

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

Russia holds the presidency in October. Much of the Council's work is likely to remain remote due to COVID-19 restrictions, although an effort is underway to hold several meetings on UN premises.

Russia will hold a debate focusing on a [comprehensive review of the peace and security situation](#) in the Persian Gulf region under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security". This signature event appears to have grown out of a concept for the region that Russia proposed in 2019. Secretary-General António Guterres is a possible briefer.

Two open debates are also anticipated late in the month. The quarterly open debate on "[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)" is expected to feature a briefing by Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov. There will also be an open debate on [Women, Peace and Security](#); possible briefers include the Secretary-General, UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngucka, a female peacekeeper, and a civil society representative. The event will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325, the Council's first on the topic of women, peace and security. A resolution is a possible outcome.

Three adoptions are currently scheduled for October. The Council expects to adopt a resolution renewing the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels suspected of being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking off the coast of [Libya](#).

The Council intends to adopt a resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in [Haiti](#) in October. Earlier in the month, a briefing is scheduled on Haiti. Also on the Americas, the Council plans to meet on developments in [Colombia](#), including the work of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia.

The mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in [Western Sahara](#) will be renewed. Prior

to that, Council members will meet on the mission's work and developments in Western Sahara.

Several other African issues are on the programme. Meetings are anticipated on:

- the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#);
- the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in [Mali](#);
- the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the [Central African Republic](#); and
- the UN Interim Security Force for [Abyei](#).

Briefings are planned on the work of the 1533 [DRC](#) Sanctions Committee and the 751 [Somalia](#) Sanctions Committee.

Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia is also scheduled to provide his biannual briefing to the Council in October on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the [DRC](#) and the region.

In addition to the open debate on the [Persian Gulf region](#) and the quarterly open debate on the [Middle East](#), there will be several other meetings on Middle East topics.

The usual monthly meetings on [Yemen](#) and on the political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons tracks in [Syria](#) are anticipated. The political and humanitarian briefings on Syria are likely to be combined. Meetings on the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the [Golan Heights](#) and the implementation of resolution 1559 (Lebanon) are also scheduled.

The one European issue currently on the programme this month is [Kosovo](#).

Also this month, President of the [International Court of Justice](#) Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf will provide the annual briefing to the Council, most likely in a private meeting.

The Council is likely to continue to follow closely developments in [Nagorno-Karabakh](#), among other cases, in October.

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In Hindsight: The Annual Report to the General Assembly— Can It Be Improved?

The Security Council's annual report to the General Assembly has been one of the most belaboured aspects of the Council's working methods. Numerous initiatives undertaken by member states since 1993 have aimed at making the report more useful to its principal addressee, the General Assembly, and to the general public. The most recent of these initiatives culminated in the adoption on 27 December 2019 of a note by the president of the Security Council, tightening the report's preparation timeline with the aim of presenting it to the General Assembly before the beginning of summer, starting with the report for 2020.

Changes to the annual reporting process have come in response to pressure from the UN membership, which since the end of the Cold War has been increasingly called upon to implement Council decisions in matters such as peacekeeping and sanctions and has wanted better insight into, and more accountability for, the Council's work. Among recurrent criticisms were calls for the Council to make the annual report more analytical and for its timeline to allow for a thorough examination by members prior to the discussion at the General Assembly.

Responding to the timing-related concerns, the Council revised the process for the elaboration of the annual report in 2015, changing the reporting cycle to a calendar year and moving the presentation of the report from the main part of the General Assembly's regular session to the following spring. Until then, the Council's annual report had covered the 12-month period ending shortly before the General Assembly session at which it would be presented. In practice, there was usually insufficient time between the completion of the report and the end of the main session for members to examine the report thoroughly ahead of its discussion.

Despite the intention to afford member states more time for the study and discussion of the report, the opposite happened in the first two years after moving to a calendar-year cycle. The introductions of the 2017 and 2018 reports were finalised much later than the intended 31 January deadline, the reports' adoption took place in August, and the General Assembly discussed the reports at the very end of its session, with most delegations busy

preparing for the opening of the next session. Only a few participated in the report's discussion. In 2019, the annual report was again adopted in August but, when scheduling the discussion at the General Assembly, its president allowed more time for preparations. This time, 27 speakers, including 14 permanent representatives, participated.

This year, the Council adopted its 2019 annual report on 14 July, earlier than in previous years, during its first in-person meeting since the special measures necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic went into effect in mid-March. In turn, the 31 August discussion in the General Assembly (held as an informal virtual meeting) included 37 member states, most of them represented by permanent representatives.

The most recent adjustment of the timeline—stipulating that starting with the 2020 report, its adoption should happen by 30 May “in time for its consideration by the General Assembly immediately thereafter”—will be tested for the first-time next year. It may lead to more predictability and thus a more deliberate treatment of the report by the General Assembly.

The situation seems to be more complex with respect to addressing the other major criticism of the annual report: its insufficient analytical content. For more than two decades, the Council has made an effort to inject an element of analysis into the report.

In a 1997 note by the president that outlined a new structure for the annual report, Council members specified that the report would contain, as an addendum, “brief assessments on the work of the Security Council, which representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Security Council may wish to prepare, under their own responsibility and following consultations with members of the Council for the month during which they presided and which should not be considered as representing the views of the Council”. Up to that point, the annual report had been prepared by the Secretariat and did not contain any input from Council members.

A 2002 note by the president of the Council introduced several changes to the structure of the annual report, many of which were aimed at reducing its volume, which

had swollen to almost 600 pages. Thus, the report would no longer reproduce the monthly assessments in full but would simply list the assessments “issued by the individual monthly Presidencies of the Council on its work”. At the same time, the Council would begin the practice of assigning responsibility for drafting an introductory essay for the annual report to one of its members (the July presidency) to enhance its analytical content. The note also said that during the public meeting when the report is adopted, “members of the Council who wish to do so could comment on the work of the Council for the period covered by the report”. The Council's only public debate on the adoption of its annual report took place in 2002, and the introduction, which initially was indeed analytical, soon started losing this edge.

Based on conversations with diplomats charged with drafting the introductory essay in the last few years, it appears that achieving analytical content is hard for both substantive and political reasons. Substantively, the monthly assessments by different presidencies—which constituted important primary material for the drafters of the introduction and since 1997 had been produced by all presidencies, usually quite quickly—have, in the last few years, been submitted erratically. When the 2017 and 2018 annual reports were circulated, only three of the 12 presidencies for each year had submitted assessments. For 2019, eight members submitted their assessments in time to be used if the introduction drafter so desired. Politically, the heightened divisiveness within the Council during the past several years has made agreeing on the introduction—which is a consensus document—more difficult and time-consuming.

Some options for making the report more useful and its discussion more substantive have emerged from the General Assembly's considerations of the report and the working methods open debates at the Council and from the observations of interested diplomats.

With the Council due to adopt the 2020 report by 30 May 2021, the General Assembly should schedule its discussion in June, as several participants in this year's Assembly discussion suggested. Early consultations between the two bodies' presidencies could facilitate advance planning.

In Hindsight: The Annual Report to the General Assembly— Can It Be Improved?

While producing and agreeing on the introductory essay has been a challenge for Council members, it seems generally useful when the drafting delegation assigns the lead writer early on, who then drafts as the year progresses rather than waiting for it to end. Relieving the drafter of some of his or her regular diplomatic responsibilities may also be helpful. Budgeting sufficient time for reaching consensus on the introduction's content would be essential to meeting the 30 May deadline for the report's adoption.

Making the introductory essay more analytical is probably a bigger challenge, and delegations put forward specific recommendations during the 31 August informal discussion of the 2019 report.

Several speakers—including Switzerland, speaking on behalf of Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT), a diverse group of 25 member states sharing the objective of encouraging better Security Council working methods and enhanced transparency—suggested that the drafters focus attention not only on individual files but also address trends in the areas of international peace and security and the work of the Council.

Various delegations suggested that, in addition to describing what the Council had accomplished during the year, the introduction should also analyse what the Council was unable to achieve. Other suggestions included analyses of trends in voting during the year (such as unanimous versus contested decisions, use of the veto, or non-adoptions because of an insufficient number of affirmative votes). The goal of such analyses, as Singapore stressed, would be “to allow all members of the General Assembly to understand trends in the Council so that all of us can work together to build convergence on the most important issues of the day”.

Whether it is possible to agree on a more analytical essay under today's Council dynamics remains a question. During the May Council open debate on working methods as well as in the Assembly's informal discussion of the annual report, several members highlighted the importance of all Council presidencies' producing their respective assessments of the work during that month. It has been stressed that the assessments, while produced in consultation with Council members, are submitted by the individual delegations and should not

be considered as representing the views of the Council. Assessments produced soon after the end of a presidency could be a vehicle for providing both analysis and capturing details that might later be overlooked. In a sense, coming full circle to the point when the monthly assessments were introduced in 1997, the set of assessments from a given year could form a companion piece to the annual report. Another opportunity for individual Council members to share their analyses of the Council's work during a particular year—and thus enhancing the Council's transparency and accountability to the broader membership—would be their own participation in the public discussion during the meeting held to adopt the annual report. The most recent compendium of working methods, the 2017 “Note 507”, stresses that during that meeting, “members of the Council who wish to do so may comment on the work of the Council for the period covered by the report”.

Also this month, President of the International Court of Justice Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf will provide the annual briefing to the Council, most likely in a private meeting.

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Afghanistan

On 3 September, Council members held an open VTC meeting on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2020/891). Deborah Lyons, Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's report on UNAMA, issued on 18 August. The Council was also briefed by Saad Mohseni, Chief Executive of MOBY GROUP, which includes Afghanistan's largest media company. On 12 September, significant progress was made in the Afghan peace process, as the negotiation teams of the Afghan government and the Taliban met in Doha, Qatar, for a first round of intra-Afghan talks, which are aimed at achieving a political settlement to the war in Afghanistan. On 15 September, the Security Council adopted resolution 2543 which renewed the mandate of UNAMA for

another year, until 17 September 2021. On 18 September, in a press statement, Council members welcomed the start of the negotiations in Doha (SC/14310).

Belarus

On 4 September, there was an Arria-formula meeting on human rights in Belarus held via VTC. The meeting was co-organised by Council members Estonia, the UK and the US and co-sponsored by Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Ukraine. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia Urmas Reinsalu chaired the meeting. Briefings were delivered by Anaïs Marin, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus; Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarusian opposition presidential candidate; Valiantsin Stefanovic, Vice-Chairman of Viasna, a Minsk-based human rights

NGO; and Volha Siakhovich, a law expert for the Belarusian Association of Journalists.

Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations: the Role of the International Organization of La Francophonie

On 8 September, Council president Niger held an open VTC meeting on the relationship between the UN and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the organisation's founding in Niamey, Niger. The meeting's briefers were the Secretary-General of the OIF, Louise Mushikiwabo; Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa; and Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, the Foreign Minister of Armenia, in his capacity as the Chair of the Ministerial Conference of la Francophonie. This was the first

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Council meeting focused on cooperation with the OIF. Participants in the meeting spoke about the importance of early warning and conflict prevention mechanisms, promotion of sustainable development, the need to include women and young people in peace processes, the OIF's important electoral observation missions, and more. Speakers particularly emphasised the benefits of cooperation and partnerships between the OIF and other organisations, such as regional groups and the UN. Several speakers welcomed the fact that the virtual meeting was held with simultaneous translation, stressing that multilingualism is a crucial part of the UN's working methods.

Youth, Peace and Security

On 9 September, an Arria-formula meeting on the implementation of Security Council resolutions on youth, peace and security by UN peace operations was held via VTC. It was co-organised by the Dominican Republic, France, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and the US. The briefers at the meeting were Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations; Mauricio Artiñano, a representative from the UN Verification Mission in Colombia; Iana Minochkina, youth adviser and coordinator of the youth, peace and security program in UNMIK; Joao Scarpelini, former UN youth adviser in Somalia; Andjela Mirković, member of the United Youth Task Force Network of Young Kosovo Peacebuilders; and Diellza Geci, co-founder of the Kosovo Youth Fest. At the meeting, participants discussed best-practices and lessons learned regarding the implementation of resolutions 2250 (2015), 2419 (2018) and 2535 (2020) by peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

COVID-19

On 9 September, Security Council members held an open VTC on the implementation of resolution 2532, which demanded a cessation of hostilities in all situations on the Council's agenda to combat the COVID-19 pandemic (S/2020/897). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

Mark Lowcock briefed. This was followed by a 24 September VTC summit-level debate on "global governance after COVID-19". Secretary-General António Guterres and AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat briefed at the session, which was chaired by Niger's president, Mahamadou Issoufou and organised during the General Assembly high-level week. The concept note for the meeting (S/2020/883) described the "weaknesses" exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in dealing with the peace and security threats caused by the crisis, and stated that the purpose of the summit was "to discuss the need for global governance reform to strengthen convergence towards global sustainable peace and security".

Children and Armed Conflict

On 10 September, the Security Council convened for an in-person open debate on "Children and Armed Conflict: Attacks against Schools as a Grave Violation of Children's Rights", which focused on the Sahel region (S/PV.8756). The Council was briefed by Virginia Gamba, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict; Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF; and Marika Tsolakakis, a representative from the Global Coalition for the Protection of Education from Attack. Council members were also briefed by two young civil society briefers from Niger: Rimana Mayaki, the president of the Children's Parliament of Niger, and Hadiza (who was identified only by her first name for safety reasons), a member of an organisation that promotes education in conflict zones. At the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement on attacks against schools, which was co-authored by Niger and Belgium (S/PRST/2020/8). The presidential statement reaffirmed the right to education and its contribution to peace and security, while condemning the significant increase in attacks against schools in recent years.

Myanmar

On 11 September, the Council discussed Myanmar during a closed VTC. Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener, High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, and Kanni Wignaraja, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific briefed on a range of issues including the need to de-escalate the conflict,

humanitarian access, the Panglong peace process, accountability, the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations, the tripartite memorandum of understanding between the Myanmar government, UNDP and UNHCR, and the upcoming November elections. While members showed some unity over concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for conflict de-escalation, it seems they were divided along the usual lines regarding issues such as accountability, international humanitarian law and humanitarian access.

Peacekeeping

On 14 September, the Security Council held its annual open debate on peacekeeping in accordance with resolution 2378, which requests the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive annual briefing on "reform of United Nations peacekeeping" every 12 months and to update the Council on the "continuous efforts made in filling the existing gaps in terms of force generation and capabilities" (S/2020/911). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed the Council on progress made in advancing the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

Counter-Terrorism

On 14 September, the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida and 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committees held the annual joint open briefing for UN members. On 16 September, the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee held a closed VTC for the presentation of a report by the Ombudsperson on a delisting request.

South Sudan

On 16 September, Council members held an open VTC, followed by a closed VTC, to discuss UNMISS (S/2020/914). The briefers were Nyachangkuouth Ramban Tai, representing the civil society organisation Assistance Mission for Africa, and Special Representative and head of UNMISS David J. Shearer. Ramban Tai spoke about intercommunal violence in South Sudan and emphasised the Security Council's protection of civilians role. Shearer described delays in security sector reform and in reconstituting the Transitional National Legislative Assembly in South Sudan.

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Conflict-Induced Food Insecurity

On 17 September, Security Council members held an open VTC on the protection of civilians from conflict-induced hunger (S/2020/930). Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, Executive Director of the World Food Programme David Beasley and the Director-General of the Food and Agricultural Organisation, Qu Dongyu, briefed. Earlier in the month, on 4 September, Lowcock sent Council members a white paper warning about worsening food insecurity, including the risk of famine, as a result of armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northeast Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. The white paper had been sent in accordance with resolution 2417 of May 2018 that requests the Secretary-General to report swiftly to the Council when there arises “the risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity”.

