

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In September, Ireland will have the presidency of the Security Council. All meetings are expected to be in person this month.

Ireland has chosen to convene three signature events during its presidency.

One will be a ministerial-level open debate on [peacekeeping transitions](#). The Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defense, Simon Coveney, will chair the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers. Ireland intends to pursue a resolution on peacekeeping transitions as a possible outcome of the meeting.

An open debate on [climate change and security](#) is the second signature event planned by Ireland in September. Secretary-General Guterres and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

Finally, a briefing on the [non-proliferation](#) of weapons of mass destruction will be held to mark the 25th anniversary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

A briefing by [The Elders](#) on the maintenance of international peace and security will also be convened this month. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and Chair of The Elders, and Lakhdar Brahimi, former UN Special Envoy and Elder Emeritus, are expected to brief the Council.

The Council will meet this month for the quarterly debate on the UN Assistance Mission in [Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA) and the renewal of the UNAMA mandate.

The Council is expected to hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian

situations and on the use of chemical weapons in [Syria](#).

Other Middle East issues on the programme of work this month are expected to be:

- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting on developments;
- [Iraq](#), a mandate renewal of the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD); and
- “[The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)”, the monthly meeting.

African issues that the Council expects to address in September are:

- [Libya](#), meetings on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the 1970 Sanctions Committee, as well as the renewal of the UNSMIL mandate;
- [Sudan](#), a meeting on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and a briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sanctions Committee; and
- [South Sudan](#), a meeting on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Council members are negotiating a draft resolution proposed by Niger and Norway on the protection of education in conflict that could be adopted during the month.

The Council will continue to follow developments in Ethiopia (Tigray), Haiti and Myanmar closely during the month. Meetings on these and other issues are possible.

In Hindsight: Humanitarian Space and the Security Council

In the early post-Cold War period, Council action in relation to humanitarian issues usually entailed calling on parties to an armed conflict to allow humanitarian organisations access to populations in need or appealing to member states to provide

humanitarian assistance. Early examples include resolution 688, which was adopted in April 1991 and insisted that “Iraq allow immediate access by international humanitarian organisations to all those in need of assistance”, and resolution 746

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of March 1992, which appealed to member states and humanitarian organisations to contribute to relief efforts in Somalia. Similar language was included in resolutions concerning Afghanistan, Armenia/Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Rwanda, among others.

More recently, and particularly in the past decade, the Council has expressed itself more frequently on humanitarian affairs, including in politically difficult environments. The proliferation of humanitarian crises in country situations on the Council's agenda has undeniably contributed to this development. Countries such as Libya, Mali, Syria, and Yemen—all suffering protracted humanitarian crises—have come onto the agenda since 2011. Other long-standing country situations such as Afghanistan, the DRC and Haiti continue to face significant humanitarian challenges. And in recent months, the Council has grappled with how to support efforts to provide assistance to vulnerable populations in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

What is Humanitarian Space?

The Council's deepening involvement with humanitarian affairs provides an opportunity to highlight the relationship between its work and humanitarian space, a concept that is widely deployed by humanitarian actors. There is no universally agreed definition of humanitarian space and, as Collinson and Elhawary explain, it often means different things to different people and organisations.¹ Two examples illustrate how humanitarian organisations conceptualise humanitarian space. Rony Brauman, former president of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), has described humanitarian space as an environment that allows humanitarian agencies to operate independently of external political agendas,² in which they are “free to evaluate needs, free to monitor the distribution and use of relief goods, and free to have a dialogue with the people”.³ OCHA's glossary of humanitarian terms refers to humanitarian space as a synonym for a “conducive humanitarian operating environment”, notes the importance of the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, and says that “sustained humanitarian access is ensured when the receipt of humanitarian assistance is not conditional upon the allegiance to or support to parties involved in a conflict but is a right independent of military and political action”.⁴ The notion of humanitarian space can also encompass such issues as the protection of civilian infrastructure, humanitarian exemptions for sanctions, and the protection of medical workers. These issues were highlighted in a Council meeting on the protection of humanitarian space that took place on 16 July.

Descriptions of humanitarian space tend to explicitly exempt this concept from politics. But in recent years, this issue has occasioned some of the most difficult negotiations in the Council, notably over the extent to which the Council should seek to protect humanitarian space and facilitate humanitarian action, particularly in circumstances where the host state does not consent to those measures. This has led to protracted discussions on whether Council products should refer to the 1991 “United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance” or to humanitarian principles, as applied by OCHA and other humanitarian actors.

The 1991 UN Guiding Principles of Humanitarian Assistance, or Humanitarian Principles?

When Council products now mention “the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance”, they are referring to text annexed to General Assembly resolution 46/182, adopted on 19 December 1991. The GA resolution and its annex explicitly address the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. The “guiding principles” for this are set out in the first twelve paragraphs out of 42 in this annex, the bulk of which address prevention, preparedness, financing and coordination, and development. These “guiding principles” have become a central point of contention in debates regarding the Council's role in facilitating humanitarian space.

This GA text endorses three of the international humanitarian principles set out by the ICRC in 1965, which guide the work of OCHA and many other humanitarian actors, stating that “humanitarian assistance must be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality”. The fourth humanitarian principle that guides OCHA and other humanitarian actors, namely independence, was endorsed in General Assembly resolution 58/114, which was adopted in December 2003. At the same time, the 1991 guiding principles state that “the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must be fully respected in accordance with the Charter of the UN. In this context, humanitarian assistance should be provided with the consent of the affected country and in principle on the basis of an appeal by the affected country”. The text goes on to note that each state has the responsibility, first and foremost, to take care of the victims of emergencies occurring on its territory.

While several members frequently refer to humanitarian principles in Council discussions, others, most notably Russia, have emphasised the 1991 guiding principles' references to host country consent and state sovereignty. Since April 2013, when “guiding principles” were mentioned in press elements regarding Syria, they have consistently been referred to in Council products concerning humanitarian action, usually at Russia's insistence. A series of resolutions relating to Afghanistan, the CAR, the DRC, South Sudan, and Syria, among other country situations, have regularly included language regarding the guiding principles in their operative paragraphs. To take one example, resolution 2217 of April 2015, which renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR, demanded that all parties allow and facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance “in accordance with the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance”.

In recent times, some Council members have sought to reword such references, leading to sharp disagreements. In December 2020, France, as penholder for the DRC, removed language from MONUSCO's mandate demanding that all parties respect “the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance and relevant provisions of international law” in facilitating the timely

1. Sarah Collinson and Samir Elhawary, 'Humanitarian Space: A Review of Issues and Trends' Humanitarian Policy Group Report 32 (2012): p.1.

2. Cynthia Brassard-Bordeau and Don Hubert, 'Shrinking Humanitarian Space? Trends and Prospects on Security and Access', The Journal of Humanitarian Assistance (2010): p.1.

3. Johanna Grombach Wagner, 'An IHL/ICRC Perspective on Humanitarian Space' (2006): p.1. <https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/ud/vedlegg/fn/multidimensional-and-integrated/an-ihl-icrc-perspective-on-humanitarian-space-by-grombach-2007.pdf>

4. OCHA, 'Glossary of Humanitarian Terms in Relation to the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict' (2004): p.15 https://inec.org/system/files/resources/OCHA_2003_Glossary_of_Humanitarian_Terms_in_relation_to_the_Protection_of_Civilians_in_Armed_Conflict.pdf.

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delivery of humanitarian aid. This language had been included in every resolution that renewed MONUSCO's mandate between March 2014 and December 2019. The final text, which was adopted as resolution 2556, instead demanded that all parties facilitate the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance “in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and the humanitarian principles”. France's amendment ultimately led Russia to abstain on the resolution.

The tension between those supporting “the relevant provisions of international law and the humanitarian principles”, on the one hand, and those supporting the “guiding principles of humanitarian assistance”, on the other, was captured in Russia's explanation of vote:

We cannot agree with the new wording of the paragraphs on international humanitarian assistance proposed by the authors, which dilutes the relevant United Nations guiding principles contained in General Assembly resolution 46/182. We regard the guiding principles as the only universal basis for the work of all international humanitarian organisations and donors. They capture the imperative to ensure respect for the sovereignty of States recipients of humanitarian aid. We believe that they need to be fully reflected in documents of the Security Council.

This tension has persisted in recent Council debates concerning the Syrian humanitarian file. On 11 July 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2533, authorising the continued use of one border crossing between Syria and Turkey for the delivery of humanitarian aid for 12 months. The resolution was only adopted following the vetoing of two draft resolutions by China and Russia. On 9 July, in explaining their first vetoes, both members referred specifically to General Assembly resolution 46/182. China noted that “cross-border operations should strictly follow the guiding principles of humanitarian emergency assistance set out in General Assembly resolution

46/182”, while Russia said that the cross-border mechanism “has to be gradually phased out and replaced by humanitarian deliveries in accordance with the principles outlined in General Assembly resolution 46/182”. Both states expressed a similar sentiment in statements issued on 10 July 2020 regarding their second vetoes. The UK, on the other hand, criticised China and Russia for politicising a humanitarian issue, while the US said that “there is no justification for Russia's and China's vetoes today, and this action cannot be spun into false choices between humanitarian aid, sovereignty, and sanctions”.

Council members who prefer to include references to the humanitarian principles, rather than the guiding principles on humanitarian assistance, seem to be seeking to decouple them from General Assembly resolution 46/182 and its emphasis on consent and sovereignty. These Council members also appear to prefer linking humanitarian principles and international law. For example, resolution 2568 of March 2021, which reauthorised the AU Mission in Somalia, used identical language to resolution 2556 and reiterated the Council's demand that all parties allow timely delivery of humanitarian assistance “in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and in line with humanitarian principles”. Council members who seek to include this language may be doing so because they take the view that consent to humanitarian assistance cannot be arbitrarily withheld under international law when certain conditions are satisfied, a position that has gained broad acceptance among scholars.⁵

There is no sign that debates among Council members about whether Council products should refer to the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, or to humanitarian principles, will wane. While the use of sufficiently broad language may allow resolutions to be adopted, it is likely to remain difficult for the Council, in contentious situations, to take action that protects humanitarian space and facilitates humanitarian action.

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Georgia

On 4 August, Security Council members discussed the situation in Georgia under “any other business”. The meeting, which marked the 13th anniversary of the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, was requested by Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed. Following the meeting, the members that requested the meeting and incoming Council member Albania delivered a joint statement at the press stakeout reaffirming their support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemning Russia's military presence in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Maritime Security

On 6 August, the Council members discussed a 29 July attack on an oil tanker off the coast of Oman under “any other business”. The meeting was requested by Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. There was no briefer during the meeting.

