S/2019/858** (1 November 2019) was the final report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia.

# Somalia

“Farmajo” signed the electoral bill into law.

The Council was last briefed on Somalia on 24 February. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNSOM; Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and head of AMISOM; and Dan Smith, Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, briefed. Briefers and Council members mentioned that 2020 is a pivotal year for Somalia. While noting positive actions, some of them highlighted the lack of dialogue among the many stakeholders. Swan urged bold action so that progress can be made on Somalia’s 2020 priorities, something echoed by many Council members. These priorities range from development goals, such as continued work toward debt relief, to political ones, such as holding elections and finalising the federal constitution. Madeira urged international support for Somalia’s electoral and security efforts. Smith focused on the negative impact of climate change on peace operations in Somalia.

As the Secretary-General’s 13 February report on UNSOM stated, the security situation in Somalia remains fragile. The report concludes by recommending the renewal of UNSOM’s mandate for 12 months.

On the margins of the 33rd African Union Summit, Farmajo and Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi held a meeting on 11 February in the Ethiopian Prime Minister’s office. It was their first meeting, as the last reconciliation talks between the Somali government and Somaliland took place in 2015, before either of them took office. Previous attempts to arrange a face-to-face meeting between representatives from both sides were unsuccessful due to cancellations and questions of political will. There are hopes that this meeting signals positive developments to come.

Somalia’s humanitarian situation remains troubling. In December 2019, approximately 2.3 million people in communities most affected by acute food and nutrition insecurity in Somalia were receiving assistance, according to the World Food Programme. Somalia is also experiencing its worst locust infestation in 25 years. The locusts have also caused problems in other countries throughout the Horn of Africa. Over the past four months, Somalia has seen hundreds of thousands of hectares of farmland and plants

destroyed, bringing worries that this will also have a devastating impact on future harvests; in early February, the government declared a national emergency.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

The 751 Somalia Sanctions regime was renewed on 15 November 2019. Ambassador Marc Pecteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), chair of the sanctions committee, visited Somalia at the end of January. Accompanying Belgium were representatives from committee members China, Estonia, France, Germany, and Russia. Trip participants were able to meet with Somalia’s president, prime minister, and foreign minister for what were described as fruitful discussions. Somali representatives shared their views on how to improve the relationship with the Panel of Experts. This is critical as 2019 was characterised by a tense relationship between Somalia and the UN, with the Panel of Experts in particular. During its last mandate period, the Panel of Experts was unable to gain permission to make a formal visit to Somalia.

## Key Issues and Options

In planning for UNSOM’s mandate renewal, there are several items for Council members to consider. First of all, last year’s mandate renewal emphasised the need for Somalia to address the slow progress in the implementation of its political priorities—such as the constitutional review process, preparations for elections in 2020-2021, and further defining the relationship between the federal government and the states—as well as the transition plan and the national security architecture. Given the lack of progress, member states are likely to consider how best to encourage action when renewing the mandate.

Additionally, Council members will be looking at how well UNSOM has continued to provide strategic support and advice to the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM on peacebuilding and state-building in the areas of governance, security sector reform and rule of law, development of a federal system, constitutional review, and coordination of international donor support. Resolution 2461 also called on Somalia and South West State to address allegations of human rights violations and abuses prior to the South West State elections. Council members will want to see if that call was answered and whether the continued violations and abuses of human rights in Somalia—which resolution 2461 condemned—have abated.

While negotiating UNSOM’s renewal, members are likely to begin considering how

to renew AMISOM’s mandate in May. That may be a more difficult negotiation process due to divergent views among troop-contributing countries, Council member states, and Somalia about the size and strength of AMISOM in the future.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

In general, Council members hold similar positions on Somalia. However, mandate renewals can be difficult because of divisions about the best way to encourage change and progress in Somalia. For example, Council members differ on the pace of troop withdrawal. The three African members of the Council in 2019 supported the AU position that an AMISOM drawdown was premature and that Somalia was not ready to take on greater security responsibilities. Their position was supported by China and Russia. Meanwhile, France, the UK and the US supported reductions by the end of 2019. Resolution 2472 set out a compromise whereby it decided to reduce “uniformed AMISOM personnel by 1000 to a maximum level of 19,626, by 28 February 2020”.