The Humanitarian Effects of Environmental Degradation of Peace and Security

On 17 September, Security Council members held a ministerial-level open debate in VTC format on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security (S/2020/929). A concept note was circulated in advance of the meeting (S/2020/882). Kalla Ankourao, Niger’s Foreign Minister, chaired. The focus of the meeting was on the Sahel region and the

Lake Chad Basin, although some participants broadened the geographical scope of the discussion. ICRC President Peter Maurer, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Ibrahim Thiaw, and UNCCD Earth Ambassador, artist and activist Inna Modja briefed. Maurer spoke about his recent visit to Niger and Burkina Faso, and the tensions precipitated by severe weather events. Thiaw spoke of violence precipitated in the Sahel region over dwindling access to land and water resources. Modja described efforts to plant vegetation and trees across the Sahel to enhance stability in the region.

Iraq

On 18 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2544 renewing the mandate of UNITAD until 18 September 2021 (S/2020/920). Resolution 2544 retains UNITAD’s mandate. It also aligns the term of the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD with the term of UNITAD’s mandate, and renews the Special Adviser’s term until 18 September 2021. In a 16 September letter to the Council president, the Iraqi foreign minister had requested the renewal of UNITAD’s mandate for one year.

Sudan

On 25 September, the Council held an in-person briefing on Sudan in the ECOSOC chamber (S/PV.8761). Under-Secretary-General

for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed on UNITAMS and UNAMID, respectively. The briefing followed the 3 June adoption of resolutions 2524 and 2525. Resolution 2524 established UNITAMS for an initial period of 12 months, while resolution 2525 extended UNAMID’s mandate until 31 December. Among other issues, the Council discussed the Secretary-General’s 17 September report, which suggested a structure and geographical deployment for UNITAMS.

Nagorno-Karabakh

On 29 September, Council members met under “any other business” on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, and the UK requested the meeting, considering the recent escalation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on recent developments. Following the meeting, Council members issued press elements in which they voiced support for the Secretary-General’s call for an immediate end to the fighting and a return to negotiations. They also expressed support for the central role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, while urging the sides to work closely with them to resume dialogue without preconditions.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to renew 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, which is set to expire on 3 October.

The authorisation given by 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. The mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expires on 15 September 2021.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General’s latest report on the implementation of resolution 2491, which extended the smuggling and trafficking-related vessel inspection authorisation in October 2019, said, “the Mediterranean Sea remains a high-volume and deadly thoroughfare for the smuggling of, and trafficking in, refugees and migrants”. The overall number of people arriving in Europe on the Central, Eastern and

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2542 (15 September 2020) extended UNSMIL’s mandate until 15 September 2021; it was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). **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/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. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/876** (2 September 2020) was on the implementation of resolution 2491.

Libya

Western Mediterranean routes decreased by around 30 percent in comparison to the same time period last year. Between 1 March and 31 July 2019, 28,000 migrants and refugees arrived in Europe by sea; between 1 March and 31 July of this year, the number stood at 20,000, according to UNHCR and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The number of people departing from Libya during that period saw an increase, however. In 2019, UNHCR reported 6,636 departures between 1 March and 31 July; in 2020 it reported 9,500 departures within the same timeframe.

The current security situation in Libya and the country's lack of effective state institutions have created a growing space for organised crime, including the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, according to the EU. A person will pay between 500 to 1,500 euros to get to Europe, depending on the type of boat and how many people are travelling in it. By way of example, the Secretary-General in his report calculated that a rubber boat which is able to carry 120 people can bring human traffickers and migrant smugglers a potential profit of 168,000 euros. UNHCR and IOM said that the boats are often overcrowded and unseaworthy, and smugglers frequently do not provide life jackets, water or food. The EU reported that smugglers continued to tactically avoid providing enough fuel for the boats to reach European shores via the Central Mediterranean but enough for the boats to leave Libya's territorial sea. In order to avoid being captured themselves, the smugglers in some cases leave the migrants and refugees in the boats to complete the journey on their own.

The Secretary-General re-emphasised that under international law, Libya is a safe port neither of disembarkation nor of return. Policies of member states continue to result in the disembarkation of migrants and refugees in Libya, however. The number of people returned to Libya after the vessels transporting them were intercepted increased from about 3,700 between 1 March and 31 July 2019 to about 4,450 in the same time period this year. About half of the people disembarked originally came from Sudan, according to estimates by the UNHCR.

Libya has no asylum procedure nor

asylum legislation, and authorities “do not fully recognize the mandate of UNHCR in providing and overseeing the application of international protection”, according to the Secretary-General's report. Migrants and refugees continue to “suffer or witness unspeakable brutality and inhumanity” during their attempts to get to Europe. About half of the people disembarked in Libya were placed in overcrowded detention centres. For the approximately 2,780 people being held in official detention centres as at 31 July, the conditions remain “horrific” as detainees experience grave violations of their human rights by officials and armed groups. The ill-treatment reported included instances of torture, including sexual and gender-based violence (in some cases leading to the death of the victims); enforced disappearances; forced labour; forced recruitment by armed groups; insufficient health care and food; exposure to extreme heat; and lack of ventilation, light and electricity. The perpetrators continue to commit these crimes with impunity. Grave human rights violations are also reported in unofficial detention centres run by both state and non-state armed groups, housing “hundreds of migrants and refugees”.

The COVID-19 pandemic led some European countries to temporarily refuse to allow disembarkations or the rescue of persons in distress at sea and restrictions imposed by states on vessels operated by non-governmental organisations halted their rescue operations for weeks. One country reportedly ordered commercial vessels to push boats in distress back to the high seas.

The impact of measures taken by states aimed at preventing and combatting trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling, including through targeted sanctions imposed by the Council through the 1970 Libya sanctions regime, “remains difficult to ascertain”, according to the Secretary-General's report.

The EU launched the military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) on 1 April as the follow-on mission to EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA. Operation Irini's primary task is the implementation of the arms embargo, a secondary task being to disrupt “the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks”. The EU

reported that the operation had conducted a total of 111 flights between its inception and 31 July, reporting vessels in (potential) distress to the relevant national authorities. Operation Irini's mandate does not include a search and rescue component.

At the time of writing, the UN's 2020 humanitarian response plan for Libya of \$129.8 million was funded at 59.1 percent, with \$53.1 million outstanding.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) was scheduled to consider, as part of an interactive dialogue on 5 October, an oral update from a fact-finding mission to Libya that had been mandated 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 immediate issue for the Council in October is to adopt a resolution renewing 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.

Council Dynamics

Members continue to be aware that international efforts to combat the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, including via vessels off the coast of Libya, need to be strengthened. The last three years have seen few changes in the authorisation to support those efforts, which made the negotiations less divisive than the initial discussion in 2015. Issues around flag state consent and the authorisation to use force were sources of contention at the time. If the penholder aims for little change to the text, negotiations may again be uncontentious.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, sharing the pen with Germany on the sanctions file; Germany will draft the October authorisation renewal. Günter Sautter, Germany's Deputy Permanent Representative, chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

Comprehensive Review of the Situation in the Gulf Region

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold a debate focusing on a comprehensive review of the situation in the Persian Gulf region under the agenda item “maintenance of international peace and security”. This is a signature event of the Russian presidency, building on a concept for the region that Russia proposed in 2019.

Background

In addressing the complex security situation in the region, Russia shared a proposal on the “Collective Security Concept for the Persian Gulf Region” with members of the Security Council and the wider UN membership via a letter to the Secretary-General in July 2019. That same month in Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry presented the proposal to representatives of Arab states, Iran, Turkey, the five permanent members of the Security Council, the EU, the Arab League, and the BRICS countries (comprising, in addition to Russia, Brazil, India, China and South Africa) accredited in Moscow. A month later, Russia unveiled more details about the initiative in a press conference at the UN. Russia identified as one of the main priorities the need to address the issue of terrorism and extremism in the region by creating a consolidated counter-terrorism coalition and mobilising public opinion in the Islamic world to this end. The concept emphasised the importance of common adherence to international law, the UN Charter and Security Council resolutions. Russia stressed that the security system in the region should be universal and comprehensive, recognising the interests of all regional and other parties. It has also emphasised the importance of confidence-building measures for the process.

As one of the long-term objectives, Russia envisions the creation of an Organization for Security and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf, which would be composed of the countries in the region as well as Russia, China, the US, the EU, India, and other interested parties as observers or associate members. Russia has said that the process of establishing such a security system should be initiated through

bilateral and multilateral consultations among stakeholders in the region and beyond, including regional organisations. This would eventually lead to an international conference on security and cooperation in the Gulf during which stakeholders would be called upon to agree on the main parameters of the future security system.

Key Developments

Various conflicts in the Gulf region continue to be a source of significant instability for the immediate region and to affect international relations more widely, given the number of external stakeholders that are involved. Regional dynamics in the Gulf are dominated by the Sunni-Shi’a divide—manifested primarily between predominantly Sunni Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and predominantly Shi’a Iran—and divisions within the Arab League, including the crisis with Qatar.

The conflict in Yemen, which has implicated several regional actors, has entered its sixth year and shows no signs of abating. The fighting has exacerbated Yemen’s humanitarian crisis and caused massive displacement of the civilian population.

Hostilities between the US and Iran have contributed to the already tense security situation in the region. In May 2018, the US announced its withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) aimed at preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, and it has since continued to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran as a part of its broader strategy of maximum pressure. Under the agreement, which had been endorsed by resolution 2231, the Council lifted nuclear-related sanctions on Iran while establishing a stringent system to monitor Iran’s nuclear programme. Formally, Iran has remained in the agreement although it has reduced its nuclear-related commitments and has gradually resumed uranium enrichment activities beyond JCPOA-mandated limits. Iran has continued to emphasise that its actions are reversible and that its return to full compliance with the JCPOA is conditioned on sanctions relief from the agreement’s remaining parties.

Resolution 2231 put in place specific restrictions on, among other things, arms-related transfers to and from Iran, which are set to expire in October. The US has argued that Iran poses a threat to peace and security in the region and that it continues to supply weapons to terrorist groups and proxies in violation of resolution 2231. Therefore, it has stressed the importance of extending the arms embargo beyond October.

In August, the US circulated to Council members a draft resolution that would extend the existing arms-related restrictions indefinitely or “until the Security Council decides otherwise”. On 14 August, the draft resolution was not adopted, failing to obtain nine votes. The Dominican Republic and the US voted in favour, China and Russia against, and the remaining Council members abstained. On 20 August, the US submitted a letter to the Council president notifying the Council that it finds Iran to be “in significant non-performance of its commitments under the JCPOA” and that it is initiating the snapback mechanism leading to the re-imposition of sanctions in place before the adoption of resolution 2231.

Resolution 2231 stipulates that any concerned party to the JCPOA can notify the Council about an issue that it considers a significant violation of the agreement. The sanctions in place before the adoption of resolution 2231 would then resume 30 days after the notification unless the Council adopts a resolution that continues the lifting of the sanctions. All Council members except the Dominican Republic have challenged the legality of the US assertion that it still has a right to trigger the snapback mechanism, given that it withdrew from the JCPOA in May 2018. The US has argued that it still retains this right because resolution 2231 lists it as a party to the JCPOA. The 30-day deadline for a snapback procedure passed on 20 September, and the US has said that it expects “that all UN member states will fulfil their legal obligation and re-impose sanctions on Iran”.

In the second part of 2019 and early this year, several security incidents in the Gulf region contributed to rising tensions among

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE PERSIAN GULF Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. S/RES/598 (20 July 1987) called for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of military activities between Iran and Iraq and, among other things, called for the Secretary-General to examine measures to enhance security and stability in the region. **Security Council Letters** S/2020/815 (20 August 2020) contained notification by the US that Iran is in significant non-performance of its commitments under the JCPOA. S/2019/604 (26 July 2019) contained the proposal of the Russian Federation on collective security in the Persian Gulf region and associated background information. S/2018/524 (1 June 2018) was the concept note for the debate on the maintenance of international peace and security: comprehensive review of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. **Security Council Meeting** S/PV.8293 (25 June 2018) was the debate on the comprehensive review of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. **Other** S/2020/803 (14 August 2020) was the draft resolution to extend the arms embargo on Iran.

Comprehensive Review of the Situation in the Gulf Region

some of the key players in the region and internationally. On 3 January, Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, was killed by a US strike near the Baghdad airport, as was Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy of the Iraqi Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). On 8 January, Iran retaliated by striking a US base in Iraq, injuring approximately 100 US troops, according to media reports.

In September 2019, the Abqaiq and Khurais oil facilities in Saudi Arabia—which process more than half of Saudi Arabia's daily crude oil production, or 5 percent of the global market—were attacked by drones and cruise missiles, causing heavy damage to the sites. The Houthi rebel group claimed responsibility for the attacks, but the US and Saudi Arabia claimed that the attack did not emanate from the territory of Yemen and that

the weapons used were of Iranian origin. The Houthi rebel group is at war with the government of Yemen, which is supported by a Saudi Arabia-led coalition. Houthi rebels also claimed responsibility for the June 2019 cruise missile attack on Abha international airport in Saudi Arabia. In another incident in June 2019, two oil tankers were attacked in the Strait of Hormuz. The US and Saudi Arabia blamed the attack on Iran, which denied the accusation.

During recent Council meetings on country-specific situations in the Gulf region, Russia has drawn attention to resolution 598 from 1987 which, among other things, called for the Secretary-General to examine measures to enhance security and stability in the region. This is consistent with its proposal for collective security in the Gulf.

Council members have organised a

number of discussions on the regional dynamics of conflicts in the Middle East in recent years. In March 2019, France and Germany organised an informal interactive dialogue on “Fostering dialogue and cooperation as a response to conflicts and common challenges in the Middle-East and North Africa”. The meeting was intended to explore ways “for the Council to overcome divisions and tackle collectively regional challenges, through promoting regional dialogue and cooperation, and, in each country of the region, strong state institutions that are respectful of human rights and the rule of law”. During its presidency in June 2018, Russia organised a debate on a comprehensive review of the situation in the Middle East and North Africa. The debate focused on broader issues affecting the region as well as the root causes of conflict.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments in Colombia and the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the mission, published on 25 September.

The mandate of the Verification Mission expires on 25 September 2021.

Key Recent Developments

The situation in Colombia remains difficult, as violence continues unabated despite repeated calls for parties to halt aggression in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Attacks against communities, including indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, and the killing of former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) members, human rights defenders, and social leaders continue to complicate the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group FARC-EP.

During the reporting period of the Secretary-General's report, the mission verified the killings of 18 former FARC-EP combatants—bringing the number of ex-combatants killed since the beginning of the year to 49. On 28 August, Jorge Iván Ramos, a leader of the FARC political party, was killed in the Bolívar department. Ramos is one of the highest-ranking former FARC-EP commanders to have been killed since the signing of the 2016 Peace Agreement. Members of the FARC party have publicly expressed alarm over information indicating that the guerrilla group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) might have been responsible for his death.

