

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has the presidency of the Security Council in November. Although the Council held several meetings in the Council chamber in October, COVID-19 infections at the mission of a member state led to the suspension of in-person meetings in late October, and it is unclear when they will resume.

St Vincent and the Grenadines has chosen to hold a high-level open debate on “contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity”, under the [Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace](#) agenda. The Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves, will chair the meeting. The expected briefers are Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development Ibrahim Mayaki; Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies Sir Hilary Beckles; and possibly the President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Munir Akram (Pakistan).

There will be the biannual briefing, followed by consultations, on the [Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel \(FC-G5S\)](#), which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (G5 Sahel) established in 2017 to combat terrorist and criminal groups in the region.

Several meetings on [Somalia](#) are expected. The Council is scheduled to adopt a resolution renewing several elements of the Somalia sanctions regime that will expire on 15 November. Additionally, the Council is expected to hold a meeting on the implementation of the mandates of UNSOM and AMISOM.

Regarding [Libya](#), there will be a briefing on the ICC by the Prosecutor and a briefing and consultations on UNSMIL.

Adoptions are also anticipated to renew the mandates of [MINUSCA \(Central African Republic\)](#) and [UNISFA \(Abyei\)](#).

The regular meetings on [Syria](#), [Yemen](#) and the [situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#), are also on the November programme of work. On Syria, there will be an open and closed meeting on the political and humanitarian situation and a closed meeting on the use of chemical weapons. The meetings on developments in Yemen and on the situation in the Middle East are planned in both open and closed format.

Other meetings on the Middle East include:

- [Iraq](#), with briefings and consultations on UNAMI and UNITAD; and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on resolution 1701.

On Europe, the Council will hold its semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and renew the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force.

Regarding the [DPRK](#), the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), will brief in consultations. The sixth annual briefing with heads of [police components of peace operations](#) will be held in early November. In addition, the Security Council and the General Assembly will elect five judges to the [International Court of Justice](#) to commence their term on 6 February 2021.

The 15 current Council members and the incoming five (India, Ireland, Kenya, Norway and Mexico) will participate in the annual “Hitting the Ground Running” workshop organised by Finland.

30 October 2020

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In Hindsight: Formulating the Motion to be Put to a Procedural Vote

Security Council procedural votes—which require nine votes in favour to be adopted and cannot be vetoed by a permanent member—remain rare, with a recent high of four such votes in 2018. From 1946 through 1989, there were 153 procedural votes, and since 1990 there have been only 28. Since the end of the Cold War, most procedural decisions—adopting the agenda for a particular meeting; adding a new item to the “seizure list”, as the list of all formal agenda items is known; or inviting an individual to participate in a Council meeting—have been arrived at by consensus during consultations.

However, the vote tally on the 28 procedural votes recorded since 1990 demonstrates how divided the Council was on most of these issues. Setting aside the ten procedural votes between March 1990 and December 1992 that were called by the US regarding the participation of the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in meetings, in which the US was the only member voting against, most of the remaining 18 decisions were adopted or rejected by a narrow margin of votes. Thirteen of those votes have taken place since 2014. That year and the next two each featured one procedural vote. In 2017, there were three such votes, and in 2018, four. There were two procedural votes in 2019 and one so far in 2020.

Procedural votes are taken during formal Council meetings and, unlike other Council decisions, neither require nor generate a written document. The procedural question is presented by the president orally just before the vote. The fact that the Council held no formal meetings for several months during the COVID-19 pandemic and developed a purely written voting procedure during the Chinese presidency in March may be a factor in the dip in procedural votes in 2020 (S/2020/253).

Often, the decision to be voted on is articulated in the room, on an ad hoc basis, just before the vote. Eventually, the president of the Council restates the question for everyone to be clear; sometimes, what exactly is being decided creates differences of opinion, or competing questions are put forward. It is up to the president to formulate the eventual motion to be put to a vote.

Such was the case during the discussion preceding the most recent procedural vote, on 5 October (S/PV.8764). Russia, the October

presidency, decided to hold the monthly briefing on the use of chemical weapons in Syria in public, although it usually takes place in consultations. In addition to Izumi Nakamitsu, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, who usually briefs on the Syria chemical weapons issues, the presidency invited José Bustani, a former director of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to brief. The European members of the Council (Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, and the UK) and the US objected, arguing that Bustani, who left the OPCW more than a decade before the Council began considering the Syria chemical weapons file, lacked the relevant expertise. Speaking on behalf of the six members, the UK asked the presidency to put the issue of the proposed briefer to a procedural vote.

An unusual public discussion ensued—with China, France and Germany also taking the floor—about how the question should be phrased. Russia suggested that the procedural question should be “Who is opposed to Mr. José Bustani briefing today’s meeting?” The UK countered that the question should be “The Russian Federation wishes to propose this briefer. Who supports it?” France suggested re-phrasing the question as “Do you agree that Mr. Bustani should brief the Council?” After several minutes’ discussion on whether to vote on all the questions and in which order, the Permanent Representative of Russia, in his capacity as Council president, announced that he would “not insist, unless other delegations should, on deciding as to which proposal shall be put to the vote first” and would “put to the vote the question whether the Council agrees to invite Mr. José Bustani to brief it today”. Three members—China, Russia and South Africa—voted affirmatively, six voted against, and six abstained. The agreement on the briefer was thus not adopted because it failed to obtain the nine affirmative votes required on a procedural vote. The Council then proceeded to hear the briefing from Nakamitsu. Taking the floor in his national capacity during the discussion that followed, the Russian representative, in addition to his own comments, read out the statement prepared by Bustani.

How procedural questions are formulated and in what order they are put to a vote is sometimes part of an intricate political strategy. On one occasion, in 2000, several

members wanted to block the participation of the representative of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in a debate on the situation in the Balkans on the grounds that it was inappropriate for the Council to hear from a representative of a country whose senior leadership was at the time under indictment by a tribunal unanimously established by the Council, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. Russia supported the Yugoslav representative’s participation and suggested a procedural vote to collectively approve or reject all the speakers planned for that meeting; they included the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Balkans and the High Representative for the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy, as well as the participation of concerned member states, under Rule 37 of the Council’s Provisional Rules of Procedure.

The presidency (France) suggested that three separate procedural votes be held: on member states’ asking to participate under Rule 37, on the two high-level envoys’ participation, and on the participation of the Yugoslav diplomat. Russia insisted that a single procedural vote be held on all those wishing to participate. The presidency thus asked Council members to “take a single decision on all the requests, considered as a whole”, stressing that this “would mean that the Council would either accept all the requests or reject them all”. The president also signalled that should the Russian proposal fail to be adopted, he would “follow the procedure that I myself have proposed” (S/PV.4164). The single decision received four votes in favour and failed to be adopted. The Council then adopted by no-objection procedure the list of member states asking to participate under Rule 37 and the invitation for the UN and the EU envoys to brief. A separate vote was then held on the proposal to invite the representative of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to participate. This motion received four votes in favour and was not adopted.

Most, but not all, procedural votes are held in public. Sometimes a procedural vote is called with the knowledge that the proposal will not be adopted, precisely in order to establish a public record of the Council’s efforts on a particular issue. On one occasion in the post-Cold War period—the July 2005 vote on the decision to add the situation in

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Zimbabwe to the Council's agenda and hold a briefing on it—the vote was conducted in a private meeting with the vote results (approving the proposal) provided in a communiqué issued afterwards (S/PV.5237).

One could argue that for pragmatic reasons, taking a procedural vote—rather than engaging in painstaking, sometimes multi-day informal consultations—could be an efficient use of the Council's time. Nevertheless,

at present there seems to be considerable acrimony associated with resorting to procedural votes. Their use may signal more complicated Council dynamics, in particular among its permanent members.

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UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 2 October, Council members were briefed in consultations by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix on the latest 90-day report by the Secretary-General on UNDOF and the most recent developments.

Arria-formula Meeting on Access to Education in Conflict and Post-Conflict Contexts

On 2 October, an Arria-formula meeting on “Access to education in conflict and post conflict contexts: Role of digital technology and connectivity” was held via VTC. The meeting was co-hosted by Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and South Africa. The briefers at the meeting were Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director; Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Assistant Secretary-General, Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau, International Telecommunication Union; Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou, the CEO of the National Agency for Information Society of Niger; and Paula Ingabire, the Minister of Information and Communications Technology and Innovation of Rwanda.

Haiti

On 5 October, the Council held an open VTC meeting on BINUH (S/2020/979), followed by a closed VTC session. Special Representative and head of BINUH Helen La Lime underlined the increased unrest in the country, threats posed to the security of the state due to the activity of violent gangs, the widespread perception of impunity, and an economic recovery negatively affected by the impact of COVID-19. On 15 October, the Council renewed the BINUH mandate until 15 October 2021 through resolution 2547 (S/PV.8768). The resolution did not make

significant changes to the core mandate of the mission, its tasks, or the reporting requirements set out in resolution 2476 of 25 June 2019. Two member states abstained: China and Russia.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 6 October, the Security Council held open (S/2020/987) and closed VTCs on MONUSCO. Special Representative Leila Zerrougui briefed the Council. She called on political actors to overcome their differences and to compromise for the good of DRC. She also praised MONUSCO's efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger), also delivered his annual briefing to the Council. On 26 October, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council presenting the Joint Strategy for MONUSCO's potential drawdown.

Mali

On 8 October, the Council held its quarterly briefing on Mali with Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Special Representative and head of MINUSMA (S/PV.8765). On 15 October, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2020/10), welcoming the new transitional arrangements in Mali following the 18 August coup d'état, and outlining expectations of the way forward (S/PV.8769). The Council underlined that the transition should lead to constitutional order and elections in Mali within 18 months; reiterated the strategic importance of the full, effective and inclusive implementation of the 2015 peace agreement; and called on the Malian authorities to take expedited action to protect civilians, reduce intercommunal violence and restore peaceful relations between communities in central Mali. A Council press statement on 16 October condemned in the strongest terms the 15 October attack against MINUSMA

in Kidal region through an explosive device, which killed one peacekeeper from Egypt and seriously injured one other, as well as the attack against a MINUSMA integrated camp in Timbuktu, which injured at least one peacekeeper from Burkina Faso (SC/14330).

Cyprus

On 9 October, the Council held in-person consultations on Cyprus. Special Representative and head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar briefed Council members via VTC. The Republic of Cyprus requested the meeting over recent actions by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in the city of Varosha that it believes run counter to relevant Security Council resolutions on the issue. The Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2020/9) in which it reaffirmed the status of Varosha as set out in previous Council resolutions (S/PV.8766). It also called on the sides in Cyprus and the guarantor powers to engage in dialogue.

Arria-formula Meeting on Mediation

On 9 October, Council members held an Arria-formula meeting on mediation, via videoconference. Belgium, Germany, Viet Nam and non-Council member Switzerland jointly hosted the meeting. The agenda was based on a discussion paper entitled “Mandating peace: Enhancing the mediation sensitivity and effectiveness of the UN Security Council”, which was authored by Laurie Nathan, Professor of the Practice of Mediation at the University of Notre Dame, and commissioned by the German Federal Foreign Office. Professor Nathan presented the key findings of his report. Nicholas Haysom, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Sudan; Natalia Gherman, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA); and Mohamed Ibn

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Chambas, Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), provided comments on the report and their perspectives on mediation more broadly.

Counter-Terrorism

On 9 October, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee held an open VTC briefing on “Emerging trends in violent extremism conducive to terrorism and addressing violent extremism through a human rights-based approach”, and on 15 October, it held a closed VTC meeting on maritime security. On 27 October, the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee held a closed VTC meeting to receive the quarterly oral briefing by the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team.

Great Lakes Region

On 13 October Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia provided his bi-annual briefing to the Council on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region and other recent developments in the region (S/PV.8767). Xia announced that he had submitted a new strategy focused on preventive diplomacy, security cooperation and development to the Secretary-General on 12 October. Council members had been anxiously awaiting the strategy, which is expected to guide the work of Xia’s office for the next decade. Xia struck a positive tone and described the region as broadly stable.