During negotiations a year ago, Council members agreed to maintain the core mandate for UNSOM, and indications are that they are likely to do so again. Points of contention included an operative clause on the adverse effects of climate change, adding to climate and security language that was in the preambular part of the 2018 UNSOM mandate renewal. The new language in last year’s renewal called on Somalia to consider the adverse implications of climate change, other ecological changes, and natural disasters, among other factors, by undertaking such actions as risk assessments and risk management strategies relating to these factors. It also requested that the Secretary-General provide information about such assessments in his reporting. While climate and security language has increasingly been incorporated into Council outcomes over the past two years, the role of the Council regarding this issue remains politically sensitive to some members. It is unclear in what form these references will survive another round of mandate negotiations.

Resolution 2461 called for periodic threat assessments, of which one took place during the mandate’s 12 months. Some members were expecting multiple assessments to



# Somalia

take place during the mandate, and so may criticise that there was only one. There may also be differences between member states on how to refer to electoral preparations. Some

may highlight the lack of progress as a point of concern while others will likely consider it an internal problem that is not within the realm of the Security Council to address.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia. Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) chairs the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee.

## DPRK

### Expected Council Action

In March, the Council is expected to extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee.

The panel's mandate expires on 24 April.

### Key Recent Developments

The New Year's speech by DPRK leader Kim Jong-un signalled a possible new direction for the country in 2020. He called on the population to be ready to be self-reliant, possibly marking the end of an opening-up that had led to an almost two-year rapprochement between the US and the DPRK. He also announced that the DPRK would no longer be constrained by a self-imposed moratorium on testing intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and nuclear weapons.

In the past two years, diplomatic activity has generally taken centre stage. In the second half of 2019, however, the DPRK stepped up both its hostile rhetoric and its ballistic missile testing. Since May 2019, the DPRK has conducted over a dozen ballistic missile tests in violation of Council resolutions. In December 2019, it carried out ground tests that could bolster its nuclear deterrent capacity. The DPRK conducted what it called a "very important" test at one of its launching stations, which it said would help change the country's strategic position. Since starting talks with the US in 2018, however, the DPRK has refrained from testing ICBMs.

In March 2019, the vote on the draft resolution for the Panel of Experts' mandate renewal was postponed for several weeks. The US and Russia disagreed over mentioning the impact of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK and Russia's request that OCHA periodically report to the Council on this issue. As a compromise, committee

members agreed to address the humanitarian situation in the DPRK within the committee and hold briefings by OCHA every six months. During the informal consultations held on 2 December 2019, OCHA briefed the committee.

This concern over the humanitarian impact of sanctions was evident in a draft resolution China and Russia circulated on 16 December 2019. It called for a partial lifting of sanctions, for ensuring the unobstructed and timely provision of aid, and for members to intensify their efforts in providing humanitarian assistance to the DPRK. Following two rounds of expert-level negotiations in December, the draft resolution was not actively pursued in light of members' widespread view that any easing of sanctions would be premature.

At press time, the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), is expected to brief Council members in consultations on 27 February on the 90-day report about the committee's work. The committee has discussed the final report, which is expected to be circulated to the Council by 5 March, if approved by all members.

### Key Issues and Options

For the last two years, the Council has maintained a relatively low profile on the DPRK, with most diplomatic activity taking place outside its purview. Following Kim's threat to resume testing of ICBMs and nuclear weapons, a key issue is whether the Council needs to pay closer attention to the potential destabilisation of the peninsula. An option would be for Council members to issue a statement addressing the need for stability to be maintained on the peninsula, for diplomatic talks to resume, and for sanctions to be implemented.

A continuing issue is the effectiveness of sanctions on the DPRK. While the panel's reports regularly detail violations, divisions among Council members have made it difficult for the committee to adopt the panel's stronger recommendations. An option, particularly if the March report reveals significant breaches of sanctions, is for the Council to consider ways of ensuring stricter sanctions enforcement.

In the last two years, the Council has tried to balance the pressure of sanctions with providing space for diplomatic activity. With the stalemate between the US and the DPRK since the Hanoi summit in February 2019, the Council may need to consider alternative diplomatic strategies, including encouraging talks with regional players and the UN.

Although the DPRK has not reported any cases, an emerging issue is the potential impact of a novel coronavirus outbreak on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK and how to manage humanitarian exemptions around this.