On 9 August, the Council held a videoconference (VTC) open debate on maritime security (S/2021/722). The briefers were Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, the Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet; Ghada Fathi Waly, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); and Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), speaking on behalf

5. Rebecca Barber, 'Does International Law Permit the Provision of Humanitarian Assistance Without Host State Consent? Territorial Integrity, Necessity and the Determinative Function of the General Assembly', forthcoming in TD Gill et al (eds), Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law 2020 (TMC Asser Press, 2021): p.3, citing: Sandesh Sivakumaran 'Arbitrary Withholding of Consent to Humanitarian Assistance in Situations of Disaster', International and Comparative Law Quarterly 64(3) (2015): pp 516-519; Michael Bothe, Karl Josef Partsch and Waldemar Solf, (1982) New Rules for Victims of Armed Conflict: Commentary on the Two 1977 Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. (Martinus Nijhoff, 1982): p.434; Dapo Akande and Emanuela-Chiara Gillard, 'Oxford Guidance on the Law Relating to Humanitarian Relief Operations in Situations of Armed Conflict' University, (UN OCHA and Oxford 2016): p.21 <https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/law-relating-humanitarian-reliefoperations-armed-conflict>, Cedric Ryngaert, 'Humanitarian Assistance and the Conundrum of Consent' Amsterdam Law Forum 5(2) (2013): pp 5-19.

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of President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo in his capacity as chairperson of the AU. The meeting provided an opportunity for Council members to discuss possible responses to the interconnected security, economic and environmental threats posed by maritime crimes such as piracy and armed robbery, human and drug trafficking, and transnational organised crime at sea.

Following the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/15) reaffirming that international law, as reflected in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in the oceans. The presidential statement also encourages member states to continue to build and strengthen their capacities to enhance maritime security.

Lebanon

Council members held consultations on the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) on 10 August. Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions Alexandre Zouev briefed Council members. On 30 August, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2591, which extended the mandate of UNIFIL for another year until 31 August 2022.

Humanitarian Action

On 11 August, Council members held a virtual Arria-formula meeting on: “Humanitarian action: overcoming challenges in situations of armed conflict and counter-terrorism operations”. Kenya organised the meeting. The briefers were Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and Director of the UNOCT; Reena Ghelani, Director of OCHA’s Operations and Advocacy Division; Helen Durham, Director of International Law and Policy at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security.

Somalia

On 12 August, the Security Council met to discuss the situation in Somalia in a briefing followed by consultations (S/PV.8833). Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) James Swan and Special Representative of the AU Chairperson and head of the AU Assistance Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) Francisco Madeira briefed. The chairperson of the Somalia National Women Organization, Batulo Sheikh Ahmed Gaballe, also briefed. The meeting focused on the effort to complete parliamentary and presidential elections, the dire humanitarian situation, the future of AMISOM and the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan to hand over security responsibilities to national forces, and the continued threat posed by Al-Shabaab. On 30 August, the Council adopted resolution 2592, renewing the UNSOM mandate until 31 May 2022.

Myanmar

On 17 August, the Security Council discussed the situation in Myanmar in a private meeting (S/PV.8835). Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener briefed on the latest political developments. Dato Erywan bin Pehin Yusof—the Second Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, the current Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and ASEAN’s Special Envoy for Myanmar—updated members on the timeline for the

implementation of ASEAN’s five-point consensus. Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Ramesh Rajasingham briefed on the humanitarian situation in the country and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting, several members expressed concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation and called for a humanitarian pause to facilitate access to healthcare, vaccines and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines.

West Africa and the Sahel

On 17 August, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/16) following up on its 8 July briefing on West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) (S/PV.8836). The statement expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in some countries in the region; the growth of terrorism in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, as well as in the wider West African region; and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. The presidential statement recognised the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters on the security and stability of West Africa and the Sahel region.

Peacekeeping

On 18 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2589 (S/PV.8837), which focused on fighting crimes against UN peacekeepers. On the same day, the Council held a ministerial-level debate on “Protecting the Protectors: Technology and Peacekeeping” (S/PV.8838). Secretary-General António Guterres briefed the Council on the new strategy for the digital transformation of UN peacekeeping and the partnership for technology in peacekeeping. A presidential statement on technology and peacekeeping (S/PRST/2021/17) was adopted as an outcome of the debate.

Counter-Terrorism

On 19 August, the Council held a ministerial-level briefing (S/PV.8839) on the Secretary-General’s 13th biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or Da’esh) (S/2021/682). India’s Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, chaired the meeting. The briefers were Under-Secretary-General Vladimir Voronkov, the head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT); Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Michèle Coninsx; and Davood Moradian, the Director-General of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies.

Haiti

On 23 August, following a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on 14 August and tropical storm “Grace” on 16 and 17 August, Council members discussed the humanitarian situation in Haiti under “any other business”. Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Helen La Lime and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths briefed on the situation on the ground and the response efforts underway. Council members expressed their condolences to the Haitian people and reiterated their commitment to the country.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 25 August, Acting Chair of the 1718 Committee Ambassador Trine Heimerback (Norway) briefed Council members on the 90-day

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report regarding the committee's work in closed consultations.

Ethiopia (Tigray)

On 26 August, the Security Council convened in person for an open briefing and closed consultations on the situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia (S/PV.8843). Secretary-General António Guterres briefed the Council during the open session, while Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths briefed during the closed consultations. Underscoring a point he had made at his 19 August press stakeout, Guterres stressed that all parties need to recognise that “there is no military solution” to the conflict. He noted that Tigray remains “largely under a de-facto humanitarian blockade” and expressed concern over the large-scale displacement caused by the conflict. Guterres also condemned “in the strongest possible terms” conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, and expressed concern over violations and abuses against civilians “reportedly perpetrated by all parties to the conflict”. Guterres called on all parties to “immediately end hostilities without preconditions and seize that opportunity to negotiate

a lasting ceasefire”. Guterres further stated that “foreign forces should leave the country” and that unrestricted humanitarian access must be granted to all areas in need. The meeting, which was held under the “Peace and Security in Africa” agenda item, was requested by Estonia, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. A representative of Ethiopia participated in the open briefing.

Mali Sanctions

On 30 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2590, renewing the Mali sanctions measures—an asset freeze and travel ban—until 31 August 2022, and the mandate of the Mali Panel of Experts until 30 September 2022.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 30 August, the Security Council convened for an open briefing followed by closed consultations on: “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” (S/PV.8847). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed the Council.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council is expected to consider the renewal of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which is set to expire on 17 September. The Council will also hold its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. Deborah Lyons, the Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, and a representative of Afghan civil society are expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

Following a military offensive that swiftly gained momentum in the aftermath of the Biden administration's announcement that the US would begin withdrawing troops on 1 May, the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan. During the initial phase of the offensive, which also began in early May, the Taliban focused primarily on taking control of districts, roads, military outposts, and border crossings in rural areas. By early August, the Taliban controlled more than half of Afghanistan's 421 districts and, in direct contravention of its February 2020 peace agreement with the US, had begun attacking several provincial capitals throughout the country. Zaranj, the capital of Nimruz province near the Iranian border, fell to the Taliban on 6 August and was quickly followed by several major Afghan cities, including Kunduz and Kandahar, which were captured by the Taliban on 8 and 12 August, respectively. On 15 August, the Taliban seized Kabul and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country.

Following an initial meeting regarding recent developments in Afghanistan on 6 August, the Council convened again for a briefing and closed consultations on 16 August following the fall of Kabul. The Secretary-General briefed, and Afghanistan's Permanent

Representative to the UN, Ghulam M. Isaczi, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. In his statement, the Secretary-General said the UN had received “chilling reports of severe restrictions on human rights throughout the country” and noted that he was particularly concerned by accounts of violations of the rights of women and girls. He also called on the Council to “use all tools at [its] disposal” to suppress the threat of terrorism in Afghanistan and guarantee that basic human rights will be respected. He further noted that the UN intended to stay in Afghanistan and urged the international community to remain united.

Shortly after the meeting, Council members issued a press statement. Among other matters, the statement expressed concern about reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, stressed the need to bring perpetrators to justice, and called for greater efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and allow unhindered access for humanitarian actors. Council members also called for the establishment of a new government with the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women, as well as urgent talks to resolve the crisis of authority and arrive at a peaceful settlement.

Although the Taliban declared the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on 19 August, which is the same name it used when it was last in power, it also indicated that it will not make any decisions or announcements regarding the formation of a new government until the 31 August deadline for the withdrawal of US troops expires. Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, the Chair of the High Council for National Reconciliation, are currently

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2543](#) (15 September 2020) renewed UNAMA's mandate until 17 September 2021. [Security Council Press Statements SC/14604](#) (16 August 2021) addressed the Taliban's seizure of Afghanistan. [SC/14592](#) (3 August 2021) addressed the escalating violence in Afghanistan, including the Taliban's attack on the UN compound in Herat.

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negotiating the formation of an inclusive interim government with the Taliban.

On 18 August, the UN announced that it had relocated a number of UNAMA's international staff to offices in Almaty, Kazakhstan. On 24 August, reports suggested that the Taliban had taken control of UN compounds in Afghanistan and that local staff were facing reprisals. Approximately 3,000 Afghan nationals are currently employed by UNAMA.

The international community's response to the Taliban's seizure of Afghanistan have been varied. On 16 August, a spokeswoman for the Chinese government said that China is ready to deepen "friendly and cooperative" relations with Afghanistan and that it will respect the "wishes and choices of the Afghan people". China has not closed its embassy in Kabul. Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative on Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, noted on 16 August that Russia will observe the actions of the new authorities before deciding how to respond, and subsequently said that the Taliban were better negotiating partners than Ghani's "puppet government". Russia also held military exercises with Tajikistan along its border with Afghanistan and has kept its embassy in Kabul open. In a possible sign of closer relations with Russia, the Taliban asked Russia to negotiate with a group of Afghan leaders who are currently holding out against the Taliban in Panjshir Valley. On 17 August, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, said that the EU will only cooperate with the Taliban if it respects fundamental human rights, especially those of women, and prevents the use of Afghanistan's territory by terrorist organisations. On 16 August, the US said that it will not support the Taliban if it harbours terrorists or fails to uphold the basic rights of its people, particularly women and girls.

The humanitarian and displacement situations in Afghanistan, which were already dire before the Taliban's takeover, have continued to deteriorate. In an 18 August press conference Mary-ellen McGroarty, the World Food Programme's Country Director in Afghanistan, said that 14 million Afghans are currently suffering from severe hunger and that \$200 million in food aid is required before the start of winter. At the same press conference Caroline Van Buren, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) Representative in Afghanistan, noted that 500,000 people have been displaced in Afghanistan since January. The suspension of aid to Afghanistan by many member states, as well as the IMF's announcement that it has halted plans to distribute \$400 million in emergency reserves to Afghanistan and the US Treasury Department's decision to block access to \$9.4 billion in funds held by Afghanistan's central bank, are likely to affect the Afghan response to the humanitarian crisis.

At the time of writing, the situation at Kabul airport was chaotic. Control of the road leading to the airport was divided among the Taliban, the remnants of Afghan intelligence forces, and foreign troops. On 26 August, two suicide bombers detonated explosives outside Kabul airport. According to media reports, as many as 170 people were killed and at least 200 were wounded. On 27 August, the Council issued a press statement regarding the attacks. The statement noted that Islamic State in Khorasan Province had claimed responsibility, condemned all instances of terrorism, reiterated that no Afghan group should support terrorists and called on all parties to facilitate the safe evacuation of civilians.