Western Sahara

On 14 October, Council members met in a closed VTC session to hear briefings from Special Representative and head of MINURSO Colin Stewart and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita. After that, members entered into negotiations to renew the mandate of MINURSO. On 30 October, the Council adopted resolution 2548 through a written voting procedure to renew MINURSO for an additional year. Thirteen voted in favour, and there were two abstentions.

Colombia

On 14 October, the Security Council convened for an open briefing on Colombia via VTC (S/2020/1023). Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission

in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2020/943). On 19 October, Council members issued a press statement which strongly condemned the killings—including those of children and young people—that have occurred in Colombia in recent months (SC/14332). They further urged the National Commission on Security Guarantees to finalise and implement a public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups.

Nagorno-Karabakh

On 19 October, Security Council members held in-person consultations on the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. France, Russia, and the US called for the meeting amid the escalation of violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed members on the latest developments. Leading up the meeting and for several days thereafter, members engaged in negotiations on a presidential statement on Nagorno-Karabakh. Given the diverging views among some members on the language in the draft, the penholders (France, Russia and the US) dropped the proposal and the statement was not adopted.

Gulf Region

On 20 October, the Security Council held a ministerial-level debate via VTC under the agenda item “Maintenance of international peace and security” on: “Comprehensive review of the situation in the Persian Gulf region” (S/2020/1037). Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov chaired the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres; Robert Malley, the President and CEO of International Crisis Group; and Vitaly Naumkin, Director of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, briefed the Council. The meeting built on a vision for collective security in the Persian Gulf that Russia shared with members of the Security Council and the wider UN membership through a letter to the Secretary-General in July 2019 (S/2019/604). During the meeting members addressed cross-cutting issues and common security challenges such as the threats posed by terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They also discussed ways to promote cooperation in the Persian Gulf area

and to contribute more effectively to regional peace and security.

Kosovo

On 21 October, the Council held its second regular briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/2020/1040). Special Representative and head of UNMIK Zahir Tanin briefed the Council on recent developments and the latest report by the Secretary-General. In his briefing, Tanin emphasised that recent developments in the EU-facilitated dialogue and talks in Washington demonstrate the potential for progress on outstanding issues. On the issue of rule of law, he stressed the importance of cooperation with the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office. Ministers for foreign affairs Ivica Dačić (Serbia) and Meliza Haradinaj-Stubllja (Kosovo) addressed the Council as well.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 26 October, the Council held the quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” via VTC. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed. He expressed concern about the decision by Israel to approve the construction of nearly 5,000 housing units in the West Bank. Mladenov also appealed to the Palestinian Authority to resume security and financial cooperation with Israel, noting that the lack of cooperation had worsened the threat of COVID-19 in the area.

Afghanistan

On 27 October, members of the Security Council issued a press statement strongly condemning the 24 October attack that took place near the Kawsar e Danish educational center in Kabul (SC/14338). The attack, which was claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), killed 24 people—most of whom were young students—and injured more than 50 civilians. Council members expressed concern over the high levels of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and called for sustained efforts to reduce violence.

Lebanon (1559)

On 28 October, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed

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the Council on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2020/1032) on the implementation of resolution 1559 in a closed VTC meeting. On 28 October, the Secretary-General issued an implementation plan for the recommendations contained in his 1 June assessment report on the continued relevance of UNIFIL's resources, in accordance with the Council's request in resolution 2539.

Women, Peace and Security

On 29 October, the Security Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security via VTC. Secretary-General António Guterres gave the opening statement. The following speakers briefed: the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Danai Gurira; Nataliia Emelianova, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Adviser in the UN

Interim Security Force for Abyei; and Zarka Yaftali, head of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation in Afghanistan. On 30 October, the Council failed to adopt a resolution on women, peace and security, initiated by Russia. The draft received five votes in favor (China, Indonesia, Russia, South Africa and Viet Nam), while the remaining Council members abstained.

Lebanon (1701)

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council expects to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701, due on 11 November. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a militant group Hezbollah and Israel. Briefings are expected from the Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Ján Kubiš, and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

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

Key Recent Developments

The situation in Lebanon remains difficult, as pre-existing political and economic challenges have been compounded by the effects of the 4 August Beirut port explosion and the increasing spread of COVID-19. Lebanese ruling elites struggled to form a new government after the 10 August resignation of Prime Minister Hassan Diab, who stepped down following widespread anti-government protests in the aftermath of the Beirut blast. On 26 September, Mustafa Adib—whom Lebanese President Michel Aoun designated as the new prime minister on 31 August—announced his resignation, citing his failure to form a government. It appears that disagreements arose between governmental factions, as Lebanon's dominant Shi'ite Muslim parties—Hezbollah and the Amal Movement—reportedly insisted that the minister of finance be a Shi'a Muslim.

On 22 October, Aoun designated Saad Hariri as Lebanon's next prime minister. Hariri, a Sunni Muslim politician, has held the premiership three times, and resigned from the role most recently on 29 October 2019 following widespread protests calling for better living conditions. Hariri vowed to implement the political and economic reforms contained in the roadmap presented by French President Emmanuel Macron during his 6 August and 1 September visits to Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Lebanon continued to suffer from the effects of a deteriorating financial and humanitarian situation. The Beirut blast killed 192 people, injured at least 6,500—including some 1,000 children—and left hundreds of thousands in need of shelter. The unemployment rate, which stood at 30 percent in June, has increased, as over 150,000 workers are estimated to have lost their jobs either temporarily or permanently because of the explosion. Between 27 September and 23 October, UNIFIL provided assistance in Beirut, including in clearing debris and reconstruction. This was done in line with resolution 2539, which was adopted on 28 August and renewed UNIFIL's mandate for a year. The resolution authorised the mission to undertake "temporary and special measures" to support Lebanon in the aftermath of the Beirut explosion.

The UN-coordinated response plan to the Beirut port explosion is seeking \$355 million to assist 300,000 people in need. As at 20 October, close to 29 percent of the plan has been funded.

The recent months have witnessed

accusatory rhetoric from Israeli and Lebanese officials, as well as incidents on the Lebanon-Israel border that have increased tensions in the area. On 27 July and 26 August, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) opened fire towards Lebanese territory, claiming it was responding to an infiltration attempt by Hezbollah operatives and to small arms fire aimed at IDF troops, respectively. At the time of writing, UNIFIL had yet to announce the conclusion of its investigations into both incidents.

During his 29 September speech to the UN General Assembly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu claimed that Hezbollah is storing arms in a residential area in Beirut's Janah neighbourhood. Netanyahu asserted that the arms depot is located near a gas station, thus putting civilians in danger of another potential blast. In a televised speech, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah denied Netanyahu's allegations, adding "we know very well where we should place our missiles".

On 14 October, Israeli and Lebanese officials held an initial round of negotiations on the delineation of the maritime border between the two countries. The meeting was facilitated and mediated by the US and hosted under UN auspices. The parties meet regularly in a tripartite mechanism consisting of UNIFIL and the two countries to discuss security issues along their shared land border, but the maritime negotiations mark the first talks between Lebanon and Israel on civilian matters in 30 years.

The maritime dispute between Israel and Lebanon revolves around approximately 330

Lebanon (1701)

square miles in the Mediterranean Sea that both countries claim as part of their Exclusive Economic Zone. The contested area reportedly contains potentially lucrative natural gas fields. Media reports estimate that Lebanon's decision to accept the American mediation framework after having refused similar offers for over a decade was prompted by its need to alleviate its dire economic condition, which has worsened following the Beirut blast. A second round of negotiations took place between 28 and 29 October.

On 29 October, the Secretary-General issued the first elements of an implementation plan for the recommendations contained in his 1 June assessment report on the continued relevance of UNIFIL's resources, in accordance with the Council's request in resolution 2539.

Key Issues and Options

A major concern for the Council is the economic and political instability engulfing Lebanon, which has the potential to undermine the already fragile security situation in the country. Council members also remain concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the main objectives of resolution 1701, including a permanent ceasefire and disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon.

A key priority for the Council is to protect the integrity of UNIFIL's mandate and to provide the force with the means to carry out its tasks. Council members may choose to endorse the Secretary-General's plan for the implementation of the recommendations

of the 1 June assessment report and request the Secretariat to initiate deliberations with the parties and troop-contributing countries on the matter. Members may wish to convene an informal meeting with a Secretariat official to ask questions about the implementation plan, similar to the meeting the Council held on 17 June with Lacroix to discuss the assessment report.

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. Such a product may also welcome the start of negotiations on the delineation of the maritime border between Israel and Lebanon and call on the sides to undertake further confidence-building measures.

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 views Hezbollah as a major threat to the stability of the region and has advocated for stronger action by UNIFIL to tackle the problem of the militant group's stockpiling of arms. However, some members, such as Russia, claim that Council discussions should

not focus on Hezbollah since the group is a member of the Lebanese government. Several Council members, in their national capacity, have recently expressed a more critical view of Hezbollah. On 22 October, Estonia imposed sanctions on members of Hezbollah, barring their entry into the country. In addition, during a 27 September press conference, French President Macron criticised Hezbollah for its role in Prime Minister-designate Adib's failure to form a new government. He asked the group to clarify whether it is a political party or whether it proceeds "in a logic dictated by Iran and its terrorist forces".

Differences of view on UNIFIL's role were evident in the difficult negotiations on resolution 2539. The US entered the negotiations advocating for provisions aimed at facilitating UNIFIL's access in its area of operations, as well as for a reduction of its troop ceiling. However, most Council members believed that UNIFIL should maintain its current mandate and troop strength. In an apparent compromise, the resolution reduced the force's troop ceiling from 15,000, as set out by resolution 1701, to 13,000. Following the adoption of resolution 2539, the US stated in its explanation of vote that if the resolution's provisions do not improve UNIFIL's access or help the force tackle Hezbollah's maintenance of arms, it would seek further action on the matter during next year's UNIFIL mandate renewal negotiations.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will hold a high-level open debate on "contemporary drivers of conflict and insecurity", under the Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace agenda. The

Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves, will chair the meeting, which will be held by videoconference. The expected briefers are Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Chief

Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development Ibrahim Mayaki; Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies Sir Hilary Beckles; and possibly the President of the Economic and Social

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEBUILDING **Security Council Resolutions** [S/RES/2413](#) (26 April 2018) took note of the General Assembly's decision to invite relevant UN bodies and organs to further consider the recommendations and options in the Secretary-General's implementation report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. [S/RES/2282](#) (27 April 2016) was on the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture. **Security Council Presidential Statements** [S/PRST/2018/20](#) (18 December 2018) was on the PBC's advisory role to the Council, initiated by Sweden. [S/PRST/2017/27](#) (21 December 2017) laid out the elements related to peacebuilding and sustaining peace to be considered when reviewing the mandates and configuration of peacekeeping missions. **Secretary-General's Reports** [S/2020/773](#) (30 July 2020) was on peacebuilding and sustaining peace submitted in connection with the 15-year comprehensive review of the UN peacebuilding architecture. [S/2019/448](#) (30 May 2019) was on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. [S/2018/43](#) (18 January 2018) was on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, including options to increase, restructure and better prioritise financing for peacebuilding. **Security Council Letters** [S/2020/678](#) (6 July 2020) was from the Secretary-General, transmitting the reflections and recommendations of the group of independent eminent persons on the implementation of the resolutions of the ten-year review of UN peacebuilding. [S/2020/645](#) (2 July 2020) was a letter from the PBC chair to the president of the General Assembly and the president of the Security Council, containing the main elements from the series of consultations convened by the PBC during the first half of 2020 to contribute to the formal phase of the peacebuilding review. [S/2020/91](#) (31 January 2020) was on the appointment of the group of independent eminent experts for the 2020 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture.

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Council (ECOSOC), Ambassador Munir Akram (Pakistan).

Key Recent Developments

This year, the UN's peacebuilding architecture is undergoing its third comprehensive review since it was first made operational in 2006. The review was launched in October 2019 to assess progress in implementing the 27 April 2016 General Assembly and Council resolutions on the 10-year review of the peacebuilding architecture. The initial informal phase, as set out in the terms of reference for the current review, was organised around three tracks—regional consultations, consultations by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and reflections by a group of independent eminent persons—to assess the implementation of these resolutions and the recommendations contained in previous reports of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. These tracks would then provide input for a Secretary-General's report, to be considered by member states during the second, intergovernmental-process phase.

