

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

Germany has the presidency of the Security Council in July. While the Security Council is expected to continue to work largely remotely, Germany appears keen to have some meetings in the Council chamber if circumstances allow.

There are five open debates planned for July. During this period of remote meetings, open debates have been held as open videoconferences (VTCs), and statements by non-Council members have been submitted in writing.

Early in the month a high-level open debate on [pandemics and security](#) is anticipated. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas will chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross Peter Maurer, and Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the AU.

A high-level open debate is also planned to discuss [peacekeeping and human rights](#). Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, German Federal Minister of Defence, will chair the meeting. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, Special Representative for South Sudan and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) David Shearer, and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

Germany also plans to hold a ministerial-level open debate on [climate and security](#) in late July. The annual open debate on [conflict-related sexual violence](#) will also be held in July at ministerial level, focusing on accountability and the implementation of a survivor-centred approach. The Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, is expected to brief together with a civil society representative. Finally, there will be the regular quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, with Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nikolay Mladenov expected to brief.

At least four adoptions are scheduled in July. The Council is expected to renew the mandate of the [UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement \(UNMHA\)](#), which expires on 15 July. An adoption is also expected to renew the [2127 Central African Republic sanctions regime](#) and the mandate of its Panel of Experts. The mandate of the [UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus \(UNFICYP\)](#) is expected to be renewed before the end of the month. Also expected is the adoption of a resolution on [small arms](#), whose draft was introduced by Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany and Niger and circulated to Council members in June. Meetings may furthermore need to be scheduled to vote on draft resolutions re-authorising the cross-border/cross-line aid delivery in [Syria](#) and [climate and security](#).

Regarding Middle East issues, on [Syria](#) open and closed VTCs on the political and humanitarian situation and a closed VTC on the use of chemical weapons are anticipated. Open and closed VTCs on developments in [Yemen](#) are also planned.

On African issues, there will be open and closed VTCs on [Libya](#) as well as on Libya sanctions. Open and closed VTCs will also be held on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on [West Africa and the Sahel](#).

Members will receive the quarterly briefing on developments in [Colombia](#) in an open VTC, followed by a closed VTC discussion.

Ahead of the renewal of UNFICYP's mandate, members will be briefed in a closed VTC on recent developments in [Cyprus](#).

The semi-annual briefing on the [UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia's](#) activities will take place in a closed VTC.

Members will be watching developments in [Myanmar](#), [Iran](#) and [Afghanistan](#) as well as on the [Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam](#) and additional meetings may be added if necessary.

30 June 2020
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In Hindsight: The Council's Scorecard in the First Six Months of 2020

It has not been business as usual for the Security Council in the first six months of 2020. Since mid-March, the suspension of in-person Council meetings has required unexpected decisions and drastic changes. The restrictions on conducting its business in the Council chamber have pushed the body to find new ways to carry out its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. It has required applying the Charter and the rules of procedure to completely new territory and immersion into the use of technology new to most members.

Adapting to a New Working Environment

After an initial period of what appeared to be paralysis in mid-March, the Council has progressively moved closer to operating as it would normally. China, as the president in March, was faced with developing the initial provisional measures, which have been expanded by the Dominican Republic and Estonia during their subsequent presidencies. Starting with remote meetings described as closed videoconferences (VTCs), the Council now holds open VTCs that are webcast, as are the virtual open debates. These remote formats use an in-house platform that allows all Council members, as well as the Director of SCAD and briefers, to see each other on a single computer screen. In the virtual version of open debates, states not members of the Council take part by submitting written statements that are subsequently published as a letter from the president of the Council. This format has also maintained the possibility for civil society briefers to participate. The webcasts of the open VTCs, the written record of the briefings and statements, and outcomes of meetings are kept on the Security Council's website under a new category labelled "Covid-19 related". During this period of virtual meetings, more members are sharing their statements on their websites and through social media, including statements made in closed VTCs. In March, when meetings were not webcast, Council members made a concerted effort to adopt press elements to provide some information on Council activity. This practice has continued for some closed VTCs, with the press elements communicated by the Council president in a virtual stakeout.

By April, subsidiary bodies had established ways of getting their work done through virtual meetings and written statements. In

March, two subsidiary body briefings, on South Sudan sanctions and the 1540 Committee dealing with non-proliferation, did not take place. The chairs of these committees, Estonia and Indonesia, respectively, instead circulated written statements, with Council members also able to submit their statements in writing.

By the end of June, VTCs had replicated almost all the regular Council formats. However, there were missing elements. The lack of interpretation led Council members to decide to conduct meetings in English. Frustrated with not having multilingual options, France, as president in June, chose to conduct meetings and deliver statements in French. Russia followed suit by delivering some statements in Russian, followed by English. There is also no provision for members to deliver an explanation of vote during adoptions. Although members can provide a written explanation of vote following an adoption, this is seen as a poor substitute for being able to publicly express their views in the Council chamber. As agreed in late March, resolutions are adopted through a 24-hour written procedure and presidential statements through electronic agreement. Results are announced by the Council president in a VTC, with members present but not speaking. Not having the wider membership participate live in the open debate format is also seen as a drawback.

An unexpected bonus of conducting business via VTC is the ease with which high-level representatives are able to participate. This has encouraged high-level participation in several meetings, including the protection of civilians meeting in May and the Middle East and Mali open VTCs in June. Members have also used the Arria-formula and informal interactive dialogue formats creatively during this period. Both allow for participation by a wider range of parties than the "open VTC" format. The first high-level Arria-formula meeting, on the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II on European soil, was organised by Estonia during its May presidency, with 45 out of 76 participating members represented at foreign minister level or above. Difficulty getting agreement on a briefer for a meeting on Syria chemical weapons in May led to the meeting being held as an informal interactive dialogue session with the suggested briefer.

One drawback of the virtual meetings being considered as unofficial meetings is how to conduct a procedural vote, as these are conducted in formal meetings. Members have found ways to have the necessary discussions on new issues such as Hong Kong and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Adding a new issue to the Council's agenda, however, requires a formal meeting, of which there are currently none.

Meetings Hold Steady, Hours Drop

The overall number of meetings fell from 196 formal meetings and consultations in the first six months of 2019 to 182 formal meetings, consultations and VTCs in the corresponding period in 2020. This is largely attributable to the Council's not having met at all from 13 through 23 March, leaving it with 20 meetings (including VTCs) in March 2020 compared to 31 meetings in March 2019. For the remainder of this period, the number of meetings this year is comparable to 2019, and occasionally higher.

Time spent in meetings has decreased in 2020. In the first six months, the Council spent 276.4 hours in meetings, with 147.7 of those hours in VTCs. At the six-month mark in 2019, the Council had spent 360.3 hours in public meetings and consultations. This decrease can be attributed to a number of factors, including the seven working days spent without meetings and the relative brevity of the virtual version of open debates. Council open debates often last six hours or more, whereas the open VTC format, which does not include the spoken participation of the wider membership, has tended to last about two hours. Some anticipated open debates have been postponed, as in the case of women, peace and security, or have been held as Arria-formula meetings. In addition, at least one open debate—on multilateralism—that had been anticipated during China's presidency in March was not held as the Council had not yet decided on meeting modalities.

(Please see SCAD's "The Monthly Highlights of Security Council Practice" for more details on these statistics.)

Essential Business Continues

Despite a more cumbersome adoption process, the Council has generally been able to adopt decisions that were needed to renew

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mission mandates and sanctions regimes. The number of decisions over this period is almost exactly the same as in 2019. The Council adopted 33 decisions (resolutions and presidential statements) in the first half of 2020. Over the same period in 2019, the Council adopted 34 decisions. The Council adopted six presidential statements during this period, one more than in 2019. The number of resolutions fell slightly from 29 to 27.

It was clear from the start that 2020 was not going to be an easy year for consensus in the Council, for reasons unrelated to COVID-19. The first resolution adopted (S/RES/2504) was on the cross-border and cross-line delivery of humanitarian aid in Syria, which had 11 votes in favour and four abstentions. In February, two other resolutions—on Libya and Yemen sanctions—also failed to be adopted unanimously. During the period of working remotely, the Council has been able to adopt 13 resolutions, with only two that were not unanimous—one on South Sudan sanctions and another on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals. This may have been partly due to a willingness to have short rollovers in order to take the time to obtain consensus, as was done when renewing the UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur, or to delay a decision, as with the March and June adoptions on the UN Mission in Somalia. In assessing the work

of the Council during this period, its inability to adopt any product on COVID-19 was particularly striking.

Council Dynamics

The existing divisions among Council members may have made it harder to reach decisions in a virtual environment. While the Council has been able to get its work done during this period, often agreement required protracted negotiations, at times on issues that appeared peripheral. New stress points emerged with this pandemic. The relationship between the US and China deteriorated against the backdrop of the US position on the origin of the coronavirus and its criticism of the World Health Organization. There has been no improvement in relations between the US and Russia, reducing the prospects of substantive Council action on such issues as Syria and Venezuela. The US position on several matters has hardened, making it difficult to include language in outcomes on climate change, aspects of the women, peace and security agenda, and the ICC.

The ten elected members (E10) continue to meet regularly as a group and with the Secretary-General. However, the E10, too, have had greater difficulty finding common ground on issues upon which they were once in agreement, such as the humanitarian situation in Syria. Elected members were

instrumental in getting the Secretary-General to brief on COVID-19 in early April, but the letter requesting the meeting was only signed by nine of the ten elected members as South Africa declined to do so.

Sub-groups of Council members continued to be visible during this period. The African members (A3), joined by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have regularly taken joint positions. In a briefing on Somalia in February, South Africa spoke on behalf of this group. The EU members, at times joining with past EU members and on one occasion with the incoming members, have held 11 joint virtual stakeouts on a range of topics, including the Middle East, Myanmar, Syria chemical weapons, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Council members have expressed frustration with some of the limitations of virtual negotiations. They note that the virtual platform makes it difficult to read body language and to have the sort of quiet corridor conversations that may help during an impasse. There might also be less sense of pressure to compromise when not faced with 14 other members in the same room. Members acknowledge that security concerns might make for less frank discussions on a virtual platform. Developing relationships and building trust, essential tools in a diplomat's arsenal, are much more difficult in the virtual world.

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Tribunals

On 3 June, the president of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Judge Carmel Agius, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, met remotely with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals. On 8 June, they briefed Security Council members in an open VTC (S/2020/527). On 25 June, Council members adopted resolution 2529 extending the operating period and the term of the prosecutor until 30 June 2022 (S/2020/602). Resolution 2529 was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (by Russia).

UN Peacekeeping Operations

On 4 June, Security Council members held an open VTC meeting (S/2020/514) with force commanders of UN peacekeeping operations from the UN Multidimensional Integrated

Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF). The commanders briefed the Council on the operational challenges their respective missions face in their work, focusing primarily on the impact of COVID-19.

Sudan (Darfur)

On 4 June, the Security Council adopted two resolutions related to Sudan (S/2020/496 and S/2020/497). Resolution 2525 extended the mandate of UNAMID at its current troop and police ceiling for two months from 31 October until 31 December 2020. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to provide the Security Council with a Special Report no later than 31 October 2020,

assessing, among other things, “the impact of the peace process on the security situation in Darfur, the capacity of the Government of Sudan... to protect civilians in line with the strategy outlined in the Government of Sudan's letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 21 May 2020, and recommendations on the appropriate course of action regarding the drawdown of UNAMID, taking into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic”. Resolution 2524 established a follow-on mission, the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and requested the Secretary-General to “swiftly initiate the planning for and establishment of UNITAMS, with a view to reaching full operational capacity as soon as possible and in order to ensure the mission is able to start delivering against

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all its strategic objectives no later than 1 January 2021". Both resolutions were adopted unanimously. On 9 June, the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia), provided the Council the quarterly briefing on the committee's work in an open VTC format. On 10 June, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, briefed the Council on her semi-annual report to the Council. Bensouda's briefing came the day after Ali Kushayb, a Sudanese national who is wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur (Sudan), surrendered himself voluntarily in the Central African Republic.

G5-Sahel Joint Force

On 5 June, Security Council members held an open VTC, followed by a closed VTC, on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) (S/2020/515). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ismael Ould Cheikh Ahmed of Mauritania on behalf of the Group of Five for the Sahel briefed Council members. In press elements after the meeting, Council members commended the FC-G5S for its increased operational tempo, reaffirmed the importance of support by the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali to the joint force, and took note of the Secretary-General's assessment on the matter in his recent report on Mali (S/2020/476). In renewing the mandate of MINUSMA on 29 June, in resolution 2531, the Council specified that private companies may deliver MINUSMA life support consumables (rations and fuel) to FC-G5S units operating outside of Mali.