### Council Dynamics

Members continue to be divided over their approach to the role of sanctions in addressing the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK. The US has been a strong proponent of maintaining the policy of maximum pressure until the DPRK takes concrete steps toward denuclearisation. The EU members of the Council are generally supportive of this approach. On the other hand, China and Russia have shown interest in considering some form of sanctions relief. It is possible that members' divergent views will result in difficult negotiations of the draft resolution renewing the Panel of Experts.

The US has been reluctant to address the DPRK's ballistic missile tests in light of its diplomatic efforts. On the other hand, several other Council members, particularly

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2464](#) (10 April 2019) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 24 April 2020. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/16](#) (29 August 2017) condemned the launch of a missile over the territory of Japan and urged the DPRK to comply with previous Council resolutions and presidential statements. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8682](#) (11 December 2019) was an open briefing on non-proliferation focused on the DPRK. [S/PV.8507](#) (10 April 2019) was the meeting to adopt a resolution renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 24 April 2020. [Sanctions Committee Documents S/2019/971](#) (20 December 2019) was the annual report of the 1718 Sanctions Committee. [S/2019/691](#) (30 August 2019) was a midterm report of the Panel of Experts.

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## DPRK

European members, have pushed for discussions following the tests last year. It remains to be seen whether the US position will change if it becomes clear that the diplomatic track is closed and the DPRK conducts further tests.

Although the March report is unlikely to be blocked by any member, China and Russia may question the methodology used, as they

have in the past, and request further evidence for some of the panel's findings. Although the report has not been published and is meant to be confidential, it has been leaked to the press, and China has expressed its unhappiness and concern over the leak. Responding to media accounts based on the report that China has been involved in violating the coal

sanctions, it has stressed that it fulfils its international obligations related to resolutions on the DPRK.

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

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## UNDOF (Golan Heights)

### Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of UNDOF expires on 30 June.

### Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur war. Its mandate is to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces as well as the so-called areas of separation (a demilitarised buffer zone) and limitation (where Israeli and Syrian troops and equipment are restricted) in the Golan Heights. The implementation of the mandate entails observing any violations of the 1974 Agreement, reporting them, and liaising with both sides. The mission's observation role has been limited since its September 2014 relocation from the Bravo (Syrian) to the Alpha (Israeli-occupied) side because of the armed conflict in Syria. As at January 2020, UNDOF comprises 1,139 personnel and has a budget of \$2,762,400 for the year from July 2019 through June 2020. The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan continues to provide UNDOF with military observers.

The Secretary-General's 4 December 2019 report, covering the period from 18 September to 22 November, said that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was being maintained

but that while the overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remained stable, some military activity in the area of separation had taken place. On both the Alpha and the Bravo side, military equipment was present in the area of limitation and, UNDOF reported, Syrian armed forces are still present in the area of separation, where only UNDOF military forces are permitted. Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have also continued to fire across the ceasefire line. UNDOF has protested all violations of the 1974 Agreement and called upon both sides to exercise restraint. On 19 November 2019, UNDOF personnel at the Hermon South position observed two unidentified objects being fired from a location approximately 50 meters from an IDF position. In addition, UNDOF reported three explosions and was subsequently informed by the IDF that rockets fired from Syria had been intercepted. Meanwhile, UNDOF personnel observe daily crossings by unidentified individuals (farmers and shepherds tending livestock) from the Bravo side. To deter such crossings of the ceasefire line, UNDOF has put up warning signs.

According to the Secretary-General's report, there has been an improvement in the security situation on the Bravo side, allowing UNDOF to plan for progressively resuming inspections in the area of limitation, which had been suspended for security reasons. In this context, UNDOF has recently increased its monthly operational patrols on routes in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side from 573 in August 2019 to 886 in October, and its patrols now cover approximately 95 percent of the area of separation and approximately 50 percent of the area of limitation. Of note, on 29 October 2019, UNDOF resumed night patrols in the area

of separation; they had also been suspended in 2014. In addition, UNDOF sent patrols to a UN temporary observation post, known as 80A, for the first time since 2014. This has increased UNDOF's situational awareness of the area of operations.

UNDOF continues to use the Qunaytirah crossing point, which reopened in October 2018 after having been closed in 2014, to move personnel and equipment between the Alpha and Bravo sides. However, administrative measures have created procedural and logistical burdens for UNDOF, and conversations continue with the IDF on ways to make the use of the crossing point easier. The report also notes that developments in Lebanon have affected the primary supply route for UNDOF between Beirut and Damascus since 17 October 2019, which is having an impact on the movement of UNDOF personnel, fuel and other supplies. As a result, the mission has faced a series of challenges, including delays in troop rotation.