Member states and UN entities initiated the regional consultations involving regional organisations, think tanks, and policy and academic institutions. A series of PBC meetings starting in February considered several peacebuilding-related thematic issues—transitions during the withdrawal of peace operations, the role of women, institution-building and UN system-wide engagement, and financing and partnerships for peacebuilding. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the PBC also held a number of meetings on the impacts of the global health crisis, observations of which were integrated into a 2 July letter to the Secretary-General.

The group of independent eminent persons, appointed in January by the Secretary-General, presented its reflections and recommendations in a 7 July letter transmitted by the Secretary-General to member states. Writing about current drivers of conflicts, the expert group observed: "Today's conflicts are multidimensional, marked to varying degrees by persistent exclusion, inequalities and grievances, including refugee flows, internal displacement and humanitarian spillovers of conflict, weak governance and State capacity, and compounded by climate change, violent extremism and the perverse use of new technologies".

At the end of July, the Secretary-General submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council his report for the formal intergovernmental process of the peacebuilding review. This officially started the second phase of the review, in September, co-facilitated by Ambassador Craig John Hawke (New Zealand) for the General Assembly and Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) for the Security Council. The co-facilitators have since prepared a short "procedural" draft resolution that UN member states started considering in October, eventually for adoption by both the General Assembly and the Council.

The COVID-19 pandemic, declared a global health crisis on 11 March by the World Health Organization, brought new attention to the nexus of the UN's peace and security, development, humanitarian and human rights pillars, which has been at the heart of UN peacebuilding reforms since the ten-year review. Security Council meetings on the pandemic have included discussions about its secondary affects that could trigger conflict and instability, such as the economic fallout, an increase in political tensions and loss of trust in government institutions. Council resolution 2532, which sought to support the Secretary-General's global ceasefire appeal to combat COVID-19, recognised that the pandemic risked reversing peacebuilding and development gains in transition and post-conflict countries and is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Secretary-General's 30 July report for the peacebuilding review said: "The current pandemic threatens not only hard-won development and peacebuilding gains but also risks re-instigating conflicts or fomenting new ones. ... The challenges of the pandemic further underscore the imperative of coherent, multidimensional and cross-pillar responses aligned with the integrated logic of the Sustainable Development Goals".

Key Issues and Options

The open debate is meant to afford member states an exchange of views about the security impacts of contemporary conflict drivers and instability, such as pandemics and environmental challenges, including climate change. Moreover, it seeks to promote discussion about the Security Council's role in fostering an integrated and coherent approach by

the UN system to address such challenges. A related issue that may prompt discussion is how to more systematically address socio-economic challenges to peace and security, including opportunities for collaboration between the Council and the UN development system to support conflict-affected countries in achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals, and between the Council, the PBC and ECOSOC to create more comprehensive development approaches for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

No formal Council outcome is anticipated from the debate, which is separate from the ongoing peacebuilding review. However, the Council could seek to organise more periodic discussions on socioeconomic or other emerging conflict drivers to raise awareness of their destabilising affects and to promote efforts to address such problems.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Differences have existed between members that believe the Council must do more to address structural conflict drivers and those that feel the Council is not the right platform to focus on the wide-ranging socioeconomic factors that are related to armed conflict. Among the latter group, Russia has been notably the most vocal and often cautions about the value of maintaining the division of labour between the UN's principal organs and its peace and security, development and human rights pillars. Some of the UN's membership has also continued to raise concerns about the concept of sustaining peace, which emerged from the last review, with some viewing it as "securitising" development or enabling interference in issues of state sovereignty.

On climate change, the US, like China and Russia, has raised objections about the issue being tackled by the Council. But it objects for different reasons, as the Trump administration denies that climate change is occurring.

After initial concerns raised by China and South Africa about the COVID-19 pandemic's link with the maintenance of peace and security, members appear to recognise and agree on its potential peace and security implications. Most recently, Niger organised a Council summit-level debate during its September presidency on global governance reform to strengthen the multilateral system's

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ability to respond to peace and security threats from the pandemic, as well as terrorism, transnational organised crime, the illicit arms trade, climate change, and cybercrime.

As a small island developing state, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines' interest in organising this debate stems from the greater destabilising effects of climate change and the pandemic on developing countries. In addition to its role as co-facilitator for the peacebuilding

review, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was last year's president of ECOSOC, which was established in 1945 with the view that peace and security require development.

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will hold its annual briefing with the heads of UN police components in UN peace operations. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is expected to brief. The briefing will be held via videoconference (VTC). The heads of police components of three UN peacekeeping operations and one special political mission will also brief: Pascal Champion, the police commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Unaisi Lutu Vuniwaqa, the police commissioner of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); Issoufou Yacouba, the police commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA); and Serge Therriault, the police commissioner of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). Champion is expected to brief on increasing UN police performance and accountability while Vuniwaqa is likely to brief on the contribution of UN police to the protection of civilians. Yacouba is likely to address the issue of advancing political solutions through UN policing, and Therriault to discuss capacity-building and development efforts, focusing on the Haitian National Police.

Key Recent Developments

Briefings with the heads of police components of UN peace operations have been held annually since 2014. The most recent, held on 6 November 2019, featured briefings from Lacroix and Yacouba as well as Awale Abdounasir, the police commissioner of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Mary Gahonzire,

the police commissioner of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Marie-Joseph Fitah-Kona, Adviser to the Mayor of the Third Arrondissement of Bangui, Central African Republic, also briefed.

At that time, Lacroix noted that UN police components are well placed to deal with emerging challenges and threats such as organised crime and international terrorism, and the need to build the national capacities of host states, especially in the area of the rule of law. In this context, Abdounasir spoke about MONUSCO's efforts to address organised crime, while Gahonzire discussed UNISFA's efforts to support community protection committees in Abyei, and Yacouba addressed efforts to build governance in "ungoverned spaces" in Mali. Fitah-Kona offered a first-hand view of the benefits of having UN police deployed to Bangui, noting that their presence had provided Bangui greater security, allowing shops to reopen, while also helping to raise awareness of violence against women and sexual exploitation and abuse.

At the 2017 annual police commissioners' briefing, the Council adopted resolution 2382, emphasising the important contribution UN policing can provide in peacekeeping and special political missions at different stages of a conflict. It also stressed the importance of UN policing with respect to the protection of civilians, capacity-building, and the development efforts of host state police services. On 21 September 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2436, reaffirming its support for the development of a comprehensive and integrated performance policy framework that identifies clear standards of performance for evaluating all UN civilian and uniformed personnel working in and

supporting peacekeeping operations, including police components.

Since last November's annual briefing, the Council has adopted two more resolutions that are directly relevant to this year's briefing: on 30 March, the Council adopted resolution 2518, which emphasised the importance of enhancing the safety and security of UN peacekeepers and police components and called on host states to facilitate access and freedom of movement for UN peacekeepers and police components and their equipment consistent with a mission's mandate, including casualty and medical evacuation. This is particularly important given the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. With the adoption of resolution 2538 on 28 August, the Council took an important step to improve efforts towards women's "full, effective and meaningful participation at all peacekeeping levels and positions". As part of these measures, resolution 2538 encouraged member states to develop "strategies and measures to increase the deployment of uniformed women to peacekeeping operations", including increasing the number of women in police forces.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is the impact that COVID-19 is having on peace operations, including police components, and their ability to undertake their mandated tasks. On 27 March, the Secretary-General announced that he had suspended the rotation and deployment of uniformed personnel, including individual police officers and formed police units, until 30 June. Though the full suspension has now been lifted, the Department of Peace Operations continues to review these carefully: some countries have been requested to delay troop and police rotations

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2538 (28 August 2020) was on the role of women in peacekeeping operations. S/RES/2518 (30 March 2020) was on improving the safety and security of peacekeepers. S/RES/2436 (21 September 2018) was on peacekeeping performance. S/RES/2382 (6 November 2017) recognised that policing is as an integral part of the mandates and decision-making structures of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8661** (6 November 2019) was the annual briefing of the heads of UN police components.

UN Peacekeeping

by three months that they may “maintain operational strength and execute their mandated tasks”.

Given this, the Council and briefers may wish to focus on how peace operations are undertaking their mandated tasks while being guided by the Secretary-General’s four main objectives for UN peace operations in

response to COVID-19. These objectives are the protection of UN personnel and their capacity to continue critical operations, helping contain and mitigate the spread of the virus, supporting national authorities in their response to COVID-19, and continuing to deliver on key mandates.

Council Dynamics

There is general agreement among Council members about the importance of UN police in helping to maintain public order, protect civilians, and assist host states in building their law enforcement capacities.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Preparations for the first round of presidential elections—which are scheduled for 27 December, with legislative and local elections and a possible second round of presidential elections in early 2021—continue apace despite a tense political and security environment. The Secretary-General’s 12 October report noted that the CAR’s political situation is “increasingly characterized by tension and mistrust” as elections in the country approach.

On 23 September, the CAR National Assembly passed legislation that amended the electoral code and extended the registration deadline by a month. While the Secretary-General noted that the deadline extension has not affected the 27 December election date, several Council members, speaking during a Council briefing on the CAR on 19 October, expressed concern that the process could be “endangered” if there are further delays. The registration process had been set back because of insecurity and obstruction by a number of armed groups, including the 3R (Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation) group and the anti-Balaka.

The National Assembly’s 23 September electoral code amendments failed to include a provision that would have allowed approximately 250,000 Central African refugees

outside the country to vote in the upcoming elections. Despite a recommendation from the CAR’s multi-stakeholder consultative framework on the elections and UN advocacy, CAR President Faustin-Archange Touadéra said that permitting refugee participation presented “insurmountable obstacles”, though he did not elaborate on the nature of these hurdles.

Briefing the Council on 19 October, Mankeur Ndiaye, Special Representative for the CAR and head of MINUSCA, said 16 candidates, including three women and the incumbent Touadéra, have so far announced their intention to compete in the presidential elections. Among them is former president François Bozizé, who announced on 25 July that he would run in the elections; he 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”. Ndiaye noted on 19 October that some of the candidates have “cast doubt on the country’s peace process”.

Implementation of the CAR’s 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation also remains problematic, with a number of armed groups continuing to violate the agreement and obstruct the restoration of the CAR government’s authority. In addition, according to the Secretary-General, there has been a “resurgence in violence” in the CAR’s north-west, though the situation in CAR’s north-east stabilised after an upswing in violence earlier this year. In response, and in support of its protection of civilians mandate, MINUSCA has undertaken a series of 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 there and another, launched in coordination with the Central African armed forces on 17 June, to end violence against civilians in north-west CAR committed by the 3R armed group.

According to OCHA, CAR’s humanitarian situation remains worrisome. Approximately 2.6 million people require humanitarian assistance and 2.36 million people are considered food insecure. Intercommunal tensions, attacks against civilians, and a spate of attacks on humanitarian workers have had a detrimental impact on the humanitarian situation and delivery of assistance. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the country’s socioeconomic situation. The overall number of those infected with the coronavirus remains relatively low (as of 10 October, there were officially 4,850 cases), but 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”.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the independent expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, Yao Agbetse. According to Agbetse’s report (A/HRC/45/55), from July 2019 to June, MINUSCA’s human rights division documented 880 incidents of abuse and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, which involved 1,552 victims.

On 7 October, the HRC adopted without a vote resolution 45/35, which renewed the mandate of the independent expert on the situation

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/2020/994** (12 October 2020) was a report on MINUSCA. **Security Council Letter S/PV.8771** (19 October 2020) was a briefing on the latest Secretary-General’s report (S/2020/994) on MINUSCA.

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of human rights in CAR for a year and requested that the independent expert work closely with MINUSCA, especially in the area of transitional justice. The resolution also reminded countries that contribute troops to MINUSCA acting under the mandate of the Security Council to take appropriate measures to “prevent any and all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and to prevent impunity among their personnel”.

Key Issues and Options

The immediate task for the Council is renewing MINUSCA’s mandate in November and ensuring that the December elections are credible and held in a secure and transparent manner. As such, members may use the mandate renewal as an opportunity to strengthen further the mission’s efforts to support CAR in organising the elections. Monitoring the process leading up to the elections and the implementation of the CAR peace agreement will also be a priority.