In the days preceding the blasts, international leaders pressured US President Joe Biden to extend the 31 August evacuation

deadline. In response, the Taliban said there would be "consequences" if foreign troops stay beyond 31 August. On 24 August, Biden announced that the US was "on pace to finish by August the 31st", and the US ultimately ended its operation on 30 August, with thousands of Afghans still waiting to leave the country. On 29 August, approximately 100 countries announced that the Taliban had provided assurances that foreign nationals and Afghan citizens will be allowed to travel freely to destinations outside Afghanistan following the withdrawal of foreign military forces.

On 30 August, the Council adopted resolution 2593 concerning recent developments in Afghanistan. The resolution demands that Afghan territory not be used to attack any country or shelter terrorists and asks for strengthened efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. It also calls on all parties to allow unhindered access for humanitarian actors. In relation to the evacuations from Afghanistan, the resolution notes that the Taliban has made a commitment to allow Afghans to travel abroad. It references the dangerous security situation around Kabul airport and expresses concern regarding intelligence which indicates further terrorist attacks may take place nearby. The resolution calls on relevant parties to work with international partners to strengthen security near Kabul airport and requests that every effort be made to allow for its rapid and secure reopening. It further underlines that all parties must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, reaffirms the importance of upholding human rights, and calls on the parties to seek a negotiated political settlement.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 10 August, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet issued a statement warning that the "failure to stem the rising violence and commission of human rights violations and abuses is having disastrous consequences for the people of Afghanistan". The statement also referred to rising civilian casualties and "reports of violations that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity", as well as serious violations of the rights of women and girls. Bachelet reiterated these points during a 24 August special session of the Human Rights Council on the "serious human rights concerns and situation in Afghanistan", which was convened following an official request submitted on 17 August by Pakistan, Coordinator of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and Afghanistan. The request was supported by at least 89 states. In her speech, Bachelet also advocated for the creation of a special mechanism to closely monitor the actions of the Taliban.

On 16 August, a group of independent human rights experts issued a statement expressing outrage over "the wanton attacks on civilians, the targeting of independent journalists and media, and the violence being directed at women and girls". Among other matters, it emphasised that the Council "must now be unequivocal in action" and called on it "to take appropriate action under Chapter VII of the Charter to safeguard the human rights and humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan, including its most vulnerable, and to address the role of Member States to prevent acts of terrorism under international law".

Women, Peace and Security

On 19 August, Mette Knudsen, Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, and Alison Davidian, UN Women Deputy Representative in Afghanistan, briefed the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security regarding the situation of women in Afghanistan.

Co-chairs Ireland and Mexico held a press stakeout following the IEG meeting, during which Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) said that the co-chairs had urged the Council to protect and vindicate the rights of Afghan women and girls in all decisions and actions on the future of Afghanistan. She also suggested steps that the Council could take immediately, including calling on all parties to facilitate the "safe and timely departure

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of Afghans, particularly human rights defenders, women leaders and those involved in public life, women's rights activists, peacebuilders and journalists, who wish to leave the country"; and insisting that the "full, equal and meaningful participation of women in any new government is a non-negotiable condition of international engagement". Following Ireland's remarks, Ambassador Alicia Guadalupe Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) further stressed that the rights of women and girls need to be at the heart of the collective response to the crisis.

The background note for the meeting, which was prepared by UN Women, recommended that the Council adopt a resolution calling for a nationwide ceasefire in Afghanistan that "fully incorporates gender considerations, including the protection of women". The note also recommended that the Council ask UNAMA to take account of gender considerations as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate and support, consult and engage with a wide range of women's civil society organisations as it carries out its work. It further suggested that UNAMA monitor threats, attacks, and killings of women.

Key Issues and Options

A major issue for the Council is the renewal of UNAMA's mandate and determining what role UNAMA will be able to play following the Taliban's takeover. Because this will largely be determined by the security and operating environment in Afghanistan and by the Taliban's willingness to allow UNAMA to carry out its work, Council members will follow developments on the ground and the progress of the negotiations regarding the formation of an interim government closely. Given the fluid situation, one option is for the Council to adopt a short technical rollover of UNAMA's mandate and request a strategic review that considers how UNAMA can best operate in Afghanistan and what it can realistically achieve. This review could be conducted in consultation with UNAMA, with a particular focus on the safety and security of its staff, and the results could be used to inform a further renewal of UNAMA's mandate before the technical rollover ends.

Council members may also wish to consider imposing further sanctions on the Taliban and members of its leadership.

Another matter for Council members to consider is the role the Council can play in securing the safety of women and girls. In line with the recommendations made ahead of the recent IEG meeting on Afghanistan, Council members could encourage member states to provide women at risk with emergency visas and access to diplomatic and political channels. Council members could hold an informal meeting with Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten; and women from Afghan and international civil society. This meeting could focus on discussing how the Council can assist those trying to ensure the safety of women and girls as the Taliban consolidate their power.

Council Dynamics

Before the Taliban took control, Council members were largely united in their support for UNAMA's work. At the time of writing, it remains unclear how the Council will approach the renewal of the mission, whose future will likely be contingent on the position adopted by the new Afghan authorities. In general, Council members that have kept their embassies in Afghanistan open and expressed a willingness to work with the Taliban, such as Russia and China, may be less inclined to take action that the Taliban could view as provocative. Other members who have repeatedly emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Taliban respects and upholds the fundamental rights of Afghans and adheres to international norms—including Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the UK, and the US—are likely to be more supportive of taking action that seeks to hold the Taliban to these standards. Council members are likely to agree, however, on the importance of ensuring that Afghanistan does not become a haven for terrorism.

Estonia and Norway are the co-penholders on Afghanistan, and Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti (India) chairs the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. The US is the penholder on the sanctions file.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

In the southwestern province of Daraa, several weeks of tensions and reports of low-level violence followed the residents' rejection of the results of Syria's 26 May presidential elections. In late June, the conflict escalated when Syrian government forces, apparently supported by Iranian-backed militias, began a siege of Daraa al Balad in the southern province of Daraa. Daraa al Balad is inhabited by 55,000 people, including a large number of former members of the armed opposition. Having cut off access, critical services and supplies to

Daraa al Balad, government forces began shelling the area on 28 July and ground clashes between government and opposition forces ensued. According to OCHA, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent had officially registered 38,600 people displaced by the fighting as at 17 August.

There has also been an uptick in fighting, including shelling and airstrikes, in Idlib in the north-west of Syria since June, with reports of civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure as a result of aerial bombardments and shelling in the area. Mark Cutts, the UN Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, was quoted in a 23 August Al Jazeera article as saying that Idlib is experiencing the most "serious escalation in bombing" since the March 2020 ceasefire. According to the Secretary-General's 18 August report on the humanitarian situation in Syria, the UN Office of the High

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2585 (9 July 2021) renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing. **Secretary-General's Report S/2021/735** (18 August 2021) was the regular 60-day report on the implementation of humanitarian resolutions by all parties to the conflict in Syria.

Syria

Commissioner for Human Rights has verified the deaths of 35 civilians from the conflict in Idlib governate in June and July.

On 12 August, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen released a statement in which he called for a nation-wide ceasefire, raising alarm at the “siege-like situation” of Daraa al Balad and noting ongoing tensions elsewhere in Syria, including increased violence in the north-west and persistent water security problems in the north-east. In Daraa al Balad, Pedersen referred to a lack of sufficient medical assistance for the wounded and severe shortages of fuel, water, bread, and cooking oil.

On 24 August, the Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Special Envoy Pedersen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, and Khaled Erksoussi, the Secretary General of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, briefed the Council via videoconference (VTC). Pedersen urged the parties to work towards a nation-wide ceasefire, and emphasised the importance of a “credible political process” supported by “more sustained international cooperation”. Griffiths reported that “ongoing hostilities, economic crisis, water shortages and COVID-19 are driving humanitarian needs for millions of already vulnerable people [in Syria] to some of the highest levels...since the start of the conflict”. Erksoussi expressed concern about the toll of high food prices and sanctions on the Syrian people, as well as the impact of water shortages in the north-east of the country.

There has been no discernible progress on addressing the use of chemical weapons in Syria. During a 4 August Council session on the issue, Thomas Markram, Deputy High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, outlined the difficulties that the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) continued to face in order to complete its work in Syria, including travel restrictions due to COVID-19 and no response from the Syrian government to the OPCW’s request to deploy its Declaration Assessment Team to Damascus in May. During the meeting, members’ interventions again demonstrated the stark divisions on the Council on the chemical weapons file. While most members expressed support for the work of the OPCW, Russia, in particular, voiced strong apprehension, claiming that OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias, who briefed the Council on 3 June, had offered “many inconsistencies and outright distortions” and that there had been “an increasingly dangerous politicization in the OPCW”.

The meeting also came amidst tensions arising from an incident on 8 June, when an attack—reportedly by Israel—took place on a Syrian military facility housing a previously declared former chemical weapons production facility, destroying two cylinders related to the use of chlorine gas in April 2018 in Douma. The OPCW had been mandated to transport the cylinders to its headquarters for further inspection but had been prevented from doing so by the Syrian authorities.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 5 August, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet released a statement expressing alarm over “the plight of civilians in and around the southern Syrian city of Daraa, where neighbourhoods are seeing intense fighting and indiscriminate shelling by government forces and armed opposition groups, with the only route out strictly controlled by the Syrian government”. The fighting, which is “the most serious confrontation” there since 2018, has led 18,000 civilians to flee Daraa al Balad since 28 July, the statement said.

During its upcoming 48th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 23 September with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and consider its latest report (A/HRC/48/70). On 24 September, the HRC is expected to hear an oral update from an OHCHR representative on the extent of civilian casualties in Syria, as requested in HRC resolution 46/22, followed by a general debate.

Women, Peace and Security

During the 25 June monthly political meeting on Syria, Special Envoy Pedersen and Abeer Hussein, a member of the Syrian Women’s Political Movement, briefed the Security Council. Pedersen regretted the lack of progress on the issue of detainees, abductees and missing persons in Syria. Echoing reports from the Women’s Advisory Board, he noted how women “are particularly impacted when detained or when their family members are”, and reported on his engagement with the Syrian government towards advancing this issue. Hussein stressed that women residing in Syria are strong and that their choice to stay in Syria is motivated by the prospect of having greater opportunities for generating change, especially at the community level. During her intervention, Hussein stressed the importance of reaching “a genuine political solution” and focused on living conditions in Syria, noting how the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened a situation already characterised by a lack of economic security and education as well as gender-based violence and displacement. She strongly criticised the May elections as not respecting “the most basic internationally recognized standards” and argued in favour of a constitution that will give precedence to international instruments over conflicting domestic legal arrangements “in order to abolish all kinds of discrimination against women”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is what role the Council can play in reinvigorating the political process in Syria. Plans for a sixth round of the Constitutional Committee have been delayed for several months as the parties have not agreed to Pedersen’s proposal for an agenda for the meeting. The rising violence in Daraa and other parts of Syria is another important issue that the Council will continue to monitor. On the humanitarian front, the importance of securing cross-line humanitarian access, efforts to step up COVID-19 vaccinations, and water shortages in the north-east of the country are key ongoing issues.