Somalia

On 9 June, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, briefed Council members in an open VTC on the committee's activities from 28 February to 9 June (S/2020/529). He highlighted al-Shabaab's increased use of improvised explosive devices in Somalia, and their devastating effect. On 22 June, Council members renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 August 2020 through a technical rollover (S/2020/573). Resolution 2527 passed unanimously through the Council's provisional 24-hour voting period.

Mali

On 11 June, Council members held a ministerial-level VTC on Mali (S/2020/541). Secretary General António Guterres briefed on his quarterly report on Mali (S/2020/476) and biannual letter outlining security challenges, MINUSMA performance, and transition planning (S/2020/481). Pierre Buyoya, AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel, also briefed. On 14 June, members issued a press statement condemning an attack the day before on a MINSUMA convoy that killed two peacekeepers from Egypt (SC/14213). On 29 June, in resolution 2531, the Council renewed the mandate of MINUSMA for one year until 30 June 2021.

UNOCA/LRA

On 12 June, Security Council members held an open VTC (S/2020/542), followed by a closed VTC, on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the work of UNOCA and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (S/2020/542). Special Representative and head of UNOCA François Louncény Fall briefed. Fall noted that terrorist attacks, maritime insecurity and political tensions in the region have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that "the slowdown in economic activities due to COVID-19 deprives States of the resources they need to address the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, with the risk of creating social unrest", while "the persistence of armed conflicts in some parts of Central Africa undermines our efforts to respond to challenges posed by COVID-19".

Iraq

On 15 June, Security Council members received a briefing in an open VTC (S/2020/547) from Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, based on the Special Adviser's fourth report on the activities of UNITAD (S/2020/386). A closed VTC followed.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 15 June, Security Council members held a closed VTC with troop contributing countries of UNDOF. On 18 June, Council members held a closed VTC on UNDOF. On 29 June, the Council adopted resolution 2530, renewing UNDOF's mandate until 31 December 2020.

Security Council Elections

On 17 June, the UN General Assembly held the first round elections for the five non-permanent seats on the Security Council for the 2021-2022 term. India, Ireland, Mexico, and Norway were elected in the first round of voting. Kenya was elected in the second round of voting, defeating Djibouti for a single seat available for African Group.

Terrorism

On 18 June, a joint briefing of the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee and the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee was held in a closed VTC. It focused on a joint report by the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate and the Analytical Support and Monitoring Team on the financing of terrorism (S/2020/493).

Briefing by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

On 18 June, Council members held an open VTC meeting (S/2020/560), followed by a closed VTC session, with UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi. The meeting took place under the agenda item "Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", which allows for a general briefing by the High Commissioner without tying it to a specific situation on the Council agenda. Grandi described the situation of refugees in several country-specific cases on the Council's agenda, including Libya, Myanmar, Syria and Venezuela, among others, and addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugee populations.

Haiti

On 19 June Council members held open and closed VTCs on BINUH (S/2020/568). Special Representative of the Secretary-General Helen La Lime briefed. Jacques Létang, President of the Haitian Bar Federation and member of the Human Rights Office in Haiti, also spoke, detailing the lack of state authority throughout Haiti. Council members agreed to press elements that were read out by the Council president after the meeting. The elements noted the impact of COVID-19, the troubling humanitarian situation, and the need for Haiti's political actors to work together to address underlying conditions.

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Burundi

On 22 June, the Security Council convened a closed VTC meeting on Burundi. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Bintou Keita briefed. The Council was expected to meet on Burundi in May, in keeping with the quarterly briefings on the issue requested by resolution 2303. That meeting was not scheduled, however, and the decision was taken to postpone it until after Burundi's presidential elections, which were held on 20 May. A meeting was then scheduled to take place on 11 June, but with the sudden death of outgoing President Pierre Nkurunziza, it was postponed until 22 June. The Council agreed press elements, taking note of the final results of the presidential and legislative elections and the "peaceful transition of power" after the sudden death of President Nkurunziza". Further, the Council "stressed the importance of pursuing national unity, political inclusiveness and peacebuilding and encouraged all parties to continue to promote a peaceful atmosphere among all Burundians". Finally, the Council "welcomed the commitment of the UN towards long-term stability and sustainable development in Burundi".

South Sudan

On 23 June, Council members held an open VTC, followed by a closed VTC, on South Sudan (S/2020/582) covering the Secretary-General's latest report on this issue (S/2020/536). David Shearer, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNMISS, and Edmund Yakani, Executive Director of the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, briefed.

Children and Armed Conflict

On 23 June, Security Council members held an open VTC meeting on Children and Armed Conflict (S/2020/594). Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba presented the Secretary-General's annual report, which was published on 9 June (S/2020/525). The Executive Director of UNICEF, Henrietta Fore, and Mariam, a young civil society representative from the National Children's Parliament of Mali, also briefed the Council. Following the meeting, members of the Security Council issued a press statement (SC/14224) in which they condemned the scale of violations against children in armed conflict and expressed concern regarding the effect on children of the COVID-19 pandemic. They welcomed the work of the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and the

Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which were established by resolution 1612 (2005), noting the contribution of these tools to the children and armed conflict agenda in the past 15 years, including through the demobilisation and reintegration of more than 150,000 children. Council members also reiterated their call to member states and the UN system to mainstream child protection provisions into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. France circulated a concept note ahead of the meeting.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 23 June, Council members issued a press statement in which they condemned an attack on MONUSCO that occurred on 22 June near Beni, which resulted in the death of one Indonesian peacekeeper and injuries to another (SC/14222). This attack was on many Council members' minds during the Council open VTC on MONUSCO on 25 June (S/2020/598). Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui and the coordinator of the organisation Save Act Mine, Jamal Usseini, briefed Council members. After the closed VTC meeting, the Council president read out agreed press elements in which Council members expressed their concern for the deteriorating human rights and security situation in eastern DRC. Additionally, the press elements touch on the ongoing discussions between the government and MONUSCO on the transition compact for MONUSCO's exit "and called for further consultations ahead of the report expected on 20 October". The elements also call on MONUSCO to improve its overall efficiency. On 25 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2528 which renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2021. Also on 25 July, WHO declared the Ebola outbreak, which started in August 2018, over in the DRC. This outbreak killed more than 2,280 people.

Afghanistan

On 25 June, Council members held an open VTC meeting, followed by a closed VTC session, on the situation in Afghanistan. Deborah Lyons, Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's 17 June report on UNAMA. Ghada Fathi Waly, Executive Director of UNODC, and Shaharзад Akbar, chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), also briefed the Council. On 30 June, Council members issued a press

statement in which they reaffirmed the UN's role in promoting peace in Afghanistan and welcomed regional and international efforts to facilitate intra-Afghan negotiations. Council members welcomed the steps taken by the Afghan government and the Taliban to move towards negotiations, including the partial implementation of the commitments to release prisoners, and called for the swift release of remaining prisoners and a reduction of violence to facilitate the commencement of direct talks. They further called for inclusive and meaningful peace negotiations with the participation of women and youth, while emphasizing that "gains made in the last 19 years, including in the field of human rights, especially the rights of women, children and minorities, must be protected and built upon". Members of the Security Council reaffirmed the importance of the Secretary-General's call for a comprehensive ceasefire in Afghanistan and expressed concern over the recent increase in violence in the country, while strongly condemning the 27 June killing of two AIHRC employees in Kabul.

Peace and Security in Africa

On 29 June, Council members held an open VTC to discuss ongoing negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan on the operation of the nearly-completed Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile. This meeting came after a discussion under "any other business" was held on 22 June due to an Egyptian letter calling for the Council to discuss the issue under article 35 of the UN Charter.

Iran non-proliferation

On 30 June, the Council held its semi-annual briefing, in an open VTC, on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo presented the latest Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231. The Council's facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve (Belgium), briefed on the work of the Council related to resolution 2231, and the Head of the EU delegation, Olof Skoog, briefed on the work of the JCPOA's Joint Commission. Secretary-General António Guterres, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif also participated in the meeting.

Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its quarterly open debate on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov is expected to brief. With the extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic likely still to be in place, the debate is likely to be held as an open videoconference (VTC) with statements by non-Council members submitted in writing.

Key Recent Developments

On 17 May, citing the need for national unity in light of the COVID-19 outbreak, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival, Benny Gantz, launched a coalition government, following three inconclusive elections that began in April 2019. Under the terms of the coalition deal signed by the two leaders, the government will be able to decide as early as 1 July on whether to annex parts of the West Bank. The terms of the agreement stipulate that the decision on annexation—which Gantz does not have the authority to block—will be made in “full agreement with the United States and with international discussions on the subject”. At press time, several aspects of the government’s approach to this issue were still unclear, including the precise areas to be annexed and whether the process is foreseen in a phased manner.

Speaking in Ramallah on 19 May, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas declared that the Palestinian leadership would be absolved from security and other agreements with Israel and the US in light of the Israeli government’s threat to annex parts of the West Bank. Subsequently, the Palestinian Authority withdrew some of its forces from Abu Dis, indicated that it was ending its intelligence cooperation with the United States, and declared that it would no longer accept taxes collected for it by Israel.

Mladenov briefed Council members on 20 May in an open VTC session, which was followed by a closed VTC. He said that Israel’s annexation of parts of the West Bank “would constitute a most serious violation of international law, deal a devastating blow to the two-state solution, close the door to a renewal of

negotiations and threaten efforts to advance regional peace and...broader efforts at maintaining international peace and security”.

The Jerusalem District Planning Committee approved the construction of as many as 2,200 housing units in occupied East Jerusalem’s Har Homa settlement on 26 May. The Secretary-General’s recent report on the implementation of resolution 2334 maintained that this expansion and the envisioned “construction of 3,000 housing units in the Giva Hamatos settlement...would further consolidate the ring of settlements around Jerusalem’s southern perimeter, separating the Palestinian areas of the city from Bethlehem and the southern West Bank”.

The security situation in the Gaza Strip has generally been calm in recent months, although some incidents have been reported. On 6 May, Palestinian militants fired two rockets into Israel from Gaza. Palestinian militants have also resumed launching incendiary devices into Israel since mid-May. No casualties have been reported from these incidents.

Difficult sanitary conditions in the densely populated Gaza Strip raise concerns about the potentially devastating humanitarian and economic impacts of a wider outbreak of COVID-19 in the area. As of 19 June, 72 cases of COVID-19 and one death as a result of the disease have been reported in Gaza. Citing recent surveys, the Secretary-General estimates that some “35 percent of industrial firms in Gaza have ceased their operating capacity” and nearly “all restaurants and hotels have ceased operations” as a result of the virus. This has resulted in thousands of people losing their jobs in a place where the unemployment rate was already 45 percent in 2019. The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) has taken a number of measures to curtail the spread of the virus in the Occupied Palestinian territories, including closing schools and providing medical advice to patients whose condition is less severe by phone rather than in person.

On 24 June, the Council held its monthly meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Special Coordinator Mladenov, and Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed

About Gheit briefed. All three emphasised that annexation by Israel of parts of the West Bank would have grave consequences. Guterres said that it “would...grievously harm the prospect of a two-State solution and undercut the possibilities of a renewal of negotiations”. Mladenov stated that it “may kill the very idea that peace and statehood for the Palestinian people can be achieved through negotiations”. And Gheit declared that it would “destroy any prospect for peace” and seriously threaten regional stability.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 15 June, the Human Rights Council (HRC) concluded its general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet presented four reports concerning the human rights situation in Palestine. She emphasised that the reports showed the “persistence of human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the occupied Syrian Golan” and expressed concern regarding the “excessive force used by Israeli forces and the heavy burden placed on the already impoverished community and overstretched health facilities and social services in Gaza”. On 16 June, a group of HRC special procedures mandate holders issued a statement raising concerns about the agreement by the new Israeli coalition government to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian West Bank. The statement stressed that the “annexation of occupied territory is a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations” and pointed out that the Security Council “has repeatedly criticised the Israeli settlements as a flagrant violation under international law”.

Women, Peace and Security Developments

In his 20 May briefing to the Council, Mladenov quoted from the Secretary-General’s 9 April policy brief on “The Impact of COVID-19 on Women”: “[a] cross every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the impacts of COVID-19 are exacerbated for women and girls simply by virtue of their sex”. Mladenov added that UN Women had recently reported that the pandemic was disproportionately affecting Palestinian girls and women. He further said that inequalities in the economic sphere are expected to widen due to the creation and exacerbation of pre-existing vulnerabilities and gender-specific risks. Mladenov showed continued concern over an increase in gender-based violence, especially when families live in small spaces and face growing socioeconomic pressures. He referred to reports by NGOs in Gaza and the West Bank showing “a rise in cases of life-threatening incidents of gender-based

UN DOCUMENTS ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) reaffirmed that the establishment of Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 has “no legal validity” and condemned “all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror”. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/555** (18 June 2020) was a report on the implementation of resolution 2334. **Security Council Letters S/2020/430** (22 May 2020) was a record of the open VTC on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” on 20 May.

Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

violence". This challenge is aggravated by an ongoing lack of shelters, protection and referral services, according to Mladenov.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to address the potential annexation of parts of the West Bank by Israel—a step that the UN and nearly all members of the Council would consider illegal under international law and a major blow to the two-state solution. Given US support for the Israeli government, a formal outcome critical of such a move would be highly unlikely at present. Instead, different groups of members—for example, those Security Council members representing the EU, the AU or the Arab League—could issue joint statements in advance of the monthly debate expressing their positions. As for recent precedent, the EU members of the Council issued a joint statement critical of Israeli settlement activity in November 2019, shortly after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo broke with past US policy, saying that “the establishment of Israeli

civilian settlements in the West Bank is not, per se, inconsistent with international law”.

Another important issue for the Council is what role it can play in resurrecting the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, given the widespread rejection of the US peace proposal earlier this year, including by the Palestinians. One option that has been proposed by a number of Council members—and could be further explored this month—has been to revitalise the Middle East Quartet, which consists of the EU, Russia, the UN, and the US.

Given the ongoing humanitarian needs facing Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere—which are likely to be exacerbated by the coronavirus—members may choose to appeal for enhanced financial support for UNWRA. In this regard, an UNWRA pledging conference, chaired by Jordan and Sweden, was held virtually on 23 June, resulting in pledges amounting to approximately \$130 million. Fulfilment of these pledges will help to partially cover UNWRA’s \$400 million funding gap.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Strong criticism of potential annexation of parts of the West Bank has been widely voiced both in and out of the Council, and such views are likely to be reiterated during the July meeting. The League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, many EU member states, and many UN Security Council members have rejected the US “Vision for Peace”—which envisions the incorporation into the state of Israel of existing Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem. The US maintains that its peace plan should be viewed as a starting point for negotiations; at the 24 June Council meeting, US Ambassador Kelly Craft asserted that the plan “is designed to lead the sides to a realistic two-state solution, offering a viable path to Palestinian statehood”. At the same meeting, Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon accused the Palestinians of choosing “rejectionism over any realistic solution” to the conflict.

Pandemics and Security

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council will hold an open debate on the peace and security implications of pandemics and international health crises. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas will chair the session. Secretary-General António Guterres, International Committee of the Red Cross President Peter Maurer, and AU Commissioner for Social Affairs Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil are the likely briefers. Because the measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to still be in place, the debate is expected to be held as an open videoconference (VTC) and statements by non-Council members are expected to be submitted in writing.

Key Recent Developments

On 11 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. In the two weeks before the declaration, cases of COVID-19, which was first

identified in China in late 2019, had expanded 13-fold and the number of affected countries had tripled, with 118,000 cases in 114 countries and over 4,000 deaths, according to the WHO. With New York City becoming a new epicentre of the pandemic, UN headquarters closed down from 16 March (other than for essential services), and over the next two weeks, the Security Council adapted its working methods to hold meetings remotely.

On 23 March, the Secretary-General called for an immediate global ceasefire to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. He highlighted the particular challenges posed by the pandemic to conflict-affected countries where “health systems have collapsed”, “health professionals are few in number and have often been targeted”, and refugees and displaced persons are “doubly vulnerable”. The appeal received some initial positive responses, with armed groups in a number of countries committing themselves to ceasefires.

On 2 April, the General Assembly adopted a resolution, co-sponsored by 188 countries, that emphasised the importance of global solidarity in fighting the disease. The resolution acknowledged the “crucial role played by the World Health Organization”, expressed “strong support for the central role of the United Nations system in the global response”, and called for “intensified international cooperation to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic”.

The Security Council, for its part, has come under widespread criticism over its inability to address the crisis. As early as 18 March, Estonia proposed a Council press statement on the pandemic. At the time, some members questioned the pandemic’s link to international peace and security and felt that some of the statement’s contents went beyond the Council’s mandate. It was also around this time that France initiated high-level discussions among the P5 on a draft resolution,

UN DOCUMENTS ON COVID-19 [General Assembly Document A/RES/74/270](#) (2 April 2020) reaffirmed the General Assembly’s “commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism and its strong support for the central role of the UN system in the global response to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic”.

Pandemics and Security

which soon stalled over US-China divisions on identifying the origins and name of the virus and describing early responses. By the end of March, Tunisia proposed a draft resolution to the Council's ten elected members, which, similarly to the draft being negotiated by the P5, would express support for the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal.

As the negotiation processes continued on the two resolutions, Council members held a closed VTC on 9 April with the Secretary-General on COVID-19's "impact on Council agenda situations", including peace operations, humanitarian crises, and the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal. Guterres told members that beyond being a health crisis with social and economic impact, "the pandemic also poses a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security".

Guterres outlined eight particular threats posed by the pandemic. They included the potential for the pandemic to create discontent with public institutions, particularly if citizens perceive that authorities were mishandling the response or were not being transparent about the scope of the crisis, and for the economic fallout to create "major stressors", especially in fragile and less developed countries. The postponement of elections or referenda or the decision to proceed with a vote "can create political tensions and undermine legitimacy", the Secretary-General's statement notes.

Other threats, according to Guterres, are that actors in conflict settings could use the uncertainty created by the crisis to promote further division and turmoil, that terrorist groups could exploit the health crisis, that the risk of bioterror attacks could increase, that the pandemic could stall peace processes or impede crisis diplomacy, and that it could trigger or exacerbate human rights challenges. In a short set of press elements Council members expressed "support for all efforts of the Secretary-General concerning the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to conflict-affected countries and recalled the need for unity and solidarity with all those affected".

On 14 April, US President Donald Trump announced that the US would halt funding to the WHO for 60 to 90 days to review the agency's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, which Trump has strongly criticised. Six weeks later, Trump announced that the US would be terminating its relationship with the WHO and ending its funding to the agency.

By the time of the 14 April announcement, negotiations on the respective P5 and E10 draft resolutions had largely concluded, and France and Tunisia proceeded to merge the drafts into a single text, which they presented to Council members during a 23 April closed VTC. But negotiations were then stymied over whether to mention the WHO in the resolution: the US opposed any such reference, while China insisted on it. On 7 May, the co-penholders placed the draft resolution under silence procedure, believing that they had found compromise language by replacing an explicit reference to the WHO with a reference to the "United Nations system, including specialized health agencies". The US broke the silence over this issue, however, and during the second half of June, France and Tunisia began a new push to find a compromise on the WHO issue.

While the Council has yet to collectively pronounce itself on the pandemic, members have discussed the impact of COVID-19 in nearly all its country-specific and thematic meetings. Press elements following such sessions have addressed different dimensions of the pandemic in the particular context—such as calling for cooperation between UN peace operations and host governments to contain the disease, expressing concern about the health and safety of peacekeepers, and calling for ceasefires or for conflict parties to de-escalate in line with the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal.

Key Issues and Options

The open debate is meant to consider and promote greater understanding of the peace and security implications of international health crises and the relevant role of the Security Council therein, including in conflict prevention. It will look to identify "triggers" that can cause a health crisis to become a security crisis, such as socio-economic impacts that are often root causes of conflict: unemployment, social tensions and stigma, and poor governance. There is the issue of how pandemics worsen humanitarian crises in conflict countries; conversely, how violence fosters the spread of disease, for example by large movements of people and by hindering coordinated responses; and their impact on peace operations. Lessons from previous health crises such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic and more recent Ebola crises in West Africa and

the Democratic Republic of the Congo are another issue for consideration.

As this issue went to press, it appeared likely that the Council would adopt the French-Tunisian draft resolution that demands a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda and calls for all parties to engage in an immediate humanitarian pause for at least 90 days. An option, if an agreement remains elusive, could be a shorter resolution or presidential statement narrowly focused on just those elements directly related to the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal, while another option is to table the draft resolution, compelling members to decide how to vote.

Council Dynamics

Negotiations on the COVID-19 draft resolution have pitted the US against China. US criticism and rhetoric about China over the pandemic, amid the major US outbreak, have exacerbated tensions between the countries. China's insistence on referring to the WHO—which has been mentioned in other Council resolutions on HIV/AIDS and Ebola—has at times been supported by developing countries on the Council that are more reliant on the UN agency. (For more on the Council's reactions to other health crises, see "International Peace and Security, and Pandemics: Security Council Precedents and Options": What's in Blue, 5 April 2020.)

Securing a Council resolution has been important for France. President Emmanuel Macron started the initiative and has sought to organise a P5 summit to agree on a common approach to the pandemic. Several elected members have also been keen to see the Council address the pandemic. In addition to Tunisia's role, the Council's elected members (minus South Africa) requested the Council's 9 April briefing by the Secretary-General on COVID-19, and during the May impasse, Estonia and Germany floated the idea of a more concise resolution centred on the Secretary-General's ceasefire call, though this did not gain traction. Russia and South Africa have at times pushed for the Council to address the issue of lifting unilateral sanctions or establishing broader sanctions exemptions to ensure effective COVID-19 responses, citing, among other things, the Secretary-General's appeal at a March G20 summit to waive sanctions that can undermine countries' capacity to respond to the pandemic.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

Expected Council Action

In July, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, is expected to brief the Council in a closed videoconference on UNRCCA's activities.

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNRCCA is a special political mission, established by the Secretary-General in 2007 for an open-ended period based on a proposal by the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). The centre's mandate includes a liaison function, monitoring and analysis of the situation on the ground, maintaining contact with regional organisations, offering a political framework for conflict prevention activities of the entire UN system in the region, and additionally maintaining contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to ensure a comprehensive overview of the regional situation. The Special Representative reports orally to the Council on the centre's activities twice a year.

Gherman last briefed Council members in consultations on 22 January. She updated members on UNRCCA activities on matters pertaining to countering terrorism, transboundary water management, border demarcation, and regional cooperation initiatives with Afghanistan. In addition, she described UNRCCA's initiatives aimed at empowering women and youth, such as the launching of the UNRCCA Preventive Diplomacy Academy, which brought together young people from the five Central Asian states and Afghanistan with the goal of promoting their role as agents of change in areas that experience inter-ethnic tensions.

Because of restrictions on travel to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, since March UNRCCA has adapted its preventive diplomacy activities to an online platform, carrying out several meetings aimed at increasing cooperation to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. On 4 June, UNRCCA convened online regional consultations on the impact of the pandemic on preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism in cooperation with the UN Counter-Terrorism

Centre and with the participation of the institutes of strategic studies and other state institutions of the Central Asian states. At the meeting, Gherman stated that issues related to violent extremism and terrorism could become even more pressing in the post-pandemic era. She also highlighted the importance of undertaking preventive measures and planning to address different types of possible future threats.

On 11 June, UNRCCA convened an online meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the Central Asian states and Afghanistan to discuss regional challenges in the context of COVID-19 and ways to address them. The pandemic has hit Afghanistan hard, with 27,878 confirmed cases and 548 fatalities as of 19 June. The UN Development Programme has expressed concern about the devastating consequences of the virus on Afghanistan's economy while warning that the pandemic could cause an economic contraction of 4 percent in 2020 and 17 percent by 2023, compared with pre-2019 activity. Several central Asian states, such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have been providing humanitarian support to Afghanistan during the pandemic on a bilateral basis, including medical supplies and personal protective equipment.

At the 11 June meeting, the leaders of the Central Asian states expressed their support for the peace process in Afghanistan while echoing the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. In addition, they discussed means to address the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic, including regional measures that were part of the Secretary-General's policy brief titled "Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19". In this regard, the leaders discussed initiatives such as promotion of regional tourism after the pandemic and emphasised the importance of embedding Afghanistan in regional efforts such as electricity transmission projects.

Four out of the five Central Asian states have confirmed cases of the COVID-19, with Kazakhstan reporting 19,285 cases and 140 fatalities, Kyrgyzstan reporting 3,954 cases and 43 fatalities, Tajikistan reporting 5,691 cases and 52 fatalities and Uzbekistan reporting 7,177 cases and 20 fatalities

from the virus as of 25 June. At the time of writing, Turkmenistan had not reported any cases of the virus. All five countries instituted emergency measures to curb the spread of the virus, including closure of borders and enforcement of lockdowns.

Since Gherman's last Council briefing, UNRCCA has continued to offer mediation support in resolving regional issues. On 1 May, a dam collapsed in the town of Sardoba in Uzbekistan, which is located near the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan border, leading to at least four deaths, the displacement of approximately 90,000 people, and the destruction of agricultural and residential areas in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. UNRCCA expressed its support for the cross-border cooperation between the countries in mitigating the consequences of the collapse and reaffirmed the UN's readiness to assist the governments in relief efforts in the area.