Given the concern of a number of Council members regarding ongoing attacks on humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, Council members may also wish to strengthen language in the MINUSCA mandate about the need for greater accountability for those groups and individuals who violate international humanitarian law.

Finally, as the elections approach, members may also consider adopting a statement echoing the conclusions of the 1 October high-level ministerial meeting on CAR convened by the Secretary-General, urging continued calm and a cessation of all violence and calling for full implementation of the peace agreement. This, coupled with a potential unanimous adoption of MINUSCA’s mandate renewal in November, would demonstrate the Council’s unified support for MINUSCA.

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 in December. Strong differences regarding the CAR sanctions regime were highlighted during negotiations in January and were again raised during both the 1 October high-level ministerial meeting on CAR and the 19 October Council briefing. Nonetheless, the unanimous adoption of resolution 2536 renewing sanctions in July and the smooth negotiations leading to its adoption suggest that the Council may now have found a more unified way to approach CAR. Council members appear to be largely unified in their wish to have uncontentious negotiations leading up to the mandate renewal.

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

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

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

The current authorisation for EUFOR ALTHEA expires on 5 November.

Key Recent Developments

Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to experience political instability, which is hampering progress on socio-economic reforms and preventing effective coordination between state institutions on issues such as COVID-19 response. After the general elections of 7 October 2018, disputes between Bosnia’s main Bosniak, Croat and Serb parties—including on issues relating to the country’s possible NATO integration—delayed the formation of a national government (the Council of Ministers) for 14 months. On 23 December 2019, the state parliament endorsed the

new Council of Ministers after an agreement between the parties was reached through international facilitation.

However, the predominantly Bosniak and Croat regional entity, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)—one of the two entities that make up BiH along with the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska (RS)—is still without a government, as are two of the Federation’s ten cantons. The FBiH entity remains under the rule of a caretaker government. The ongoing deadlock reflects continued divisions and tensions among Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs.

Local elections, which were initially set to take place on 4 October, were postponed to 15 November because the Central Election Commission (CEC) did not receive sufficient funding to conduct preparatory activities. The delay in the elections was caused by disagreements between state authorities on the approval of the state budget for 2020. On 17 June, a substantial achievement was made when Bosniak and Croat leaders signed an agreement allowing local elections to be held in the divided Bosniak and

Croat city of Mostar for the first time since 2008. Local elections in Mostar were stalled because of the failure of political parties to implement a 2010 Constitutional Court decision regarding the city’s election law. The CEC announced that elections in Mostar are planned for 20 December.

In recent months, limited progress was made regarding BiH’s consideration for EU membership. On 28 April, the three members of the Presidency of BiH announced the launch of a process to implement the 14 key priorities contained in the European Commission’s May 2019 opinion on BiH’s application for EU membership. The priorities include recommendations on issues of democracy, rule of law, human rights, and public administration reform. In its 6 October report on BiH, the European Commission concluded that while there was partial progress on some key priorities—including the agreement on elections in Mostar and the repeal of the death penalty in the RS entity’s constitution—the country needs to do much more to meet the obligations of EU membership.

UN DOCUMENTS ON BIH Security Council Resolution S/RES/2496 (5 November 2019) renewed the authorisation of EUFOR-ALTHEA until 5 November 2020. Security Council Letter S/2020/379 (8 May 2020) contained the statements made at the 6 May Security Council meeting on BiH. Reports of the High Representative S/2020/345 (29 April 2020) covered the period from 16 October 2019 to 15 April 2020.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the early response in BiH was successful, as the country put aside political divisions and adopted strict measures to address the crisis. However, after an early relaxation of the mitigating measures, cases peaked during the summer months. The European Commission's 6 October report noted coordination difficulties on pandemic response as management bodies acted in their respective jurisdictions and there were no unified countrywide response strategies. As at 29 October, BiH reported 46,639 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 1,182 fatalities.

The Security Council held its previous semi-annual meeting on BiH via videoconference on 6 May. Inzko briefed on his latest report and expressed concern about attempts by some political parties in the governing coalition in RS to promote discussion on the removal of foreign judges from the BiH Constitutional Court. Inzko warned that removing foreign judges could lead to certain political parties taking control over the Constitutional Court, thereby allowing them to "dismantle existing arrangements in the country".

The Council was also briefed by Irena Hasić, executive director of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights in Bosnia and Herzegovina, who described the ethnically divided school system in BiH and emphasised the need for inter-ethnic socialisation among young people to promote reconciliation and dialogue. She elaborated on the difficulties faced by civil society organisations because of the divided institutional system in BiH, including limits on their ability to access schools in the RS entity. Several Council members emphasised the importance of empowering youth to participate in decision-making and transitional justice processes, as

well as investing in education to address the high rate of youth unemployment in BiH that is leading an increasing number of young people to emigrate.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 46th session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a committee of 23 independent human rights experts, concluded that conflict-related sexual violence investigations in BiH have been "ineffective and too slow", leading to insufficient compensation and support for victims. In a 19 August statement, CEDAW underscored that according to various estimates, during the war in Bosnia between 1992-1995, some 12,000-50,000 girls were raped by armed forces. It called on the BiH government, that is currently undergoing post-conflict transitional justice processes, to ensure that survivors of wartime sexual violence have full access to "national remedies, effective relief and reparations".

Key Issues and Options

Political gridlock, lack of respect for the rule of law, and ethnic divisions in BiH remain key issues. Slow progress in advancing socio-economic reforms linked to BiH's EU integration and fulfilling the criteria and objectives for closing the OHR are recurring issues.

Council members will be following the preparations for the local elections set to take place in November. An emerging concern in this regard is the potential for the spread of divisive rhetoric in the run-up to the elections. Since the campaign period officially started on 16 October, the CEC has already disqualified the Serbian "United Srpska" party from running because of a campaign video deemed to promote ethnic hatred.

Council members may consider issuing a press statement calling for the holding of free and fair local elections. Such a product may welcome the political agreement that allows

elections to be held in Mostar and call on BiH to take additional steps to promote political and socio-economic reform.

Council Dynamics

Council members largely share concerns over BiH's divisive ethnic politics and the urgent need for parties to take the necessary steps following the general elections in October 2018. Most members are also critical of the RS leaders' rhetoric, which they view as challenging BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, however, tends to be more supportive of the positions of the RS leadership and is critical of the High Representative, contending that his reporting is not objective. During the 6 May Council meeting, Russia argued that the situation in BiH does not pose a threat to international peace and security and called for the early closure of the OHR.

Divisions over BiH's "Euro-Atlantic" integration, and those related to a possible future accession to NATO in particular, between the US and European Council members on one side and Russia on the other, have also been a factor in Council dynamics in the past six years.

As in previous years, the decision on 5 November 2019 to re-authorise EUFOR ALTHEA for one year was not controversial, as all members of the Coordination and Drafting Group and the Council supported the continuation of the EU-led international force. The BiH Coordination and Drafting Group prepares the first draft of Council products on BiH. For 2020, it comprises Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK and the US. The US will be the penholder in November.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

November marks one year since the Constitutional Committee for Syria began its work. Following an official launch for all 150 members of the Committee in Geneva on 30

October 2019, the first round of meetings of the 45 participants who make up the "Small Body" met on 4 November, and the Committee reconvened in Geneva between 25 and 29 November 2019 for a second round

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2533 (13 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 Meeting Record S/PV.8764 (5 October 2020) was a meeting on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

Syria

of discussions. Progress has been slow, however; the co-chairs from the government side and the opposition side were unable to agree on an agenda over the first two rounds of talks. Despite this and after a long delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen organised a third round of meetings, held in person in Geneva on 24 August and 27-29 August. Speaking to the Council on 18 September, Pedersen noted that “very real differences on substance even at the quite general level” persist. In order to get agreement on an agenda for a fourth round of meetings, the Special Envoy travelled to Damascus on 25 October for two days of meetings with Syrian officials. Pedersen, who briefed the Council on 27 October, informed members that “there was some valuable narrowing of the differences” on the agenda that “could provide a way out and enable consensus...on the agenda for the next two meetings”. If such an agreement could be reached, he noted, it was possible that the Committee could meet in Geneva sometime in November.

Pedersen’s visit to Damascus comes in the context of an increasingly precarious humanitarian situation in the country. The official total of COVID-19 cases throughout Syria remains relatively low (the Syrian Ministry of Health reported 4,826 cases of COVID-19 as at 13 October), but the country has seen a very rapid rise in cases since the summer. Recent independent studies suggest that the number of cases is significantly higher. With 143 healthcare workers having tested positive for COVID-19 (as of 13 October), there is concern that Syria’s strained medical care facilities will be further weakened.

Syria’s declining economic situation and a sharp rise in food insecurity also appear to be exacerbating the country’s humanitarian conditions. Syria has recently suffered from the sudden collapse of its currency, the Syrian pound, and, according to OCHA, an unemployment rate of nearly 50 percent in August. By some estimates, 80 percent of Syria’s population now lives in poverty. Meanwhile, food prices continue to increase; according to a recent World Food Programme analysis, Syria’s national average price of essential commodities was the “highest rate recorded since the start of the crisis”. Overall, 9.3 million Syrians are considered food insecure, an increase of 1.4 million over the last six months.

The situation in Syria’s north-west remains particularly worrying. According to OCHA, the number of COVID-19 cases there has increased twenty-fold from early September to 20 October (the date of the most recent available data) with some 2,865 COVID-19 cases confirmed. As with the rest of Syria, the north-west also suffers from poorly equipped medical facilities, inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and low testing capacity. The latter has, however, seen improvement recently with the opening of two new testing laboratories, bringing the total to three. As for the security situation in the area, violence, including shelling and airstrikes, persists. OCHA reported that while regular airstrikes have been ongoing over the last several weeks, 20 September saw the highest number in a single day since a ceasefire went into effect on 5 March, with 28 airstrikes in the Idlib area. Incidents involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and car bombs as well as attacks by armed groups on civilians and humanitarian workers also appear to be on the rise in the area.

The region has also seen increased challenges to the delivery of humanitarian assistance since the adoption in July of resolution 2533, which left open only one Council-mandated border crossing, Bab al-Hawa, for this purpose. Given that the Bab al-Hawa crossing now needs to handle humanitarian assistance for 1.3 million people, including 800,000 internally displaced persons living in the northern Aleppo Governate, OCHA reported on 20 October that work to repair and widen roads in the area was beginning.

Finally, on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, Russia and China sponsored an Arria-formula meeting on 28 September. Several speakers who have publicly alleged that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) withheld exculpatory evidence regarding the 7 April 2018 chemical weapons attacks on Douma were invited to speak. (On 1 March 2019, the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria [FFM]—whose mandate is “to establish facts surrounding allegations of the use of toxic chemicals, reportedly chlorine, for hostile purposes in the Syrian Arab Republic” rather than identify the perpetrators—released its report on Douma, concluding that the FFM’s investigation provided “reasonable grounds that the use of a toxic chemical as a weapon took place”.)

The Arria-formula meeting was followed by the regular monthly chemical weapons meeting on 5 October. Unlike previous recent meetings on the issue, which have been held in a closed format, Russia, as President of the Council in October, held the meeting in an open format. In addition to inviting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu—who regularly briefs the Council on the implementation of resolution 2118, which prohibits Syria from using, developing, stockpiling or retaining chemical weapons—Russia also invited former OPCW Director-General José Bustani. Several Council members objected to Bustani’s speaking on the issue of the use of chemical weapons in Syria, arguing that his tenure as head of the OPCW pre-dated the use of chemical weapons in Syria and thus he could not provide relevant information. A procedural vote was taken, and Bustani was not allowed to speak. Nevertheless, the Russian Permanent Representative, Vassily Nebenzia, speaking in his national capacity, read Bustani’s statement to the Council.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered an updated written report (A/HRC/45/31) from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria. Presenting the report, the commission’s chair, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, said that Syrians continue to suffer “gross human rights violations by all the actors controlling the territory”. In the report, the COI proposed several steps for the international community, including an international mechanism to coordinate efforts currently taking place to collect information on an estimated 100,000 missing and disappeared persons and facilitating prisoner releases. Pinheiro was adamant that incommunicado arbitrary detention and torture amount to a “crime against humanity”. Syria, speaking as a concerned country, rejected the “selective and politicized report”, alleging that it employed double standards.