Council members may wish to build on the momentum garnered from the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585—which reauthorised the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for the delivery of humanitarian aid—and adopt a presidential statement expressing support for the work of the Special Envoy, calling for the full and constructive engagement of all parties to the Constitutional Committee, demanding an end to hostilities, and emphasising the need to provide cross-line access, particularly in north-west Syria.

Another option could be for members to convene an informal interactive dialogue with Syrian officials to discuss ways to overcome obstacles to the delivery of cross-line humanitarian assistance in north-west Syria.

Council Dynamics

The adoption of resolution 2585 has been widely hailed as a rare moment of Council unity on the Syria file and an important moment in Russia-US relations. Building positive momentum around this achievement could shift Council dynamics towards a more constructive engagement on the Syria file. However, while Council members were able to bridge differences and find compromise language in 2585, on several issues that have divided the Council on the humanitarian situation including the number of border crossings to be authorised and the length of the mandate, issues such as the efficacy

Syria

of cross-line deliveries, the impact of unilateral sanctions, funding of early recovery projects, and reporting requirements remain

sources of disagreement that may continue to adversely affect Council deliberations.

Maintenance of International Peace and Security: The Elders

Expected Council Action

In September, Ireland will convene a briefing on peace and security issues with members of The Elders, a non-governmental organisation of distinguished public figures founded by Nelson Mandela that strives to promote human rights and peace. Mary Robinson, who chairs The Elders and is the former President of Ireland (1990-1997) and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), and Lakhdar Brahimi, an emeritus member of The Elders who is the former Algerian foreign minister (1991-1993) and a veteran UN diplomat, are expected to brief. It appears that the meeting is intended to provide an opportunity for members of The Elders to share their views on several issues that the Council is grappling with, including Afghanistan, Ethiopia (Tigray), Myanmar, and climate change and security, among others.

No formal outcome is anticipated from the meeting.

Background

Nelson Mandela, the former president of South Africa (1994-1999), founded The Elders in 2007. Its mission is “to engage with global leaders and civil society at all levels to resolve conflict and address its root causes, to challenge injustice, and to promote ethical leadership and good governance”. It works through both private and public diplomacy.

Mary Robinson and former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who is the deputy chair of The Elders, have briefed the Council on previous occasions as representatives of this organisation. The meeting will be the first time that Brahimi has addressed the Council in his capacity as an Elder. Several themes have emerged in previous Council briefings by The Elders, including the importance of addressing nuclear proliferation and climate change, promoting women’s equality and welfare to address global challenges, and upholding the multilateral system.

Key Recent Developments

On 12 June 2019, the Security Council held a briefing on “Conflict prevention and mediation” during Kuwait’s Council presidency. In addition to Secretary-General António Guterres, Mary Robinson and Ban Ki-moon briefed on behalf of The Elders. Robinson criticised the failure of the Council’s permanent members to uphold their responsibilities under the UN Charter by favouring “realpolitik or short-term power stratagems”. She pointed in particular to the “repeated use of the veto by certain permanent members on draft resolutions aimed to prevent mass atrocities”. Robinson noted that

The Elders believed that the Council could play a proactive role in preventing conflict and addressing challenges such as climate change and cyber-threats. She further emphasised the importance of integrating the views and experiences of women in conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts. Ban said that the Council could do more to support the good offices work of the Secretary-General, called for enhanced coordination between the UN and regional organisations in preventing and resolving conflicts, and expressed concern about the threat of nuclear conflict.

On 9 January 2020, the Council held a ministerial-level open debate hosted by Viet Nam on the “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter” as an opportunity for member states to reflect on and reaffirm their commitment to upholding Charter principles, particularly in the context of international peace and security. Secretary-General Guterres and The Elders’ Chair Robinson briefed. During the meeting, a presidential statement was adopted in which the Council upheld its commitment to multilateralism and the central role of the UN.

At the meeting, Robinson underscored The Elders’ concern about two existential threats facing the global community: nuclear proliferation and climate change. She noted that The Elders had underscored the need for “all nuclear Powers to get serious about disarmament and to pursue policies of nuclear minimization in order to preserve peace for future generations”. She added that a “new mindset” was required that recognises the urgency of the climate crisis. Robinson also asked the Council to “give greater priority to the terrible problem of systemic violence and discrimination against women and girls”.

The Council held a high-level open debate on “Pandemics and the Challenges of Sustaining Peace” via videoconference on 12 August 2020 during Indonesia’s Council presidency. In addition to Secretary-General Guterres and Sarah Cliffe, director of New York University’s Center on International Cooperation, former Secretary-General Ban briefed in his capacity as a member of The Elders. Ban criticised the Council for its delayed agreement in adopting resolution 2532 of July 2020, which demanded a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on the Council’s agenda and called upon all parties to armed conflicts to engage immediately in a 90-day humanitarian pause in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/1](#) (9 January 2020) upheld the Council’s commitment to multilateralism and the central role of the UN. [Security Council Letter S/2020/799](#) (14 August 2020) was a compilation of briefings and statements at the 12 August 2020 open videoconference debate on “Pandemics and the Challenges of Sustaining Peace”. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8699](#) (9 January 2020) was an open debate on the “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”. [S/PV.8546](#) (12 June 2019) was a briefing on “Conflict prevention and mediation”.

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold its annual debate on peacekeeping reform pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017. The Irish presidency plans to hold the meeting at ministerial level with a particular focus on peacekeeping transitions. Ireland's minister for foreign affairs and minister for defence, Simon Coveney, is expected to chair the debate. Secretary-General António Guterres, former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

A resolution on peacekeeping transitions is a planned outcome.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2378 requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive annual briefing to the Security Council on reform of UN peacekeeping every 12 months, to be followed by a debate. Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix provided the first comprehensive briefing to the Council on this issue in September 2018 in which he elaborated on the Secretary-General's reform of the UN peace and security architecture and his Action for Peacekeeping Initiative (A4P). In September 2019, Lacroix again briefed the Council on the progress and challenges of peacekeeping reform. In his briefing to the Council in September 2020, Lacroix outlined the eight priorities of peacekeeping reform in 2021 and beyond, which is referred to as A4P+. Among these priorities are coherent action to serve an overarching political strategy, the safety and security of peacekeepers, and the application of a gender lens to peacekeeping activities.

This year, Ireland plans to take advantage of the annual debate to advance discussions about peacekeeping transitions. With several drawdowns and exits of long-standing UN peacekeeping missions planned for the coming years, understanding transition processes has become critical. The Secretary-General identified the facilitation of successful transitions as a priority for the entire UN system when he briefed the Council at the 18 July 2019 debate on "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace: Strengthening Partnerships for Successful Nationally Owned Transitions". The closure of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) in 2017 and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in 2018 were considered successful examples of the UN's engagement in assisting countries that were making the difficult transition from conflict to peace. There are also other recent examples of transitions, such as in Haiti from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) to the UN Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) and then to the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and in Sudan from the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) to the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS).

Some peacekeeping missions are in the process of planning their transitions, such as the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Secretary-General is expected to present his transition plan on MONUSCO pursuant to resolution 2556 of 18 December 2020. The UN and the AU have conducted separate independent assessments outlining their respective options

for the future of AMISOM post-2021. Following a recent AU delegation visit to Mogadishu to address the reservations expressed by the Somali government on the AU independent assessment, the AU announced that they had reached agreement with the Somali government on the modalities for a follow-up mission to AMISOM post-2021. The two sides are expected to finalise the details of their agreement for subsequent consideration by the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council.

Over the years, the Council has held discussions on transitions in mission-specific contexts. It has also conducted field missions to observe the management and implementation of transitions. For instance, the Council conducted a visiting mission to Haiti in June 2017 to review the transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH. A similar visit to West Africa in February 2019 also provided a useful opportunity for Council members to hold roundtable discussions with the relevant UN officials in the field on what lessons and best practices could be drawn from the transitions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia. In July 2019, Peru organised a briefing on peacebuilding and sustaining peace with a particular focus on strengthening partnerships for nationally-owned transitions.

In a 21 December 2017 presidential statement, the Security Council recognised the importance of adequately resourcing the peacebuilding components of UN peacekeeping missions, including during mission transitions and drawdown, and emphasised the need to draw upon the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission in discussions on mission mandates and transitions.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues relevant to the issue of peacekeeping transitions that may be raised in the ministerial-level debate include how to:

- promote the primacy of politics as a hallmark of transition processes;
- foster cooperation and partnership between host countries, various UN entities, troop- and police-contributing countries, and other partners;
- address the threat of violence against civilians during the transition and reconfiguration of peacekeeping missions;
- foster coherence among all relevant stakeholders in effectively implementing transitions;
- support the protection of civilians in transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding operations;
- support the engagement of civil society as well as promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in transition planning; and
- support the long-term economic and developmental needs of countries in transition.

A likely option is pursuing a resolution on peacekeeping transitions. Possible elements could include:

- underscoring the importance of political solutions in guiding transition processes;
- emphasising the need for the protection of civilians to be a key

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2524](#) (3 June 2020) established the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). [S/RES/2378](#) (20 September 2017) requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on reform of UN peacekeeping every 12 months, to be followed by a debate. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2018/8](#) (19 April 2018) welcomed the successful completion of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). [S/PRST/2017/27](#) (21 December 2017) includes references to peacekeeping transitions. [S/PRST/2017/8](#) (30 June 2017) welcomed the successful completion of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). [Security Council Letter S/2020/911](#) (16 September 2020) was a record of the statements made at a videoconference meeting on peacekeeping reform. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8579](#) (18 July 2019) was a briefing on strengthening partnerships for successful nationally owned transitions. [S/PV.8349](#) (12 September 2018) was a debate on peacekeeping reform.

UN Peacekeeping

focus of attention in moving from peacekeeping to peacebuilding;

- appealing to member states and partners to scale up financial support for post-conflict states, while underlining the need for predictable and sustainable financing of the peacebuilding activities of countries in transition;
- highlighting the importance of crafting precise and clear benchmarks and timelines that can be implemented in a prioritised and sequenced manner;
- highlighting the role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in fostering coherence amongst stakeholders; and
- requesting a dedicated report of the Secretary-General on how the UN system is handling transitions.

Council Dynamics

Council members recognise that properly managed and executed transitions can help to avoid a relapse into another conflict, sustain the gains made in the management and resolution of conflicts, and pave the way for durable peace. Ireland's objective for the ministerial-level debate in September is to facilitate discussion on how to make transitions strategic and how to manage them well. In this regard, it would like the Council to consider transitions as part of the continuum of peace operations and place the debate within the

framework of the sustaining peace agenda.