On 30 July, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the judicial component of the transitional justice system established by the 2016 Peace Agreement, expressed concern about the constant killings of former combatants and issued an order to the Colombian Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Office of the Presidential Counsellor for Stabilization and Consolidation, the National Protection Unit and the Ministry of Finance, calling on them to implement mechanisms for

the protection of ex-combatants contained in the 2016 agreement. Among other things, the SJP called for the National Commission on Security Guarantees, the body charged under the peace agreement with developing a public policy for dismantling criminal organisations and their support networks, to increase the frequency of its meetings and to present guidelines and an action plan for the policy within 60 days (that is, by 30 September). President Iván Duque convened the commission on 12 August after a long hiatus, last having done so on 9 January.

Violence against communities and social leaders also remains prevalent. Three massacres that took place between 10 and 16 August in the Nariño and the Valle del Cauca departments claimed the lives of 15 people, most of whom were minors. In addition, a massacre on 20 September in the municipality of Buenos Aires in the Cauca department resulted in the death of six young people. As of 25 September, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had verified 42 incidents in which a high number of civilians were killed since the beginning of the year, with an additional

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2545](#) (25 September 2020) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia until 25 September 2021. [Secretary-General's Report S/2020/943](#) (25 September 2020) was the 90-day report. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8749](#) (14 July 2020) was the quarterly meeting on Colombia. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14255](#) (16 July 2020) reiterated the support of Council members for the peace process in Colombia.

Colombia

13 under investigation. The continued violence and insecurity have led to large-scale displacement, with more than 37,000 people displaced in Colombia since the outset of the year. The Secretary-General has repeatedly stressed in his reports that the areas most affected by violence are rural departments with limited state presence that are characterised by the presence of illicit economies and illegal armed groups.

Following the death of a citizen in police custody on 9 September in Bogotá, large-scale public protests erupted in the capital and in the neighbouring city of Soacha. The citizen, Javier Ordoñez, was reportedly arrested for violating city rules aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19. The widespread circulation of a video showing police officers repeatedly shocking Ordoñez with a stun gun sparked anger over police misconduct and prompted calls for reform. Some of the protests turned violent, with OHCHR saying that “excessive use of force” by security forces may have resulted in the deaths of at least 13 people—most of whom were young people—and injured more than 300. On 21 September, further protests against the government’s response to the previous protests, as well as its economic and social policies took place in Bogotá.

On 25 September, the Security Council adopted resolution 2545, which extended the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for another year. The resolution did not make changes to the core mandate of the mission that was set out in the 2016 agreement. The mission’s mandate focuses on verifying aspects of the agreement related to the political, economic and social reincorporation of the former FARC-EP combatants, and personal and collective security guarantees which include comprehensive programmes of security and protection measures for communities and organisations in conflict-affected areas.

Resolution 2545 contains new language that recalls that the 2016 agreement envisaged a role for the Verification Mission in monitoring compliance with the sentences

handed down by the SJP. The resolution expresses the Council’s readiness to consider adding this task to the mandate of the Verification Mission, upon the conclusion of a consultation process coordinated by the Colombian government on the matter. The Colombian government had previously requested that the Council approve a role for the Verification Mission in monitoring the SJP sentences, but it appears that it needed more time to conduct inter-institutional consultations with the SJP and the Verification Mission on the matter. The SJP is reportedly expected to begin handing down sentences in the latter part of 2021.

Human Rights-Related Developments

[Addressing the Human Rights Council \(HRC\) at the opening of its 45th session on 14 September, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed deep concern about the killings of human rights defenders in Colombia. Bachelet said that OHCHR has documented 47 killings of human rights defenders in 2020, stressing that 44 additional cases are in the process of verification. Bachelet also addressed the protests following the death of Ordoñez. She noted that OHCHR is verifying reported cases of violence against protesters and has offered “technical assistance on democratic and human rights-based policing of protests”. The 2016 Peace Agreement “should be implemented to prevent further violence, and human rights violations and abuses”, she said.](#)

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 only on selected aspects—continues to be a key factor for Council members.

Council members may be interested to hear from the briefer what should be done to facilitate 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; guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of the reintegration process of former FARC-EP combatants; and ensuring the

centrality of the needs of communities affected by violence in all peacebuilding efforts.

The persistent violence in the country is a long-standing concern for the Council. This issue was addressed in numerous Council press statements calling for the National Commission on Security Guarantees to make progress in devising a plan to dismantle criminal organisations in the country. Some Council members may therefore wish to inquire about advances in this regard.

A future issue for the Council, subject to the completion of the consultations coordinated by the Colombian government, will be the possible expansion of the mandate of the Verification Mission to include monitoring of the sentences of the SJP. This will require an additional resolution. Ahead of that decision, Council members may request information from the Secretariat on relevant operational issues, such as which sanctions will be verified or whether the mission will require specific expertise. Members can request such information in the form of a Secretary-General’s letter, or they could convene a meeting to hear a briefing from a Secretariat official.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the peace process in Colombia. While they have generally been deferential towards the government, some differences in tone have emerged since 2019. Some Council members have been more critical of issues such as the continued insecurity in rural areas and the government’s uneven approach to implementing various aspects of the agreement. These differences were evident during the negotiations on resolution 2545. It appears that the EU members of the Council sought to add language on the killings of ex-combatants, human rights defenders and social leaders in reference to challenges in the implementation of the peace agreement. However, it seems that some Council members preferred not to make additional changes to the text of the resolution, and therefore the language was not retained.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing on the activities of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due out in October, and on the most recent developments. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place, the meeting is likely to be held as a videoconference (VTC).

UNDOF's mandate expires on 31 December.

Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement (the 1974 Agreement) between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur war. Its mandate is to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces as well as the so-called areas of separation (a demilitarised buffer zone) and limitation (where Israeli and Syrian troops and equipment are restricted) in the Golan Heights. Carrying out the mandate entails observing any violations of the 1974 Agreement, reporting them, and liaising with both sides. UNDOF protests observed violations of the 1974 Agreement and calls upon both sides to exercise restraint. Such violations regularly include unauthorised personnel and equipment in the areas of separation and limitation, the firing of weapons across the ceasefire line, and drones and aircraft crossing the ceasefire line. The mission's observation role has been limited since its September 2014 relocation from the Bravo (Syrian) to the Alpha (Israeli-occupied) side because of the armed conflict in Syria. As of 10 August, UNDOF comprises 1,098 personnel. The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan continues to provide UNDOF with military observers.

During the latest annual meeting with force commanders from UN peacekeeping operations, on 4 June the Council was briefed, among others, by the Deputy Force

Commander of UNDOF, Brigadier General Maureen O'Brien. In her remarks, she addressed UNDOF's COVID-19 plan of action. The purpose of the plan is to limit the possibility of the virus spreading in the mission while at the same time maintaining operational capability. Measures in effect under the plan include movement restrictions between the 14 UNDOF positions, staff (national as well as international) mostly working from home, and the identification of facilities for isolation and quarantine. She emphasised that there had been no COVID-19 cases in UNDOF to date and that the mission was able to continue implementing its mandate. Movement restrictions put in place by the Israeli and Syrian governments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had recently been eased.

In her briefing, O'Brien reiterated that UNDOF's operating environment is "complex and sensitive", including ongoing violations of the 1974 Agreement by both sides. Under these circumstances, UNDOF continues to develop its plan for a full return to the Bravo side. She added that a new trend had emerged: the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh/ISIL) had begun claiming responsibility for attacks perpetrated in the Dara'a governorate located in the area of limitation in the south of Syria. Some of these attacks had taken place within the UNDOF area of operations.

On 14 June, Israeli Settlements Minister Tzipi Hotovely announced the approval of a plan to settle 300 families in what will be known as "Trump Heights". On 25 March 2019, US President Donald Trump signed a presidential proclamation recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. UN spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said on the same day that Secretary-General António Guterres considers "that the status of Golan has not changed".

The Council renewed UNDOF's mandate in a unanimous vote on 29 June in resolution 2530.

Attacks between Israel and Syria—and therefore violations of the 1974 Agreement—increased in late July after the Israel Defense

Forces (IDF) allegedly killed a combatant of the Iranian-sponsored Shi'a militant group Hezbollah on the outskirts of Damascus on 20 July. On 3 August, the IDF confirmed that it had killed four people it accused of setting up explosives along the border fence on the Golan Heights. Retaliating against the Syrian government, which Israel blamed, the IDF attacked targets of the Syrian Armed Forces in the demilitarised zone.

The new head of Mission and UNDOF Force Commander, Major General Ishwar Hamal of Nepal, took over at the end of July. In a 25 August statement, he expressed his intention to continue expanding UNDOF's footprint but emphasised that this was likely to increase the security risks. Assessing the security situation as generally calm, he stressed that, nevertheless, the underlying situation "remains volatile and uncertain".

Key Issues and Options

The numerous violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974 are ongoing issues for the Council. UNDOF's ability to implement its mandate, including its full return to the Bravo side, has been a key issue since 2014.

Council Dynamics

There is general agreement within the Council that UNDOF's mandate contributes to stability in the region, given the absence of a peace agreement between Israel and Syria. Both countries still value UNDOF's presence and want to see the mission's full return to the Bravo side. Council members also support its eventual complete return, mindful of the fact that this would require a continuously favourable security environment, which is also crucial for maintaining the confidence of troop-contributing countries.

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

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2530 (29 June 2020) renewed the mandate of UNDOF until 31 December 2020. **Secretary-General's Report S/2020/506** (8 June 2020) was the latest report on UNDOF. **Security Council Letters S/2020/624** (30 June 2020) was from the president of the Security Council containing the draft UNDOF renewal resolution in blue and the votes submitted by all Council members. **S/2020/514** (8 June 2020) was from the president of the Security Council containing the briefings given during an open VTC under the agenda item "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations" and statements by Council members.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) which expires on 16 October. Prior to the adoption, the Council expects to meet to receive a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of BINUH, Helen La Lime.

Key Recent Developments

Haiti faces extreme political, economic, and social uncertainty. All crises were initially overshadowed in the spring by the appearance of COVID-19, delaying action on many initiatives. The reported COVID-19 cases are 8,740, with 227 deaths as of 29 September. However, the number of reported cases could be inaccurate given the Haitian population's widespread fear and distrust of health officials after a devastating cholera outbreak began in October 2010 (and ultimately tied to the presence of UN peacekeepers). People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 reportedly face stigmatisation, especially in rural areas. The most recent Secretary-General's report, published on 15 June, said that by 31 May there had been 27 confirmed incidents—including attempted lynching, hate speech, attacks against care centres, and denial of treatment—directed against people who had tested positive or were suspected of testing positive for COVID-19. Even unrelated paediatric vaccinations are down as unfounded rumours circulate of Haitians being used as test subjects to find a COVID-19 cure. Additionally, with remittances from abroad making up approximately 36 percent of Haiti's gross domestic product, the sharp downturn of economies around the world may leave many Haitians abroad without money to send home, worsening an already dire economic situation.

In 2019, a series of riots against Haitian President Jovenel Moïse led to a de facto shutdown of the entire country. Protests largely abated in early 2020 as lockdown measures against COVID-19 went into effect. In recent weeks, however, riots have resumed. Opposition groups continue to call on Moïse to resign and for plans to be made for elections. Moïse has been governing Haiti through executive decree since 13 January when the existing parliament's mandate

expired. A new parliament was not in place because legislative and local elections had not been held in October 2019, as constitutionally mandated. In 2019, parliament failed to pass an electoral law and approve an election budget that would have been the first steps for organising the elections, and there was no political agreement on the new composition of the Provisional Electoral Council.

On 28 August, Monferrier Dorval, an influential lawyer and head of the bar association in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince, was shot and killed in his home. While an official investigation is underway, there have been protests calling for his killers to be brought to justice, with many frustrated about the lack of accountability for this and other murders. Recent weeks have also seen a rise in gang-related killings and violence. Such crimes were already extremely high in Haiti, and the increase is making a fragile security situation worse. Protesters say that the gangs are silencing critics of Moïse's government. In her last public briefing to the Council on 19 June, La Lime said that the increase in gang violence in Port-au-Prince may be tied to an attempt to influence the results of any future election. Many Haitians are frustrated with what they see as Moïse's unconstitutional use of power, especially since elections remain unscheduled.

Disagreements persist over how to proceed with constitutional and structural reforms and establishing an electoral calendar. While Haitian officials, supported by BINUH's good offices, have held exploratory meetings about how to proceed with elections, there has been little progress, which has increased the frustration felt by Haitians. In early September, Moïse took some concrete steps, issuing a statement that elections will take place in 2021 and that he would soon establish an electoral council. Given the inability of Haiti's political factions to compromise, however, it seems unlikely that they will easily reach consensus.

BINUH's mandate, established through resolution 2476, includes advising the government on issues related to promoting and strengthening political stability and good governance, the rule of law, an inclusive inter-Haitian national dialogue, and protecting and promoting human rights. According to

diplomatic sources, BINUH is fully established and is working with the UN's agencies, funds and programmes on the ground. Despite the limitations on in-person actions because of COVID-19 safety protocols, BINUH has been able to make some progress with certain benchmarks, including continued good offices by Special Representative La Lime and the development by an advisory unit of an inclusive approach to a community violence reduction national strategy, as laid out in resolution 2476.

The Council last met to discuss BINUH on 19 June, when it held an open videoconference (VTC) meeting, followed by a closed VTC session. La Lime and Jacques Letang, current president of the Haitian Bar Federation (FBH) and a founding member of the Human Rights Office in Haiti (BDHH), briefed Council members.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 29 July, Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in a statement that former Haitian paramilitary leader Emmanuel "Toto" Constant must be held accountable for the "horrendous human rights violations" committed during the 1990s, particularly for his involvement in the 1994 Raboteau massacre, a politically-motivated mass killing that took place in the Raboteau, a slum on the outskirts of Gonaïves. In a landmark moment for justice in Haiti, Constant was convicted in absentia in November 2000, having fled to the US in 1994. He was deported from the US in June 2020 and arrested upon his arrival in Port-au-Prince. On 10 July, the judiciary announced that the file related to his detention could not be located, raising concerns as to the legal basis for Constant's detention. "Impunity destroys the social fabric of societies and perpetuates mistrust among communities or towards the State", said Bachelet. She emphasised that perpetrators of such "egregious acts" as Constant "must not be allowed to escape justice".

Key Issues and Options

While COVID-19 has not affected Haiti as severely as some had feared, it has laid bare the overall fragility of the country. Council members remain particularly frustrated by the lack of progress on constitutional reform and preparations for elections. Members may want to hear La Lime's views on what can be done to generate an improved environment for negotiations. Council members are also likely to want more information about

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the increase in gang-perpetrated violence, ongoing training and activities of the Haitian National Police, and the decades-long problem of prison overcrowding.

As they mark one year since the establishment of BINUH, members may seek updates on how well the transition has gone from a long-standing peacekeeping presence to a smaller special political mission. The last time the Council members held a closed VTC on Haiti, they issued press elements afterwards. They may choose to adopt a presidential or press statement to mark the first anniversary of BINUH and call on Haitian stakeholders to do more to create an environment conducive to elections.

Given the challenges of COVID-19 and the related uncertainties, members may not want to adjust BINUH's tasks. There is a recognition that it has been challenging for BINUH to implement all of its mandated tasks with COVID-19 protocols in place—for example, trying to support community engagement when staying socially distanced from the community. An option for the Council could be largely to roll over BINUH's mandate in a new resolution, perhaps with added language calling on BINUH to use its good offices to contribute to a conducive environment to address the increasingly fraught political space.

It is also possible that some member states may want to strengthen BINUH's capacities. For example, some may want to increase BINUH's ability to help the Haitian National Police remain independent and credible, especially ahead of what is expected to be a tense environment once elections are scheduled. BINUH could be mandated to provide additional means to strengthen the police with new tools and capacities.