On 6 October, the HRC adopted resolution 45/21 with 27 members voting for (including current Council member Germany and incoming Council member Mexico), one against, and 19 abstentions (including current Council member Indonesia and incoming Council member India). Resolution 45/21 strongly condemned the government of Syria for severe human rights violations, drawing on the COI updated report, and noted that there are “reasonable grounds” to believe the Syrian authorities, “in pursuance of a continued State policy”, continued to perpetrate crimes against humanity.

Syria

Key Issues and Options

The Council is closely following progress on the work of the Constitutional Committee. Council members may wish to use the one-year anniversary of the launch of the Constitutional Committee to take stock of the Committee's work. With the anniversary and the announcement of a potential fourth round in November, the Council could adopt a presidential statement welcoming progress to date, while also laying out a clear set of substantive achievements they expect the Committee to aim for in upcoming rounds of meetings.

Council members will continue to monitor

progress on the delivery of UN humanitarian assistance to Syria's north-west and north-east, especially in light of the closure of all authorised border crossings except at Bab al-Hawa. Some members may pursue more information on cross-line delivery into Syria's north-east in order to better assess its efficacy.

Council Dynamics

While there appears to be agreement among Council members that the work of the Constitutional Committee is an overall positive development, some members have become increasingly concerned with the committee's

lack of progress. In addition, 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. Finally, recent meetings on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including both the 28 September Arria-formula meeting and the 5 October Council briefing, have further deepened divisions on this issue.

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

Libya

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing by the Acting Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL), Stephanie Williams, and the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Günter Sautter, the Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany. Additionally, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda will deliver her semi-annual briefing on recent developments concerning cases in Libya. The Council may also adopt a resolution supporting compliance of all national and international stakeholders with the 23 October ceasefire agreement between the Libyan conflict parties. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place, the meetings are likely to be held as videoconferences.

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 authorisation given through resolution 2526 (to inspect vessels believed to be in violation of the arms embargo) expires on 5 June 2021. UNSMIL's mandate expires on 15 September 2021. The

authorisation given through resolution 2491 (to inspect vessels suspected of being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking) expires on 3 October 2021.

Key Recent Developments

A 14-month-long assault by the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF, also known as the Libyan National Army) under General Khalifa Haftar against Libya's capital, Tripoli, and the internationally recognised Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) based there was halted by armed groups supporting the GNA in June. Both the LAAF and the GNA receive foreign military backing in violation of UN sanctions. Turkey's support for the GNA eventually turned the conflict in its favour. A stalemate between armed forces continues around Sirte. The town has strategic significance because of its proximity to Libya's oil crescent, where most of the country's oil export terminals are located, which is part of the two-thirds of Libyan territory that remains under Haftar's control.

On the political situation, as a result of the Berlin Conference on Libya in January, negotiations between Libyan parties along three tracks (economic, political and security) are

underway, with varying levels of progress. The Council endorsed the conclusions of the Berlin Conference in resolution 2510 of 12 February, on which Russia abstained. Regarding the security track, the 5+5 Joint Military Commission conducted its fourth round of talks in Geneva in October. The 5+5 Joint Military Commission consists of five representatives each from the GNA and the LAAF. These talks marked the first time that the representatives met directly; in the previous rounds, UNSMIL had conducted shuttle diplomacy between the two parties. During a 23 October press conference, Williams announced that the representatives had signed a "complete, countrywide, and permanent ceasefire agreement with immediate effect". According to the terms of the agreement, the ceasefire includes the departure of foreign fighters and mercenaries from all sovereign Libyan spaces (land, sea and air) within three months starting the same day. The agreement also contains an immediate suspension of foreign military training, including the departure of respective training personnel; issues of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed elements; and the intention to set up a monitoring mechanism

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2546 (2 October 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 that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. 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/2510 (12 February 2020) endorsed the conclusions of the Berlin Conference on Libya; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). S/RES/2509 (11 February 2020) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 May 2021 as well as the measures related to the illicit export from Libya of petroleum until 30 April 2021; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). Security Council Letter S/2020/1043 (27 October 2020) was from the Secretary-General, transmitting a copy of the permanent ceasefire agreement signed by the Libyan parties in the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8763 (2 October) was the adoption of resolution 2546. Security Council Press Statement SC/14339 (27 October 2020) was on the ceasefire agreed between representatives of the GNA and the LAAF.

Libya

for the implementation of the agreement. The signatories to the agreement further included a request for UNSMIL to share the agreement with the Council, and for the Council to adopt a resolution supporting compliance of all national and international stakeholders with the ceasefire agreement. On 27 October, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the agreement.

Resolution 2510 requested the Secretary-General to report on several aspects, including on “proposals for effective ceasefire monitoring under the auspices of the UN”. Resolution 2542 of 15 September renewing UNSMIL’s mandate until 15 September 2021 requested the Secretary-General to submit that information “no later than 60 days after the adoption of this resolution”.

On 2 October, the Council adopted resolution 2546, renewing 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.

The EU removed Aguila Saleh, the head of the House of Representatives—which is aligned with Haftar—from its sanctions list on 2 October “in light of his recent constructive engagement in support of a negotiated political solution to the Libyan crisis”. Saleh had been listed by the EU on 1 April 2016 as obstructing the implementation of the UN-brokered Libyan Political Agreement and the formation of the GNA.

The Secretary-General, during a 5 October high-level virtual event on Libya he co-chaired with Germany, called the persistent violations of the arms embargo a “scandal”, saying this called into question “the basic commitment to peace of all involved”.

On 14 October, the GNA announced that it had arrested Abd al Rahman al-Milad, who was sanctioned by the Council on 7 June 2018 for his involvement in trafficking and smuggling of migrants and related human

rights violations. At the time of his listing, he was the head of the regional unit of the Libyan Coast Guard in Zawiyah but lost this position shortly after the listing. The latest final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee of 29 November 2019 names al-Milad as reportedly working with GNA-affiliated fighters. UNSMIL welcomed the arrest.

A confidential report by the Panel of Experts that was leaked to the press in early May said that the Russian private military company Wagner Group had deployed around 1,200 mercenaries to fight for Haftar, according to the media. The Kremlin denies ties to the Wagner Group despite accusations to the contrary by various sources. On 15 October, the EU sanctioned Russian national Yevgeniy Prigozhin, describing him as a “businessman with close links” to the Wagner Group, including financial links. Among the reasons given for his listing is the “delivery of arms as well as deployment of mercenaries into Libya” supporting the LAAF. The Wagner Group is also named by the EU as having “participated in multiple military operations” against the GNA.

UNSMIL has remained without an appointed head since 2 March when Ghassan Salamé announced his resignation as Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, citing stress-related health reasons. Resolution 2542 split the role of Special Representative into a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and an UNSMIL Coordinator, following pressure by the US. Council members have not been able to agree on candidates put forward by the Secretary-General since March.

COVID-19 case numbers in Libya continue to rise sharply. As at 30 October, Libya had 60,628 confirmed cases.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) heard as part of an interactive dialogue an oral update from the Fact-finding Mission on Libya, established by the HRC in June through resolution 43/39. The chair of the mission, Mohamed Auajjar, noted that due to the broad mandate of

the mission, this allowed for flexibility to “consider a range of potential violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by all parties” in Libya since 2016. Williams, who also participated in the interactive dialogue, noted that accountability for various human rights and humanitarian law violations was the only way to ensure justice for the crimes as well as sustainable peace in Libya. She furthermore observed that UNSMIL called for the immediate closure of government-managed migration detention centres and illegal detention facilities under the control of armed groups that were connected to the trafficking of migrants. She emphasised that thousands were denied access to basic services with the level of human suffering being “simply unacceptable”.

Key Issues and Options

The ongoing conflict in Libya and related non-compliance with the arms embargo by multiple international actors have been ongoing issues for the Council, together with the implementation of the Berlin Conference’s conclusions. One option for the Council is to follow-up on the request contained in the ceasefire agreement to adopt a resolution supporting the implementation of the agreement.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council continues to be divided over Libya. Council outcomes routinely call upon UN member states to cease support for parallel institutions in Libya and refrain from interfering in the country, but some countries, including members of the Council, fail to respect these calls.

France has shown political support for Haftar while his largest military backer is the United Arab Emirates. Mercenaries from several countries are reportedly fighting on both sides, as acknowledged in the ceasefire agreement. All foreign sponsors but Turkey deny their role in Libya.

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

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In November, 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

The Houthi rebel group continued to threaten the oil- and gas-rich governorate of Marib, while Hodeidah, along the Red Sea, experienced an outbreak of its most intense fighting since the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement put in place a ceasefire in the governorate. UN-led negotiations between the Yemeni government and the Houthis on a joint declaration for a nationwide ceasefire, economic and humanitarian measures, and restarting political talks entered their eighth month at the end of October.

The fighting in Hodeidah occurred in the first week of October. It centred around the al-Durayhimi and Has districts just south of Hodeidah city, with the Houthis reportedly seeking to break the nearly two-year siege of their forces in al-Durayhimi. On 8 October, Griffiths called on the parties to stop the fighting and to preserve their commitments under the Stockholm Agreement. At the Council's 15 October briefing, the Special Envoy reported that the situation had calmed and that recent days had also seen a decrease in fighting in Marib.

In rare positive news, the sides conducted a prisoner exchange after an agreement to do so was announced on 27 September at the conclusion of talks in Geneva hosted by the Special Envoy and the ICRC. On 15 and 16 October, 1,056 prisoners were exchanged—over 600 Houthi prisoners and approximately 400 pro-government fighters, including 19 Saudis and four Sudanese from the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. It was the largest swap of prisoners since the announcement of a prisoner exchange mechanism in the Stockholm Agreement to release up to 15,000 prisoners. Also on 15 October, 200 Yemenis—most of whom had been prevented from returning

since leaving Yemen for medical treatment around the time of the December 2018 UN-brokered talks held in Sweden—returned to Sana'a from Oman.

At the 15 October Council meeting on Yemen, which members held in the chamber while Griffiths spoke via videoconference (VTC), he highlighted this good news. On the joint declaration, he noted the challenges caused by the need to conduct negotiations through shuttle diplomacy and mostly virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In consultations, Griffiths apparently observed that some of the humanitarian and economic measures were continuing to hold up agreement. During a virtual press conference after the briefing, Griffiths stressed the need to conclude the joint declaration “within weeks, not months”, saying he hoped the declaration could be brokered this year.

During the meeting, Lowcock provided an update via VTC on the humanitarian situation. He said that UN humanitarian flights to Sana'a had resumed since the Council's last briefing on Yemen in September. The fuel shortage in northern Yemen, due to the government's blocking fuel imports through Houthi-held ports because of a dispute over the use of import revenues, was continuing to drive up fuel prices and exacerbate humanitarian needs. Among other challenges, Lowcock said funding of the 2020 UN humanitarian response plan had improved from just 30 percent in September to 42 percent. But the funding shortfall was still much larger compared to past years at this time. He repeated his warnings about the looming threat of famine.

A Council press statement released the day after the meeting urged the Yemeni parties to endorse the UN-facilitated Joint Declaration proposals without delay. Among other points, it condemned military escalations in Marib and Hodeidah governorates, welcomed the prisoner exchange, and expressed deep concern about the risk of famine.

On 17 October, Iran's Foreign Ministry announced the arrival of an ambassador to Yemen, Hassan Irloo, who had presented his credentials to the Houthi authorities in Sana'a. The Special Envoy's office issued a

statement on Twitter stressing that it had no involvement in the transfer of Irloo to Sana'a.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered the report of the High Commissioner on the implementation of technical assistance provided to the National Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of violations and abuses committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen (A/HRC/45/57). Presenting the report, Georgette Gagnon, director of field operations and the technical cooperation division of the Office of the High Commissioner, observed that many of the attacks on and hostilities involving the civilian population may amount to “serious violations of international humanitarian law”.