Key Issues and Options

One of the main issues for the Council is how to make better use of UNRCCA's experience in conflict prevention and what more the Council could do to support UNRCCA's role in preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation.

The situation in Afghanistan and its effects on the Central Asian region is another issue for the Council to consider, as well as how to incorporate the regional impact in its regular debates on Afghanistan. In this regard, the Council may consider inviting Gherman to occasionally participate in the quarterly debates on UNAMA to discuss regional political and economic cooperation. In addition, Council members may request the Secretary-General to include in the UNAMA report an integrated analysis of regional impacts of the situation in Afghanistan using contributions from UNRCCA.

A new issue for the Council is how to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region that could affect international peace and security, including secondary impacts on the socio-economic situation, on counter-terrorism efforts, and on the human rights situation. Some members might emphasise the importance of respecting the rule of law and regional cooperation on human rights as well as the need to ensure

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA [Security Council Letter S/2007/279](#) (7 May 2007) was from the Secretary-General on the establishment of a UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13179](#) (25 January 2018) welcomed further cooperation between UNRCCA, the Central Asian States, and relevant regional organisations.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

that efforts to curb the spread of the virus do not curtail such civil rights as the right of assembly.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the work of UNRCCA and view it as an important tool in promotion of cooperation in Central Asia. However, Council members

have been unable to agree on a press statement on UNRCCA since January 2018, owing to disagreements between the penholder, Russia, and the P3 (France, the UK and the US) about whether to include references to cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

In addition, it appears that in the last two semi-annual consultations on UNRCCA, several Council members raised issues relating to human rights, with Germany and the US referring to the situation of Uighur minorities. Other members, including China and Russia, opposed the statements made about this issue and said it is unrelated to UNRCCA's mandate.

Peace Operations and Human Rights

Expected Council Action

As one of the four signature events of its presidency, Germany is organising an open debate on “United Nations peacekeeping operations: Peace Operations and Human Rights”. Anne-gret Kramp-Karrenbauer, German Federal Minister of Defence, will Chair the meeting. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, Special Representative for South Sudan and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) David Shearer, and a civil society representative are expected to brief. An outcome is not anticipated; however, Germany is planning to host a side event following the debate to continue the dialogue. Because of extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the debate is to be held as an open videoconference (VTC), and statements by non-Council members are expected to be submitted in writing.

Background and Key Recent Developments

More than half of the current peace missions created or authorised by the Security Council have human rights tasks in their mandates and include substantive human rights capacities or components. Those without a human rights component tend to be older missions with predominantly or exclusively military mandates.

An appreciation for the relevance of human rights in peacekeeping developed gradually. Though the first human rights component of a peace operation was established in 1991 as part of the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador, human rights components were rare in peace missions for the next decade or so. In March 2001, the Council held a two-day retreat outside of New York at the initiative of the UK to discuss human rights and the work of the Security Council, focusing on human rights and early warning, human rights in peacekeeping operations, and human rights in post-conflict situations. By the time then-Council member Portugal organised an Arria-formula meeting over a decade later, in February 2012, on the topic of “Human rights in the context of peacekeeping operations,” most missions had human rights components.

Since then, member states have often highlighted the importance of human rights as a key concept within peacekeeping. This was prominently reiterated on 28 March 2018, when 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 have endorsed the A4P’s “Declaration of

Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations”. The declaration consists of eight thematic areas, four of which explicitly mention the role of human rights.

First, under the theme “To advance political solutions to conflict and enhance the political impact of peacekeeping”, the declaration notes that member states “affirm that the pursuit of sustainable political solutions should guide the design and deployment of UN peacekeeping operations, [while] recognizing that lasting progress in strengthening... human rights needs to occur in parallel”.

In the area of “strengthening the protection provided by peacekeeping operations”, the declaration “recognize[s] that host states bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians and stress[es] the contribution that peacekeeping operations, where mandated, can make to international efforts to protect civilians and to promote and protect human rights”, while under the theme “improving the safety and security of peacekeepers”, the declaration “commit[s] to support pre-deployment preparations of personnel and capabilities required for effective performance, and the existing human rights screening policy”.

Finally, the declaration notes that member states remain “committed to the implementation of the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy for all UN support to non-UN security

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2518](#) (30 March 2020) was on capacity-building and safety and security of peacekeepers. [S/RES/2436](#) (21 September 2018) was on peacekeeping performance. [S/RES/693](#) (20 May 1991) established the first human rights component in a peace operation, the UN Observer Mission in El Salvador. [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 a debate on peacekeeping reform, which featured a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. 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 of peacekeepers. [S/PV.8521](#) (7 May 2019) was an open debate on “Investing in peace: improving safety and performance of United Nations peacekeepers”.

Useful Additional Resources

The Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, Produced by the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Team; Policy and Best Practices Service; Policy, Evaluation and Training Division; UN Department of Peace Operations, 2020. *Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping Handbook*, Produced by the Protection of Civilians Team; Policy and Best Practices Service; Policy, Evaluation and Training Division; UN Department of Peace Operations, 2020. Namie Di Razza and Jake Sherman, *Integrating Human Rights into the Operational Readiness of UN Peacekeepers*, International Peace Institute, April 2020.

Peace Operations and Human Rights

forces, including reimbursements” under the theme of “strengthening the conduct of peacekeeping operations and personnel”. Members signing the declaration furthermore “commit to provide well-trained and well-equipped uniformed personnel” while emphasising “the need for increased funding to better support training”.

Key Issues and Options

The July debate offers an opportunity to discuss the impact of including protection of human rights in peace operations mandates on missions’ overall effectiveness. Members may explore topics such as the practicalities of integrating human rights in peace operations’ mandates, including child protection and the protection of women; what challenges the operations face; and how they can best collaborate with civil society organisations on the ground. Troop- and police-contributing

countries (T/PCCs) may want to highlight in their interventions best practices and lessons learnt about integrating human rights aspects of the mandates into the work of an operation on the ground.

An important ongoing issue is how the UN can help improve human rights readiness through training mechanisms. While international human rights is a key element of UN training, the quality of pre-deployment training varies widely among T/PCCs, and, according to the International Peace Institute, “in-mission induction trainings are usually not well-tailored to specific missions...” and “methodologies...fail to integrate the practical training needs identified on the ground”.

Council Dynamics

The inclusion of human rights elements in numerous mission mandates established by the Council reflects its general acceptance of

the relevance of human rights to peace and security efforts. While the Council has been able to agree on human rights tasks in specific situations, however, approaching human rights as a thematic issue has proven controversial. A 2017 initiative by the US to add a new agenda item, “Human rights and international peace and security”, was dropped because of opposition from China, Russia and members of the Non-Aligned Movement serving on the Council at the time. Eventually, a compromise was reached to hold a meeting, with a briefing by Guterres, under the existing agenda item “Maintenance of international peace and security”. However, it appears that the present proposal to hold a debate on peacekeeping and human rights (under the agenda item “United Nations peacekeeping operations”) met with the members’ consent.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to receive briefings by the Acting Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Stephanie Williams, and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Jürgen Schulz, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place, the briefings and the subsequent consultations are likely to be held as open and closed videoconferences, respectively.

UNSMIL’s mandate expires on 15 September. The authorisation given by resolution 2491 (to inspect vessels suspected of being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking) expires on 3 October, and that of resolution 2526 (to inspect vessels believed to be in violation of the arms embargo) expires on 5 June 2021. 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

After 13 months of fighting, armed groups aligned with the internationally recognised and UN-backed Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) halted General Khalifa Haftar’s offensive against the capital, Tripoli. All positions in greater Tripoli held by forces allied with Haftar, head of the eastern-based militia known as the Libyan National Army (LNA), had been retaken by the GNA by 4 June. Both the GNA and the LNA receive foreign military support in violation of UN sanctions. During an 18 June address to the Human Rights Council (HRC), Williams spoke of an “alarming military buildup” due to “the uninterrupted dispatch by the foreign backers of increasingly sophisticated and lethal weapons” and increasing

recruitment of mercenaries for both sides. International efforts to facilitate a permanent ceasefire between the parties have been unsuccessful so far. In her statement to the HRC, Williams also spoke of 400,000 internally displaced persons and 654,000 asylum seekers, migrants and refugees in the country.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, one of the LNA’s foreign backers, proposed a ceasefire on 6 June. Turkey, the main military sponsor of the GNA, rejected the proposal, arguing that it was made in bad faith. Last November, the GNA and Turkey signed two agreements, one on cooperation on military and security matters and the other on maritime boundary delimitation, including drilling rights. After a failed attempt to have Haftar sign a ceasefire agreement brokered by Turkey and Russia in January 2020, Turkey increased its military support to Libya, eventually turning the conflict in favour of the GNA.

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2526 (5 June 2020) renewed for 12 months the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. S/RES/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 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 for 12 months 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. Security Council Letter S/2020/504 (5 June 2020) was from the president of the Security Council containing the results of the vote on resolution 2526.

Libya

On 20 June, el-Sisi said that Egypt might intervene to protect its borders if the GNA advanced towards the city of Sirte (which is about 800 kilometres from the Egyptian border). A day later, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said the government preferred a political solution and el-Sisi's statement had been misinterpreted. Sirte has strategic significance because of its proximity to Libya's oil crescent, which remains under Haftar's control, part of the two-thirds of Libyan territory the LNA controls. Haftar receives political support by parallel governmental authorities located in the eastern city of Tobruk, including the House of Representatives. Its president, Aguila Saleh, supported an Egyptian intervention in a statement on 24 June. The GNA has declared its intention to govern the entirety of Libyan territory.

The consequences of the armed conflict also became more visible in June. When the GNA regained control of the city of Tarhouna, 16,125 people were displaced from the area within 24 hours due to intense fighting, according to the International Organization for Migration. Additionally, LNA-allied forces reportedly laid antipersonnel landmines while retreating from Tripoli's southern suburbs. In and around Tarhouna, shortly thereafter, 11 mass graves were discovered. The Secretary-General received this information "with horror" and expressed his deep shock in a 12 June press statement. He offered support to the GNA to investigate alleged crimes, which the authorities accepted. ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a 21 June statement that the mass graves "may constitute evidence of war crimes or crimes against humanity". First investigations by the GNA reportedly showed that children were among the dead and that dozens had been buried alive.

Airwars, a non-profit organisation that tracks civilian harm resulting from military actions in Iraq, Libya, Somalia and Syria, reported that more civilians had died in Libya after COVID-19 was declared in mid-March than in any month since August 2019, with the number of deaths in April in Libya higher than those in Syria.

On the political situation, as a result of the Berlin Conference on Libya in January, negotiations between Libyan parties along three tracks (economic, political and security) are underway, with different levels of progress. The Council endorsed the conclusions

of the Berlin Conference in resolution 2510 of 12 February, on which Russia abstained. The participants of the Berlin Conference further agreed to establish an International Follow-Up Committee (IFC) to coordinate efforts to implement the Berlin Conference conclusions. The third meeting of the IFC at the level of senior officials took place virtually on 22 June.

Following the second round of talks on the security track, which concluded on 23 February, the conflict parties agreed on a draft ceasefire agreement and were expected to present it to their leadership. During her briefing to the HRC, Williams emphasised that the UN's mission in Libya remained ready "to help Libyans rebuild a state strong enough to peacefully contain political differences". She welcomed the start of the third round of negotiations on the security track, consisting of a 3 June meeting of UNSMIL with an LNA delegation and a 9 June meeting between UNSMIL and a GNA delegation.

On 5 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2526, renewing 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.

The Secretary-General has yet to appoint a successor to Ghassan Salamé, who announced his resignation from the post of Special Representative and head of UNSMIL on 2 March. Candidates put forward by the Secretary-General so far have not been able to garner unanimous support from Council members. It further seems that the US is pushing to divide the role into two positions: a head of UNSMIL and a Special Envoy for Libya.

As of 30 June, Libya had 802 confirmed cases of COVID-19. The UN's 2020 humanitarian response plan for Libya of \$129.8 million has been funded at 32.8 percent, with \$87.2 million outstanding.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its resumed 43rd regular session (the session was suspended on 13 March because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed on 15 June), the HRC held an interactive dialogue on 18 June on the situation of human rights in Libya. The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Ashif, gave an oral update concerning

the LNA's offensive of 4 April 2019. Acting Special Representative Williams also addressed the meeting. Al-Ashif said that the "subsequent fighting has resulted in a serious deterioration in the human rights and humanitarian situation in Libya". The High Commissioner called on the HRC in her report (A/HRC/43/75) to "establish an international investigative body into human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law". At the 18 June meeting, Libya, speaking as the concerned country, also called for the creation of an independent investigation mechanism. In its 22 June resolution (A/HRC/43/L.40) on "technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights in Libya", which was adopted without a vote, the HRC requested the High Commissioner to dispatch a fact-finding mission to Libya to "establish the facts and circumstances of the situation of human rights...and to collect and review relevant information to document alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties".