While Council members are generally supportive of discussion on peacekeeping transitions as a thematic item, some past negotiations on transitions and reconfigurations of peacekeeping missions have been contentious. Specific language proposed on the protection of civilians, human rights, the rule of law, security sector reform, peacebuilding, and climate change have been divisive. The draft resolution to be proposed by Ireland may require negotiation on some of these issues.

Some members may underline the need to take into account the needs and priorities of host states. Others may point out the importance of implementing timelines and benchmarks in a flexible manner based on the evolving security situation on the ground.

As witnessed in previous negotiations, members have proposed reporting requirements on discrete aspects of different agenda items. In this regard, some members may support an effort to call for a stand-alone reporting requirement on peacekeeping transitions. However, others may oppose this to avoid additional budgetary implications. A proposal that the Secretary-General brief the Council on peacekeeping transitions as part of his annual comprehensive report pursuant to resolution 2378 might be more acceptable to most Council members.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing and consultations on Yemen. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths and possibly a civil society representative are expected to brief. General Abhijit Guha, head of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), will brief during consultations.

Key Recent Developments

On 6 August, the UN announced the appointment of Hans Grundberg as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen. Grundberg had been serving as EU ambassador to Yemen since 2019. He previously headed the Gulf Division at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs when Sweden hosted the UN-facilitated talks that culminated in the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement that established a ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate. Grundberg succeeds Martin Griffiths, who served as the UN envoy to Yemen from March 2018 to June of this year.

Fighting continued across multiple frontlines during August. The strategic focus of the conflict remains Marib governorate. The Houthi rebel group's offensive to take the oil- and gas-rich territory continues to be stymied by Yemeni government forces, supported by Saudi Arabian airstrikes, outside Marib city. In the central al-Bayda governorate, a Houthi counter-offensive reversed gains in July by government-affiliated forces, enabling Houthi incursions into Shabwa governorate. Meanwhile, ceasefire negotiations—based on a UN

plan that would reopen Sana'a airport, lift restrictions on shipping into Hodeidah ports, and resume a political process—remain stalled.

At the Council's 23 August briefing on Yemen, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari noted that there had been no progress in ceasefire talks. The Houthis have conditioned their acceptance of a ceasefire and the resumption of the political process on an initial stand-alone agreement to open Sana'a airport and Hodeidah ports; the government wants to agree on and implement these measures together as a package. Khiari said that progress in implementing the Saudi Arabia-brokered Riyadh Agreement, a power-sharing deal agreed to in 2019 between the government and the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), had stalled following a break in negotiations between the parties in early July for the Eid holiday.

Griffiths delivered his first briefing on Yemen as Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs during the 23 August Council meeting. He highlighted the role of Yemen's economic collapse in driving the country's humanitarian crisis, including the threat of famine. Griffiths stressed the need to provide salaries to unpaid civil servants, maintain remittances (amid recent reports that Saudi Arabia was terminating the jobs of Yemeni workers in the country), and stabilise Yemen's currency, which since July has traded at record lows in government-held areas at nearly 1,000 Yemeni rials to the US dollar. (In Houthi-held territory, it has been trading at 600 rials to the dollar). Griffiths also called for lifting restrictions on commercial imports through Hodeidah, as the government embargo on

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2586 (14 July 2021) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2022. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8840 (23 August 2021) was a briefing on Yemen. S/PV.8797 (15 June 2021) was Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' final briefing on Yemen. S/PV.8786 (3 June 2021) was a briefing on the FSO Safer oil tanker.

Yemen

fuel shipments into Houthi ports has driven up fuel costs. He further called for an end to profiteering and market manipulation, which are contributing to the higher prices, especially in Houthi-held areas. UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore briefed on the situation of children in Yemen, with Guha addressing Council members during consultations.

Also on 23 August, the International Monetary Fund announced that it would provide Yemen with about \$665 million in special drawing rights, which will help boost Yemen's foreign exchange reserves to stem the fall of the rial.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its upcoming 48th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 14 September with the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts and consider its latest report (A/HRC/48/20). On 7 October, the HRC will consider the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on 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/48/48).

Sanctions Related Developments

On 13 August, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee received a briefing from the Yemen Panel of Experts on the panel's mid-term update. Previously, on 16 July, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba briefed the 2140 Committee on the situation of children and armed conflict in Yemen. According to a committee press release, Gamba expressed concern about the increase in the total number of grave violations in Yemen in 2020, compared to 2019. The most notable and worrying increase was observed in incidents of denial of humanitarian access, which had increased by one-third. The number of verified abductions and incidents of sexual violence committed against children had also increased, despite the fact that the latter is known to be underreported, according to the press release.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues remain the need to achieve a ceasefire and to resume a peace process. Sustaining the Riyadh Agreement between the government and the STC is another important issue, critical for preventing the conflict's further deterioration. At the September briefing, Council members may encourage Grundberg to develop his ideas or vision to reinvalidate the peace process.

Yemen remains the world's largest humanitarian crisis, according to the UN, with 20.7 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance or protection. Key issues related to the crisis

include the prevention of famine, the protection of civilians, access challenges for humanitarian assistance, and support for the economy. The UN has repeatedly warned about the potential for the Houthis' Marib offensive to worsen the humanitarian crisis if it triggers a new wave of mass displacement, as there are already over one million internally displaced persons in the governorate. During the General Assembly's high-level week in September, Sweden, Switzerland and the EU will host a humanitarian event to raise more relief funding for Yemen. Following new commitments by Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the US, the 2021 Yemen humanitarian response plan was approximately 50 percent funded in August.

Another recurring key issue is the threat posed by the FSO Safer oil tanker, holding an estimated 1.15 million barrels of oil and moored in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held Ras Isa oil terminal. The UN continues to negotiate with the Houthis (albeit unsuccessfully to date) to allow a technical team to conduct an assessment mission and make initial repairs to the decrepit ship, which risks causing an environmental catastrophe in the event of an oil spill or fire.

Council members could issue a press statement, as they sometimes do after meetings on Yemen, to call for:

- a nationwide ceasefire;
- measures to address the humanitarian crisis, such as the lifting of restrictions on fuel imports through Hodeidah ports;
- the continued implementation of the Riyadh Agreement; and
- cooperation with the UN by the Houthis to avert a crisis with the Safer oil tanker.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their positions on Yemen. They support UN-led mediation efforts for a ceasefire and share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the environmental threat posed by the Safer oil tanker. The US lent new momentum earlier this year to mediation efforts after it appointed a US Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, who has closely coordinated with the UN. European members and the US tend to be more critical of Houthi obstructionism, while Russia is more cautious in singling out the Houthis—a dynamic that has sometimes played out this year during negotiations on Council products.

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

Libya

Expected Council Action

The Council will be actively engaged on Libya in September. Early in the month, the Council will hold a briefing on the situation in the country to be followed by closed consultations. The anticipated briefer is the Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL), Ján Kubiš, with a civil society briefer

also being considered. The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti (India), is expected to present the report on activities of the committee, which is likely to cover 120 instead of the usual 60 days, as the last scheduled report delivery was postponed due to the high-level nature of the briefing on Libya held in July.

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). **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/12** (15 July 2021) welcomed the second Berlin Conference on Libya. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/752](#) (25 August 2021) was on the implementation of resolution 2542. [Security Council Letter S/2021/716](#) (6 August 2021) was the letter from the Secretary-General transmitting the strategic review of UNSMIL.

Libya

Council members will also negotiate the renewal of the UNSMIL mandate with adoption scheduled for mid-September. A second adoption is foreseen for late September, when Council members convene to renew the authorisations granted by resolution 2546 of 2 October 2020, allowing member states acting in their national capacity or through regional organisations to intercept vessels off the coast of Libya suspected of migrant smuggling.

Key Recent Developments

For the upcoming meeting on the situation in Libya and the negotiations on UNSMIL's mandate, Council members will have the final report of the independent strategic review of UNSMIL as a reference. The review was first requested by the Council as part of last year's mandate renewal through resolution 2542. The Secretary-General was asked to provide recommendations for improving the efficacy of UNSMIL's mission structure, the prioritisation of its tasks and the capacity and effectiveness of its staffing. As part of the review, the Council also requested an "assessment of the options for effective ceasefire monitoring under the auspices of the UN including additional recommendations as necessary". In resolution 2570, adopted on 16 April, Council members expanded the terms of the requested assessment to include a ceasefire monitoring component for the mission.

The Secretary-General submitted the review report with a letter to Council members on 6 August, endorsing the findings and recommendations of the review, which include the following:

- UNSMIL played a considerable role in supporting Libyan actors to resume dialogue on political, security and economic matters, and the UN remains a credible and impartial actor in the Libya peace process;
- a growing stalemate in the political, security and economic tracks and continued divisions within the country challenge the ongoing peace process;
- UNSMIL should therefore strengthen and intensify its good offices and mediation efforts along with its engagement with Libya's neighbouring countries, especially regarding the withdrawal of foreign forces;
- the position of UNSMIL's Special Envoy should be relocated to Tripoli and converted to a Special-Representative position, supported by two Deputy Special-Representatives, one for political affairs and one for humanitarian matters (resolution 2542 replaced the position of the Libya-based Special-Representative with a Geneva-based Special Envoy and introduced a Libya-based UNSMIL coordinator in charge of managing the mission's day-to-day operations and management);
- UNSMIL's approach to the ongoing intra-Libyan talks along the political, economic, security, humanitarian and human rights tracks should be harmonised;
- surge capacity should be deployed to support Libya's pre-electoral phase from August through December and to alleviate budgetary, accommodation and staffing constraints, including the immediate deployment of protection advisors;
- advocacy for humanitarian and human rights issues should be increased and coordination with UN country team entities should be strengthened further;
- the mission's footprint should be expanded to eastern and southern regions; and
- another strategic review should be conducted after the elections

to re-evaluate staffing and capacity needs.

Preparations are underway for the elections scheduled for 24 December. The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), an assembly of 75 participants who are responsible for identifying a constitutional basis for the elections, held several consultative meetings but could not reach agreement. It then convened a "Proposal Bridging Committee", intended to merge the various proposals under discussion and suggest a way forward. Consultations of the committee resulted in four proposals, which were presented to the LPDF on 11 August for the forum to vote on. During the meeting, however, numerous LPDF members apparently voiced apprehensions about voting on the proposals at this stage. UNSMIL now intends to convene a follow-up meeting to bridge the remaining differences. Meanwhile, voter registration has gained traction; some 2.83 million Libyans living in-country have registered to vote. Libyans living abroad have until 15 September to register.

On the security side, the opening of the coastal road between Misrata and Sirte on 30 July represented a crucial step towards the full implementation of the 23 October 2020 ceasefire agreement, but the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries has yet to make notable progress.