On 6 October, the HRC adopted two resolutions on Yemen. Resolution 45/15 was adopted with 21 voting for (including current Security Council member Germany and incoming Council member Mexico), 12 against (including incoming Council member India), and 12 abstentions (including by current Security Council member Indonesia). The resolution endorsed the work of the Group of Eminent and International Regional Experts (GEE), “expressing deepest concern” at the findings of the GEE report (A/HRC/45/6) and renewing and strengthening the GEE's mandate. Resolution 45/15 also urged all parties in Yemen to “end any use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare” and called for full implementation of Security Council resolution 2417, which condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. The government of Yemen rejected the resolution, calling it a “politicization of the human rights situation in Yemen”.

Resolution 45/26 was adopted without a vote. It requested all parties to the conflict in Yemen to “implement fully” Security Council resolution 2216, noting that it may contribute to an improvement in the situation of human rights.

Key Issues and Options

The joint declaration of a nationwide ceasefire, along with a restart of peace talks, remains the main political initiative. The Houthis' Marib offensive risks undermining the negotiations on the joint declaration as the governorate is a political and economic stronghold for the government. It also threatens to worsen the humanitarian situation for the governorate's residents and the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons hosted in Marib. Sustaining and implementing the Riyadh Agreement between the government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC),

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8770](#) (15 October 2020) was a briefing by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14329](#) (16 October 2020) urged the Yemeni parties to endorse the UN-facilitated joint declaration proposals without delay. [Selected Human Rights Council Documents Resolution 45/15](#) (6 October 2020) renewed the mandate of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen. [A/HRC/45/6](#) (28 September 2020) was the third annual report of the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen, which recommended that the UN Security Council refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court.

Yemen

which is overseen by Saudi Arabia, is another important issue, reflecting the complexity of resolving Yemen's war.

Yemen's deteriorating economy—including the near-depletion of its central bank reserves, the decline in the value of the Yemeni rial, and a decrease in remittances from the Yemeni diaspora—is exacerbating the country's humanitarian crisis, as is the COVID-19 pandemic. Access restrictions on aid, particularly by the Houthis in the north, and the fuel shortage, contribute to the worsening situation. Funding for relief efforts also remains critical to stave off the risk of famine, about which the UN has issued new warnings since July.

The FSO Safer oil tanker moored near the port city of Hodeidah is an equally urgent issue. An oil spill from the deteriorating ship would destroy the Red Sea ecosystem for decades, prevent use of Hodeidah's critical port for up to six months and destroy

livelihoods for 1.6 million Yemenis. During his 15 October briefing, Lowcock said that discussions with the Houthis on dispatching a UN mission to assess the tanker's condition and undertake initial repairs "have accelerated in recent weeks" and that the UN hoped to receive written approval for its deployment in the coming days.

If agreement is reached on the joint declaration being negotiated for a ceasefire, the Council may adopt a resolution to welcome or endorse the deal. Another option is to have the GEE brief the Council on its latest report on the human rights situation in Yemen. (This year's report recommended that the Security Council refer the situation in Yemen to the International Criminal Court.)

Council Dynamics

Council members appear aligned in their support of the Special Envoy, continuing to back his efforts to reach an agreement on the joint

declaration for a ceasefire and the resumption of a political process. Members further share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the FSO Safer. So far this year, members have issued multiple press statements and press elements urging the parties to reach agreement on the declaration and calling on the Houthis to facilitate the UN technical mission to access the oil tanker. The US, which seeks to reimpose sanctions on Iran, often points to what it perceives as Iran's destabilising role in Yemen. Russia, at times, raises concerns about singling out the Houthis in Council products, which, from its perspective, could be perceived as Council bias.

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

International Court of Justice

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council and the General Assembly will elect five judges to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to commence their term on 6 February 2021.

Background

The ICJ consists of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms by the Council and the General Assembly. Five seats come up for election every three years. There is no bar on consecutive terms. According to article 2 of the ICJ Statute, the judges are "independent" and "elected regardless of their nationality".

The statute calls for "national groups" to nominate the candidates. The Secretary-General prepares and then shares a list of all candidates with the Council and the General Assembly, per article 7 of the statute.

The statute does not have a formal requirement for the geographical distribution of the seats. Article 9, however, requests the electors to consider "that in the body as a whole the

representation of the main forms of civilization and of the principal legal systems of the world should be assured". Article 3 rules out the possibility of two judges of the same nationality holding seats on the court. In practice, the court's composition reflects that of the Council in usually featuring a judge from each of the five permanent members. There have been two exceptions: there was no Chinese judge at the ICJ from 1967 to 1985, and there has been no judge from the UK since 2018. The current regional distribution is as follows: African states, three judges; Asia-Pacific states, four; Eastern European states, two; Latin American and Caribbean states, two; and Western European and Other states, four.

The five judges whose terms are to expire are Julia Sebutinde (Uganda, representing the African states); Xue Hanqin (China, representing the Asia Pacific states); Yuji Iwasawa (Japan, also representing the Asia Pacific states); Peter Tomka (Slovakia, representing the Eastern European states); and Giorgio

Gaja (Italy, representing the Western European and Other states). Twelve of the current judges are male and three are female. Since the establishment of the ICJ, four out of 108 judges have been female.

On 28 October, the Council held its annual private meeting with the president of the ICJ, Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf. They spoke about the relationship between the Council and the ICJ 75 years after the adoption of the UN Charter and 100 years after the adoption of the Statute of the ICJ.

Candidates

Eight candidates are contesting the five positions. Four of the candidates are current members of the ICJ: Julia Sebutinde (Uganda); Xue Hanqin (China), the incumbent vice-president; Yuji Iwasawa (Japan); and Peter Tomka (Slovakia). The other candidates are Taoheed Olufemi Elias (Nigeria), Emmanuel Ugirashebuja (Rwanda), Maja Seršić (Croatia), and Georg Nolte (Germany).

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.XXXX (28 October 2020) was the communiqué of the annual private meeting of the Council with the president of the ICJ. Other S/2020/619 (29 June 2020) was a note by the Secretary-General containing the curricula vitae of the eight candidates for the five positions on the ICJ. S/2020/618 (29 June 2020) was a memorandum by the Secretary-General containing the current composition of the ICJ and the election procedure in the Council and the General Assembly. S/2020/615 (29 June 2020) was a note by the Secretary-General containing the names of the eight candidates for the five positions on the ICJ by national group.

International Court of Justice

Election Process

Article 8 of the ICJ Statute states that the Council and the General Assembly “shall proceed independently of one another to elect the members of the Court”. Members of the Council therefore have a vote both in the Council and the General Assembly. Since the first election in 1946, the voting has been conducted by secret ballot in simultaneous meetings of the two organs. According to article 10, candidates who receive an absolute majority of votes in both the Council and the General Assembly are elected. Voting practice has established that “absolute majority” means “a majority of all electors, whether or not they vote or are allowed to vote”, as specified in the latest memorandum of the Secretary-General on the procedure of the election. All votes of Council members, whether cast by permanent or elected members, count equally. In order to be elected, a candidate must therefore obtain 97 votes in the General Assembly and eight votes in the Council.

Balloting continues until the same five candidates have obtained an absolute majority of votes in both organs. In case more than five candidates receive an absolute majority on the same ballot in either organ, a new vote on all candidates will be held. In case fewer than five candidates obtain the required votes, the next round of voting will be held for only the remaining vacant seat(s).

During the last regular election of five judges in 2017, all six candidates received an absolute majority of votes in the Council in the first three rounds of voting, held on 9 November, triggering further rounds. The fourth round of voting resulted in all but Dalveer Bhandari (India) receiving the required votes for the five available seats. Four of the five seats were filled in that round and further voting took place between the two remaining candidates, Bhandari and Christopher Greenwood (UK). For the next six rounds of voting at the Council, Greenwood received an absolute majority. At the same

time, Bhandari obtained an absolute majority of votes in the General Assembly. After the UK withdrew the candidacy of Greenwood, Bhandari was elected on 20 November 2017.

Council Dynamics

The practice of permanent Council members being represented on the ICJ may favour the re-election of Xue (China); regional considerations may put her in competition with Iwasawa from Japan. This may also pose a challenge for the three candidates from Africa (Sebutinde from Uganda, Olufemi from Nigeria and Ugirashebuja from Rwanda) and the two candidates from Eastern Europe (Tomka from Slovakia and Seršić from Croatia). Nolte from Germany may be considered as running unopposed, as he is the only candidate representing Western Europe and Other states. These practices are not necessarily determinative, however.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council expects to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The Council is also expected to extend the mission's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), established in 2011 to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the Sudan-South Sudan border.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support for the JBVMM 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. Four attacks against UNISFA staff as well as instances of intercommunal violence are identified in the most recent report of the Secretary-General as being of particular concern. Criminal acts and the presence of armed elements remain sources of insecurity, and humanitarian needs

are significant. On the political side, bilateral relations between Sudan and South Sudan continue to improve. On 3 October, the transitional government of Sudan and an opposition group, the Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minawi, signed a peace agreement in Juba that was facilitated by South Sudan. Council members welcomed the agreement in a press statement. Last month, senior officials from the two countries met to discuss the status of Abyei and other border issues. Despite the continued rapprochement between Sudan and South Sudan, however, little progress has been made in resolving the final status of Abyei.

UNISFA continues to face several challenges in fulfilling its mandate. No progress has been made regarding the outstanding issuance of visas for three formed police units and 108 individual police officers or towards making the Anthony airstrip operational, which is supposed to be facilitated by Sudan and South Sudan. The Council has referred to the need to facilitate construction

of the airstrip since resolution 2398, adopted in 2017, as part of the mission's basing arrangements. In resolution 2497, adopted in November 2019, it said that use of the airstrip will reduce UNISFA's transport costs and logistical challenges; facilitate medical evacuations, official travel and air cargo needs for the mission; increase humanitarian access; and enhance safety and security for UNISFA personnel. 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, due to ongoing discussion with Sudan and South Sudan regarding such an appointment.

On 14 May, the Council adopted resolution 2519, which extended UNISFA's mandate and the mission's support for the JBVMM until 15 November. The resolution did not make changes to the mandate. It maintained the authorised ceilings of 3,550 troops and 640 police, both set out in resolution 2497 of November 2019. Currently,

UN 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/2020/1019](#) (15 October 2020) was the Secretary-General's report on UNISFA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8772](#) (22 October 2020) was a briefing on Sudan/South Sudan. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14323](#) (9 October 2020) welcomed the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement in Juba on 3 October.

Sudan/South Sudan

the mission includes only 35 police officers, with the low rate of deployment attributed to the non-issuance of visas by Sudan as well as travel restrictions in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Council was last briefed on Abyei on 22 October by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. Lacroix emphasised that the low number of police officers “will inevitably lead to the closure of some team sites... and will have a negative impact on the mandate implementation”. UNISFA has reported 11 confirmed cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic, with no new positive cases recorded since July, Lacroix said.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council to consider leading up to UNISFA’s renewal in November is what modifications to make, if any, to the mandate and force structure in light of the overall appropriateness of the current mandate in relation to the situation on the ground and the obstacles the mission has faced in fulfilling its role. This assessment is likely to be informed by the observations and recommendations contained in the 15 October Secretary-General’s report on UNISFA, which include extending the

mandate of UNISFA for another six months.

It is likely that the difficulty of obtaining visas for members of UNISFA’s police component, a long-standing issue, and the failure to appoint a civilian deputy head of mission as requested by the Council in May 2019, the subject of ongoing discussions with Sudan and South Sudan, will be discussed further during negotiations ahead of UNISFA’s mandate renewal.

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 through the UN Mission in South Sudan, the UN-AU Mission in Darfur and the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan. However, the upcoming renewal of the mission’s mandate and the expiration of UNISFA’s support for the JBVM 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.

Another rollover of the mandate may be less likely in November. At the briefing on 22 October, the US reiterated its position that

it is time to consider a future that does not require a peacekeeping operation in Abyei and stressed that UNISFA’s indefinite operation, particularly with the restrictions placed on it, is “untenable”. The US has typically in the past pushed for further troop reductions, asserted that UNISFA is persisting longer than intended for an interim force and pressed for a viable exit strategy for the mission. A joint statement by the three African members, along with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, at the 22 October meeting emphasised the stabilising role of the mission and the continued relevance of the mandate in “uncertain times” and endorsed the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the current mandate for six months.