Key Issues and Options

The ongoing military conflict in Libya and related non-compliance with the arms embargo by multiple international actors have been ongoing issues for the Council, together with the implementation of the Berlin Conference's conclusions. Council members individually could use their influence to put pressure on the conflict parties and proxy powers to adhere to the arms embargo and engage in a political solution in good faith.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council continues to be divided over Libya. Council outcomes routinely call upon UN member states to cease support for parallel institutions in Libya, but some countries, including members of the Council, fail to respect these calls. Haftar's wide territorial control and past claims to be uniting the country and fighting terrorism have resulted in political and military support from a number of countries inside and outside the Council. France has shown political support for Haftar, while his largest military backer is the United Arab Emirates.

A confidential report by the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee that was leaked to the press in early May said that the Russian private military company Wagner Group has deployed around 1,200 mercenaries to fight for Haftar, according to the media. The Kremlin denies ties to the Wagner Group against accusations

Libya

to the contrary by various sources.

Mercenaries from different countries are reportedly fighting on both sides. All foreign

sponsors but Turkey deny their role in Libya.

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.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In July, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), will brief the Council to present the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on West Africa and the Sahel.

Key Recent Developments

Terrorist groups continue to destabilise the Sahel, fuel intercommunal violence and increasingly threaten coastal West African countries. Boko Haram and a splinter group, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), remain a threat to north-east Nigeria and to other countries in the Lake Chad Basin. Presidential elections in the subregion, several of which may be contentious and risk causing political violence, are also planned this year in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, and Togo.

There has been increased military cooperation between five Sahelian countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, which have formed the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S)—and external partners since the formation of the Coalition of the Sahel at a January summit in Pau, France. In March, France and other EU countries launched a special operations task force, called Task Force Takuba, to assist the Malian military in combatting terrorist groups in the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region with Burkina Faso and Niger. It should be operational later this year. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member states have sought to increase security cooperation to stem the expanding terrorist threat and support the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel). Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso conducted their first joint operation along their shared border

in May, announcing that eight militants had been killed and 38 others arrested. The AU is also continuing discussions with ECOWAS on deploying 3,000 troops to the Sahel.

In the Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram killed 98 Chadian soldiers on 23 March in Boma, Chad. On 29 March, Chad launched a counter-insurgency operation. At the conclusion of the 10-day operation, which deployed troops to Niger and north-eastern Nigeria, Chad claimed that over 1,000 Boko Haram militants had been killed, with a loss of 52 soldiers. On 9 June, the Boko Haram ISWAP faction killed at least 81 people—its deadliest attack on civilians this year—and stole between 400 and 1,200 cattle in the village of Felo, Nigeria. A 16 June Security Council press statement condemned the attack as well as terrorist attacks on 13 June in Monguno against a UN humanitarian facility and on 13 June in Nganzai in Borno State, Nigeria, which together resulted in at least 120 people being killed.

Earlier this year, the Council renewed the mandate of UNOWAS through an exchange of letters with the Secretary-General for three years until 31 January 2023. The mandate of UNOWAS continues to be organised around four objectives: monitoring political developments and good offices; enhancing regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats in West Africa and the Sahel; supporting, through political advocacy and convening, implementation of the UN's Sahel Strategy; and promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights and the integration of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

On 11 February, the Council adopted a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel. The statement emphasised the need

for national stakeholders in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Niger, Mali, and Togo to work together to hold elections and to take all appropriate steps to prevent violence. In light of tensions in Guinea, the Council called on all political stakeholders, regardless of political affiliation, to resume dialogue without delay so that electoral processes, as well as political reforms, can be conducted with broad consensus.

The presidential statement highlighted concerns about the political situation in Guinea, encouraging Chambas to continue carrying out his good offices there. A 22 March referendum on a constitutional amendment would allow President Alpha Condé to contest a third and fourth term. The referendum was held along with long-delayed legislative elections, both of which the opposition boycotted. Violence on election day resulted in at least ten deaths in Conakry and four in the Nzérékoré region. In a statement, Chambas strongly condemned all acts of violence and the excessive use of force and called on Guineans to mobilise against intercommunal violence.

At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating the mandate renewal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). During June, Mali saw major protests calling for President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's resignation over continued insecurity and corruption. On 20 June, an ECOWAS delegation, dispatched to Mali due to the protests, called for a re-run of disputed local elections that were held in March and the convening of a national unity government. Secretary-General António Guterres issued a statement expressing concern over the political developments and support for ECOWAS efforts.

UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/2 (11 February 2020) emphasised the need for free and fair, credible, timely and peaceful elections during 2020. Secretary-General's Report S/2020/373 (8 May 2020) was a report on the FC-G5S. Security Council Letter S/2020/85 (31 January 2020) renewed the mandate of UNOWAS from 1 February 2020 to 31 January 2023. Security Council Press Statements SC/14216 (16 June 2020) condemned terrorist attacks on 9 and 10 June in Felo, on 13 June in Monguno, and on 13 June in Nganzai in Borno State, Nigeria. SC/14155 (1 April 2020) condemned the 23 March attack in Boma, Chad, in which 98 soldiers were killed and an attack on military vehicles near Goneri, Nigeria, in which at least 47 were killed.

West Africa and the Sahel

Key Issues and Options

The threat of terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel remains a key issue, as are Chambas' good offices activities around electoral and political tensions. Related to these issues are the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Secretary-General's 8 May report on the FC-G5S, terrorist groups have sought to exploit the pandemic to intensify attacks and for propaganda purposes. MINUSMA has been hard hit by the pandemic, with over 100 cases, including the deaths of two peacekeepers. The pandemic is also expected to severely affect this year's high-stakes electoral processes, according to Chambas during a briefing of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on 22 April. Guinea's opposition and civil society have already accused president Condé of exploiting the pandemic to silence opposition to the March referendum and legislative elections.

Drug trafficking, intercommunal violence, and piracy are key issues that are linked at times with terrorist groups. In addition to

regional security initiatives, efforts to address structural causes of instability, such as underdevelopment, poor governance and climate change, are also important, including the UN's Sahel Strategy, the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme and the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilisation strategy. Implementation of Mali's 2015 peace agreement is also frequently cited as key for both Mali and the Sahel's stabilisation.

The Council might adopt a presidential statement that could, inter alia, encourage authorities and national stakeholders to work together to seek a level playing field for upcoming elections; urge respect for freedoms of assembly, expression and the press; and seek consensus in addressing the implications of COVID-19 on the electoral process. An option for the briefing could be to invite the chair of the PBC, which frequently works on West Africa and the Sahel, to address the Council on the region's peacebuilding challenges.

Council Dynamics

Members have long valued the good offices activities of Chambas and UNOWAS' conflict prevention role. During discussion of the latest UNOWAS mandate renewal, members felt that the Secretary-General's proposal to place a greater focus on having UNOWAS oversee the integration of UN system activities for "sustaining peace" and sustainable development risked weakening the political nature of the mission. This resulted in the Council's first authorising a one-month extension of UNOWAS in December 2019 to consider the proposal more closely and then scaling back some of the proposed changes in the mandate.

Members have some diverging views on how the UN and Council should support regional counter-terrorism efforts such as the FC-G5S. Substantive discussion of such support, including on financing and the role of MINUSMA, tends to occur during Council meetings on Mali and the FC-G5S.

Belgium and Niger are co-penholders on UNOWAS.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which expires on 15 July. The Council is also expected to receive its monthly briefing on Yemen by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock may brief on the humanitarian situation, and General Abhijit Guha, the head of UNMHA, is also likely to brief. With the extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic likely to still be in place, the briefings are expected to be held as a videoconference (VTC). The Yemen Panel of Experts is due to submit its mid-term update to the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee by 28 July.

Key Recent Developments

Yemen's war continued and its humanitarian crisis—the largest in the world, according to the UN—worsened, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Griffiths has continued efforts to broker an agreement between the Yemeni government and Houthi rebel group for a nationwide ceasefire, a series of confidence-building measures, and the resumption of peace talks.

The government and the Houthis continue to battle in Yemen's north. Airstrikes by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which backs the government, increased after the expiry of the unilateral ceasefire that the coalition announced on 8 April to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (initially for two weeks and then renewed for one month on 23 April). Intense airstrikes hit Sana'a and other Houthi strongholds for several days after the coalition announced that it had

intercepted bomb-laden Houthi drones and a ballistic missile fired at southern Saudi Arabia on 15 and 16 June. On 23 June, the coalition announced that it had intercepted a new round of ballistic missiles and drones targeting Riyadh.

The government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) also continued fighting in Abyan and Socotra governorates. On 22 June, it was reported that the STC had seized several state buildings, including the governor's headquarters, during fighting in Socotra's capital of Hadebo. That same day, the coalition announced that it would deploy monitors to observe a ceasefire agreement in Abyan. It also announced plans for a meeting on implementing the Riyadh Agreement, last year's power-sharing arrangement between the government and STC brokered by Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia and the UN hosted a virtual

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2505 (13 January 2020) extended the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2020. **Secretary-General's Report S/2020/531** (11 June 2020) was on the implementation of resolution 2231. **S/2020/525** (9 June 2020) was on children and armed conflict. **Security Council Letter S/2020/524** (15 June 2020) was a review of UNMHA. **Security Council Press Statements SC/14176** (29 April 2020) was on instability in southern Yemen. **SC/14159** (10 April 2020) welcomed the coalition's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire and called on the Houthis to reciprocate without delay.

Yemen

pledging conference on 2 June for the Yemen humanitarian response, where a funding shortage has forced the scaling back or closure of almost 75 percent of major aid programmes. The conference generated pledges totalling \$1.5 billion of the \$2.41 billion required through the end of the year. Saudi Arabia made the largest commitment, of \$500 million, of which \$300 million would be directed through the UN.

A 15 June statement by OCHA highlighted that COVID-19 appeared to be “spreading rapidly” in Yemen with a fatality rate four times the global average. As of 23 June, Yemen had 971 cases and 258 deaths, mostly reported from government-held areas, but lack of available testing has made it impossible to confirm this data. The Houthis, for their part, have been accused of concealing the extent of the outbreak in the north, reporting four cases in total by mid-June. In May, the UN evacuated almost 100 international staff based in Sana’a to protect them from COVID-19, reducing its foreign staff in the city to 60.

On 24 June, Security Council members held a closed VTC on Yemen. Griffiths provided an update on his efforts to broker a joint declaration by the government and Houthis of a ceasefire; humanitarian and economic measures (including the opening of the Sana’a airport, reducing restrictions on imports to Hodeidah ports, paying civil servant salaries, and establishing a joint operations cell to combat COVID-19); and resuming peace talks. Lowcock briefed on the humanitarian situation, and Guha elaborated on a recent review of UNMHA, the report of which had been circulated to Council members earlier in the month. A 29 June Council press statement condemned the escalation of violence and expressed deep concern at the slow pace of negotiations, calling on the parties to agree to mediated proposals with haste.

Also in June, the Secretary-General released his annual report on Children and

Armed Conflict. This year’s report removed the Saudi-led coalition from among entities listed for committing grave violations affecting children, citing “a sustained significant decrease in killing and maiming due to air strikes and the signature and implementation of the programme of time-bound activities to support the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2019”. In 2019, the coalition was identified as responsible for killing and maiming 222 children, compared to 729 in 2018 and 670 in 2017. Yemeni parties that remain listed include the Houthis; Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula; pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees; the STC-affiliated Security Belt Forces; and Yemeni government forces.

A June 2020 Secretary-General’s report on the Iran nuclear deal concluded that cruise missiles used in several attacks claimed by the Houthis last year on Saudi Arabia were of “Iranian origin”.

Key Issues and Options

Achieving a nationwide ceasefire and restarting a political process remain key. Griffiths has frequently reported that the sides are close to an agreement, but this has yet to materialise. Holding a closed Council VTC meeting on 24 June, rather than including a public session, sought to allow for a franker discussion of the issues that have frustrated an agreement. If agreement is reached on a joint declaration, the Council may adopt a resolution to welcome or endorse the deal.

The humanitarian situation remains a critical issue. In addition to a lack of humanitarian funding and the pandemic, there is renewed alarm about the risks posed by Yemen’s already beleaguered economy. The decline in remittances because of the pandemic and the near-depletion of Yemen’s foreign reserves at the central bank in Aden are among economic factors threatening to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis.