Regarding the situation of migrants and refugees—a crucial issue for the renewal of resolution 2546—UNHCR reported on 20 August that some 21,120 persons attempting to cross the Mediterranean were intercepted or rescued by the Libyan Coast Guard. This figure already exceeds the total count in 2020. More persons are reported to be embarking for Europe through Libya since fighting in the country subsided. The EU naval mission EUNAVFOR MED IRINI is currently the only multilateral effort acting under resolution 2546 authorisations.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 30 July, the Working Group on the use of mercenaries, which is composed of five independent experts, said in a statement that "nine months after the ceasefire agreement calling for withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya, mercenaries and private military and security contractors continue to operate in the country". The statement called for all mercenaries and mercenary-related private contractors to leave Libya, saying that their departure is long overdue and is a vital precondition to peaceful elections scheduled for later this year. During its upcoming 48th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 7 October with the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on Libya and to consider its report (A/HRC/48/83).

Women, Peace and Security

The Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security last met on Libya on 1 April. Kubiš briefed members on UN efforts to bolster women's participation during the upcoming elections and underscored that UN support for ceasefire monitoring arrangements should be inclusive of women and youth. During the meeting, UN Women, as the IEG secretariat, made several key recommendations for the attention of Council members, including that the Council should "retain in UNSMIL's mandate all existing references to women, peace and security" and that it should "call upon all parties to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of diverse women at all stages of the dialogue and transition process". UN Women also suggested UNSMIL be requested to "prioritize women's participation in the upcoming elections, engage regularly with a wide range of women's civil society organizations, and monitor and report on threats and violence against women in the public sphere". The recommendations also included the provision of budgetary allocations adequate to allow UNSMIL to deliver its mandate on women, peace and security.

Libya

Key Issues and Options

With the strategic review now finalised, a key issue for the Council is how to take its recommendations forward. In renewing the UNSMIL mandate, they may look at ways not only to ensure adequate financial resources and staffing to accommodate potential adjustments to the mission but also to better support existing structures and the Libyan peace process. Another option would be to urge that protection advisors be deployed to address concerns over conflict-related and gender-based sexual violence and the protection of children.

An additional issue is the question of UNSMIL's restructuring. The Council could decide to change the leadership structure, as suggested in the recent review. Alternatively, it could opt for considering changes to the structure at a later date—potentially informed by a review following the December elections—and only make adjustments to the good offices and mediation parts of the mandate at this stage.

Another key issue is working towards the full and coordinated withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. In the UNSMIL renewal, the Council could consider urging the Special Envoy to increase discussions on the matter with Libya and the other countries concerned.

The preparations for the 24 December elections are also an

important issue for the Council. Council members may learn more about options in this regard by inviting a civil society briefer with insight into the LPDF proceedings or electoral expertise.

Inviting a briefer from the EU to address the Council ahead of the renewal of resolution 2546 could inform Council members about recent IRINI activities. Such briefings have taken place in the past regarding the renewal of authorisations implemented by the EU mission.

Council Dynamics

Council members appear united in their call to swiftly advance electoral preparations and further promote the political, institutional and social unity of the country. The withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries remains a divisive issue, especially given the call of the “A3 plus one” Council members (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) for a regional and coordinated approach and the reported involvement of a permanent council member in mercenary activities on the ground. Russia and China abstained from the vote on resolution 2542, citing concerns over language regarding the ceasefire monitoring mechanism, human rights and gender.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), due by 1 September. The chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia), is expected to provide the quarterly briefing on the committee's work.

The mandate of UNITAMS expires on 3 June 2022.

Key Recent Developments

There has been limited progress in advancing key elements of the political transition and the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) in the context of significant political, security, humanitarian and economic challenges. Several aspects of the Constitutional Document and the JPA have yet to be implemented. On 19 August, a spokesperson of the Transitional Sovereign Council said the body had instructed some of its members to launch discussions on the formation of the Electoral and the Constitution-Making Commissions.

The security situation in parts of Darfur remains precarious, with intercommunal violence, human rights violations and abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, and large-scale displacement. In early August, violence was reported in Tawila and Gallab in North Darfur. On 12 August, the spokesperson of the Secretary-General said that limited humanitarian aid had been provided to 30,000 internally displaced people at a camp in Sortony in North

Darfur due to lack of access following clashes there in July. More than 350,000 people have been displaced in Sudan as a result of intercommunal conflict and armed attacks between January and June of this year, the spokesperson added.

On 3 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2579, extending the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. The resolution retained the strategic objectives for UNITAMS outlined in resolution 2524, which established the mission on 3 June 2020, while making some adjustments. It decided that UNITAMS should prioritise support for six specified areas during the mandate period. These areas include supporting ceasefire monitoring in Darfur, implementation of the National Plan for Civilian Protection, and the constitution-drafting process. It also requested the Secretary-General to swiftly increase the deployment of personnel to UNITAMS.

The AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) completed its drawdown on 30 June as requested in resolution 2559. The current liquidation phase of the mission, which began on 1 July, is expected to be completed within 12 months. On 27 July, the Council received an oral briefing on the drawdown and closure of UNAMID, as requested in resolution 2559, from Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 26 July.) On 2 August, the Council adopted a presidential statement on UNAMID's closure. Among other things, it “recognises improvements in security conditions in some areas of Darfur and stresses the need for continued progress to consolidate peace

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2579](#) (3 June 2021) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. [S/RES/2562](#) (11 February 2021) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until 12 March 2022. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/14](#) (2 August 2021) was on the drawdown of UNAMID. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/696](#) (31 July 2021) was a review of the situation in Darfur and benchmarks to assess the measures on Darfur. [S/2021/470](#) (17 May 2021) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8825](#) (27 July 2021) was a briefing on progress in closing UNAMID. [S/PV.8816](#) (8 July 2021) was a briefing on the GERD. [S/PV.8791](#) (9 June 2021) was the semi-annual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor. [S/2021/495](#) (20 May 2021) was a record of the briefing on UNITAMS.

Sudan

and security, including through comprehensive implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement”.

On 3 August, the Council of Ministers unanimously passed a draft law on Sudan’s accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The draft still needs to be approved by a joint meeting of the Transitional Sovereignty Council and the Council of Ministers. In June, the Council of Ministers unanimously decided to hand former officials indicted for war crimes in Darfur over to the ICC, but did not specify a timeframe for doing so has not been specified. The Council received the semi-annual briefing related to the Court’s work on Darfur by then-ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on 9 June. (For more see, our What’s In Blue story of 8 June.)

Regarding the regional situation, disagreement continues between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the second filling of which was completed in July. Sudan has communicated its opposition to the filling of the GERD in two letters to the Council, dated 22 June and 7 July. On 8 July, the Council received a briefing on the issue under the agenda item “Peace and security in Africa”. (For more, see our What’s In Blue story of 7 July.)

The Council was last briefed on UNITAMS on 20 May by Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its upcoming 48th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on 6 October on the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Sudan, covering progress and challenges, including the work of the country office and its field presences (A/HRC/48/46).

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 31 July, Council members received the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the situation in Darfur and recommendations for key benchmarks that could serve in guiding the Council to review the sanctions measures on Darfur, as requested in resolution 2562. The report outlined four key benchmarks and related targets, namely progress on political and economic governance issues; progress on transitional security arrangements in Darfur; progress on the National Plan for Human Rights; and progress on transitional justice and accountability. In the resolution, the Council expressed “its intention to establish clear and well identified key benchmarks no later than 15 September”.

On 16 August, the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee was briefed by the Panel of Experts on Sudan in connection with the panel’s interim report, which was submitted in accordance with resolution 2562. (The interim report is not made publicly available.)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is assessing the performance of UNITAMS across its four strategic objectives and six priority areas as identified for the mission in resolution 2579. In doing so, an option would be for Council members to take into account the benchmarks and indicators outlined in an annex to the Secretary-General’s 17 May report. (Resolution 2579 takes note of these benchmarks and indicators.) In addition, resolution 2579 requested UNITAMS to identify qualitative indicators to complement the existing indicators that are quantitative in nature. At the meeting in September, members could reiterate the importance of following up on the benchmarks and indicators as well as the development of qualitative indicators.

An issue related to Sudan sanctions is whether the Council will be able to establish clear and well-identified key benchmarks by 15 September, an intention expressed in resolution 2562. The findings and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General’s 31 July report are likely to inform Council members in this regard. An option would be for the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee to consider a visit to Sudan.

A further issue that Council members will want to follow closely is the security situation in Darfur, particularly in light of the closure of UNAMID. An option would be for Council members to consider a visiting mission to Sudan, including Darfur.

Council Dynamics

Council members welcome and are strongly supportive of the overall commitments made by the government to peace and the transition to democracy in Sudan. However, members also emphasise the need for the full implementation of the JPA. The dire economic and humanitarian situations are also particularly worrisome for many members. While divisions persist in assessing the situation in Darfur, many members remain concerned about the levels of violence in certain areas as well as the humanitarian situation.

An overarching divergence of views in the Council on the utility of the Sudan sanctions regime apparently continues. Those members eager to see the Council ease the sanctions measures tend to emphasise positive developments in the country. Other Council members appear more cautious about the removal of sanctions in part because of ongoing violence in parts of Darfur. (For more details, see our What’s In Blue story of 10 February.)

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions. Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia) chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on South Sudan, which members expect to receive by 8 September. Consultations will follow the briefing.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)

expires on 15 March 2022.

Key Recent Developments

On 9 July, South Sudan marked ten years of independence. There has been some progress in implementing the Revitalized Agreement

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2577 (28 May 2021) extended the sanctions regime. S/RES/2514 (12 March 2020) renewed the mandate of UNMISS. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2021/566** (14 June 2021) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8801** (21 June 2021) was a briefing on South Sudan. **Security Council Letter S/2021/661** (15 July 2021) was a letter from the Secretary-General transmitting the needs assessment to create an enabling environment for elections, requested in resolution 2567.

South Sudan

on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), but overall implementation continues to be slow and selective. In early August, 504 members of the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly and 84 members of the Council of States were sworn in. The legislature is expected to pass new laws and reforms to make further progress on the full implementation of the R-ARCSS, including the permanent constitution-making process and preparations for elections at the end of the transitional period. The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (RJMEC), which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS, identified several obstacles in its most recent quarterly report covering 1 April to 30 June. These include insufficient funds and resources; a lack of confidence between some parties to the R-ARCSS; the stalled implementation of the Transitional Security Arrangements, including the establishment of the Necessary Unified Forces; recurrence of community-based violence and insecurity in some parts of the country; capacity gaps in some institutions; the negative impact of the activities of holdout groups in some areas of the Equatorias; and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall peace process.

In early August, there were clashes in Upper Nile State between rival military factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), reportedly following declarations by intra-party rivals of First Vice President Riek Machar that they had deposed him as the head of the party and its military forces. On 9 August, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers adopted a communiqué on South Sudan, which among other things noted concern "that the unfolding political crisis and splintering of the SPLM/A-IO...bears significant immediate and long-term implications on the broader security and humanitarian situation as well as the ongoing peace process". On 10 August, President Salva Kiir issued a statement expressing commitment to the implementation of the R-ARCSS and calling for the immediate cessation of hostilities within the SPLM/A-IO.

Localised ethnic and intercommunal violence continues. In August, there was an increase in intercommunal attacks in the Tambura region in Western Equatoria. On 23 August, UNMISS said that the situation in Tambura was tense because of the increased presence of armed young people and that the mission had reinforced its protection of internally displaced people and evacuated humanitarian workers in the area who had sought refuge at its temporary operating base there.