Council members also called for the swift issuance of visas, opening of the Anthony airstrip and appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission. Germany and Estonia emphasised the need to deploy human rights experts to UNISFA. Previous Council resolutions have requested the Secretary-General to ensure “effective monitoring of violations and abuses of human rights”. The Secretary-General’s report encouraged engagement with the Sudanese and South Sudanese authorities on the issue.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is likely to renew certain elements of the Somalia sanctions regime that will expire on 15 November. Additionally, the Council is expected to hold a meeting on the implementation of the mandates of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) with briefings likely from the heads of the two missions, James Swan and Francisco Madeira, respectively. The Council is also due to receive a report from the Secretary-General on the situation regarding piracy and armed robbery at sea. Authorisations for states and regional organisations in the

fight against piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia expire on 4 December.

The authorisation for AMISOM expires on 28 February 2021. The mandate of UNSOM expires on 31 August 2021.

Key Recent Developments

On 27 June, the chair of the Somali National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC), Halima Ismail Ibrahim, advised the Federal Parliament that upcoming elections should be postponed because of logistical, financial and COVID-19 challenges. This led to a series of discussions and disagreements amongst the Federal Government of Somalia, the federal member states and Somali politicians.

At the heart of the issue is the oft-repeated promise by Somali high-level officials that the next elections would be one person, one vote instead of the current clan-based system of indirect voting. The question for Somalia was whether to hold elections close to the time frame outlined in the Somali constitution or to honour the promise of direct voting, which would entail a delay. (The Constitution requires that parliamentary elections must be held every four years, and the last elections were held in 2016.)

A compromise was eventually reached between the five leaders of the federal member states and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed “Farmajo”. Parliament approved

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2540 (28 August 2020) extended UNSOM’s mandate for 12 months until 31 August 2021. S/RES/2520 (29 May 2020) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 28 February 2021. S/RES/2500 (4 December 2019) renewed the counter-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia for 12 months. 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 Buytsverwe (Belgium) in his capacity as Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee.

Somalia

the compromise on 26 September, as a result of which elections will be held under a modified indirect system to align with the previously approved electoral calendar. The system remains clan-based (with clans' delegates choosing the members of the lower house of parliament, which in turn will choose the president), but there will be more electors taking part in parliamentary elections than ever before: 27,775 delegates from Somalia's clans, almost twice as many as in the previous election. As per the new agreement, which was announced by the NIEC on 2 October, Somalia will hold legislative elections from 1 to 27 December and presidential elections on 8 February 2021. As part of the compromise, President Farmajo and the presidents of five federal states also agreed to form a 21-member dispute resolution committee to address any electoral issues that may arise during the election periods.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 45th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered the report (A/HRC/45/52) of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan. On a positive note, Dyfan highlighted the commitment of the Somali government to improving the situation of human rights in the country by protecting civilians from harm in a manner that respects international humanitarian law and human rights and to strengthen accountability and the rule of law. Dyfan emphasised in the report, however, that despite the Somali government's efforts, "significant gaps" remain.

On 6 October, the HRC adopted without a vote resolution 45/27, renewing the mandate of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia for a year. Resolution 45/27 also emphasised the Security Council's resolution 1325 and subsequent Council resolutions regarding women, peace and security, and it recognised the Somali cabinet's endorsement of a Somali women's charter to "strengthen women's participation in peacebuilding and socio-economic progress in the stabilization and rebuilding efforts for Somalia".

Sanctions-Related Developments

The Council initially 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 of 24 April 1992. The authorisation of the sanctions regime remains open-ended, but 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 sanctions regime. The Council must also renew the mandate of the Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts every year.

The latest periodic briefing by the chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee took place on 28 October. The previous briefing by then-chair Ambassador Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) on 9 June emphasised that the 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.

Key Issues and Options

Council members are focused on the critical role upcoming elections could have in the continued progress of Somalia toward a more stable future. Council members want the UN presence in Somalia to support elections in the best way possible. They will want to hear from Swan, Special Representative and head of UNSOM, how the Council can best continue to support Somali stakeholders during this significant and potentially unstable period. Similarly, Council members have been urging dialogue between the Somali Federal Government and its member states.

On 10 January 2021, the Council is due to receive an independent technical assessment on AMISOM and UNSOM. This assessment could provide some ideas for making adjustments to the missions' priorities. Council members may want to know more about progress in the technical assessment, which seems to be behind schedule.

Council Dynamics

On sanctions, Council members generally agree on the need to renew the elements of resolution 2498. However, the differences

that were apparent during last year's resolution negotiations, which led China, Equatorial Guinea and Russia to abstain, remain. 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. Language regarding Djibouti-Eritrea reconciliation continues to be included in these texts every year.) China and Russia furthermore did not approve of the inclusion of some human rights language, saying that the HRC would be a more appropriate venue for considering such issues.

Preparations for upcoming elections in Somalia will continue to be at the forefront of Council members' concerns. Several member states have repeatedly stressed the need for direct elections, but in the wake of political developments and challenges related to coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, they softened their language. For Council members, it is a delicate balance between wanting to push for a stronger development of democratic practices, respect for the country's traditions, and what can practically be achieved in Somalia given technical, security, and logistical concerns.

The upcoming report of the independent technical assessment may illuminate differences between members on the future of AMISOM that could come to a head in 2021. Some members see AMISOM as a critical bulwark against Al-Shabaab and believe that removing its authorisation could create a destabilising security vacuum. Meanwhile, as one of the main financial sponsors of AMISOM, EU Council members are eager to see tangible improvement on the ground, with Somali national forces taking the lead. That would eventually create an environment for AMISOM to withdraw.

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

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

In November, the Council is expected to hold its biannual briefing, followed by consultations, on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S), which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (G5 Sahel) established in 2017 to combat terrorist and criminal groups in the region.

Key Recent Developments

The FC-G5S has increased the tempo of military operations this year—a point highlighted in previous 2020 Secretary-General's reports on the FC-G5S and Mali. However, the security situation, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, continues to worsen amid a growing humanitarian crisis, political instability and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mali experienced a coup d'état on 18 August when soldiers from the Kati barracks entered Bamako and arrested President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, who resigned later that night. The coup came in the wake of major protests that started in June demanding Keita's resignation over Mali's continued insecurity, corruption and disputed legislative election results. In announcing their seizure of power, coup leaders claimed that they were committed to the Mali 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and to cooperating with international presences, including the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), France's regional counter-terrorism Operation Barkhane, the European Takuba Task Force and the FC-G5S. Mediation by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led to the establishment of a transitional government by the beginning of October to preside over an 18-month transition period until elections can be held.

The insurgency by violent extremist groups in Burkina Faso continues to engulf much of the country. According to the UN Refugee Agency, over one million internally displaced people had been registered as at 24 September, up from 921,000 people at the start of June. In one recent incident, militants attacked a convoy of displaced people on 4 October, killing 25 in Sanmatenga province in the Centre-Nord region. Security forces and self-defence volunteers have also been accused of extrajudicial killings and abuses. A Human

Rights Watch report in July said more than 180 corpses had been discovered at various times between November 2019 and June near the northern town of Djibo; residents largely blame government forces for the killings.

Burkina Faso has also been flagged for a growing hunger crisis, including famine-like conditions in pockets of its Sahel region. Speaking at a Council briefing on conflict-induced hunger on 17 September, World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley described a “disaster unfolding in Burkina Faso, driven by the upsurge in violence” as the number of people facing crisis levels of hunger had tripled to 3.3 million people. Burkina Faso is scheduled to hold presidential elections on 22 November while Niger has general elections, including presidential, scheduled for 27 December.

On 20 October, Germany, Denmark, the EU and the UN hosted a ministerial-level virtual conference on the central Sahel—Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Seeking \$2.4 billion for emergency relief efforts to assist more than 13 million people, the conference resulted in pledges by over 20 donors totaling \$1.7 billion. This included \$985 million for the rest of 2020 and \$704 million for 2021 and beyond. In a pre-recorded video message to the conference participants, Secretary-General António Guterres said that the central Sahel was at a “breaking point” as the security situation had deteriorated sharply and humanitarian needs in the border region between Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger had reached record levels. Guterres repeated that his appeal for an immediate global ceasefire was crucial for the region.

When renewing the mandate of MINUSMA on 30 June in resolution 2531, the Security Council clarified that “private companies” may deliver life support consumables from MINUSMA to the FC-G5S. The previous year's mandate renewal had expanded its provision of such support to benefit all FC-G5S units, and not only to those operating in Mali, provided that the joint force or a third party would transfer the cross-border assistance. However, the UN said that the resolution's language was not sufficient to allow MINUSMA to use contractors, and this was one reason the FC-G5S had been prevented from taking fuller advantage of the peacekeeping operation's support.

Key Issues and Options

Taking stock of progress and challenges in making the FC-G5S fully operational remains a key issue for the Council's briefings on the joint force. This includes progress in establishing its police component and whether recent changes to MINUSMA's mandate to allow contractors to deliver cross-border assistance has improved the mission's capacity to support the FC-G5S.

Promoting and ensuring that the FC-G5S complies with international humanitarian law, which is critical for effective counter-terrorism operations, and the UN's human rights due-diligence policy, necessary for MINUSMA support, are related issues. Complementing security measures by addressing structural causes of instability in the Sahel—such as poor governance, underdevelopment and climate change—through the UN's Sahel Strategy and the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme is another important issue. The humanitarian crisis is of increasing concern.

Council members usually issue a press statement following the briefing on the FC-G5S, though after their last meeting in June they issued press elements only. Past press statements have reflected on developments related to the FC-G5S and the security situation in G5 Sahel countries. In addition, the statements have emphasised the importance of upholding international humanitarian law and the need for a holistic approach to stabilise the region. The statements also often request the Secretary-General to provide regular updates on Burkina Faso to the Peacebuilding Commission, which most recently discussed the situation on 8 October.

Another option (but unlikely at this time) is to act on the Secretary-General's recommendation, put forward repeatedly since 2017, that the Council provide the FC-G5S with a Chapter VII mandate and authorise a logistical support package for the FC-G5S with UN assessed contributions.

Council Dynamics

Council members all express support for the FC-G5S. However, they often raise concerns about the force's struggles to become fully operational, its reported human rights abuses and its long-term sustainability. France is a strong advocate of the force, which it views as

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

part of a long-term exit strategy for its Operation Barkhane. Niger, a member of the G5 Sahel, has continued to call for the Council to authorise a Chapter VII mandate for the FC-G5S. In its view, that could ensure sustainable financial support for the FC-G5S. It seems that Niger's sensitivities related to discussing human rights abuses by forces from G5 Sahel countries were the reason members did not agree on a press statement in June.

Several Council members contribute to

other security initiatives in the region, including MINUSMA and EU training and capacity-building missions, as well as to regional development initiatives that, members frequently stress, require equal attention in order to stabilise the Sahel.

The Council has been divided over whether the UN should provide financial support to the FC-G5S. Over the last two years, it has put on hold discussion of the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a UN support

package for the force to allow more time for the FC-G5S to demonstrate its effectiveness and how it uses funding that has already been committed. The US, in particular, prefers to assist the FC-G5S bilaterally, and has previously been wary of authorising MINUSMA to support the FC-G5S.

France is the penholder on the G5 Sahel joint force.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing by the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the most recent developments in Iraq and on the two latest Secretary-General's reports, on UNAMI and on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Both reports are due in November. The fifth report of the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) is also due in November. If the measures implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are still in place, the meetings are likely to be held as videoconferences.

UNAMI's mandate expires on 31 May 2021 and the mandate of UNITAD expires on 18 September 2021.

Key Recent Developments

Attacks continue to be directed against the US military and diplomatic presence and the US-led Global Coalition against Da'esh (the Coalition) in Iraq. These attacks are usually not claimed by any group. The US blames Iran-backed militias operating in Iraq and has attacked their bases in retaliation. The Coalition is represented by about 2,500 troops and the US has about 5,200 troops stationed in the country. On 9 September, the US military announced its intention to withdraw about 2,100 troops from Iraq. On 15 September, a

British diplomatic convoy was targeted by a roadside bombing in Baghdad. In late September, the US increased its pressure on Iraq to ensure the protection of its sites, with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo threatening to close the US Embassy in Baghdad, the largest US diplomatic mission globally. During a press conference at the Department of State on 14 October, Pompeo remarked positively upon efforts by Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to increase the number of Iraqi Security Forces for the protection of US diplomatic facilities.