Council Dynamics

Council members in general supported the establishment of BINUH instead of a traditional peacekeeping mission, with the Dominican Republic (Haiti's neighbour on the island of Hispaniola) being the sole voice advocating a return to traditional peacekeeping. Several Council members believe that the problems Haiti is experiencing are not of the type that are best addressed by peacekeeping but are political in nature and better handled by a political mission and Haitians themselves. In contrast, the Dominican Republic and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (which is also likely to speak on behalf of the three African Council members) may reiterate their concerns about the influx of illicit small arms and light weapons into Haiti, fuelling an increase in gang-related violence that damages Haiti's ability to provide a safe electoral

environment. In the past, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has also, uniquely, brought up the issue of reparations for the descendants of former enslaved Haitians.

Resolution 2476, which established BINUH, was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and the Dominican Republic). During the negotiations in June 2019, China wanted a mandate that was less UN-led and more informed by Haiti's own priorities. China felt its position was not reflected in the resolution, and so abstained. Explaining its abstention on the resolution, the Dominican Republic stated that it felt the mandate of the new mission was not robust enough and that an approach based primarily on public security was inadequate. It also regretted that the resolution did not establish a firm electoral timetable. Such concerns may come up again in October.

Council members remain divided over the best way to support elections in Haiti. Moise has pledged to begin constitutional reform, but the process has been slow. Some members worry that the constitutional reform process could be used to delay elections. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic may preclude holding elections in the near future. Members may reiterate their past calls for Haitians to hold a national dialogue to resolve their differences.

The US is the penholder on Haiti.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council expects to hold its monthly meetings on both the political and humanitarian situations and on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in much of Syria appears to be relatively stable, according to Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock, who briefed the Security Council on 16 September. This assessment, Lowcock noted, comes despite a series of

incidents and reports of civilian casualties in the country's north-west and south. In north-west Syria, there have been ongoing reports of artillery shelling and aerial bombardment and, according to Lowcock, ceasefire violations have increased near the southern contact line of the Idlib "de-escalation area". In addition, on 25 August a joint Turkish-Russian patrol monitoring the M4 security corridor was attacked by unknown assailants, injuring two Russian soldiers. In southern Syria, there continue to be reports of popular unrest, owing to the country's deteriorating economic situation, and targeted

assassinations of Syrian officials and kidnappings by armed opposition groups.

There is increasing concern over the rapid rise of COVID-19 cases in Syria. According to Syrian Ministry of Health data from 17 September, the number of COVID-19 cases in Syria still appears to be relatively small: officially, there are 3,654 confirmed cases (including 163 fatalities). While this appears to be a sharp increase over previous reporting periods, Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, said on 27 August that reports

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2533 (11 July 2020) renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through one border crossing (Bab al-Hawa) for 12 months. **Secretary-General's Report S/2020/813** (20 August 2020) was the regular 60-day report on the implementation of humanitarian resolutions by all parties to the conflict in Syria. **Security Council Letters S/2020/913** (16 September 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 September open VTC meeting on Syria. **S/2020/823** (19 August 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 August open VTC meeting on Syria.

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of increasing numbers of patients arriving in health care facilities and growing numbers of death notices and burials indicate that “actual cases far exceed official figures”. The pandemic is seriously affecting Syria’s health care capacity and further damaging Syria’s fragile economy. During the Council’s 16 September session, Lowcock noted that Syria lacked adequate COVID-19 testing capacity and that medical personnel have limited access to personal protective equipment (PPE). As a result, a sizeable number of healthcare workers have contracted the virus, causing medical facilities to close or offer limited services. In the Al Hol refugee and internally displaced persons camp in north-east Syria, for example, health facilities had to cease operations entirely due to the lack of PPE, and infected staff.

Meanwhile, Syria’s economic situation continues to worsen. Coupled with the Syrian pound’s sudden collapse, COVID-19 has exacerbated Syria’s rapid economic deterioration over the summer. According to OCHA, the unemployment rate increased from 42 percent in 2019 to nearly 50 percent in August. The current economic situation, along with damaged supply chains from the Beirut explosion on 4 August, has caused food prices to rise, increasing food insecurity. According to a World Food Programme food security analysis in July, Syria’s national average price of essential commodities was the “highest rate recorded since the start of the crisis”, having increased 251 percent compared to July 2019.

On the humanitarian situation in Syria’s north-west, the Secretary-General reported that the challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance have increased since the adoption in July of resolution 2533, which left open only one Council-mandated border crossing, Bab al-Hawa, for the delivery of humanitarian assistance into Syria. The Secretary-General’s 20 August report to the Council argues that, in the context of resolution 2533, “available routes are limited, in poor condition, frequently congested, and not always open” and that “the single remaining authorized border crossing, Bab al-Hawa, ... will need to sustain higher demands”. Since July, there have been lengthy delays and a significant increase in travel times for vital humanitarian assistance: according to OCHA, getting assistance into areas of the northern Aleppo Governate, which previously took

two hours from the now-closed Bab al-Salam crossing point, currently takes over 11 hours.

Regarding the political process, Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen informed the Council on 18 September about last month’s meetings of the Constitutional Committee, which were held in person in Geneva on 24 August and 27-29 August. Despite the two-day hiatus after three members of the Constitutional Committee tested positive for COVID-19, the meetings were held in a generally positive atmosphere, though there were no concrete outcomes, with Pedersen informing the Council that “very real differences on substance even at the quite general level of the discussions” persist. Nonetheless, and despite the committee’s inability to agree on an agenda for a future meeting, the committee co-chairs remain willing to meet again.

Finally, on 10 September, the Council met in an open videoconference (VTC) session to discuss the use of chemical weapons in Syria. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu informed Council members that the Syrian authorities have “not yet provided sufficient technical information or explanations” regarding the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Technical Secretariat’s work on two Syrian research centres alleged to be sites where chemical weapons have been developed. Moreover, further inspections have been delayed because of COVID-19. As such, the OPCW has been unable to close its work on this matter. The OPCW is awaiting a response to a 20 July letter sent by its Director-General to Syria’s deputy foreign minister, which followed a 9 July decision, taken by a vote of the OPCW’s Executive Council, condemning Syria’s use of chemical weapons. The Executive Council decision and subsequent OPCW letter are both in reference to the report of its Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which concluded that “there are reasonable grounds to believe that Syria used chemical weapons in Ltamenah, Syria in March 2017”. The Executive Council’s decision requested that Syria declare to the OPCW not only where the chemical weapons used in the attacks were “developed, produced, stockpiled, and operationally stored for delivery” but also “all of the chemical weapons it currently possesses”. The Technical Secretariat, the letter noted, “is ready to assist the government in the fulfilment of

these obligations” within the 90-day period called for in the decision.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Addressing the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the opening of its 45th session on 14 September, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet reiterated that Syria’s people continue to face “multiple and comprehensive crises”. COVID-19 has highlighted the ravages of a health system battered by “deliberate bombings...and ill-equipped to meet even basic needs”. Noting that the World Food Programme reports that 9.3 million Syrians face food insecurity, she called for “an end to this inhumanity and conflict”. On 22 September, the HRC was scheduled to consider an updated written report (A/HRC/45/31) from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

Key Issues and Options

The 20 August Secretary-General’s report and briefings by Rajasingham and Lowcock over the past two months indicate that the closure of the Bab al-Salam crossing has had a negative impact on OCHA’s ability to deliver humanitarian assistance in a timely manner. Damage to supply chains from the Beirut explosion, concerns about the arrival of winter, and rising food insecurity are likely to return the contentious issue of humanitarian access to the Council’s front burner, forcing the Council to explore options to improve the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the north-west. These could include consideration of re-authorising Bab al-Salam or, in the event of a rapidly deteriorating situation due to COVID-19 in Syria’s north-east or a lack of further improvements in cross-line delivery, reinstating the Al Yarubiyah border crossing between Syria and Iraq.

The Council is also closely following progress on the work of the Constitutional Committee. With the Special Envoy’s 18 September announcement that he hoped another round of the Constitutional Committee could be held in person in Geneva in early October, members may seek ways to offer support to this body.

On the chemical weapons track, Council members will be eager to hear whether the OPCW has received any reaction from the Syrian government to its 20 July letter. Failing an official response by the 9 October deadline, one option for the Council would be to issue a statement reminding the Syrian government of its obligation.

Syria

Council Dynamics

The Council remains deeply divided on Syria. While there appears to be agreement among Council members that the formation and continuing work of the Constitutional Committee is a positive development, some

members have noted that this is only the first step in a political process that should lead to free and fair elections under UN supervision. Also, despite growing concern about the impact of COVID-19, Syria's economic collapse, and challenges facing delivery of

humanitarian assistance, there is little agreement on how these issues should be resolved.

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

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's most recent report on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Special Representative and head of MONUSCO Leila Zerrougui is expected to brief the Council. At the same meeting, the Chair of the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger), will deliver his annual briefing to the Council.

Also, Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia is expected to provide his bi-annual briefing to the Council in October on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework) for the DRC and the region and other recent developments in the region.

The MONUSCO mandate expires on 20 December.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation continues to be fraught. 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. On 8 and 10 September, two attacks attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed 58 people in Ituri province. The ADF is an armed group that originated in Uganda, and the DRC's Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have been waging an offensive against them since 30 October 2019.

Hundreds of civilians have been killed or displaced as a result, most from ADF reprisal attacks.

Ituri has also faced attacks by an armed group called the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO), whose fighters are drawn mostly from the Lendu ethnic group and are in conflict with the Hema tribe over natural resources and land. Some CODECO fighters have signed a peace agreement with the DRC government, but several factions are still fighting. In an 11 September statement released by his spokesperson, the Secretary-General expressed his concern about the ongoing violence in the border areas of Ituri and North Kivu provinces.

The DRC continues to face various health challenges. Reported cases of COVID-19 had reached 10,611 by 29 September, including 271 deaths. An ongoing measles epidemic has led to nearly 320,000 cases and more than 6,000 deaths, mostly of children, since January 2019. Malaria and cholera are also threats to the population. On 25 June, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the tenth Congolese Ebola outbreak, which started in August 2018, had ended in eastern DRC. This outbreak killed more than 2,280 people. However, another, unrelated Ebola outbreak had already been reported in western DRC on 1 June. This outbreak in Équateur province has resulted in 104 confirmed Ebola cases and 47 deaths. While this area of the DRC does not face the security challenges of the east, it is difficult to reach; some villages are only accessible via water transportation.

Developments in the DRC and the Wider Great Lakes Region

Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi has continued to promote cooperation between the DRC and its neighbours. This regional outreach comes in the context of efforts to stabilise the eastern DRC. On 7 September, Tshisekedi's spokesperson announced that a regional summit in Goma, North Kivu, would be held in the coming weeks. Presidents Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Évariste Ndayishimiye (Burundi) and João Lourenço (Angola) have been invited. "This high-impact mini-summit will look at three themes—peace and security in the region, diplomatic and political relations among the states and the revival of economic activities in the current context of the fight against COVID-19", said DRC spokesperson Jolino Makelele.

Mass displacement remains a challenge for the Great Lakes region. According to the Secretary-General's 3 April report on the implementation of the PSC Framework, the DRC continues to host the largest internally displaced population in Africa, with more than five million displaced individuals, including over 940,000 people newly displaced in 2019. Additionally, as of 29 February, there were over 917,000 refugees from the DRC, most of them in Uganda. Burundi had a total of 102,722 internally displaced persons. Given the widespread movement of people in this area, regional cooperation in the face of COVID-19 is particularly important. Countries immediately initiated measures to contain the spread of the disease in line with the WHO recommendations, and those crossing

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2528 (25 June 2020) renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2021 and the mandate for the Group of Experts until 1 August 2021. **S/RES/2502** (19 December 2019) renewed the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2020. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2020/272** (3 April 2020) was on the implementation of the PSC Framework for the DRC and the Great Lakes Region, covering 1 September 2019 to 15 March 2020. **S/2020/214** (18 March 2020) covered the activities of MONUSCO and the situation in the DRC from 27 November 2019 to 16 March 2020. **Security Council Letters S/2020/726** (20 July 2020) was from the Secretary-General, appointing six people to the Group of Experts until 1 August 2021. **S/2020/598** (29 June 2020) transmitted the statements from the 25 June open videoconference on MONUSCO. **Security Council Press Statement SC/14222** (23 June 2020) condemned an attack on MONUSCO that occurred on 22 June near Beni, which resulted in the death of one Indonesian peacekeeper and injured another.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

borders are subject to quarantine measures. Still, there are many informal border crossings where there is little monitoring.

The Council most recently discussed the Great Lakes region in an Arria-formula meeting on 15 July focusing on the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the region. The meeting was co-hosted by Council members Belgium, South Africa and the US, along with the DRC. Several briefers from the UN, the private sector and civil society were invited to speak, including Xia. The meeting's objective was to demonstrate the need for a collaborative and holistic approach to ending illegal exploitation of natural resources, in particular gold and coltan. According to the 2 June final report of the DRC Sanctions Committee's Group of Experts, illegally exploited gold is traded in much higher volume than legally traded gold, resulting in millions of dollars in lost taxable income. Several armed groups continue to finance their military campaigns through the exploitation of natural resources, occupying artisanal mines and selling gold.

There are ongoing talks about the development of a new UN regional strategy on peace and security for the Great Lakes Region to guide the work of the Special Envoy in support of the implementation of the PSC Framework. The framework was signed in 2013 to help "address the root causes of conflict, put an end to recurring cycles of violence and ensure renewed regional commitments to respecting State sovereignty" in eastern DRC and the Great Lakes Region. The overall political situation between neighbours has improved, but challenges to long-term stability in the region remain.

In this context, on 7 January 2019, the Secretary-General chaired the first meeting of the Standing Principals Group, comprising regional countries that meet regularly and review progress in implementation of the PSC Framework, which recommended the development of a strategy to enhance the UN's conflict prevention and resolution efforts in the region. In June 2019, the Secretary-General instructed Xia to lead the development of the proposed strategy. Since then, Xia has been consulting with various stakeholders—including UN operations on the ground, civil society, and regional governments—on the best way forward. Once the strategy is ready, Xia will submit it to the Secretary-General for approval.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Human Rights Council (HRC) is scheduled to consider the comprehensive report of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet on the situation of human rights in the DRC (A/HRC/45/49) in an interactive dialogue on 1 October during its 45th session. A team of international experts will present their final report (A/HRC/45/50) on the situation of human rights in Kasai, in central DRC, on the same day.

In a 28 August statement, Bachelet expressed deep concern over the death threats directed at the Congolese human rights defender and Nobel Prize laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege. Bachelet emphasised that Mukwege is "a true hero – determined, courageous and extremely effective" who has for years been helping severely injured and traumatised women as well as making a consistent effort to encourage others to try to deal with the "uncontrolled epidemic of sexual violence in the eastern DRC". Bachelet underscored that his life seemed to be in serious danger and expressed hope that President Tshisekedi's publicly-expressed commitment to ensuring Mukwege's security will lead to Mukwege and his team's safety so the "indispensable work they perform [...] can be guaranteed".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 25 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2528, which renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2021. On 10 July, the DRC Sanctions Committee held an "informal informal" meeting to discuss the Group of Experts' final report, published 2 June, with representatives of Burundi, the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda. On 4 September, another informal meeting was held at which the group presented its programme of work after its mandate was renewed in June until 1 August 2021. The Secretary-General subsequently appointed six people to the Group of Experts, three of whom were new. The next committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for October.