Another issue for July is the mandate renewal of UNMHA. As is the practice, the Council may renew UNMHA for six months, maintaining its four-point mandate, including that it lead and support the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC) that oversees the ceasefire and redeployment of forces set out in the 2018 Hodeidah agreement between the government and Houthis, and that it monitor the compliance of the parties to the accord. The resolution could encourage the parties to reactivate the RCC, in which the government suspended its participation following the 11 March shooting of its liaison officer, who subsequently died. It could also comment on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mission. In late April, most UNMHA personnel were temporarily withdrawn to their home countries over concerns about the pandemic, with a core team of 12 personnel remaining in Hodeidah.

Council Dynamics

Council members appear aligned in their support of the Special Envoy, desiring a ceasefire and resumption of a political process while being very concerned about the humanitarian crisis and COVID-19 outbreak in Yemen. On the situation in the south, in press statements and elements to the press, members have repeatedly called for the STC to reverse its actions since April, when it declared self-rule in defiance of the Riyadh Agreement. Tunisia is the Arab member on the Council that traditionally champions positions of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. The US, which is seeking to maintain restrictions on Iranian arms transfers that are set to expire later this year, often points to what it perceives as Iran’s destabilising role in Yemen.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) chairs the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In July, Security Council members are expected to hold an open videoconference (VTC) meeting, which will be followed by a closed VTC session, on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu will brief on recent developments and the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the mission, published on 26 June. A civil society briefer may also brief the Council. The Council is likely to issue a press statement following the meeting.

The mandate of the verification mission expires on 25 September.

Key Recent Developments

Since March, Colombia has been contending with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has had ramifications for the country's socio-economic situation, the security environment, and the overall implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). As of 29 June, Colombia had 95,043 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and had reported 3,223 fatalities from the virus.

Violence against communities, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and the killing of former FARC-EP members, human rights defenders and social leaders, which had been prevalent prior to the pandemic, have continued unabated. Lockdown measures that were put in place since 24 March to curb the spread of COVID-19 made it more difficult for vulnerable communities to report serious security situations and access governmental response mechanisms. As of 26 June, the verification mission had recorded the murders of 13 former combatants since the beginning of the year, bringing to over 200 the number of former combatants killed since the signing of the 2016 peace agreement. As of 19 June, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had verified the killing of 32 social leaders since the beginning of the year, with 47 additional cases currently under investigation. On 11 June, the head of the FARC political party,

Rodrigo Londoño, held a VTC meeting with UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, in which he asked for international assistance to address the killing of former combatants, including visits of special rapporteurs to the country to assess the situation of ex-combatants and social leaders.

On 28 April, the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) announced that it would not extend the unilateral "active" ceasefire that it had observed since 1 April. Secretary-General António Guterres regretted the announcement, saying that the month-long ceasefire had had a positive effect and its extension could have helped facilitate the response to the pandemic in line with his call for a global ceasefire. He further urged armed groups in Colombia to cease all violence to facilitate the unimpeded supply of relief assistance. On 14 June, the ELN released six hostages (two police officers and four civilians). The government of President Iván Duque has repeatedly said that the release of all hostages and the end of kidnappings and attacks by the ELN are preconditions for peace talks. At the time of writing, there had been no response from the government on the recent release of prisoners or the possibility of holding talks with the ELN.

The socio-economic repercussions of the pandemic had a profound impact on Colombia as lockdown measures shut down businesses, leading to a historic high of 23.5 percent unemployment in urban areas. The Colombian finance ministry estimated that Colombia's economy will contract 5.5 percent in 2020 because of the halt in economic activity caused by the pandemic. According to Ruiz Massieu, the pandemic has also hindered the processes of economic and social reintegration of former combatants, particularly with regard to the development of productive projects. In his most recent Council briefing, on 14 April, Ruiz Massieu warned that the close to 9,500 former combatants residing outside the former territorial areas for training and reintegration (TATRs) are vulnerable to pandemic health risks and urgently need access to health care and basic services such as clean water and sanitation. The UN country team in Colombia prepared a \$303 million strategy focusing on health, improving livelihoods, and protecting

vulnerable communities to lessen the devastating impact of the pandemic in Colombia.

Apart from the difficulties caused by the pandemic, the government, the FARC party, the private sector, and civil society have cooperated to address and mitigate the impact of the virus. Examples include the rapid provision of supplies such as hygiene kits to the former TATRs and initiatives by ex-combatant cooperatives to produce masks and provide support for vulnerable populations.

The Security Council last discussed Colombia on 14 April, when it received briefings from Ruiz Massieu and David Santiago Cano, a youth civil society leader from Colombia. In a 17 April press statement, members of the Security Council stated their support for the peace process in Colombia and expressed grave concern about the targeting of former FARC-EP members, human rights defenders and social leaders. In this regard, they welcomed the launch of the "Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders" action plan and called for its implementation. They further called for effective action to improve security, including through the extension of state presence; the regular convening of the National Commission on Security Guarantees; and the implementation of the Comprehensive Security and Protection Programme for Communities and Organisations in the Territories. They also noted the unilateral ceasefire declared in April by the ELN in response to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 24 April, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, Rupert Colville, said in a press briefing note that the situation in the Cauca department of Colombia was "deeply worrying". He stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions have "aggravated an already violent and volatile situation". OHCHR has received daily reports of threats, including death threats, and harassment against the "local population, including against farmers, indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities who are trying to ensure confinement and prevention measures are complied with". Some parts of Cauca continued to face "intensifying clashes" between security forces, armed groups and criminal groups. Colville said, and "civilians have been caught in the violence" with one indigenous child dead and forced

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2487 (12 September 2019) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia until 25 September 2020. Secretary-General's Reports S/2020/603 (26 June 2020) was the 90-day report. S/2020/239 (26 March 2020) was the 90-day report. Security Council Letter S/2020/305 (16 April 2020) contained a record of the Council meeting on Colombia that took place on 14 April 2020. Security Council Press Statement SC/14163 (17 April 2020) reiterated the support of Council members for the peace process in Colombia.

Colombia

displacement of two rural communities. The UN Verification Mission in Colombia has said that 36 FARC-EP ex-combatants have been killed in Cauca since the peace agreement was signed in November 2016. (During its July 2019 visiting mission to Colombia, members of the Security Council travelled to Cauca.)

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council remains to support the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia. The need to implement the agreement fully—as opposed to focusing on only select aspects—continues to be a key factor for Council members.

A new issue for the Council is how to address the risks that the COVID-19 pandemic poses to the implementation of the peace agreement. Council members might seek more information from the briefers on what can be done to ensure that the implementation of the three priorities outlined in the Secretary-General's 26 March report—protection of social leaders, human rights defenders and former FARC combatants, ensuring the centrality of the needs of communities affected by violence in all peace-building efforts and guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the reintegration process of former FARC-EP combatants—are not hindered because of the circumstances created by COVID-19.

With regard to security guarantees, Council members could reiterate their calls for the regular convening of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the body charged under the peace agreement with developing a public policy on the dismantling of criminal organisations and their support networks. The commission was last convened by Duque on 9 January.

On the long-term sustainability of the reintegration process, members may seek more information on what form of assistance, including technical assistance, might be needed to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from hindering progress on the economic reintegration of former combatants. In this regard, members might be interested in hearing more about steps that need to be taken to guarantee former combatants' access to land, including for productive projects. In addition, they might ask the briefers for updates on the implementation of the “reintegration road map”, which was jointly agreed upon by the government and FARC and adopted by a government resolution on 27 December 2019.

The current mandate of the verification mission, as set out in the 2016 agreement, focuses on verifying aspects of the agreement related to the political, economic and social reincorporation of the FARC-EP, personal and collective security guarantees, and

comprehensive programmes of security and protection measures for communities and organisations in conflict-affected areas. Looking ahead to the verification mission's mandate renewal before its September expiry, Council members may wish to consider possible modifications to the mission's mandate to correspond with developments in the implementation of the agreement. In this regard, members may consider the 16 June request of the Colombian government that the mandate be expanded to include the monitoring of the implementation of sanctions imposed by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the judicial component of the transitional justice system established by the 2016 peace agreement.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their overall support for the peace process. While they have generally been deferential towards the government, some differences in tone emerged in 2019. For example, several members have been critical of the government on such issues as the continuing security vacuum in areas from which the FARC-EP withdrew under the agreement and an uneven approach to implementing different aspects of the agreement.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council expects to hold its monthly meetings on political issues, the humanitarian situation, and the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Due to the extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meetings are likely to be held through videoconferencing (VTC).

The cross-border/cross-line aid delivery mechanism, as mandated by resolution 2504 of 10 January, expires on 10 July. Negotiations on its renewal began on 19 June.

Key Recent Developments

On 16 June, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen briefed the Council, describing the current political, socio-economic and security challenges Syria faces. Despite three months of relative calm in Syria's north-west since the 5 March ceasefire agreed by Russia and Turkey, the situation in Syria remains volatile. Instability persists because of a series of ongoing crises, including recent ceasefire violations in Idlib province; the rapidly deteriorating economic situation in the country, including the sudden and precipitous depreciation of the national currency (the

Syrian pound); and the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19 to Syria's healthcare system. Among other topics, Pedersen described the situation of detainees and those missing in Syria. The Council also heard from Noura Ghazi, founder of NoPhotoZone, a civil society organisation devoted to assisting families of detainees. She highlighted how women and children are affected by detentions. In his briefing, Pedersen also announced that the third session of the Constitutional Committee would be convened in Geneva at the end of August.

Syria's security situation appears to have

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution 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. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2020/401** (13 May 2020) was on the review of the UN's cross-line and cross-border operations. **S/2020/310** (15 April 2020) was the first report of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons' Investigation and Identification Team. **Security Council Letters S/2020/551** (XX June 2020) was a letter from the president of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the permanent representatives of Council member states containing the record of the 16 June open VTC meeting on Syria. **S/2020/427** (21 May 2020) was a letter from the president of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the permanent representatives of Council member states containing the record of the 19 May open VTC meeting on Syria.

Syria

grown more unstable in recent weeks. There have been reports of sporadic shelling in the north-west despite the ceasefire, and both Turkish and Syrian forces have deployed reinforcements around the de-escalation zone. In addition, media sources reported that Russian air strikes on 8 June in Idlib province had led to multiple civilian deaths and caused hundreds of civilians to flee their villages. Russia denied any role in the air strikes. According to OCHA, hostilities in the area caused “renewed displacement... in some parts of southern Idlib governorate and northern Hama governorate”. The situation also remains tense in and around Deraa in the south-west, where the Syrian opposition has attacked government facilities and where, more recently, there have been anti-government demonstrations in Suwayda, a majority Druze city, because of the deteriorating economic situation.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock was scheduled to brief the Council on 29 June. According to the Secretary-General’s 13 May review of the UN’s humanitarian cross-line and cross-border operations, 11 million people throughout Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of the 6.2 million people living in areas not under Syrian government control, 4.2 million concentrated in Syria’s north-east and north-west have acute humanitarian needs. According to OCHA, of the four million people living in north-west Syria, an estimated 2.7 million people are internally displaced and in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including via cross-border deliveries.

Delivery of humanitarian assistance in the north-west through the Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa crossings are at record levels, with a 130 percent year-on-year increase between April 2019 and April 2020. Meanwhile, in the north-east, cross-line air shipments of health supplies have been ongoing. On 14 June, the World Health Organization announced the delivery of more than 80 tons of emergency medical supplies to support the health system in the region. According to Lowcock’s 19 May briefing, however, since the Council failed to renew the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through Al Yarubiyah, on the Syria-Iraq border, “supplies [have] reached only 31 percent of the medical facilities that had previously

been supported by cross-border deliveries from Al Yarubiyah”. This, he argued, meant that a “combination of more cross-border and cross-line access is required to sustain, and preferably increase, humanitarian assistance” and that alternatives to Al Yarubiyah have comparatively more limitations.

The precarious humanitarian situation has been compounded by Syria’s worsening economic outlook, the collapse of the Syrian pound, and concerns about the impact of COVID-19. According to OCHA, the Syrian pound has been devalued by 105 percent since the start of May and by approximately 360 percent since June 2019. This has resulted in a steep rise in the price of food, medicine and other goods, with 7.9 million people unable to meet their food needs and a further 1.9 million people at risk of food insecurity. Though there have been few confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Syria (with the Syrian Ministry of Health as of 19 June officially confirming 178 cases of COVID-19 throughout the country and no reports of infections in the north-west), concerns about the pandemic persist.