One of the Iran-backed militias that the US has accused of perpetrating attacks against its personnel in Iraq is Kata'ib Hezbollah, which the US has designated a terrorist organisation. Kata'ib Hezbollah is part of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF), established in 2014 from different, mostly Iran-backed, Shia Muslim fighters to combat the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da'esh). Last July, then-Prime Minister Adil Abd Al-Mahdi issued an executive order bringing the PMF under the exclusive control of the Iraqi state and ordering it to cut all links with political entities. He warned that armed groups operating outside the control of the Iraqi state were illegal and subject to prosecution.

On 11 October, claiming to speak on behalf of groups of "resistance" against the US presence in Iraq, a spokesperson for Kata'ib Hezbollah stated that the group had suspended attacks on US forces, on the condition of a timetable to be put forward by the Iraqi government for US troop withdrawal. The group

had not previously claimed responsibility for any such attacks. The spokesperson asked that the government implement a 5 January resolution adopted by the Iraqi parliament calling on foreign troops to leave Iraq. The resolution had been a reaction to the 3 January US strike near the Baghdad airport that killed Qassem Soleimani, the head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, as well as Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the Deputy of the PMF. According to the online news site Middle East Eye, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had ordered Kata'ib Hezbollah and other armed groups to cease attacks.

At a press briefing after a meeting with UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 22 October in London, al-Kadhimi was clear about the challenges Iraq is facing in trying to balance US and Iranian interests. He also reiterated his zero-tolerance policy towards armed groups operating outside of state control. Attempts to rein in the PMF can have severe consequences: for example, on 17 October, PMF supporters burned down the Baghdad headquarters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party after a Kurdish former foreign minister of Iraq called upon the Iraqi government to rid the Green Zone in Baghdad of the PMF.

According to the World Bank, Iraq's growth is expected to decline by 9.5 percent this year. This would constitute Iraq's worst economic performance since 2003. Iraq also continues to depend on electricity imports from Iran to meet around one-third of its electricity needs, for which the US regularly waives the sanctions it has imposed on Iran.

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2544 (18 September 2020) extended the mandate of UNITAD until 18 September 2021. S/RES/2522 (29 May 2020) extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2021.

Iraq

During his official visit to Washington, DC, in August, al-Kadhimi signed a number of agreements with US energy companies.

Renewed protests in different parts of the country on 26 October marked the first anniversary of a major wave of widespread popular protests demanding basic services and systemic change. The protests ultimately led to the resignation of the Iraqi government last year. Since the start of the protests in October 2019, Iraqi authorities have used excessive force against protesters resulting in 490 deaths, and 7,783 injured, according to UNAMI statistics, and killings and enforced disappearances of activists have increased, with media reports connecting these crimes with some elements of the PMF.

After two prime ministers-designate had withdrawn their candidacies, Iraqi President Barham Salih named al-Kadhimi as prime minister-designate on 9 April. He seemed to be acceptable to Iran and the US. He will hold the position until elections are held on 6 June 2021. In her latest briefing to the Council on 26 August, Hennis-Plasschaert emphasised that the Iraqi parliament has yet to decide on the delineation of constituencies and parliamentary seat apportionment.

Regarding the relationship between the federal government of Iraq in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the “Sinjar Agreement” was signed on 9 October. On 3 August 2014, ISIL started its attack on the Sinjar district, home to the majority of the world’s Yazidis (a religious community believed to have been founded in the 11th century). The UN has classified the

atrocities against the Yazidis that began with the 3 August 2014 attack as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Hennis-Plasschaert has emphasised in the past that the Yazidi community continues to suffer from “insecurity, the absence of adequate services and the lack of a unified administration” and has routinely called upon Baghdad and Erbil (the capital of the Kurdistan region where Sinjar is located) to resolve their outstanding issues. The agreement intends to facilitate the return of IDPs, unify the administration in order to enable reconstruction efforts and establish a consolidated security force. Currently, a number of armed groups are active in Sinjar, including the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) which is classified as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the EU and the US, among others. UNAMI welcomed the agreement.

Iraq continues to face significant challenges from ISIL or Da’esh in the form of an intensive rural insurgency as well as sporadic attacks in large cities, including Baghdad.

COVID-19 case numbers in Iraq continue to rise sharply. As at 30 October, Iraq had 470,633 confirmed cases.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 2 October, Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, issued a joint statement with six other Human Rights Council-mandated special rapporteurs and working group members (Elizabeth Broderick, Melissa Upreti, Alda Facio, Meskerem Geset Techane, and Ivana Radačić of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls and Agnès Callamard, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions) in response to

the deadly Basra shooting in August of Dr. Riham Yaqoub and the attempted assassination of Lodya Remon Albarti. They called on the government of Iraq to investigate the killing and attempted killing of the two women human rights defenders. According to the statement, although all human rights defenders in Iraq face serious risks, women also face prejudice, exclusion by society and political leaders, physical attacks, and sexual violence, among other factors. The statement underscored that both attacks were entirely preventable, but “the State had done nothing to keep them safe”. The experts stressed that it was outrageous for women in Iraq to risk or lose their life to defend human rights.

Key Issues and Options

Council members are closely following the political, security and humanitarian situation in Iraq. After the briefing by Hennis-Plasschaert, Council members could issue press elements addressing issues of concern to them.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI and positive developments in Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq. The government routinely says that Iraq has no intention of taking sides and becoming a theatre for Iran-US tensions. Turkey continues to conduct military operations against positions of the PKK in Kurdistan, northern Iraq, despite Iraq’s objections.

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

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In November, the chair of the 1718 Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany), is expected to brief Council members on the 90-day report about the committee’s work. Because of the temporary measures adopted during the COVID-19

pandemic, the briefing is expected to be held as a closed videoconference (VTC).

Key Recent Developments

On 10 October, the DPRK held a military parade to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the governing Workers’ Party, during which it revealed a new intercontinental

ballistic missile (ICBM). DPRK leader Kim Jong-un delivered a speech in which he thanked military forces for their response to storm damage caused by a typhoon that hit the country in September and for their efforts in combating the COVID-19 pandemic. He apologised to the people of the DPRK for failing to improve their living conditions and

UN DOCUMENTS ON DPRK Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2515 (30 March 2020) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 30 April 2021. S/RES/2397 (22 December 2017) tightened sanctions on the DPRK. **Security Council Letters** S/2020/266 (31 March 2020) contained the written-procedure voting record on resolution 2515, which extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. S/2020/246 (30 March 2020) was from the president of the Security Council containing the results of the vote on resolution 2515. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8682 (11 December 2019) was an open briefing on non-proliferation focused on the DPRK. **Sanctions Committee Documents** S/2020/840 (28 August 2020) was the midterm report of the Panel of Experts. S/2019/971 (20 December 2019) was the annual report of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

praised them for their sacrifices during this year. The DPRK has reported no cases of COVID-19, a claim that has been disputed by many international experts. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had adverse effects on the economic situation in the country because of restrictions on the cross-border movement of goods and people.

In late September, a South Korean civilian government official working for the fisheries department was shot and killed at the maritime border between the two Koreas. Based on intelligence reports, South Korea has claimed that the official tried to defect to the North and was killed by DPRK troops who later burned the body out of fear that it might carry the COVID-19 virus. South Korea has condemned the act and called for a joint investigation of the incident. The DPRK has offered a different account of the incident, noting that the official had failed to answer questions upon being approached by DPRK troops, after which they opened fire. The DPRK has denied burning the man's body but confirmed that they burned a floating device they had recovered after the incident. Kim has sent a message to the government of South Korea in which he apologised to the South Korean people and its president, Moon Jae-in.

After initial discussions in the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, the midterm report of the Panel of Experts was published on 28 August. The report described the DPRK's continued violations of the sanctions imposed by the Council. The DPRK has continued to import refined petroleum products via illicit ship-to-ship transfers and direct deliveries. The panel has received a report containing data from 43 member states indicating that the DPRK has already breached an annual import limit of 500,000 barrels of refined petroleum products. Russia and China questioned the validity of the report's data and emphasised that there is not enough evidence to conclude that the DPRK has exceeded its annual cap. The midterm report also detailed instances of the DPRK's engaging in malicious cyber activity aimed at obtaining financial assets (virtual and fiat) in violation of Security Council sanctions. The DPRK has also conducted cyberattacks against officials from member states of the Council and the Panel of Experts. While the report noted that the DPRK did not conduct intercontinental or medium-range missile launches during the reporting period, it has

continued to improve its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities in violation of Council resolutions. In March, the DPRK conducted four short-range ballistic missile tests.

In December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2397, which restricts the importing of refined petroleum products to the DPRK to 500,000 barrels annually. However, the Security Council did not specify what ratio should be used for the conversion rate for tons and barrels. A persistent issue at the committee level has been the inability of its members to agree on a ton/barrel conversion rate, which would help the committee determine with more precision the allowed amount of imported petroleum products. This issue was raised under "any other business" in July and discussed at the committee level in August and October. No agreement was reached.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 October, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Tomás Ojea Quintana, released a draft report calling on the international community to "urgently consider" lifting sanctions on North Korea, which may be experiencing worsening problems as a result of its COVID-19 lockdown. The draft report, which was due to be submitted to the General Assembly during the week of 19 October, said that North Korea's severe lockdown and other stringent measures to control the virus have had a "devastating" effect on trade. This directly threatens food supplies and access to humanitarian aid, Ojea Quintana noted. Because of the unprecedented situation, he emphasised in his report that "the international responsibility for re-evaluating the sanctions regime is more urgent than ever".

Key Issues and Options

Over the past 14 years, the Council has adopted a series of resolutions, imposing and gradually escalating sanctions on the DPRK. Yet the country has not significantly changed its behaviour: it has continued to test ballistic missiles and to violate the sanctions regime. Initial diplomatic efforts and a brief period of US-DPRK rapprochement in 2018-19 resulted in some easing of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Over the past year, however, the DPRK appears to have abandoned the diplomatic track and has resumed missile tests and development of its nuclear capabilities. Given the volatile security environment, the Council is primarily concerned with maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula. An option for the Council would be to consider issuing

a formal outcome addressing the need for stability and the resumption of diplomatic talks.

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

On the sanctions front and at the committee level, an ongoing issue has been the inability of members to reach an agreement on the appropriate ton/barrel conversion. Given that the Council imposed limits on imports of refined petroleum products to the DPRK, reaching an agreement on this issue would contribute to better implementation of sanctions. Lacking agreement in the committee, an option would be to elevate the discussion of this issue to the Council level.

Council Dynamics

Members continue to be divided over the role of sanctions in addressing the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK. The US has been a strong proponent of maintaining the policy of maximum pressure until the DPRK takes concrete steps towards denuclearisation. The EU members of the Council are generally supportive of this approach. On the other hand, China and Russia have shown interest in considering some form of sanctions relief. In December 2019, they circulated a draft resolution providing partial sanctions relief for the DPRK, but the proposal has not been put to a vote and remains stalled because of insufficient support from other Council members.

Council members have been generally united in their concern about the potential consequences for the DPRK of a widespread outbreak of COVID-19. On this front, there has been broad support among 1718 Committee members for accelerating the process for considering humanitarian exceptions.

The US has been reluctant to address the DPRK's ballistic missile tests in the Council in light of its diplomatic efforts. Several other Council member states, particularly European members, have pushed for discussions following the missile tests conducted earlier this year.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK, and Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany) chairs the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Joanna Weschler
Deputy Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Deputy Executive Director

Paul Romita
Senior Policy Analyst

Alina Entelis
Policy Analyst

Teale Harold
Policy Analyst

Lindiwe Knutson
Policy Analyst

Robert Schupp
Policy Analyst

Vladimir Sesar
Policy Analyst

Vanessa Tiede
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Robbin VanNewkirk
Website Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Maritza Lopez
Administrative Assistant

Anna Haven
Research Assistant

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

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 6394

Fax +1 212 759 4038

Web securitycouncilreport.org
whatsinblue.org

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