Key Issues and Options

MONUSCO's mandate is due to be renewed in December, and with that date approaching and continued instability in eastern DRC, Council members may begin considering whether to change the mandate. Resolution 2502, the most recent MONUSCO mandate renewal, set out several tasks that could prepare for MONUSCO's eventual withdrawal, and member states will want to hear if there has been any progress on those tasks, particularly in the wake of COVID-19. Council members will be especially keen to receive the

joint strategy articulated by the DRC government and the Secretary-General, requested by resolution 2502, outlining a progressive transfer of MONUSCO's tasks to the Congolese authorities in preparation for MONUSCO's eventual exit.

In the meantime, the Council will continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on the DRC as a whole and on MONUSCO's troop rotations and community engagement operations.

Council Dynamics

In general, Council members have maintained an optimistic and united view of the DRC's political situation, with most of their concern focused on violence in the east and the health crises. Council members are encouraged by the sustained efforts by the region to increase dialogue, even when there are disagreements and in the face of increased violence by armed elements in eastern DRC. Council members may want to hear more about what is being done to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the region.

As the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate draws closer, however, differences may deepen. Some members would like to see MONUSCO take concrete steps towards an exit strategy. Others are concerned about the DRC's stability and have stressed that any changes in MONUSCO must be carried out so as not to create a security vacuum. The US in particular remains highly critical of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB)—a unit within MONUSCO authorised to use offensive force against armed groups—and wants to make changes to it. However, South Africa, the main troop-contributing country to the FIB, continues to support it, and its mandate, strongly.

Some Council members may bring up the current situation involving Mukwege. Earlier in the year, peacekeepers who had been guarding the Panzi hospital in Bukavu, run by Mukwege, were removed after COVID-19's impact on peacekeeper rotation led to some staffing difficulties for MONUSCO. After an international outcry, including Bachelet's statement, the peacekeepers returned to the hospital by 11 September. While supporting Mukwege and his work, some critics say that properly trained Congolese police would be better suited for this type of security situation and that, if MONUSCO is meant to exit at

Democratic Republic of the Congo

some point, it cannot keep providing day-to-day security in the DRC.

Council members are eager to see a comprehensive strategy for the Great Lakes region and have repeatedly said that they look forward to hearing from Xia as soon as possible. In July, Germany hosted an informal meeting

at its mission to discuss the current status of the plan. Given that the Council is beginning to discuss an exit strategy for MONUSCO, Council members are in favour of examining broader ways to consolidate state authority and create a durable security strategy. Several members have advocated caution,

warning that they will support a gradual exit of MONUSCO only if it is clear that the general stability provided by the mission over the years will not be compromised.

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

Mali

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold a briefing on Mali, followed by consultations, with the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Mahamat Saleh Annadif. The mandate of MINUSMA ends on 30 June 2021. The Mali sanctions measures—a travel ban and an assets freeze—expire on 31 August 2021, and the mandate of the Mali Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts expires on 30 September 2021.

Key Recent Developments

Starting in June, protests gripped the capital, Bamako. A coalition of opposition and civil society groups known as the June 5 Movement-Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP), led by Imam Mahmoud Dicko, demanded that President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta resign because of continued insecurity, poor governance and corruption. A Constitutional Court ruling in late April that benefitted Keïta's ruling party by overturning election results for 21 seats to the National Assembly triggered the demonstrations that took place on 5 and 19 June. Further protests on 11 and 12 July turned violent, with at least 11 protesters killed by security forces.

On 18 August, soldiers in the Kati barracks located about 15 kilometres outside Bamako mutinied. From Kati, the soldiers entered Bamako and arrested President Keïta and Prime Minister Boubou Cissé at Keïta's residence and detained other government officials, amid cheering crowds. In a televised address that night, Keïta announced his resignation and the dissolution of the government and National Assembly. Military officers who

led the coup d'état then announced the formation of the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), headed by special forces Colonel Assimi Goïta.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and other multilateral organisations and governments quickly condemned the unfolding developments. ECOWAS suspended Mali from all decision-making bodies of the regional organisation, as it did after a 2012 coup, and announced sanctions, closing all land and air borders with Mali and stopping all trade and financial flows and transactions between its member states and Mali. The AU Peace and Security Council, following an emergency meeting on 19 August, announced Mali's suspension from AU activities until constitutional order was restored. The Security Council issued a press statement that same day, ahead of its own emergency videoconference (VTC) session, demanding that all detained officials be released and reiterating Council members' strong support of ECOWAS' initiatives and mediation efforts.

Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, whom ECOWAS appointed in July as its mediator to resolve Mali's political crisis, was in Mali from 22 to 24 August. Jonathan met with Keïta—who reportedly told the ECOWAS mediator that he was not interested in returning to power—and, among others, with CNSP leaders, who proposed a three-year transition for returning the country to constitutional order. On 28 August, ECOWAS convened an extraordinary summit by VTC, with a briefing by Jonathan. In a declaration, West African leaders called for the quick establishment of a transition government to oversee a one-year transition period

leading to new presidential and parliamentary elections. At an ECOWAS summit on 7 September, West African leaders called for the appointment of the transition president and new prime minister by 15 September.

ECOWAS discussions with the CNSP have focused on the length of the transition—the sides appear to be settling on an 18-month time period—and the role of the military in the transition government. At a 15 September ECOWAS “mini-summit” held with the CNSP leadership, West African leaders insisted that the president and prime minister of the transition must be civilians, and committed to lifting the sanctions once they are appointed. The CNSP also launched a series of talks, including a “national consultation” conference from 10 to 12 September with Mali's civilian opposition groups. The M5-RFP rejected the CNSP's proposal at the conference's conclusion, as the plan would allow the military to lead a transition period.

On 21 September, the CNSP announced the new interim president, Bah N'Daw. While currently a civilian, N'Daw is a retired colonel and former defence minister under Keïta. Colonel Goïta of the CNSP was named vice-president. Jonathan led a new ECOWAS mission from 23 to 25 September to Mali, meeting with N'Daw. A communiqué at the mission's conclusion said that ECOWAS would lift sanctions once a civilian prime minister is appointed. On 28 September, N'Daw appointed Moutari Ouane as transitional prime minister. Ouane was foreign minister from 2004 to 2009, and before that was Mali's permanent representative to the UN.

Meanwhile, Keïta was released from detention on 27 August, and on 5 September,

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2541](#) (31 August 2020) renewed the Mali sanctions regime for one year. [S/RES/2531](#) (29 June 2020) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2021. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14279](#) (19 August 2020) strongly condemned the mutiny on 18 August and the subsequent arrest of Mali's president and other government officials. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2020/785](#) (13 August 2020) was the final report of the Mali Panel of Experts.

Mali

it was reported that he had gone to the United Arab Emirates for medical treatment.

Sanctions-Related Developments

In August, the Council renewed the Mali sanctions regime, which was established in 2017 to pressure the government and northern Mali armed groups to implement the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. Resolution 2541, which extended the sanctions for one year, reiterated the Council's condemnation of the mutiny and its support for ECOWAS. It added that the Council was ready to "discuss this matter...in light of the potential implications of these recent developments on the implementation of the Agreement".

Human Rights-Related Developments

Addressing the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the opening of its 45th session on 14 September, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet underscored that it was "vital" for human rights in Mali to be upheld, particularly during security operations, especially because of the "extreme fragility of the security situation." Bachelet also emphasised that everyone who had been illegally detained during the coup d'état in August should be released and "all continuing discussions of transitional political arrangements should have the fundamental rights of all Malians at their core". She noted her deep concern about the economic impact of the sanctions that ECOWAS had recently imposed, particularly in a context where "extreme poverty, conflicts and insecurity – and climate hazards such as floods and droughts – are creating great hardship and deteriorating humanitarian conditions".

On 8 September, two UN human rights experts (Alioune Tine, the HRC's independent expert on human rights in Mali, and Tomoya Obokata, the HRC's Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery) called on Mali to "end slavery once and for all" after four men who were born into slavery were beaten to death and an 80-year-old woman and two other people were hospitalised with severe injuries on 1 September.

"Nothing can justify the persistence of the practice of slavery", said Tine in a press release on the appeal. Both experts called for "a prompt, transparent, impartial and thorough investigation" into the attack. These incidents "illustrate the failure of the Malian State to implement its international commitments to protect human rights. In some cases, traditional chiefs and State authorities clearly seem to be accomplices of the perpetrators". Tine and Obokata called on Mali urgently to adopt a law explicitly criminalising slavery, following the example of states such as Niger and Mauritania, and to cooperate with human rights organisations to conduct a national campaign aimed at abolishing slavery.

In a 23 September press release, Tine called on coup leaders to immediately release all former government officials who were detained in August, saying that "[t]here is no legal basis" for the continued detentions. Of the 18 people arrested, at least 13 people are still being held at the Kati military camp, according to the press release.

Key Issues and Options

The establishment of a transition period for restoring constitutional order is a key issue. In planning for the transition and future elections, an important issue is accounting for the recurring problems of poor governance and corruption. Both have led to a lack of public confidence in the authorities and to the failure to stabilise Mali since the 2012 coup d'état despite sustained international attention and support during this period.

The risk that terrorist groups in northern and central Mali will exploit the political upheaval in Bamako is an additional concern. Furthermore, the situation distracts from efforts in implementing the already-slow moving Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement produced by the Algiers process. In announcing the CNSP's formation, its spokesperson Major-Colonel Ismaël

Wagué said that MINUSMA, the French regional counter-terrorism force Operation Barkhane, the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force and European Task Force Takuba "remain partners for the restoration of stability" and that "[a]ll past agreements, including the Algiers process signed in 2015, will be respected".

Council members have been monitoring the ECOWAS mediation process on establishing a transition government, and they may endorse any solution that emerges from those negotiations.

Council and Wider Dynamics

During its mediation efforts in June and July between the government and M5-RFP, ECOWAS was adamant that Keita should not be forced to step down and that it could not accept any unconstitutional change in power. At Council members' 19 August emergency VTC meeting, the Council's three African members, known as the A3, took the position that Keita must return to the presidency. Other Council members focused on the importance of quickly establishing a transition period, recognising that Keita would not be able to return to power given his unpopularity in the country. ECOWAS, also recognising this, shifted its efforts towards supporting a civilian-led political transition of limited duration. Council member Niger, which borders Mali, has been profoundly affected by Mali's insecurity. Overall, Council members appear to be watching and prepared to support the outcome of ECOWAS' negotiations.

France is the penholder on Mali. Ambassador José Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) chairs the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee.

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) which expires on 31 October. Prior to that, it expects to receive a briefing on MINURSO,

as mandated in resolution 2494. Colin Stewart, the Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of MINURSO, is likely to brief. Western Sahara briefings have usually been held in consultations.

Key Recent Developments

The political situation regarding Western Sahara remains unchanged. The Secretary-General has yet to appoint a new Personal Envoy since the previous envoy, former President of Germany Horst Köhler, resigned

UN DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN SAHARA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2494 (30 October 2019) renewed MINURSO's mandate for 12 months, with abstentions by two Council members. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8651** (30 October 2019) included the adoption of resolution 2494 renewing MINURSO's mandate until 31 October 2020. **General Assembly Document A/75/220** (22 July 2020) provides an overview of the major activities undertaken by stakeholders during the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

Western Sahara

his post on 22 May 2019 because of health concerns. The personal envoy is mandated to move the political process towards settlement of the Western Sahara dispute, and in the year before resigning, Köhler had successfully led several roundtable discussions with Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria, and Mauritania. (Western Sahara has been the subject of territorial disputes since Spain withdrew in 1976. Initially, both Morocco and Mauritania presented claims, but Mauritania renounced its claim in 1979. The independence movement, known as the Polisario Front, represents the nomadic inhabitants of the Western Sahara region known as the Sahrawis.)

Little is publicly known about the ongoing process to name a new personal envoy, although it seems that some candidates have been approached. Council members last met to discuss the situation in Western Sahara in a closed videoconference on 9 April, and Special Representative Stewart briefed.

On 22 July, the office of Secretary-General António Guterres submitted a report marking the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism to the General Assembly, for consideration during its 75th session. The report noted the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2494, the last MINURSO renewal, on 30 October 2019 as well as the desire to have the parties continue dialogue despite Köhler's resignation. The report also said that the Secretary-General continues to use good offices to promote progress on the situation in Western Sahara.

The COVID-19 situation in the area is difficult to assess because of the disputed nature of the territory. The World Health Organization's online database does not include any numbers from Western Sahara and instead lists Morocco and Algeria. On 22 April, humanitarian agencies submitted a comprehensive report on the needs for COVID-19 prevention and response for refugees from Western Sahara in Tindouf, Algeria. Tindouf Camp is the largest Sahrawi refugee camp and is located in the desert just inside Algeria's border. Its population numbers around 150,000, though there is no exact count, and has been home to Sahrawi refugees since 1975. In Tindouf, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is

the lead humanitarian agency, supported by the World Food Programme and UNICEF. MINURSO is the lead actor responsible for security. UNHCR and the Sahrawi leadership launched a COVID-19 working group that has established a process to refer potential suspected cases to Tindouf Hospital. UNHCR is also coordinating the response to the refugees' needs as outlined in the report.

On 30 October 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2494, renewing the mandate of MINURSO for one year. The US, as penholder, opted not to make significant changes to the text. Thirteen Council members voted in favour, with Russia and South Africa abstaining (as they did during the previous vote, in April 2019). In their statements, the two countries stressed their support for MINURSO's work. Russia indicated its belief, however, that others were trying to use the renewal to "predetermine the direction of the negotiation process being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations or to change established approaches affirmed in previously adopted resolutions". Explaining its vote, South Africa listed several aspects of the text it was not fully satisfied with, including its preference for a six-month mandate renewal that would have led to more frequent discussion of Western Sahara by the Council and its belief that MINURSO should have a formal human rights mandate to conduct "the monitoring of possible human rights violations on all sides".

Human Rights-Related Developments

Addressing the Human Rights Council at the opening of its 45th session, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said that her office continued its remote monitoring of the situation in Western Sahara. She said that the last technical missions took place five years ago and that such missions were "vital to identify critical human rights issues on all sides and contribute to preventing the escalation of grievances".

Key Issues and Options

Council members may focus on the continued lack of a personal envoy and, in turn, the lack of any political progress on one of the Council's longest-running issues. MINURSO was established in 1991 with the key objective of facilitating a referendum for the

self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. Today its duties mainly consist of monitoring the ceasefire across the Berm, a 1,700-mile-long earthen wall that divides the Moroccan-administered portion of Western Sahara from that held by the Polisario Front. Members will want to hear of any challenges on the ground to MINURSO or difficulties in implementing its mandate. There has been no progress towards holding a referendum: Council members may reflect on this, as 2020 marks 44 years since conflict began over competing claims to the territory.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Many member states are frustrated by the absence of a personal envoy and the concomitant lack of political progress. They may voice these concerns. While many do not want to be accused of stepping on the Secretary-General's prerogative of appointing his own personal envoys, Council members are nevertheless concerned that nothing has happened for over a year.

Since rejoining the AU in 2017, after a 33-year voluntary absence because the AU's predecessor body admitted Western Sahara as a member under the name "Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic", Morocco has been stepping up its efforts to maintain its de facto governance over part of Western Sahara and attempt to bring some AU members around to its way of thinking. Algeria has also renewed its involvement on Western Sahara after recently pulling back while it formed a government.

South Africa remains the Polisario's most steadfast ally on the Council. It is likely to continue to push for more negotiations to determine the status of Western Sahara, and for a focus on human rights in any mandate renewal.