On 2 June, the Council returned to its regular monthly closed-meeting format to discuss the monthly report of the Director-General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The June meeting followed an acrimonious informal interactive dialogue (IID) on chemical weapons in Syria on 12 May which discussed the first report of the OPCW’s Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) on the alleged role of the Syrian Air Force in the use of sarin as a chemical weapon in Ltamenah on 24 and 30 March 2017 and chlorine as a chemical weapon on 25 March 2017.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its resumed 43rd regular session (the session was suspended on 13 March because of the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed on 15 June) the Human Rights Council renewed on 22 June the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria for one year (A/HRC/43/L.33).

Key Issues and Options

The cross-border delivery of humanitarian assistance remains a contentious issue and will be in focus before the authorisation contained in resolution 2504 expires on 10 July. Members are anticipating difficult negotiations.

One option could be for the Council to renew resolution 2504 for a period of 12 months, allowing for consistent, unhindered cross-border humanitarian aid to be delivered to Syria through two Council-authorized border crossings with Turkey (Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa).

Another option could be for the Council to pursue a renewal of resolution 2504, seeking to reinstate the Al Yarubiyah border crossing between Syria and Iraq. Several Council members have sought ways to authorise the reopening of the Al Yarubiyah border crossing in recent months, given their views about the inadequacy of current cross-line deliveries and especially in light of the risk posed by COVID-19.

According to press reports, the initial draft resolution proposes the re-authorisation of Al Yarubiyah for six months until 10 January 2021 with an option for an additional six months if the Council determines that the effects of COVID-19 warrant it. Some Council members, however, have expressed scepticism about the need for such an authorisation: speaking during the 29 April Council briefing, Russia’s Permanent Representative urged Council members “not to waste their time on looking for a way to advocate, explicitly or implicitly for getting Al Yarubiyah back”.

Council Dynamics

The Council remains divided on Syria; difficult negotiations on the re-authorisation of cross-border aid in December 2019 and January 2020 starkly illustrated differences on the humanitarian file. Most members have emphasised the critical importance of the cross-border delivery mechanism. China and Russia, however, have often expressed reservations. Both countries have maintained that coordination with Syria on this mechanism could be strengthened and expressed concern that aid coming into the country could be diverted to terrorist groups. During his November 2019 Council briefing, Lowcock said that the cross-border aid delivery system “is one of the most closely scrutinized... in the world” and that “evidence of systemic aid diversion” had not been detected.

Belgium and Germany are the penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The Council last met on Cyprus on 30 January when it adopted resolution 2506, which extended the mandate of UNFICYP for six months. The resolution urged both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sides, and others involved, to renew their commitment to reach a settlement under the auspices of the UN. It also called on the parties to establish an effective mechanism for direct military contacts with each other, with UNFICYP as a facilitator in its liaison role, and to reduce the existing obstacles to intercommunal contacts.

Over the past six months, there has been no meaningful progress on the political front and no direct formal engagement between the Cypriot leaders in the context of unification talks. The last formal meeting between the Cypriot leaders under UN auspices took place in August 2019. Secretary-General António Guterres tried to provide some impetus for the political process in November 2019 when he hosted an informal meeting in Berlin between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinçi. In a statement issued after the meeting, Guterres said that the Cypriot leaders agreed that the current status quo is not sustainable and that they had stressed the importance of reaching a solution to the Cyprus issue within a foreseeable timeframe. Guterres also noted that he would be willing to explore the possibility of organising an informal meeting with Cypriot parties and the three guarantor powers (Greece, Turkey, and the UK). The negotiations have remained at an impasse since the collapse of the latest round of unification talks in the middle of 2017.

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been the most prominent issue in Cyprus

during the past several months, pushing aside the discussions about the political process. In late February, the Greek Cypriot side closed four of seven existing crossing points on the buffer zone (the demilitarised zone controlled by UNFICYP) to prevent a possible spread of COVID-19 in Cyprus. At the time, Cyprus had no registered cases of COVID-19. In the following days, dozens gathered on both sides of the island to protest the closure of the crossing points. On several occasions, the Greek Cypriot police used pepper spray to disperse demonstrators in Nicosia, some of whom attempted to make their way through the crossing point at Ledra Street.

In a 5 March statement, UNFICYP expressed concern about the disruption to daily life caused by the closure of crossing points. It called on both sides to enhance their cooperation in response to the pandemic. On 16 March, all crossings on the buffer zone were closed as the island detected its first cases of COVID-19. Both sides agreed to partially open the buffer zone crossings on 8 June for specific categories of people, while their full reopening is expected from 1 July.

Presidential elections in Cyprus' north were initially scheduled to take place in April but were moved to October because of restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Akinçi, who has been leading the negotiations on unification during the past five years, will run for re-election. Given the circumstances, the resumption of the political process is expected only after the elections.

Human Rights-Related Developments

At its 43rd session (suspended on 13 March because of COVID-19 and resumed from 15 to 22 June), the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the question of human rights in Cyprus (A/HRC/43/22). The report, which covers the period from 1 December 2018 to 30 November 2019, observed that the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders met informally with the Secretary-General on 25 November 2019, agreeing that "achieving a comprehensive and durable settlement within a foreseeable horizon was of the utmost importance to the future well-being of both communities and that the status quo was unsustainable". The report noted, however, that despite some positive developments, "the division of Cyprus still hinders the full enjoyment of ... human rights and fundamental freedoms...". In this

regard, the report welcomed the work of intercommunal initiatives and civil society and encouraged further visits to Cyprus by the HRC special procedures mandate holders.

Key Issues and Options

Since the collapse of the most recent round of unification talks in 2017, the Council has primarily been concerned with the lack of any meaningful progress on the political front and diminishing prospects for advancing the political settlement of the Cyprus problem anytime soon. Although the Council has taken the view that the primary responsibility for finding the solution to the Cyprus problem lies mainly with the Cypriot sides, the Council could consider taking a more proactive approach to stimulating the process. An option would be to explore changing the mandate of UNFICYP, including seeking options for downsizing and for a possible exit strategy.

Developments in the political process have usually played an important role in guiding the mandate renewal negotiations. This year has seen no significant developments on the political front, in part because of the COVID-19 pandemic and in anticipation of presidential elections in northern Cyprus. To date, Council members have received few, if any, substantial details about UN consultant Jane Holl Lute's engagement with the parties. Ahead of the mandate renewal in July, the Council could consider holding a private meeting with Lute on the prospects for progress on the political track.

The Council will continue to monitor the situation as well as tensions over the exploration for hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus. As was the case in the past, these tensions can affect the political process negatively and carry potential risks for the security situation in the region.

Council Dynamics

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

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2506 (30 January 2020) extended the mandate of UNFICYP for six months. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2020/23** (7 January 2020) was on UNFICYP. **S/2019/883** (14 November 2019) was on the Secretary-General's good offices in Cyprus. **Security Council Press Statements SC/13980** (9 October 2019) reiterated the importance of the status of the city of Varosha as set out in previous Security Council resolutions. **SC/13722** (27 February 2019) welcomed the 26 February 2019 meeting between Cypriot leaders and the progress made on confidence-building measures.

Cyprus

While the Council is united in its support for the political process, members diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the unification talks. Some seem to share the view that this process cannot be open-ended and that the Council could apply pressure on the parties to revive the negotiations.

The US has emphasised that peacekeeping missions must support political processes and that the Council should reconsider the

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

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

Climate and Security

Expected Council Action

Germany plans to convene a ministerial-level open debate on climate and security in late July. A Council product is a potential outcome of the meeting. Given that the extraordinary and provisional measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic may still be in place, an open videoconference (VTC) may be held instead of an open debate, with statements by non-Council members submitted in writing.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council last held a thematic discussion on climate-security matters in January 2019 under the Dominican Republic's presidency. That was an open debate on the theme "Addressing the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security". Briefings were provided by Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; Achim Steiner, UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator; Pavel Kabat, Chief Scientist of the World Meteorological Organization; and Lindsay Getschel, a research assistant in the Stimson Center's Environmental Security Program. DiCarlo described efforts to enhance the analytical capacities of the UN system to assess climate-security risks. Steiner described UNDP projects being undertaken to help countries and areas vulnerable to climate change—such as the Maldives and countries in the Caribbean—adapt to climate-related risks. Kabat emphasised the many destabilising impacts

of climate change, observing that it heightens the chance of conflict over water, which can lead to increased displacement and migration. Getschel appealed to the Council to adopt a resolution formally recognising climate change as a threat to international peace and security.

On 22 April, an Arria-formula meeting was held via VTC on "Climate and security risks: the latest data". The meeting was co-organised by Belgium, the Dominican Republic, France, Estonia, Germany, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the UK, and Viet Nam. The briefers were Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo; Robert Malley, President and CEO, International Crisis Group; and Dan Smith, Director, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. DiCarlo described how the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has integrated climate change into its mediation efforts as appropriate; in this respect, she referred to the UN's mediation between farmers and pastoralists contesting resources in West Africa. Malley emphasised that the "impact of climate change on conflict is context-specific, which is why...marrying granular, field based political analysis...with climate expertise could produce the most effective conflict prevention outcomes". Smith underscored the need for the UN to "promote climate risk awareness [internally]...develop a systemic approach to managing climate-related security risk...and embed climate issues in conflict prevention and peacebuilding".

The ten Council members that organised the 22 April Arria-formula meeting held a virtual meeting with Secretary-General António Guterres on 22 June to discuss climate change and security. During the meeting, they emphasised the importance of improving the information the Council receives on climate-related security risks and noted that the UN system needed to enhance its readiness to respond to such risks.

In recent years, the Security Council has begun to integrate climate-security language into its formal products. Since 2017, the need for risk assessments and management strategies with regard to the destabilising effects of climate change and other ecological factors has been incorporated into Council outcomes on the Lake Chad region, Mali, Somalia, Central Africa, West Africa and the Sahel, and Sudan as well as in the thematic resolution that the Council adopted on "Silencing the Guns in Africa" in February 2019. In renewing the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in December 2019, the Council also recognised the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, and other factors on the stability of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and welcomed the "leadership of the DRC in the development of national strategies to address these issues". During the current year alone, climate-security language has been integrated into a presidential statement on the UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel, the reauthorisation of the AU Mission

UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2525 (3 June 2020) established UNITAMS. S/RES/2520 (29 May 2020) re-authorised AMISOM. S/RES/2502 (19 December 2019) extended the mandate of MONUSCO for one year. Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2020/2 (11 February 2020) was on the UNOWAS. S/PRST/2011/15 (20 July 2011) was the Council's only thematic outcome to date on climate change and security. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8451 (25 January 2019) was an open debate during the Dominican Republic's presidency on "Addressing the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security".

Climate and Security

in Somalia (AMISOM), and the resolution establishing the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS).

Women, Peace and Security Developments

In his 9 October 2019 report on women, peace and security, the Secretary-General recognised that climate change will worsen complex emergencies, affecting women and girls disproportionately. He said that there is “an urgent need for better analysis and concrete, immediate actions to address the linkages between climate change and conflict from a gender perspective.” In response to this call, on 8 June, the UN Environment Programme, UN Women, the UNDP, and the DPPA published a report on “Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change”. The report is based upon the premise that the results of climate change aggravate existing conditions that threaten peace and security. It goes on to argue that the impact of and response to these threats are partially determined by gender norms. Drawing from case studies in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the report gives recommendations with regard to three interlinked goals: climate action, gender equality, and peace and security. In order to achieve these goals, an understanding of the gender dimension of climate-related security risks is key, according to the report. One of the recommendations of the report is ensuring “that gender considerations are appropriately reflected in debates and deliberations on emerging policy on climate-related security risks”. The report further recommends the integration of climate considerations into the National Action Plans (NAPs) for the implementation of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security; it points out that at the moment, only 17 out of 80 NAPs refer directly to climate change. During the 25 January 2019 open debate under the presidency of the Dominican Republic on “Addressing the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace

and security”, only five UN member states out of 75 included in their statements a recognition of a gender perspective as relevant in the response to climate-related security risks.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues that may be raised by Council members and other member states during the debate include:

- the need to enhance understanding about the security implications of climate change;
- the importance of developing the analytical capacities of the UN system to assess climate change-related security threats, provide the Security Council with useful information about these threats, and support states and regional organisations in developing and implementing actionable plans to address them;
- the importance of developing synergies among states, regional and sub-regional organisations, and the UN system in managing and mitigating climate change-related security risks; and
- the need to determine how the Security Council, the peace operations it mandates, and UN Country Teams can best collaborate to address such risks.

One option that is being considered is to pursue an outcome on climate change and security that could focus on enhancing the information that the Secretariat provides to the Council on climate-security risks; strengthening the capacity of UN entities in the field to analyse and respond to these risks; and developing synergies between the Security Council and other UN entities (for

example, the Secretariat, the DPPA and the Peacebuilding Commission) to develop risk management strategies for the security impacts of climate change.