The human rights, humanitarian, food security, and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormously detrimental effect on civilians. According to the acting Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan, Arafat Jamal, climate change is disrupting normal weather patterns and intensifying the impact of recent flooding, with some 90,000 people believed to have been affected by heavy rains that inundated homes and agricultural fields. In Jonglei, more than 70,000 people were affected by flooding, many of them for the second time since May.

Earlier this year, government officials said that elections, envisioned to take place in 2022, would be delayed until 2023. However, the parties to the R-ARCSS have yet to reach agreement on the duration of the current transitional period and the date for elections at its conclusion. On 15 July, the Secretary-General sent a letter to the Council transmitting a needs assessment, including security, procedural and logistical requirements to create an enabling

environment for elections in South Sudan, as requested in resolution 2567. According to the assessment, "electoral operations in South Sudan will be extremely complex and lengthy". On the electoral timeline, the assessment recommends that, in the two years prior to the holding of elections, progress be made in three areas, namely agreement on the legal and security framework for elections, the composition and functioning of the National Election Commission and the allocation of resources. It notes that "ongoing cooperation to support the implementation of the peace agreement will assume even greater importance in the context of elections" and that UNMISS "is uniquely placed to play a coordinating role amongst regional and international partners and ensure an effective alignment of good offices and technical assistance". It recommends that the UN provide electoral assistance to South Sudan in an integrated manner and in two phases, as outlined in the assessment.

Council members were last briefed on South Sudan on 21 June by Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom for the first time since he took up the role in April. Haysom highlighted "the pervasive insecurity, in particular intercommunal violence" and noted that the mission "intends to enhance collaboration and promote greater coherence among international partners", including IGAD and the AU. Rajab Mohandis, executive director and co-founder of the Organization for Responsive Governance, also briefed as a member of civil society. He emphasised that leadership "has been grossly lacking in South Sudan since the country became independent and, as it stands now, there is no clarity as to where the country is heading".

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 26 July, UNMISS urged local and national authorities to end extrajudicial executions following the killing of at least 42 people accused of criminal activity who were not given access to a fair trial. Since March, UNMISS' Human Rights Division has documented at least 14 incidents of extrajudicial killings in Warrap State, resulting in the execution of 29 males, including boys and elderly men. On 29 July, the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan expressed grave concern at "the wave of extrajudicial executions being carried out by government forces across Warrap State", which coincided with the appointment of a new governor in Warrap in March, the statement said.

During its upcoming 48th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on 23 September with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, which will provide an oral update. On 6 October, the HRC is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on the oral update of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on technical assistance and capacity-building for South Sudan.

Key Issues and Options

Several significant political and security challenges persist in South Sudan related to the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. Given this situation, the Council could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with key RJMEC officials to exchange ideas about how to support the parties in meeting their obligations under the agreement. The IID is a closed format that, unlike consultations, allows for the participation of non-UN officials and briefers.

A key issue about which Council members may seek further details going forward is in relation to the findings and recommendations made in the needs assessment on the holding of elections, including that an UNMISS-led integrated electoral assistance team be established immediately.

South Sudan

Another key issue Council members will want to follow closely is the humanitarian and food security situation. An option would be to continue to seek regular briefings from OCHA on the situation.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members welcome the recent but long-delayed swearing-in of the Revitalized Transitional National Legislative Assembly and Council of States. However, many members remain concerned about the delays in implementing other key elements of the peace agreement, such as the transitional security arrangements, ongoing inter-communal violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises.

Several Council members referred to the issue of elections in their statements at the meeting on 21 June. The US noted that “free and

fair elections...that are both timely and peaceful” are essential. China said that “all parties in South Sudan should continue to advance the preparations for the general elections”. Norway emphasised the importance of support from IGAD and regional actors while France noted that UNMISS plays a key role, especially in the run-up to the elections. Estonia expressed concern over delays in the political situation, including the rescheduling of elections that should have taken place in 2022, and said activists and human rights defenders must be able to operate freely in South Sudan in light of the upcoming elections.

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

Iraq (UNITAD)

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), which expires on 18 September.

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNITAD was established by resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 for an initial period of two years. Its mandate was renewed for one year by resolution 2490 of 20 September 2019 before being renewed for a further year by resolution 2544 of 18 September 2020. In establishing UNITAD, the Council asked the Secretary-General to establish an investigative team to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh) accountable for crimes it committed in the country “by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”. UNITAD is also responsible for promoting accountability globally for atrocity crimes committed by ISIL. UNITAD formally began its work on 20 August 2018.

According to resolution 2379, UNITAD is to be “impartial, independent, and credible”, operating within its terms of reference, the UN Charter, UN best practices and relevant international law, including international human rights law. The investigative team has an assessed budget of approximately \$21 million for 2021, covering core infrastructure and staffing needs. Additionally, it relies on voluntary contributions made to the trust fund established by resolution 2379 and on in-kind contributions, such as the provision of expert personnel. Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Qatar, Slovakia, the UK, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the US, and the EU have contributed to the trust fund. UNITAD currently employs more than 200 staff. Expert personnel from Australia, Finland, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, and the UAE have been seconded by their respective governments.

On 31 May 2018, the Secretary-General appointed Karim Asad Ahmad Khan as Special Adviser and head of UNITAD. Khan served

in this role until June, when he left UNITAD to become the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC. The appointment of Khan’s successor is currently being finalised and an announcement is expected soon. During his tenure, Khan briefed the Council on six reports regarding the work of UNITAD. He opened investigations into the mass killing of unarmed Iraqi air force cadets and military personnel at Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014; attacks committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar district in August 2014; crimes committed by ISIL in Mosul between 2014 and 2016; crimes against the Sunni, Christian, Kaka’i, Shabak and Shia Turkmen communities; and the development and use of chemical weapons by ISIL. Specialised thematic units also began investigating sexual and gender-based crimes, crimes against children, and the financing of ISIL.

Pursuant to resolution 2379, UNITAD is implementing its mandate according to “UN best practices”, meaning that no evidence may be shared for criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed. The international crimes that UNITAD is mandated to investigate have not been directly incorporated into Iraq’s legal system. As a result, offenders who have engaged in conduct that contravenes international criminal law are usually charged with terrorism offences. Under Iraqi law, the death penalty can be imposed for these offences, and this has prevented UNITAD from sharing evidence regarding potential violations of international criminal law with Iraqi authorities. Draft legislation incorporating international crimes into Iraq’s legal system, which is designed to rectify this issue, was introduced into the Iraqi parliament in October 2020. The draft legislation progressed through Iraq’s legislative process, but its progress has stalled in the lead up to the 10 October parliamentary elections. At the time of writing, it had not been adopted.

During his May briefing to the Council, Khan announced that UNITAD had finalised initial case briefs in relation to the mass killings at Tikrit Air Academy and the attacks against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar region. In finalising these briefs, UNITAD concluded that numerous international crimes were committed against the Yazidi, including genocide, extermination, enslavement, sexual violence, forcible transfer, persecution on religious and gender

Iraq (UNITAD)

grounds, and conscription of children. UNITAD also determined that the attacks at Tikrit Air Academy constitute war crimes, namely murder, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity. Khan further advised the Council that UNITAD had made arrangements to transfer evidence concerning financial crimes that were committed in support of ISIL to the Iraqi judiciary and noted that the parliament of the Kurdistan region is currently considering legislation that will establish a court with special jurisdiction over international crimes. The Iraqi Supreme Court has since issued an advisory opinion that raises several constitutional issues concerning the proposed legislation. These are currently being considered by authorities in Baghdad and Erbil.

Although resolution 2379 provides that the Iraqi authorities “are the primary intended recipient” of evidence collected by UNITAD, it also refers to the possibility that evidence collected by the investigative team could complement “investigations carried out by authorities in third countries at their request”. According to the sixth report on UNITAD’s work, which was issued in May, 14 states have requested UNITAD’s assistance with ongoing national proceedings.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 3 August, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), through its Human Rights Office and along with OHCHR, published a report titled *Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment*. The report, covering 1 July 2019 to 30 April, finds that while the country’s legal framework explicitly criminalises torture and sets out procedural safeguards to prevent it, “torture is a reality in places of detention throughout Iraq”. It provides an analysis of risk factors for torture and ill-treatment during interrogations and in places of detention, as well as targeted recommendations to the government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to build compliance with the protective framework set out in international and Iraqi law.

Women, Peace and Security

On 3 August, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, participated in an online event organised by the Free Yazidi Foundation titled “Seven-Year Commemoration of the Yazidi Genocide”. In her remarks, Patten stressed that over 3,000 Yazidi women are still missing, that no convictions of ISIL members for sexual violence crimes have been recorded in Iraq, and that Yazidi women have been stigmatised after caring for children conceived as a result of conflict-related sexual violence.

Referring to Security Council resolution 2467 on women, peace and security, Patten called on the government of Iraq to “design and implement a comprehensive and survivor-centred transitional justice strategy” with the UN and the international community’s support. Noting that the “trauma of genocide is continuously compounded by poverty”, the Special Representative

echoed the demands of Yazidi survivors for livelihood opportunities, peace, safe return to their homes, and family reunifications. Patten also called for accountability, reparations, and the right of survivors to political participation.

With reference to Iraq’s March 2021 Yazidi Survivors Law, which deals with accountability for conflict-related sexual violence and assistance to survivors, Patten stressed that the bylaws that will implement this legislation, which are currently being drafted, “need to be as flexible as possible to reach the largest number of beneficiaries”. Resolution 2576, which renewed the mandate of UNAMI until 27 May 2022, underlined the importance of the effective implementation of this law and the need for accountability for the perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence and emphasised the importance of providing support, reparations, and redress for survivors.

Key Issues and Options

The immediate issue for the Council is the renewal of UNITAD’s mandate. If the government of Iraq continues to support UNITAD in its current form and requests an extension, as is expected, then the Council could renew UNITAD’s mandate without making any substantive changes.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of UNITAD, as is the Iraqi government. Members whose national jurisdictions do not have the death penalty remain concerned that evidence shared by the investigative team with Iraqi authorities might be used in criminal proceedings in which the death penalty could be imposed. Others take the view that the use of the death penalty is Iraq’s sovereign right, a point Iraq routinely emphasises.

Another issue frequently raised by some members is the prosecution of foreign terrorist fighters currently on Iraqi soil. Some of the governments concerned have been reluctant to take back their nationals and prosecute them, leading to criticism that they are outsourcing their legal obligations. This issue came to a head in the Council in August 2020, when the US vetoed a draft resolution proposed by Indonesia on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration (PRR) of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) because the draft did not include the word “repatriation”; instead, it had agreed language from previous resolutions that referred to the “return” of FTFs.

Some members also continue to emphasise the need for Iraq to incorporate into its legal system the international crimes that UNITAD is mandated to investigate into its legal system.

The UK is the penholder on UNITAD.