Because of "explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance and mines, and from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups", the Secretary-General's report concludes that there continues to be "a significant threat" to UNDOF personnel in its area of operations.

The Council renewed UNDOF's mandate in a unanimous vote on 19 December 2019 in resolution 2503.

On 24 February, the Secretary-General announced his appointment of Major General Ishwar Hamal of Nepal as Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNDOF.

### Key Issues and Options

Ongoing issues for the Council are the numerous violations of the Disengagement of

## UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Forces Agreement of 1974. UNDOF's ability to implement its mandate, including its full return to the Bravo side, has been a key issue since 2014. Given UNDOF's increased operational patrols on routes on the Bravo side, the Council may consider requesting the Secretary-General to resume a six-month reporting cycle instead of 90 days, as had been the practice until December 2012.

### Council Dynamics

There is general agreement within the Council that UNDOF's mandate, including its liaison function, contributes to stability in the region, given the absence of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. Both still value UNDOF's presence and want to see the mission's full return to the Bravo side. Council members also support its eventual complete return, mindful of the fact that

this would require a continuously favourable security environment, which is also crucial for maintaining the confidence of troop-contributing countries.

Russia and the US are the co-penholders on UNDOF. Despite the deep divisions between the co-penholders regarding the Syria file, both countries are expected to continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue.

## Afghanistan

### Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. A senior UN secretariat representative is expected to brief on the latest Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), due in March. A civil society representative may also brief the Council.

The mandate of UNAMA expires on 17 September, and the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee expires on 16 December.

### Key Recent Developments

On 21 February, following an extensive period of negotiations between the US and the Taliban, the US State Department announced that an understanding had been reached on a seven-day reduction in violence across Afghanistan, beginning on 22 February. It said that after a successful implementation of this understanding, a US-Taliban peace agreement would be signed on 29 February. The envisioned agreement stipulates a timeline for the reduction of US troops in Afghanistan from about 13,000 currently to 8,600 and includes a pledge from the Taliban that terrorist groups targeting the US or its allies will not be able to operate in Afghanistan. At press time, no major violations of the reduction in violence were reported.

The State Department's announcement noted that intra-Afghan negotiations will start soon after the signing of the agreement and that these negotiations "will build on this fundamental step to deliver a comprehensive

and permanent ceasefire and the future political roadmap for Afghanistan". The Taliban has previously maintained that the conclusion of an agreement with the US was a precondition for it to begin negotiations with the Afghan government, whose legitimacy it does not recognise.

The contours of the envisioned peace agreement resemble that of the US-Taliban agreement announced on 2 September 2019. The signing of that agreement was cancelled on 7 September 2019 when US President Donald Trump called off the negotiations as well as a meeting with Taliban leaders and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at Camp David, citing the Taliban's responsibility for a suicide car bomb attack in Kabul on 5 September that had killed an American soldier and 11 others.

On 18 February, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced that Ghani had won the election that took place on 28 September 2019 with 50.64 percent of the vote. His main opponent—Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who according to the IEC won 39.52 percent of the vote—contested the results, declared himself the rightful victor, and vowed to form his own government. The IEC's announcement came after five months of investigations into complaints of electoral irregularities, which were primarily related to the process of counting votes and technical issues with biometric voter verification devices.

UNAMA issued a statement which took note of the IEC's announcement and stressed that any challenges to the election results need to be consistent with the country's

constitutional order. It further said that it will provide advice to "encourage the electoral management bodies to address the candidates' understandable desire to have clarity on decisions taken related to audits and recounts". At press time, no official complaint contesting the results of the election had been filed with the electoral complaints commission in Afghanistan. The Taliban, which opposed the election from the outset, issued a statement criticising the IEC's declaration that President Ghani won the election and said that this announcement went against the ongoing peace negotiations.

At press time, several key international stakeholders, including the US, had yet to formally acknowledge Ghani's electoral victory. Other stakeholders such as Russia issued statements that expressed concern regarding the political tensions created by the contested results and noted that they could have a negative impact on the future intra-Afghan negotiations.

On 26 February, Afghanistan's presidential palace announced that Ghani's inauguration ceremony is expected to take place on 9 March.