The US is the penholder on Western Sahara. Resolutions are initially discussed among the Group of Friends, comprising France, Russia, the UK, and the US, joined by Spain, the former colonial power and a country that provides much logistical and humanitarian support to the Sahrawi in Tindouf. Controversially for some, there is no representation from the African continent among the Group of Friends.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold its monthly briefing on Yemen with Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, and General Abhijit Guha, who heads the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). The mandate of UNMHA expires on 15 July 2021.

Key Recent Developments

Despite negotiations that have been ongoing for six months, Griffiths has still not been able to conclude an agreement between the Yemeni government, backed by a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition, and the Houthi rebel group on a joint declaration for a nationwide ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures, and the resumption of peace talks. On the ground, the Houthis continued a military offensive against the government stronghold of Marib, while the UN raised the alarm about the risk of famine returning to Yemen.

On 4 September, Lowcock sent a white paper to Council members on food security risks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, north-east Nigeria, and South Sudan, in accordance with resolution 2417, which requested the Secretary-General to warn the Council about “the risk of conflict-induced famine and wide-spread insecurity”. The white paper says the risk of famine in Yemen is “slowly returning.... Similar conditions are emerging today, worsening key indicators beyond the levels seen in 2018”. It attributes the re-emerging threat in Yemen to intensified fighting (now on 42 fronts compared to 30 two years ago), Yemen’s deteriorating economy, and the detrimental effect of the conflict on locust control efforts. A major gap in humanitarian funding this year has further increased the famine threat.

At the Council’s monthly briefing on Yemen on 15 September, Lowcock reiterated that “the spectre of famine has returned”. He was particularly poignant in calling out Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait for the underfunding of relief efforts, saying that the three countries had “so far given nothing to this year’s UN [humanitarian response] plan”. Lowcock added, “It is particularly reprehensible to promise money, which gives people hope that help may be

on the way, and then to dash those hopes by simply failing to fulfil the promise”.

On 17 September, ahead of the high-level General Assembly week, Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, and the UK hosted a ministerial-level videoconference on advancing the political process with China, France, Russia, the US and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Envoy Griffiths briefed. A joint communiqué called on the government and the Houthis to swiftly reach agreement on the UN peace proposals and reiterated the need for an inclusive political solution. It stressed that the parties should quickly conclude a comprehensive transitional agreement to end the war, establish a transitional period during which power is shared among diverse political and social components, and, at the end of this period, create a new government on the basis of credible national elections.

The statement further voiced great concern about the continuing Houthi offensive to take Marib, which it said threatens to derail the UN peace process. To avoid famine, the group of states called on all donors to disburse existing pledges immediately and to consider making further contributions. It also urged Yemen’s partners to consider measures to strengthen the economy, including regular foreign-exchange injections into the Central Bank and increasing critical commercial imports through all of Yemen’s ports.

During the General Assembly’s high-level week, Sweden and the EU also hosted a ministerial-level event on the humanitarian situation in Yemen. Appeals to all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and increase donor support were made by Lowcock, David Beasley of the World Food Programme and Jan Egeland of the Norwegian Refugee Council. Ahead of the meeting, Saudi Arabia announced that it would disburse \$204 million of the \$500 million it had pledged at a June donor conference for Yemen that it had hosted but had still not disbursed. Kuwait announced a \$20 million contribution.

A new round of prisoner-exchange talks started on 18 September in Geneva between the government and Houthis, co-chaired by the ICRC and the Special Envoy.

A mechanism to exchange up to 15,000 prisoners was part of the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement, which also included a ceasefire for Hodeidah governorate and a statement of understanding on Taiz. Since the agreement, however, only periodic releases totalling several hundred people have occurred. On 27 September, Griffiths and the ICRC announced that the parties had agreed to immediately release 1,081 prisoners.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 29 September, during its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered the report (A/HRC/45/6) of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen (GEE), followed by an interactive dialogue. This was the Group of Experts’ third report, titled *Yemen: A Pandemic of Impunity in a Tortured Land*, covering the period from July 2019 to June. Besides the report, GEE will also release a conference room paper, a longer and more detailed document, describing its investigations and findings. Melissa Parke, a member of GEE, said on 9 September during a videoconference with journalists in Geneva that Yemen has been “ravaged in ways that should shock the conscience of humanity”, and stressed that the group had found “reasonable grounds to believe that the parties to the conflict have committed and continue to commit serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law, some of which may amount to war crimes”.

Key Issues and Options

Obtaining an agreement for a nation-wide ceasefire and a restart of the political process remains a critical issue. The Marib offensive risks undermining negotiations, and the fall of the governorate would be a major blow to the government as it has become its political and economic stronghold during the war. The battle also threatens to worsen the humanitarian situation for the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons hosted in the governorate and other residents. Sustaining and further implementing the November 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC) is another important issue, reflecting the complexity of resolving Yemen’s war.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, Yemen’s deteriorating economy—notably the near-depletion of central bank reserves, decline in the value of the Yemeni rial and

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2534](#) (14 July 2020) extended the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2021. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8757](#) (15 September 2020) was a briefing on Yemen. [Security Council Letter S/2020/940](#) (23 September 2020) was a letter from Saudi Arabia on the hazardous situation of the FSO Safer oil tanker. [Other Joint Communiqué on the Conflict in Yemen](#), High-Level Ministerial Meeting, 17 September 2020.

Yemen

a decrease in remittances from the Yemeni diaspora—have exacerbated already dire conditions, as has the COVID-19 pandemic. Access restrictions are also contributing to the crisis. These include the government prohibition on fuel imports through Hodeidah and Ras Issa ports after the Houthis expropriated funds from a joint account of fuel revenues this past spring and the Houthis' suspension in September of UN humanitarian flights to Sana'a, which they said was due to the fuel shortage. Despite the new pledges, distribution of the promised funds remains critical to relief efforts, including to stave off the risk of famine.

The threat posed by the FSO Safer oil tanker is an equally urgent issue. A serious oil spill would, among other consequences, destroy the Red Sea ecosystem for decades, prevent use of the critical port of Hodeidah for up to six months, and destroy livelihoods for 1.6 million Yemenis on the country's west coast in addition to affecting millions of others in the region. In his 15 September briefing, Lowcock said that the UN had

submitted a revised plan for the deployment of a UN technical team to assess the Safer and make initial repairs. It was awaiting the Houthis' response.

If agreement is reached on the joint declaration, the Council may adopt a resolution to welcome or endorse the deal. After more than six months of negotiations for such a deal, however, members may wish to consider new approaches to break the impasse in the political process.

Regarding the FSO Safer, the Council may try to maintain pressure on the Houthis to enable access for the UN technical team. In future statements, Council members could recall the Houthis' previous commitments to allow UN access, point out any further failures to abide by their agreements and recall the potentially devastating effects of a spill or explosion on the environment, the livelihoods of Yemenis and the humanitarian situation.

Council Dynamics

Council members appear aligned in their support of the Special Envoy, desiring a ceasefire

and resumption of a political process. They further share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the FSO Safer. Tunisia is the Arab member on the Council that traditionally champions positions of the Saudi-led coalition supporting the Yemeni government. The US, which is seeking to maintain restrictions on Iranian arms transfers that are set to expire in October, often points to what it perceives as Iran's destabilising role in Yemen. The September VTC meeting of the P5 plus Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, and the EU High Representative had similar participants and agenda to the meeting organised in September 2019 during the General Assembly's high-level week to consider ways to push forward the political process.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. It recently appointed a Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs as part of fulfilling its commitments to combat growing food insecurity. Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) chairs the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will discuss the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which is due by 9 October. The Council will be briefed by Mankeur Ndiaye, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA, and Matias Bertino Matondo, AU Special Representative and head of the AU Office in the Central African Republic.

The mandate of MINUSCA expires on 15 November. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2021 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2021.

Key Recent Developments

On 28 July, the Security Council convened an in-person meeting in the ECOSOC chamber and adopted resolution 2536, which renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2021 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2021. In contrast to the renewal of the sanctions regime in January, which saw Russia and China abstain, resolution 2536 was adopted unanimously.

The adoption of resolution 2536 and October's meeting come in the context of a wave of violent clashes since April in CAR's north-east and north-west. According to the Panel of Experts' 8 July report, "despite their nominal commitment to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the [CAR]..., armed groups continue to impede the restoration of State authority and engaged in many violations of

the Agreement". In response to the violence, MINUSCA has undertaken a series of ongoing operations in recent months, including one launched on 17 May in the town of Ndélé in the north of the country, to help stabilise the situation, and another, launched in coordination with the Central African armed forces (FACA) on 17 June, to end violence against civilians in north-west CAR committed by the 3R (Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation) armed group.

Political tensions have also increased because of the presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for later this year and early 2021, and there are concerns that electoral dynamics might undermine the implementation of the peace agreement. Late last year and in early 2020, CAR analysts noted that the return of former presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia to the CAR could have a destabilising effect on the

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2536](#) (28 July 2020) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2021 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2021. [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/2020/545](#) (16 June 2020) was a report on MINUSCA. [Security Council Letters S/2020/572](#) (24 June 2020) was 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 22 June open VTC meeting on MINUSCA.

Central African Republic

already fragile political climate in the country. The 25 July announcement by Bozizé that he would run in the upcoming presidential elections may exacerbate tensions; Bozizé was listed under Security Council sanctions in 2014 for “engaging in or providing support for acts that undermine the peace, stability or security of CAR”. On 19 September, authorities in France arrested the former head of the presidential guard under Bozizé, Eric Bagale, for committing “acts of torture” and “preparing for war crimes” during Bozizé’s presidency. In addition, on 5 September, Djotodia announced in Bangui that he had “definitively” returned to CAR; after his initial return to CAR in January, he subsequently travelled outside the country. Though he has not announced that he would compete in the upcoming elections, he said on 5 September that “nothing prevents” him from being a presidential candidate.

Finally, according to OCHA, CAR’s humanitarian situation remains “worrisome” and the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the country’s socioeconomic situation. Approximately 2.6 million people require humanitarian assistance in CAR and 2.36 million people are considered food-insecure. While the overall number of those infected with the coronavirus remains relatively low (as of 9 September, there were officially 4,738 cases), CAR suffers from limited testing capacity, potentially masking the actual figures. According to the World Health Organization, CAR is “one of the least prepared countries to face the COVID-19 outbreak”. Seventy percent of CAR’s health services are

provided by humanitarian organisations. An estimated 659,000 internally displaced persons are considered at high risk of contracting COVID-19, given the overcrowded conditions many are living in.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 5 August, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee approved the addition of Bi Sidi Souleman, president of the 3R group, to its sanctions list. According to the listing, the 3R has killed, tortured, raped and displaced civilians and “engaged in arms trafficking, illegal taxation activities, and warfare with other militias since its creation in 2015”. Souleman is alleged to have personally participated in some of these acts.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) was scheduled to consider in an interactive dialogue on 2 October the written report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, Yao Agbetse (A/HRC/45/54). In a 27 August statement, Agbetse called on all sides to ensure that upcoming elections can proceed smoothly and for the support of the international community. “For the elections to be peaceful, they must be preceded by a ceasefire and cooperation among all sides”, Agbetse said, emphasising that after years of instability, it is essential for Central Africans to “strengthen the foundations for a return to peace, reconciliation, and respect for human rights”. Agbetse provided a set of recommendations in his statement, calling in particular for armed groups to lay down arms in line with their commitment to do so under the 2019 Peace Agreement and to respect the results of the election. He also stressed the need for the “reactivation of the existing inclusive dialogue space...in which the government, the opposition and civil society organizations can agree on essential issues”. Agbetse expressed gratitude to

MINUSCA, the UN country team and other international partners for their services and support, particularly considering the constraints due to COVID-19.

Key Issues and Options

Monitoring the implementation of the CAR peace agreement and ensuring that credible and transparent elections are held remain key priorities for the Council. Monitoring the process leading up to the elections will also be a priority. In light of recent violence and given concern around the return of both Bozizé and Djotodia, members may consider adopting a statement urging continued calm and a cessation of all violence and calling for full implementation of the peace agreement. Such a product would demonstrate the Council’s unified support for MINUSCA and its work to facilitate the electoral process.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is consensus on the Council in support of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and around the need for peaceful elections later this year. Despite evident differences regarding the CAR sanctions regime during negotiations in January, the unanimous adoption of resolution 2536 in July and the largely uncontested negotiations leading to its adoption suggest that the Council may have found a more unified way to approach the CAR.

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

Kosovo

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold its second regular briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo. The Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Zahir Tanin, will brief on recent developments and the latest report by the Secretary-General.

Key Recent Developments

On 4 September, President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia and Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti of Kosovo signed agreements on the normalisation of economic relations between Serbia and Kosovo. The signing took place at the White House in the presence of US President Donald Trump, following two days of talks facilitated by the US administration

involving Serbian and Kosovar delegations. The agreements are primarily focused on improving economic ties between Serbia and Kosovo and reaffirm some previously agreed commitments, such as establishing railway and highway links between Belgrade and Pristina. They also include commitments for a one-year moratorium on Kosovo’s seeking membership in international organisations

UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO [Security Council Resolution S/RES/1244](#) (10 June 1999) authorised NATO to secure and enforce the withdrawal of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia forces from Kosovo and established UNMIK. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/255](#) (31 March 2020) was on Kosovo. [Security Council Meeting Record S/2020/339](#) (28 April 2020) was the transcript of the videoconference briefing on Kosovo. [Other S/2019/120](#) (7 February 2019) was a note by the Council president that said the Council would hold briefings on Kosovo in June and October 2019 and that as of 2020, briefings would be held twice a year (in April and October).

Kosovo

and on Serbia's campaign to persuade countries that have recognised Kosovo to withdraw their recognition. Furthermore, the agreements contained provisions on relations with Israel: Kosovo and Israel have recognised each other, and Serbia will move its embassy to Jerusalem. Both Serbia and Kosovo committed to designating Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation.

In their subsequent remarks to the media, Vučić and Hoti provided varying interpretations of the agreements. Vučić emphasised that Serbia did not sign a trilateral agreement but only a bilateral agreement with the US, and that it does not include recognition of a third party, alluding to Kosovo. On the other hand, Hoti portrayed the agreement as one of the steps toward final agreement and mutual recognition.

The high-level EU-facilitated talks between Belgrade and Pristina resumed in July after an impasse lasting 20 months. Vučić and Hoti agreed to resume the dialogue at a 10 July summit-level meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

On 7 September, Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, hosted a meeting with Vučić and Hoti in Brussels. Before the meeting, Vučić and Hoti issued a joint statement in which they confirmed that they would continue working on the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and that they attach the highest priority to EU integration. They acknowledged that the agreements signed in Washington on 4 September could contribute to reaching "a comprehensive, legally binding agreement on normalization of relations".

The same day, European Commission spokesman Peter Stano voiced concern over Serbia's commitment to move its embassy to Jerusalem, given that it contradicts the EU's common position on the status of Jerusalem. In response, Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić said that the decision to move the embassy will be discussed by the government and will depend on a range of factors, including the future development of relations with Israel.