In addition to briefings from UN officials, the Council could also consider requesting a briefing from a climate-security expert from a think tank, university, or NGO who can describe linkages between climate change and peace and security and present options for the role the Council could play in tackling these issues.

Council Dynamics

Climate change and security is a controversial issue in the Council. Most Council members currently champion the organ’s engagement on this issue. They have emphasised that factors such as drought, water scarcity, food insecurity, and desertification that are caused or exacerbated by climate change increase the risk of violent conflict. They believe that there should be a more systemic integration of climate-related security risks into the Council’s work.

However, Russia, China and the US have strong reservations about the Council’s engagement on this issue. Russia and China have expressed concern that Council involvement encroaches on the prerogatives of other UN entities, which they maintain are better equipped to deal with this issue. Russia also believes that this is essentially a sustainable development matter, with only tangential links to international peace and security. The US has resisted efforts to incorporate climate-security language in Council outcomes on Iraq, Haiti and other matters.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence at ministerial level, focusing on accountability and the implementation of a survivor-centred approach. The Special

Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, is expected to brief. Representatives of civil society are also likely to participate. No formal outcome is anticipated at this point. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still

in place, the open debate is likely to be held as an open videoconference and statements by non-Council members would be submitted in writing.

UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2511 (25 February 2020) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for a year; it was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). S/RES/2498 (15 November 2019) extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2020. S/RES/2467 (23 April 2019) was on conflict-related sexual violence; it was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). S/RES/1960 (16 December 2010) established the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence. S/RES/1888 (30 September 2009) established the position of Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. S/RES/1820 (19 June 2008) addressed sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/487 (9 June 2020) was the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8514 (23 April 2019) was the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence and the adoption of resolution 2467.

Women, Peace and Security

Key Recent Developments

Conflict-related sexual violence, as defined in the Secretary-General's annual reports, "refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict". The position of Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict was established in resolution 1888 of 30 September 2009.

As in previous years, the Secretary-General's annual report focuses on countries where verifiable information was obtained. It provides analysis and recommendations on sexual violence in countries affected by conflict (Afghanistan, the Central African Republic [CAR], Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC], Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan [Darfur], Syria, and Yemen), in post-conflict situations (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Côte d'Ivoire, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), and "other situations of concern", including Burundi and Nigeria.

As has been the case since 2012, the annual report also contains an annex listing "parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council". It names parties in the CAR (six non-state actors), the DRC (21 non-state actors and two state actors), Iraq (one non-state actor), Mali (five non-state actors), Myanmar (one state actor), Somalia (one non-state actor and three state actors), South Sudan (four non-state actors and two state actors), Sudan (two non-state actors and two state actors), and Syria (five non-state actors and two state actors) as well as Boko Haram under "other parties of concern on the agenda of the Security Council". States listed in the annex are prohibited from contributing to UN peace operations. If an actor "has made formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence", it is marked in the annex as such. In order to be removed from the annex, an actor has to cease violations and implement its formal commitments. Only one party, the Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire, has been delisted so far.

Resolution 2467 of 23 April 2019 on conflict-related sexual violence contained a request to the Secretary-General to include in his next annual report "a gap assessment and recommendations [...] on how the Security Council can strengthen and monitor implementation of relevant commitments by parties to conflict as well as on how the UN can better support local, national, and regional efforts to address the needs of survivors of sexual violence in conflict". The annual report concludes that compliance by conflict parties with the Council's normative framework "remains low after a decade of concerted focus".

In resolution 1820 of 19 June 2008, the Council expressed its intention to consider the use of targeted sanctions against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. Of the 14 Security Council sanctions regimes, seven include explicit designation criteria for these crimes: CAR, DRC, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. In total, 13 individuals (under the CAR, DRC, Mali, and South Sudan sanctions regimes) and four entities (under the CAR and DRC sanctions regimes) have been listed under these criteria so far.

During the negotiations leading up to the 15 November 2019 adoption of resolution 2498 on the Somalia sanctions regime—which already included "planning, directing or committing acts involving sexual and gender based violence" among its listing criteria—Germany proposed adding a request for the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to "share relevant information" with the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, which was included.

On 25 February, the Council adopted resolution 2511, renewing the Yemen sanctions regime with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). The Council reaffirmed that conflict-related sexual violence falls under an existing sanctions designation criterion that encompasses violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws. During the negotiations, Belgium had proposed adding a separate designation criterion for the commission of conflict-related sexual violence, but this was not agreeable to China and Russia.

On 22 May, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict published a policy brief on "Implications of COVID-19 for the prevention of and

response to conflict-related sexual violence". The office emphasised that measures taken to combat the pandemic had already begun to disrupt the work of the UN, including the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence established by resolution 1960 of 16 December 2010.

According to estimates by OCHA, less than 1 percent of contributions to the UN's humanitarian plans are directed towards the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence. A reprioritisation of resources by donors, countries and the UN due to the pandemic may result in even greater funding shortfalls, according to the policy brief.

Arguing that the fight against impunity is essential in deterring and preventing such crimes as well as in providing redress for survivors, the policy brief also addresses the expected detrimental effects the pandemic will have on accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. Those include the judicial systems' current lack of capacity to respond to crimes.

The Council held its previous annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence on 23 April 2019. Resolution 2467, drafted by Germany, was adopted during the debate, with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia) following difficult negotiations, including veto threats by China, Russia and the US. Contentious issues included language on sexual and reproductive health rights and the establishment of a formal Council mechanism on conflict-related sexual violence, both of which were not acceptable to some members and were ultimately not included in the resolution.

Key Issues and Options

An ongoing issue for the Council is how to consolidate progress in the implementation of successive resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence. One option is to increase the direct interactions between Council members and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. That could include briefings to the Council in open or closed formats and to its subsidiary bodies, including sanctions committees.

Other issues include strengthening prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence; addressing the issue in the context of terrorism, human trafficking, and as a tactic of

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war; the accountability of perpetrators; access to services and judicial proceedings for survivors; and children born of war.

The Council could call upon state and non-state actors to make “formal commitments to adopt measures to address conflict-related sexual violence”, as required for delisting from the annex of the annual report, and request the Secretary-General to inform the Council on compliance with these commitments in his reporting.

Another option for the Council is to expand the designation criteria in all relevant sanctions regimes for conflict situations where sexual violence is persistently

perpetrated. Where such criteria exist, the Council could strengthen efforts to sanction perpetrators. In renewing the mandates of panels of experts assisting sanctions committees, the Council could make sure that, where relevant, the experts are requested to have gender expertise.

When negotiating mandate renewals of peace operations, Council members could ensure that, where pertinent, language supporting the deployment of gender advisers and women’s protection advisers is included.

Council Dynamics

The adoption of resolution 2467 showed the

current divisions among Council members on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. Council members interested in advancing the agenda might therefore avoid aiming for a Council product at this stage and focus on the implementation of the existing normative framework. However, the negotiations and vote on the resolution demonstrated that elected members are prepared to invest political capital to advance their agenda.

The US is the penholder on conflict-related sexual violence. The Dominican Republic and Germany are the co-chairs of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to renew the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) sanctions regime, which expires at the end of the month; the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August and is also expected to be renewed in July.

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

Key Recent Developments

On 22 June, the Security Council convened an open videoconference (VTC) meeting, followed by a closed VTC session, on the Secretary-General’s latest report on MINUSCA. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix was joined by Matias Bertino Matondo, AU Special Representative and head of the AU Office in the CAR, and Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service of the European Union. Lacroix told members that despite the increased challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, CAR continues to make progress on the implementation of the Political Peace Agreement, which was signed in Bangui by the CAR government and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019.

A recent resurgence in violence has, however, undermined the process.

The security situation in the CAR remains precarious. A number of violent clashes throughout the spring in the CAR’s north-east as well as violence in and around the towns of Bria and Ndélé have left dozens dead and displaced over 2,000 people. MINUSCA announced on 17 May that it was launching Operation “Igana siriri” (“Bringing Peace” in the local Sango language) in Ndélé to help stabilise the situation. On 17 June, MINUSCA announced another operation in coordination with the Central African armed forces (FACA) to end violence against civilians in western CAR committed by the 3R (Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation) armed group.

The difficult humanitarian and socio-economic situations have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 2.6 million people require humanitarian assistance in CAR, with 697,000 civilians internally displaced and another 593,000 people having sought refuge outside CAR. According to the Secretary-General’s most recent report, the CAR government has put in place several mitigating measures for COVID-19, and the number of confirmed cases remains relatively low in the country. The impact of the pandemic on the socio-economic situation, however,

has been considerable; border closures and reduced availability of food have led to price increases, and social distancing measures have caused urban transportation costs to rise substantially.

Despite security- and COVID-19-related concerns and the recent uptick in violence, presidential, legislative and local elections are scheduled for December 2020 and early 2021. The Secretary-General’s most recent report noted that the elections “will be affected by the challenges of organizing a sensitive political process in the midst of a global pandemic” and commended the CAR’s electoral authorities for publishing a revised electoral calendar that clearly recognises these challenges but adheres to prescribed constitutional timelines. On 16 May, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) announced that registration forms, critical to the authorities for establishing a voters’ list, had arrived at Bangui airport. Another 32 tonnes of registration materials were delivered to Bangui on 15 June.

Sanctions-Related Developments

In January, negotiations on the renewal of sanctions proved to be difficult, with the main points of disagreement revolving around the question of whether or not to ease the arms embargo on the CAR government. For several years, CAR government officials have requested that the arms embargo on their armed forces be lifted. In 2019,

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2507 (31 January 2020) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2020 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2020. **S/RES/2499** (15 November 2019) extended the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2020. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/124** (14 February 2020) was on MINUSCA. **Security Council Letter S/2019/930** (6 December 2019) contained the Secretary-General’s assessment of progress achieved on the key benchmarks the Council established for arms embargo measures in the CAR. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8728** (20 February 2020) was a briefing on the latest Secretary-General’s report on MINUSCA.

Central African Republic

wide consensus amongst Council members on the need to accommodate some of these concerns about the arms embargo resulted in the amendment of the sanctions regime in resolution 2488 of 12 September 2019. The resolution exempts, after notifying the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended for humanitarian or protective use and supplies to the CAR security forces of weapons with a calibre of 14.5mm or less that are intended solely for the support of or use in the CAR security sector reform process. Resolution 2507, renewing the sanctions regime, passed by a vote of 13 in favour to none against. China and Russia, citing their view that the Council should do more towards the complete lifting of sanctions on the CAR government, abstained. This was a departure from previous unanimous renewals of the sanctions regime.

Another issue that came up during the January negotiations was the duration of the sanctions regime's renewal. Given the upcoming elections in December 2020 and early 2021, some Council members raised concerns that renewing the mandate for one year might lead to the politicisation of the next mandate renewal, as it would coincide with the run-up to the elections. Resolution 2507 requested the Secretary-General to assess the progress achieved by the CAR authorities on the key benchmarks of the arms embargo no later than 30 June 2020. It further requested the CAR authorities to report by 30 June 2020 on progress made in security sector reform; the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation process; and the management of weapons and ammunition.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 18 June, the Human Rights Council held a high-level interactive dialogue on the human rights situation in the CAR as part of its resumed 43rd session which had been suspended on 13 March due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Nada Al-Nashif, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, noted the positive developments connected to the February 2019 Peace Agreement, particularly progress in formally establishing the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission. However, she expressed concern that attacks on civilians and other human rights violations and abuses remained "commonplace", including 634 incidents between September 2019 and May 2020. During the same meeting, the

independent expert on human rights in the CAR, Yao Agetse, said that at least 80 percent of 446 violations in 2019 were due to armed groups. Violations had increased since January with a series of attacks in Ndélé, some of which intentionally targeted civilians.

Key Issues and Options

The further lifting of the arms embargo and the length of the sanctions regime renewal and that of the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee will be key issues during the upcoming negotiations. Council members may want to take account of the Secretary-General's report on the key benchmarks of the arms embargo in order to assess progress. They may also want to consider renewing the mandate for 12 rather than six months to avoid concerns that the following mandate renewal could be politicised during the run-up to the elections.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is consensus on the Council in support of the Political Peace Agreement. However, differences regarding CAR sanctions persist. Several Council members are of the view that the sanctions regime continues to promote security in the CAR and can also serve to pressure the parties to implement the peace agreement, while other members have argued that more progress should be made towards the complete lifting of the arms embargo. The difficult negotiations and subsequent vote on resolution 2507 renewing the CAR sanctions regime ahead of its 31 January expiry demonstrated such divergences of opinion. Unlike previous unanimous renewals of the sanctions regime, China and Russia abstained on the resolution, arguing that the Council should do more to lift sanctions on the government.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

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Design Point Five, NY

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