According to UNAMA's annual report on protection of civilians in armed conflict in Afghanistan, 3,403 civilians were killed and 6,989 were injured in 2019. The majority of civilian casualties in the past year—62 percent—are attributed to anti-government elements, with the Taliban bearing responsibility for 47 percent of civilian casualties. Pro-government forces were responsible for 28 percent of civilian casualties, with the Afghan national security forces causing 16 percent of casualties and eight percent attributed to international

**UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2501** (16 December 2019) renewed the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee until December 2020. **S/RES/2489** (17 September 2019) renewed the mandate of UNAMA until 17 September 2020. **Secretary-General's Report S/2019/935** (10 December 2019) was the latest Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8687** (16 December 2019) was the latest quarterly meeting on the situation in Afghanistan.



# Afghanistan

military forces. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) were the leading cause of civilian casualties caused by anti-government groups, while civilian casualties caused by airstrikes reached a record-high level, accounting for almost half of civilian deaths attributed to pro-government forces.

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate in 2019 because of persistent violence and natural disasters. The 2020 humanitarian response plan for Afghanistan, which calls for \$733 million, aims to assist 7.12 million people out of 9.4 million people in need.

## ICC-Related Developments

On 20 November 2017, ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda requested authorisation from the Court's judges to initiate an investigation into alleged crimes in the context of the armed conflict in Afghanistan since 2003. Following the rejection of the prosecutor's request by the Pre-Trial Chamber II on 12 April 2018, the prosecutor submitted an appeal against the decision.

On 4-6 December 2019, the ICC's Appeals Chamber heard oral arguments in the appeals of victims and of the prosecutor against the decision of the Pre-Trial Chamber II. Lawyers representing the Afghanistan government also provided oral arguments, in which they opposed an ICC investigation in the country, maintaining that Afghanistan has the willingness and ability to carry out an investigation into alleged crimes through its own courts. The Appeals Chamber is expected to deliver its decision on the appeal on 5 March.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 18 March, the Human Rights Council is expected to consider the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan (A/HRC/43/74) as part of its 43rd session. The report, covering 1 January to 30 November 2019, focused on the protection of civilians in armed conflict; children and armed conflict; the elimination of violence against women and the promotion of women's rights; the prevention of torture and respect for procedural safeguards; and civic space and the integration of human rights into peace and reconciliation processes. It contained several conclusions, including that the negative impact on civilians remained the same or was even greater than in 2019; the right to political participation came under serious threat by anti-government elements; violence against women and girls and harmful traditional practices remain prevalent; and despite the decrease in allegations of torture and ill-treatment of persons in the custody of the government, such practices also remain prevalent. The report also contained recommendations for the government, anti-government elements and the international community.

## Women, Peace and Security

During his 16 December 2019 briefing, Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, emphasised "the importance of women's participation in all the activities of Afghan society". He further noted the parliament's passing of a 25 November resolution "calling for the protection and promotion of women's rights and for the inclusion of women in the peace process". He called this action a strong expression of commitment "to supporting Afghan women, particularly in promoting their participation in the peace process and in addressing the continuing pervasiveness of violence against women and girls". During the same meeting, Adela Raz, Afghanistan's ambassador to the UN, stressed that "the gains of the past 18 years, particularly those of women, must also be protected and expanded on further".

## Key Issues and Options

The key priority for the Council is supporting political and security stability in the country to facilitate the continuance of negotiations geared towards achieving peace in Afghanistan.

Council members will be watching closely how the announcement of Ghani's victory in the presidential elections affects the delicate political climate in the country. Concerns have been raised that disagreements between Afghanistan's ruling elites will weaken the government's position in the intra-Afghan negotiations envisioned in the US-Taliban deal. If consensus is achieved and the winning candidate is inaugurated, Council members might consider issuing a press statement to express their support for the electoral process in Afghanistan and its conclusion.

Council members will also be following developments regarding the US-Taliban peace agreement. If such an agreement is concluded, the Council can adopt a product to endorse the agreement and detail the possible role the UN might have in the future intra-Afghan negotiations.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their support for UNAMA and are committed to a peace process. They remain concerned about the overall security, political, and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Several members of the Council are engaged in different talks aimed at a peace agreement, which do not always include the Afghan government. Most members routinely emphasise that a peace process in Afghanistan has to be Afghan-led.

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