On 24 June, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office filed an indictment with the Kosovo Specialist Chambers (KSC) charging Kosovo's president, Hashim Thaçi, among others, with a series of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Thaçi was questioned by the prosecutors after he travelled to The Hague voluntarily on 13 July. He has denied all accusations. On 24 September, the Specialist Prosecutor's Office arrested former KLA officer Salih Mustafa based on an arrest warrant issued by the KSC. At press time, no details had been provided on the specific charges against Mustafa. The Specialist Prosecutor's Office is an independent office for the investigation and prosecution of the crimes within the jurisdiction of the KSC. Formally established in 2016 by the Kosovo Assembly, KSC is a special court based in The Hague that operates under Kosovo's law and is staffed by international judges, with the mission of investigating alleged war crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army during the conflict in Kosovo in the 1990s. Funding for the KSC is provided by the EU, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey, and the US.

Key Issues and Options

Maintaining stability in Kosovo remains the Council's primary concern. The Council will continue to monitor diplomatic efforts to advance the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina and any efforts towards reaching a final agreement on Kosovo.

While the EU-facilitated dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina has resumed, an issue for the Council is the lack of implementation of existing agreements, especially on the establishment of the Association/Community of Serb Municipalities in Serb-majority northern Kosovo. A related issue is whether UNMIK could play a role in facilitating implementation of the existing agreements.

The Council will follow closely the developments related to the KSC. An issue for the Council will be Kosovo's cooperation with the KSC, given that some political actors in Kosovo have publicly criticised its work. Should Kosovo limit its cooperation with the KSC, the Council could consider issuing a statement calling on the

authorities in Kosovo to adhere to its commitments to the court.

Some members of the Council, the P3 in particular, have continued to question the UNMIK reporting cycle and called for downsizing the mission in light of the relative overall stability on the ground. While the Council reached an agreement on a less frequent reporting cycle in February 2018, it could also request the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of UNMIK to consider the effectiveness of the mission.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Kosovo remains a low-intensity issue for the Council and is closely followed mainly by members with a specific interest in the region. This is due in part to the pre-eminence of regional organisations, including the EU, NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in matters related to Kosovo.

Nevertheless, deep divisions among permanent members have continued to characterise the Council's consideration of Kosovo. France, the UK and the US recognise Kosovo's independence and tend to be supportive of its government; China and Russia do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia's position. Among the elected members, Ireland and Norway have recognised Kosovo.

The US has been the most vocal proponent of a drawdown and eventual withdrawal of UNMIK, citing the level of stability in Kosovo. The US has also asserted that the mission is overstaffed and over-resourced for its limited responsibilities and that these resources could be put to better use in more pressing situations on the Council's agenda.

The issue of modifying UNMIK's mandate and its possible drawdown is likely to become more prominent in the upcoming period, given the growing number of Council members that support this position. Alone among missions regularly discussed by the Council, UNMIK's mandate, established in 1999, is open-ended. Any attempt to change it would require a new resolution, which Russia would strongly oppose and most likely block.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), as requested in resolution 2519. The likely briefers are Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), which monitors the demilitarised zone along the border between Sudan and South Sudan, both expire on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

The overall security situation in Abyei, the disputed territory along the Sudan-South Sudan border, remains volatile. Speaking to the Security Council on 28 April, Lacroix noted that this volatility persists because of ongoing intercommunal tensions and an increase in the presence of armed groups. Several incidents took place over the summer that appear to have further exacerbated the security situation, including the 15 July killing of a UNISFA contractor, who was shot while travelling in a vehicle near a UNISFA logistics base in the village of Murta. The circumstances of the shooting remain unclear. In addition, Sudanese press reported on 9 August that five people had been killed during an attack, allegedly by the South Sudanese army, in a Dinka village in the Gouli area of Abyei. According to press reports, approximately 70 South Sudanese soldiers attacked the village after a dispute with the village guards, killing three villagers, while two of the attackers were also apparently killed.

On 26 August, Sudanese and South Sudanese officials met in Juba to discuss the situation in Abyei. The meeting, organised by local Abyei business leaders, was attended by the chairman of the Sudanese government's negotiating team and member of the transitional Sovereign Council, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, and South Sudanese Vice-President Hussein Abdelbagi. While both sides agreed that a peaceful solution in compliance

with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement was needed, no further progress was reported.

On 15 June, the Secretary-General appointed Major General Kefyalew Amde Tessema of Ethiopia as UNISFA's Force Commander. As of this writing, however, no progress has been made on the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission "to further facilitate liaison between and engagement with the parties", as requested by resolution 2469 of 14 May 2019. According to the Secretary-General's 16 April report, discussions are still ongoing with Sudan and South Sudan on the appointment. The request for such an appointment was consistent with the views of the Secretary-General, who said in a 20 August 2018 letter that the mission "has lacked the civilian tools to keep the parties engaged in the advancement of their dialogue politically" to resolve the final status of Abyei. Given this concern, the Secretary-General recommended the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission to function as the main focal point on political matters.

On 14 May, the Council adopted resolution 2519, which extended UNISFA's mandate and the mission's support to the JBVMM until 15 November. In addition, the resolution maintained the current authorised troop ceiling of 3,550 and police ceiling of 640, both set out in resolution 2497 in November 2019. It also decided to allow postponement in the withdrawal of the 295 troops above the authorised troop ceiling until the COVID-19-related suspension of troop repatriations, which the Secretary-General announced in March, is lifted.

The Council was last briefed on Abyei on 28 April by Lacroix and Onanga-Anyanga. In addition to briefing the Council on Abyei's volatile security situation, Lacroix told the Council that the COVID-19 pandemic, then in its early stages, would create "unprecedented challenges" for UNISFA as well as for Sudan and South Sudan. Onanga-Anyanga also highlighted the multiple challenges that the two countries faced, including the pandemic, falling oil prices and a locust invasion, all of which would have "a negative effect on the peace processes in the two countries".

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered an oral update from the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, with the participation of representatives of the AU, in an enhanced interactive dialogue on 23 September. On 1 October, the HRC was expected to consider, also in an enhanced interactive dialogue, the written report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, Aristide Nononzi (A/HRC/45/53).

Key Issues and Options

Council members have been following closely political developments in both South Sudan and Sudan, especially given Sudan's ongoing political transition. Despite COVID-19, there has been recent—albeit minimal—engagement between the two countries on Abyei. One option would be to encourage Sudan and South Sudan to intensify their engagement to advance towards a political resolution of the border issues.

Another key issue is whether to retain UNISFA's support of the JBVMM. Resolution 2519 noted that the current extension of support to the JBVMM was its final such extension unless the parties take a number of specific measures outlined in resolution 2497. One option is to retain the support for an additional six months, as previously recommended by the Secretary-General, while another would be to retain support for a shorter period as a means of putting pressure on the parties to intensify efforts to fully implement the JBVMM and also to reach a political solution.

Council Dynamics

As in previous years, the Council's focus on the situation in Abyei remains limited, largely eclipsed by its engagement on South Sudan and Sudan. However, the upcoming renewal of the mission's mandate and the expiration of UNISFA's support for the JBVMM in November present an opportunity for Council members to direct attention to the issue. During negotiations in May on resolution 2519, there was consensus on a rollover of the mission's mandate, especially given the situation around COVID-19.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2519 (14 May 2020) renewed the mandate of UNISFA until 15 November 2020. **Secretary-General's Report S/2020/308** (16 April 2020) was the Secretary-General's most recent report on UNISFA. **Security Council Meeting Records S/2020/351** (30 April 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 28 April open videoconference meeting on UNISFA.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold the quarterly 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.

Key Recent Developments

Through a 13 August agreement by Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the US, Israel and the UAE established the full normalisation of diplomatic relations in exchange for an Israeli commitment to forgo plans to annex parts of the West Bank. Israel had previously indicated its intention to annex parts of the West Bank “as early as 1 July”. On 11 September, Bahrain, Israel and the US issued a joint statement declaring the normalisation of relations between Bahrain and Israel. Bahrain and the UAE formalised their establishment of full diplomatic relations with Israel at a 15 September signing ceremony at the White House. Among the Arab countries, Israel also has full diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan, established in 1979 and 1994, respectively.

Hostilities continue to be reported between Gaza militants and Israel. During the signing ceremony on 15 September, two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip into southern Israel. One landed in Ashdod, a coastal town west of Jerusalem, injuring two people, while the other rocket was reportedly intercepted. On the following day, 13 missiles were fired into Israel, with five reportedly intercepted by Israel’s defence system; the Israeli military responded with air strikes on Hamas targets in Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority has been critical of the agreements between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain. Following the signing ceremony, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas issued a statement declaring that there would not be peace in the region “as long as the United States and Israel as an occupying entity do not recognize the rights of the Palestinian people to establish their state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and resolving the refugee issue”.

On 25 August, Mladenov briefed Council members in an open videoconference (VTC), followed by a closed VTC, on “The situation

in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Mladenov said that the Secretary-General had welcomed the normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE. He added that he hoped that the suspension of Israeli plans to annex parts of the West Bank would provide an opportunity for the parties to re-engage in meaningful negotiations. Mladenov reiterated that annexation would violate international law and strike a deadly blow to the chances of a two-state solution.

On 4 September, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) launched a \$94.6 million appeal to address the impact of COVID-19 on Palestinian refugees in the region through the end of 2020. The press release announcing the appeal said it had “a special focus on health, cash assistance and education” while expressing concern that “COVID-19 cases have worryingly surged in the West Bank, Lebanon, and Syria, with more recent increases in Jordan and the first instances of local transmission in Gaza recorded in late August”.

The demolition of homes in the occupied Palestinian territories continues. According to a 22 August article in the Israeli media outlet Haaretz, 89 residential units had been demolished in East Jerusalem in 2020; in 2019, 104 homes were destroyed in that part of the city. In his 18 June report on the implementation of resolution 2334, the Secretary-General expressed deep concern at “the continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian structures in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem”. He urged Israel to “cease demolitions and seizures of Palestinian property and to allow Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to develop their communities, in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law”.

Council members held a briefing, followed by consultations, on “The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” on 29 September. During the briefing, Special Coordinator Mladenov expressed concern about rising rates of COVID-19 in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, as well as the high incidence of demolitions of Palestinian structures in the West Bank this year. He also noted that UNRWA has a \$200

million deficit in its core programme budget for the remainder of 2020. Mladenov further expressed encouragement at recent Fatah-Hamas efforts to promote Palestinian unity—including their call “for long-awaited national presidential and legislative elections”—and maintained that “[e]lections and legitimate democratic institutions are critical to uniting Gaza and the West Bank under a single national authority vital to upholding the prospect of a negotiated two-State solution.”

Human Rights-Related Developments

Addressing the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the opening of its 45th session on 14 September, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said the “escalating tragedy in Gaza is of particular concern”. Bachelet spoke about the land and sea blockade, which has been imposed by Israel for 13 years and has brought Gaza’s main economic and commercial activities to a complete stop. As a result, she said, “more than 38 percent of Gazans live in poverty; 50 percent are unemployed; and more than 90 percent of the water from aquifers is undrinkable”. An August decision banning the entry of fuel into Gaza has led to greater suffering and humanitarian burdens. Bachelet stressed that Gaza is currently experiencing sharply rising cases of COVID-19 with the health sector facing total collapse unless the blockade is lifted. She underscored that the blockade “contravenes international law” and “has conclusively failed to deliver security or peace for Israelis and Palestinians”.

Key Issues and Options

A key 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. A related option would be to expand the Quartet as a forum for negotiations by allowing other states in the region to participate in a mediating capacity. Council members could also discuss the proposal made by President Abbas during his 25 September statement to the UN General Assembly for an international peace conference in early 2021 that would include the involvement of “all concerned parties”.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/555](#) (18 June 2020) was on the implementation of resolution 2334. [Security Council Letters/2020/837](#) (25 August 2020) was a compilation of briefings and statements from the meeting on “The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Given the ongoing humanitarian needs facing Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and elsewhere—which are being exacerbated by the coronavirus—members may choose to appeal for enhanced financial support for UNRWA.

Council and Wider Dynamics

As part of the agreement to normalise relations with the UAE, Israel committed to suspending its plans to annex parts of the West

Bank. Several Council members have emphasised that this commitment should be permanent: that is, plans for annexation should be halted for good and not just suspended temporarily. Other widespread views in the Council—and among the UN membership more broadly—are that settlement construction is a violation of international law, that occupation should end, and that the parties should pursue a two-state solution, based on the pre-June 1967 borders, with land swaps

agreed mutually by the parties.

While the difficult humanitarian situation in Gaza has been a feature of these meetings for several years, there are growing concerns in the Council about the economic and humanitarian impact of the spread of COVID-19 in Gaza and the West Bank.

The US consistently emphasises the threat posed by Iran to peace and security in the Middle East and may do so again in October.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Philippe Kridelka (Belgium), will deliver his 120-day briefing to the Council, most likely in an open videoconference (VTC). Elements of the sanctions regime will expire on 15 November, including the partial lifting of some sanctions, and the mandate of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts expires on 15 December.

Key Recent Developments

The 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee is the oldest sanctions committee currently in operation. The Council imposed a comprehensive arms embargo on Somalia on 23 January 1992 with the adoption of resolution 733 and established a sanctions committee through resolution 751 adopted on 24 April 1992. Since then, the regime has undergone many updates and changes. While the authorisation of the sanctions regime remains open-ended, there are a few elements that must be renewed each year. On 15 November 2019, the Council adopted resolution 2498, renewing for one year the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces, the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and humanitarian exemptions to the regime. The resolution also renewed the mandate of the Somalia Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts until 15 December 2020.

The latest periodic briefing by the chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee took

place on 9 June, when its chair, then Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, briefed Council members in an open VTC on the committee's activities from 28 February to 9 June. His briefing emphasised that armed terrorist group Al-Shabaab remains a potent threat to regional peace and security and is responsible for many attacks against civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. He highlighted Al-Shabaab's increased use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Somalia and their devastating effect, as relayed to the committee in a briefing by the UN Mine Action Service on 29 April.

As of the June briefing, the committee was considering six recommendations from the panel's mid-term update pertaining to threats to peace and security in Somalia, particularly Al-Shabaab's military and financial capabilities; the implementation of the arms embargo through further improvements in weapons and ammunition management; and international humanitarian law issues, including strengthening the protection of civilians. In more positive news, there seems to have been an improvement in the relationship between the Panel of Experts and the government of Somalia, which in 2019 refused to allow the panel to conduct visits to the country. While members of the panel have also been unable to visit Somalia this year, that has been due to COVID-19, and meanwhile, the panel seems to have had extensive video calls with stakeholders, including the government.

The committee's concern about increased deadly attacks by Al-Shabaab is reflected in

recent events. On 16 August, Al-Shabaab orchestrated an attack on a popular beach hotel in Mogadishu. It began with a car bomb exploding, after which terrorists rushed into the hotel, resulting in a four-hour siege. Sixteen people were killed and 18 were injured, while Somali special forces rescued more than 200. On 7 September, at least three Somali soldiers were killed, and several individuals were injured, including one US service member, in a car bomb blast claimed by Al-Shabaab that targeted a military base outside Kismayo. On 8 September, Al-Shabaab forces attacked the government-controlled city of Bal'ad, in Middle Shabelle region. Al-Shabaab reportedly suffered serious casualties.

Committee members continue to meet under the "informal informal" format via VTC (closed in this case), due to COVID-19 protocols put in place by the UN. On 14 September, the committee held a VTC to discuss the final Panel of Experts report. The panel's report focused particularly on the financing of Al-Shabaab, finding that a large part of the group's income comes from a significant and sophisticated taxation scheme. The taxation scheme has allowed Al-Shabaab to create a parallel state in much of Somalia, and Al-Shabaab has been more than able to finance its operations. The report seemed to make the point that Al-Shabaab must be defeated not only militarily but also financially.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Addressing the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the opening of its 45th session on 14 September,

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2498 (15 November 2019) extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2020. Security Council Letter S/2020/529 (11 June 2020) was a copy of the 9 June briefing provided by Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) in his capacity as Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee.