Climate Change and Security

Expected Council Action

In September, Ireland plans to host an open debate on climate change and security. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief. A civil society representative may brief as well.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council’s focus on the adverse effects of climate change on various country- and region-specific agenda items has continued in 2021. So far this year, climate change has been referenced in resolutions on Cyprus, West Africa, South Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Sudan,

UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE AND SECURITY Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2011/15 (20 July 2011) was on climate change. Security Council Letters S/2021/198 (25 February 2021) transmitted briefings and statements from an open videoconference debate under the UK presidency titled “Addressing climate-related security risks to international peace and security through mitigation and resilience building”. S/2020/1090 (5 November 2020) transmitted briefings and statements from an open videoconference debate under Saint Vincent and the Grenadines’ presidency titled “Contemporary drivers of conflict and instability and insecurity”. S/2020/929 (21 September 2020) transmitted briefings and statements from an open videoconference debate under the Nigerien presidency titled “Humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security”.

Climate Change and Security

and Mali. Resolutions 2561 and 2587 on Cyprus and 2576 on Iraq marked the first case in which the Council recognised the effects of climate change in non-African contexts.

On 23 February, under the presidency of the UK, the Council held an open debate on “Addressing climate-related security risks to international peace and security through mitigation and resilience building”. Renowned British naturalist David Attenborough told the Council that climate change was “the biggest threat to security that modern humans have ever faced” and that “unparalleled levels of global cooperation” would be required to address it. During the meeting, which was attended by heads of state and government, several Council members, including Kenya and Niger, underlined the link between climate change and conflict while others, including Russia and China, questioned this view, arguing that political and economic factors are the key drivers of tension and conflict.

At the meeting, Guterres called the climate emergency “the defining issue of our time”. Advocating for enhanced “preparations for the escalating implications of the climate crisis for international peace and security”, he highlighted four priorities to address the crisis: cutting greenhouse gas emissions; increasing investment to help countries and communities adapt and develop resilience; encouraging a concept of security that “puts people at its centre”, whereby “[p]reventing and addressing the poverty, food insecurity and displacement caused by climate disruption contribute to sustaining peace and reducing the risk of conflict”; and calling for a collaborative approach between actors within and outside the UN system to help tackle the climate crisis.

The Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security (IEG) has held two meetings to date in 2021 to discuss the security implications of climate change in situations on the Council’s agenda. The first meeting, held on 12 March, focused on the area covered by the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). A senior UNOWAS official briefed the IEG on the impact that climate change is having in the region and highlighted the challenges and opportunities for UNOWAS in addressing climate change-related security risks. During this year’s second meeting of the IEG, held on 30 April, the group met with the deputy head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Guang Cong. The discussion centred on what the mission is doing to integrate climate change-related security risks into its work in light of the adoption of resolution 2567 on 12 March, which included new language on climate change in the mission’s mandate.

On 9 August, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN body that assesses climate change-related science, released its sixth assessment report, issuing its most dire warning about the potentially irreversible impacts of climate change on the planet. While the report did not address climate change and security, it painted a sobering picture of the negative effects of climate change on all societies, especially the most vulnerable ones. Guterres called the report a “code red for humanity”, emphasising that “there is a clear moral and economic imperative to protect the lives and livelihoods of those on the front lines of the climate crisis”.

Key Issues and Options

Several key issues are relevant to the Security Council’s involvement on climate change and security. These include:

- determining the best way to garner information on climate change-related security risks from the UN system and elsewhere

and use this information to inform concrete strategies to address these risks;

- developing the capacity of UN peace operations to assess and manage climate-security risks; and
- developing synergies among states, regional and sub-regional organisations, grass-root actors, and the UN system in managing and mitigating climate change-related security risks.

One option for the Council is to invite a civil society representative to the debate to brief on the adverse effects of climate change in her region.

Another option would be for members to discuss how the Council can engage more effectively on climate change and security matters in cases on its agenda.

Council Dynamics

All Council members share the view that the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the primary international mechanism for dealing with the mitigation and adaptation challenges of climate change and that international efforts to reduce carbon emissions must be significantly stepped up as a matter of urgency. One hundred and ninety-one countries (including all Council members) are parties to the Paris Agreement, which was negotiated under UNFCCC auspices.

While all current members of the Council recognise that climate change poses an existential threat to human civilisation, divisions remain over the Council’s role in addressing climate and security issues. Twelve members—Estonia, France, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Tunisia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the UK, the US, and Viet Nam—are supportive of a more systematic integration of climate-related security risks into the Council’s work, with varying degrees of commitment. Several of these members tend to emphasise that factors such as drought, water scarcity, food insecurity, and desertification that are caused or exacerbated by climate change increase the risk of violent conflict. In the past year, Niger (September 2020), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (November 2020) and the UK (February 2021) convened signature events during their Council presidencies in which climate change and security was the primary (or a major) focus of the discussion.

China and Russia, joined in 2021 by India, are sceptical about Council engagement on this issue, especially at the thematic level. They believe that climate change is fundamentally a sustainable-development issue that is more appropriately addressed by other parts of the UN system, including the General Assembly and ECOSOC. A key development in terms of Council dynamics in 2021 is that the US supports a Council role on climate and security matters, whereas it had not during the previous presidential administration (January 2017 to January 2021).

The UK, which has long been a proponent of Council engagement on climate and security matters, will host the 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow from 1 to 12 November in partnership with Italy. Although it will not explicitly address the nexus between climate change and security, COP26 could add new impetus for Council action on the issue.

Niger and Ireland are the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group in 2021.

Non-Proliferation

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council is expected to hold a briefing under the agenda item “non-proliferation” to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Briefings are expected from Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) Robert Floyd, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, and a member of the CTBTO Youth Group.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The CTBT, which prohibits states parties from carrying out “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion”, opened for signature on 24 September 1996. While it is nearly universally accepted, it has yet to enter into force. To date, 185 states have signed the treaty, and 170 have ratified it. Before it can enter into force, however, all 44 states designated as “nuclear-capable” and listed in Annex 2 of the treaty must sign and ratify it. Of the 44 specified states, three have not signed the treaty and eight have yet to ratify it. (See Council and Wider Dynamics below.)

Since 1999, the Secretary-General has convened a biennial conference, known as the Article XIV conference (named after the relevant Treaty article), as part of ongoing efforts to promote the treaty’s entry into force. At the conference, participating states commit to promoting the treaty and discuss concrete ways to accelerate its entry into force. The conference also offers the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO, the interim multilateral body responsible for building up the verification regime in preparation for the treaty’s entry into force, an opportunity to apprise member states of its progress. This year’s Article XIV conference will take place the week before the Council briefing. As such, its deliberations may feed into the Council’s discussions.

The Security Council has rarely considered the issue of non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction through the lens of the CTBT. In 2016, on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the treaty’s opening for signature, the Council adopted its first and only resolution specifically on the CTBT. Co-sponsored by 42 countries, resolution 2310, which sought to reinforce international support for the CTBT, passed with 14 votes in favour and an abstention by Egypt. The resolution affirmed that the treaty’s entry into force would contribute to the enhancement of international peace and security and recognised that the monitoring elements of the CTBT verification regime “contribute to regional stability as a significant confidence-building measure”. The resolution urged all states that had yet to sign or ratify the treaty, particularly the eight remaining Annex 2 states, to do so immediately and to uphold their moratoria.

Since the adoption of resolution 2310, there has been only one nuclear test. On 3 September 2017, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) announced that it had conducted its sixth nuclear test since 2006. The incident, which was swiftly detected by the international monitoring system of the CTBT, was met with widespread condemnation and a raft of new sanctions unanimously adopted by the Security Council. While tensions on the Korean peninsula have since subsided, media reports based on satellite data suggest resumed activity at missile launch sites.

On 20 May, Robert Floyd was appointed Executive Secretary of the CTBTO after he defeated former CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo in a competitive election that featured multiple rounds of voting. Zerbo’s seeking of an unprecedented third term was a divisive point in the election. Some member states argued that re-electing Zerbo would offer much-needed continuity to the organisation’s work in the face of persistent challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but other countries, including the US, opposed his re-election, citing its support for a two-term limit for heads of international organisations.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how it can promote the treaty’s entry into force. States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) have held review conferences every five years since its entry into force in 1970 to analyse the treaty’s operation and debate other related issues. Council members may consider endorsing the idea of using this review process as a forum to support the CTBT and promote its entry into force.

Another important issue is the role of nuclear testing moratoria in promoting the objectives of the CTBT. While several member states emphasised the importance of national moratoria during the adoption of resolution 2310, others raised reservations about relying on them as a substitute for committing to legally binding international norms. Russia stressed that the CTBT, rather than moratoria, “should be the benchmark for States’ responsible behaviour”.

A further key issue is how the Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO can be better supported to complete its work and to ensure that its verification regime is fully operational by the time the treaty enters into force.

An option that the Council could consider is to pursue a statement that:

- reaffirms the importance of the non-proliferation regime,
- calls on states to uphold national moratoria on conducting nuclear weapons testing,
- expresses support for the work of the CTBTO and its verification regime; and
- highlights the role of other stakeholders, such as the private sector, civil society, and academia, in promoting the treaty’s entry into force and supporting the work of the CTBTO.

Council and Wider Dynamics

India is the only current Council member that has not signed or ratified the CTBT. China and the US have signed the treaty but have yet to ratify it. All other Council members have both signed and ratified the treaty.

Council members seem to agree that the CTBT has established a strong international norm against nuclear testing. On 15 September 2016, the permanent members of the Council issued a joint statement calling upon all states “to uphold national moratoria on conducting nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion pending entry-into-force of the CTBT”.

Ireland and Mexico, both of which are members of the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), a group of countries seeking to make

UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2375 (11 September 2017) expanded sanctions to additional sectors of the North Korean economy in response to the DPRK’s nuclear test. **S/RES/2310** (23 September 2016) was on the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Security Council Meeting Record **S/PV.7776** (23 September 2016) was the meeting to adopt resolution 2310. **General Assembly Document A/RES/75/65** (7 December 2020) was a resolution titled “Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments”.

Non-Proliferation

progress on nuclear disarmament within the General Assembly's First Committee, may be critical of some members of the P5 for failing to comply with their nuclear disarmament obligations. Each year, the NAC presents an annual resolution in the First Committee titled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: accelerating the implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments", which expresses serious concern over the increased priority given to nuclear weapons in some states' security doctrines and the significant modernisation programmes currently underway.

The current Council membership also includes several members of the Non-Aligned Movement—including India, Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Viet Nam—which has frequently criticised the P5 for not fulfilling their disarmament obligations under the NPT. According to a June report by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), nuclear-armed states spent \$1.4 billion more on reinforcing and updating their nuclear arsenals in 2020 than they did the year before, despite the economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic. Six of the top nine spenders—including the US, China, India, Israel, Pakistan, and the DPRK, respectively in the order of amount spent—have not ratified the CTBT (Iran and Egypt are the other two states that have not ratified the CTBT), and three—namely the DPRK, India and Pakistan—have yet to sign it.

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