Somalia

High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said she was alarmed by an increase in reports of sexual violence against women, girls and boys. She called on the Somali authorities to swiftly adopt the Sexual Offenses Bill that was approved by the Somali Cabinet two years ago. She previously made this call in a 10 August statement when she also emphasised that the draft Sexual Intercourse Related Crimes Law “risks legitimizing child marriage” and should be prevented from becoming law, as it would also represent “a serious step backwards for the rights of victims of sexual violence in Somalia”.

The HRC was also scheduled to consider during its 45th session the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan (A/HRC/45/52).

Key Issues and Options

Council members are extremely concerned about the upsurge in Al-Shabaab attacks. They may consider whether to revise the partial lifting of some sanctions in November to

decrease Al-Shabaab’s ability to make IEDs. This could also mean an increased focus on implementation of the IED components ban in resolution 2498.

The October meeting will mark the first time the new Permanent Representative of Belgium, Philippe Kridelka, will address the Council in his capacity as chair of the committee.

Council Dynamics

This meeting may provide a preview of where things stand one month before the renewal of the partial lifting of parts of the sanctions mandate and the renewals of the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports and of the Panel of Experts’ mandate. During the adoption of resolution 2498 on 15 November 2019, China, Equatorial Guinea and Russia abstained. In their statements

after the vote, China and Russia reiterated their belief that the relationship between Djibouti and Eritrea is a bilateral one that does not merit mention in a Council resolution. (Until 2018, sanctions on Eritrea, related to its dispute with Djibouti, were part of the Somalia sanctions regime.) China and Russia furthermore did not approve of the inclusion of some human rights language, saying that the Human Rights Council would be a more appropriate venue. Equatorial Guinea also said that issues unrelated to Somalia should not be covered in the resolution. Such differences are likely to remain in 2020. There may also be some differences on the exemptions in the arms embargo for the Somalia national forces in order to combat Al-Shabaab.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia. Ambassador Philippe Kridelka (Belgium) chairs the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to receive the semi-annual briefing on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559, due on 21 October. Adopted in 2004, resolution 1559 called for the disarmament of all militias and the extension of government control over all Lebanese territory. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is expected to brief the Council.

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August 2021.

Key Recent Developments

Lebanon finds itself in an increasingly difficult and volatile situation as the country contends with political turmoil and a humanitarian catastrophe in the aftermath of the 4 August explosion in the Beirut port. The blast killed more than 190 people, injured at least 6,000, and damaged or destroyed large swaths of the city, including medical facilities. The cause of the blast is still under investigation.

The Beirut blast compounded existing

political, economic and humanitarian challenges in the country. UN agencies estimate that the explosion directly affected 300,000 individuals, with the need for shelter posing a major issue: many affected households were displaced, while others remain in partially destroyed dwellings. UNICEF warned that the displacement and overcrowding increase the risk of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and heightens the vulnerability of children and women to sexual and gender-based violence. As of 29 September, Lebanon reported 37,272 cases of the virus—more than a six-fold increase compared to the reported 5,000 cases before the explosion. Additionally, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) warned that the financial crisis in Lebanon and the COVID-19 pandemic, along with the impacts of the Beirut blast, have led an increasing number of people to undertake perilous sea journeys to Cyprus. UNHCR noted that between July and 14 September, there had been 21 journeys undertaken to Cyprus, of mostly Syrians but also of Lebanese and migrant workers. On 14 September, the UNIFIL Maritime Task

Force rescued a Cyprus-bound boat off the coast of Lebanon with 37 individuals on board, including 12 children. The boat was lost at sea for more than a week, resulting in the deaths of several passengers, including children and one woman.

Anti-government protests—which had been widespread before the explosion—intensified following the blast as citizens expressed frustration over endemic corruption and government mismanagement, which are viewed by many as a contributing factor in the disaster. On 10 August, the government of Prime Minister Hassan Diab stepped down. Diab came to power in January after Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned following widespread protests.

International interlocutors have stressed to Lebanese ruling elites that a new government must be formed urgently, and reforms adopted swiftly to address the country’s economic and humanitarian situations in order to unlock international financial aid. French President Emmanuel Macron visited Lebanon twice since the blast, on 6 August and 1 September. Macron reportedly presented Lebanese

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2539 (28 August 2020) renewed UNIFIL’s mandate until 31 August 2021. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between the militant group Hezbollah and Israel. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) called for the disarmament of all militias and the extension of government control over all Lebanese territory. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2020/329** (24 April 2020) was on the implementation of resolution 1559.

Lebanon

officials with a programme outlining political and economic reforms, including timelines for their implementation. Paris also called for the formation of a new government by 15 September and parliamentary elections within six to 12 months, while threatening to withhold international aid if no progress was made.

On 31 August, Lebanese President Michel Aoun designated Mustafa Adib as the country's new prime minister. The appointment of Adib—a Sunni Lebanese-French citizen who served as Lebanon's ambassador to Germany—received broad support from most major political groups. Adib announced his resignation on 26 September, citing his inability to form a government. It appears that disagreements arose between the different governmental factions over the appointment of a new minister of finance, as Lebanon's dominant Shi'ite Muslim factions—Hezbollah and the Amal Movement—reportedly insisted that the minister of finance be a Shi'a Muslim. Speaking at a news conference on 27 September, Macron urged Lebanese political elites to implement his reform programme within four to six weeks, while criticising them for refusing to engage in good faith to form a government.

On 18 August, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon—a UN-backed tribunal established in 2010 to hold trials for those accused of involvement in the February 2005 attack that killed former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 21 others—handed down its verdict after ten years of investigation and the trials in absentia of four defendants, who were described as “supporters of Hezbollah”. Salim Ayyash was convicted of participating in a conspiracy to carry out the attack. The three remaining defendants were acquitted due to lack of evidence. Many in Lebanon were disappointed with the verdict, as they felt it failed to address the issue of who ordered the killing of Hariri.

On 28 August the Security Council adopted resolution 2539, which renewed UNIFIL's mandate for another year. While the resolution did not make substantial changes to the mission's mandate, it reduced the force's troop ceiling from 15,000—as set out by resolution 1701—to 13,000. As of 25 August, the force stood at 10,328 peacekeepers, and as such the resolution does not entail a reduction in troop presence. The resolution further requested the Secretary-General to elaborate an implementation plan for the recommendations contained in his 1 June assessment report on the continued relevance of UNIFIL's resources within 60 days of the adoption of the resolution (that is, by 30 October).

Key Issues and Options

The growing concern for the Council is how to address the political and economic instability in Lebanon and prevent further deterioration of the already fragile security situation in the country.

One of the long-standing issues for the Council is the significant amount of weaponry held by Hezbollah and other non-state actors in contravention of resolutions 1559 and 1701. In his most recent report on the implementation of resolution 1559, the Secretary-General noted that “no specific steps have been taken” to address the disarming and disbanding of Lebanese militias since the adoption of resolution 1559 in 2004.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in the aftermath of the Beirut blast, including the increasing spread of COVID-19, is also a matter of concern. Council members may consider asking OCHA for a briefing on how the international community can further assist vulnerable groups in Lebanon.

As the Council has not issued a statement on Lebanon since February 2019, it may consider a presidential or a press statement to call for the urgent formation of a

new government in Lebanon and the swift implementation of reforms necessary to avert a humanitarian crisis.

Council Dynamics

There is a strong consensus among Council members in their support for Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. While most Council members are concerned about the maintenance of arms outside the control of the Lebanese state, there is a difference in tone on the issue of Hezbollah, the most heavily armed militia in the country.

The US has advocated for stronger action by UNIFIL to enforce the arms embargo and to tackle the maintenance of arms by the militant group. This position was repeated most recently in the closed videoconference consultations on resolution 1559, held on 13 May. However, it appears that Russia takes the view that Council discussions should not focus on Hezbollah, since the group is a member of the Lebanese government.

The differences of view regarding UNIFIL's role were also evident during the difficult negotiations on resolution 2539. Most Council members said UNIFIL should maintain its current mandate and troop strength, especially considering the destabilised situation created by the Beirut blast. The US, however, asked for language aimed at facilitating UNIFIL's access in its area of operations, as well as for the reduction in its troop ceiling. The US has repeatedly maintained that steps should be taken to either empower UNIFIL or realign the mission's configuration and resources to achievable tasks. The reduction of the troop ceiling to 13,000—an apparent concession to the US—is the first such reduction since the adoption of resolution 1701 in 2006.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold its annual open debate on women, peace and security. The Secretary-General's annual report will be released ahead of the meeting. Russia, as president of the Council in October, is expected to circulate a concept note ahead of the debate. The debate may also be held at a high level. Secretary-General António Guterres, Executive Director of UN Women Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, a female peacekeeper, and a civil society representative may brief. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place late in the month, the meeting is likely to be held as an open videoconference (VTC). A resolution is a possible outcome.

Key Recent Developments

This year marks the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325, the Council's first resolution on women, peace and security, adopted on 31 October 2000. Resolution 1325 acknowledged that armed conflict has a differential and disproportionate impact on women. The aspect of protection against sexual violence was further strengthened with resolution 1888 of 30 September 2009, which established the position of Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Resolution 2242, adopted on 13 October 2015, among other issues addressed the Council's working methods in relation to women, peace and security. The Council expressed its intention to convene an Informal Experts Group (IEG) on women, peace and security and also to invite civil society briefers representing women's organisations to country-specific and thematic meetings.

This year's co-chairs of the IEG, the Dominican Republic and Germany, are working towards a greater recognition that issues affecting women are peace and security issues. They argue that women, peace and security should not be isolated on the Council's

agenda as a thematic issue but rather, as recognised in resolution 2242, should be an integral part of the entirety of the Council's work. This is reflected in the IEG's 2016 guidelines, which suggest that not only member states' women, peace and security experts attend IEG meetings but also the respective country experts, as well. In the past year, the IEG has held meetings on Colombia, Iraq, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and on responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Because of the IEG's status as an experts' group, those meetings are not reflected on the Council's subsidiary bodies programme of work, and there is no obligation for Council members to attend. China and Russia rarely attend. UN Women acts as the secretariat of the IEG. A summary of every IEG meeting is sent as an annex to a letter from the co-chairs and the penholder to the Secretary-General and published as a document of the Council.

On 29 October 2019, the Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security. South Africa, as president of the Council that month, proposed that the focus of the debate be "Towards the successful implementation of the women, peace and security agenda: moving from commitments to accomplishments in preparation for the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000)". Briefers included UN Secretary-General António Guterres; UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security Bineta Diop; Lina Ekomo of FEMWISE (the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation); and Alaa Salah, a civil society activist and community leader from Sudan. Resolution 2493 on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was unanimously adopted following difficult negotiations. Controversial issues during the negotiations were the protection of women human rights defenders, the

strengthening of the role of the IEG co-chairs and sexual and reproductive health rights.

On 4 November 2019, the Council was briefed by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Permanent Observer of the AU to the UN Fatima Kyari Mohammed on a 21-26 October joint UN-AU solidarity mission to the Horn of Africa. This was the fourth Council meeting of its kind. In August 2017 the Council was briefed after a joint UN-AU trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria, as they were in July 2018 after a joint UN-AU visit to the Sahel region and in July 2019 following a solidarity mission to Afghanistan.

On 16 July, Council members held the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence in open VTC format at ministerial level. It was organised by Germany as president of the Council in collaboration with the Dominican Republic. Briefers included the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten; Angelina Jolie, in her capacity as a Special Envoy of the UNHCR; and Nadia Carine Therese Fornel-Poutou, Executive President of the Association des Femmes Juristes de Centrafrique. Considering the difficult negotiations of the Council's last two resolutions on women, peace and security, the president did not seek a formal outcome of the meeting. The year before, resolution 2467 of 23 April 2019 on conflict-related sexual violence was adopted with China and Russia abstaining. During the negotiations, China, Russia and the US all threatened to use their veto.

Resolution 2242 called on the Secretary-General "to initiate, in collaboration with Member States, a revised strategy, within existing resources, to double the numbers of women in military and police contingents of UN peacekeeping operations over the next five years". The Secretary-General's "Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028" was presented to the UN membership in

UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2538](#) (28 August 2020) was on women in peacekeeping operations. [S/RES/2493](#) (29 October 2019) was on the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. [S/RES/2467](#) (23 April 2019) was a resolution on sexual violence in conflict, passed with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). [S/RES/2242](#) (13 October 2015) established the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on women, peace and security. [S/RES/1888](#) (30 September 2009) established the position of Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. [S/RES/1325](#) (31 October 2000) was the first resolution on women, peace and security. **Secretary-General's Reports** [S/2020/487](#) (3 June 2020) was the latest annual report on conflict-related sexual violence. [S/2019/800](#) (9 October 2019) was the latest annual report on women, peace and security. **Security Council Letters** [S/2020/899](#) (25 August 2020) was the summary of the IEG's 29 July meeting on Colombia. [S/2020/856](#) (28 August 2020) was a letter from the president of the Security Council containing the draft resolution in blue about women in peacekeeping operations, the votes submitted by all Council members, and explanations of vote by Indonesia and Russia. [S/2020/727](#) (21 July 2020) was a letter from the president of the Security Council containing the briefings provided and statements given by states during the 17 July open VTC on conflict-related sexual violence. [S/2020/574](#) (23 June 2020) was the summary of the IEG's 27 May meeting on Mali. [S/2020/439](#) (27 May 2020) was the summary of the IEG's 29 April meeting on responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. [S/2020/283](#) (6 April 2020) was the summary of the IEG's 26 February meeting on Syria. [S/2020/282](#) (6 April 2020) was the summary of the IEG's 5 March meeting on Iraq. [S/2016/1106](#) (22 December 2016) were the guidelines for the IEG. **Security Council Meeting Records** [S/PV.8657](#) (4 November 2019) was a briefing on a UN-AU joint solidarity mission with a focus on women, peace and security. [S/PV.8649](#) (29 October 2019) was the first part of the annual open debate on women, peace and security. [S/PV.8649 \(Resumption 1\)](#) (29 October 2019) was the second part of the annual open debate on women, peace and security. [S/PV.8649 \(Resumption 2\)](#) (4 November 2019) was the third and last part of the annual open debate on women, peace and security.

Women, Peace and Security

January 2019. On 28 August, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2538 on women in peacekeeping operations. Initiated by Indonesia, it outlined several ways member states can promote the increased participation of women in peacekeeping and encouraged greater cooperation among states, the UN, and regional and sub-regional organisations as well as networking opportunities among female peacekeepers.

Key Issues and Options

An ongoing issue for the Council is how to further the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda. Areas of implementation could include better integration of relevant language in country-specific and thematic Council outcomes, inviting the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to brief the Council, and continuing to invite female civil society representatives to brief the Council.

Council Dynamics

Including language from the women, peace and security agenda as a cross-cutting issue in country-specific and thematic resolutions remains challenging.

The majority of Council members consider the normative framework of the agenda to be strong enough, arguing that the focus should be on the implementation of the agenda rather than attempts to adopt more Council decisions.

The UK is the penholder on women, peace and security issues in general, and the US is the penholder on conflict-related sexual violence. Germany and the Dominican Republic are the co-chairs of the IEG. Those two elected members will leave the Council on 31 December; the IEG will therefore be chaired by two new non-permanent members starting 1 January 2021.

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