

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In December, Niger will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Niger is expected to convene an open debate on “[Security in the context of climate change](#)”. Nigerian President Mohamed Bazoum is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat are the anticipated briefers.

The annual [briefing of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#), Filippo Grandi, will also take place in December. The briefing will focus on the situation of refugees in several country-specific cases on the Council’s agenda.

Security Council members are expected to hold consultations on the implementation of resolutions 2532 and 2565, which demanded, respectively, a cessation of hostilities in all situations on the Council’s agenda to combat the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) and a humanitarian pause to facilitate the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in areas of armed conflict.

The Security Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the [International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals \(IRMCT\)](#). The IRMCT’s president, Judge Carmel Agius, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate and to meet with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to that.

The outgoing chairs of the [Security Council’s subsidiary bodies](#) are expected to brief the Council in December to share their experiences in facilitating the work of those subsidiary bodies.

The Council is also scheduled to receive its annual briefing from the chairs of its [counter-terrorism](#) committees: the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee; the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC); and the 1540 Committee. The Council is also expected to adopt resolutions renewing the mandates of the:

- Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED); and
- 1267/1988 Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (Monitoring Team) and the Office of the Ombudsperson.

African issues on the programme of work in December are:

- [Somalia](#), resolutions renewing counter-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia and reauthorising the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) respectively;
- [DRC](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and renewal of the mission’s mandate;
- [Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and briefing on the work of the 1591 Sanctions Committee;
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and
- [Central Africa](#), briefing and consultations on the activities of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

The Council will 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 include:

- [Golan Heights](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the adoption of a resolution renewing UNDOF’s mandate;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly briefing and consultations on developments;
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)”, the monthly meeting; and
- [Iran](#), briefing on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme.

The Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council are expected to hold the 6th Joint Informal Seminar and the 15th Joint Annual Consultative Meeting on 16-17 December. The meeting was scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa this year. However, at the time of writing, consultations are still ongoing among members of the UN Security Council on the format and location of the meeting, given recent developments in Ethiopia.

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In Hindsight: Women, Peace and Security—Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges

The women, peace and security (WPS) agenda was inaugurated in 2000 with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325. Trepidation marked the agenda's 20th anniversary last year, with difficult Council dynamics characterising engagement on this issue in 2019–2020. Against this backdrop, the “presidency trio” initiative on WPS led by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico during their consecutive presidencies (September, October and November) may be understood as an initial attempt to find a way forward for the agenda at the Council.

Looking back

The two most recent WPS resolutions were adopted in 2019 and were both characterised by fraught negotiations. Resolution 2467, on conflict-related sexual violence, was the first WPS resolution not to be adopted unanimously; China and Russia abstained, citing concerns about what they perceived as the undue expansion of the Council's mandate (S/PV.8514). Further, the US threatened a veto over the proposed inclusion of language on sexual and reproductive health and, equally, rejected a fallback proposal based on agreed language from resolution 2106 (2013). While the omission of language on sexual and reproductive health in resolution 2467 did not erode rights that had already been recognised, it nevertheless triggered concern about the agenda's future and also about the Council's ability to preserve the normative developments the WPS agenda had achieved.¹

The second WPS resolution of 2019, resolution 2493, reiterated the need for the “full implementation” of the agenda and echoed previous Council calls for women's inclusion and participation in peace talks. While this text saw a return to consensus, some Council members and civil society actors regretted its lack of ambition. The resolution's initiator, South Africa, had made a number of concessions—including on women human rights defenders and the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS—to secure consensus. For instance, it seems that an initial draft called for the IEG co-chairs to submit an annual update on progress towards implementing recommendations presented at its meetings may have been unacceptable to China and Russia. Despite the ultimate consensus, some members believed that the negotiation process itself exacerbated the already difficult dynamics surrounding this issue.

Council dynamics did not improve in 2020 when a draft resolution commemorating the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325, proposed by Russia, did not garner the nine affirmative votes needed to pass. Some members doubted the added value of a text consisting mainly of previously agreed language, arguing instead that implementation of the WPS agenda should be prioritised. It seems, too, that some members perceived the proposed text as not being well-balanced between the socioeconomic and rights-based aspects of the agenda.

As a result of this uneasy climate, most Council members—and several civil society actors—have come to emphasise the importance of implementing the existing normative framework of the agenda, which is generally understood as being adequate, over its further development through new WPS resolutions, in order to avoid the risk of regression.

New developments and persisting challenges

On 31 August, Ireland, the Council president for September, circulated a joint statement of commitments on WPS with Kenya and Mexico, the respective October and November Council presidents. (Ireland and Mexico are the current IEG co-chairs, while Kenya presided over the annual WPS open debate.) On 1 September, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) described the WPS initiative as “a golden thread” that would run through the Irish, Kenyan and Mexican presidencies.

Spearheaded by elected members and assuming a cross-regional character, the trio-initiative appears to be an attempt to strengthen Council engagement on the agenda through means other than new WPS outcomes, thus helping the Council to emerge from the shadow cast by the difficult dynamics on this issue in recent years.

The trio committed to a series of actions during their presidencies, including:

- attaining gender balance among briefers and strong representation of women civil society speakers in Council meetings,
- making WPS the focus of at least one mandated geographic meeting of the Council,
- ensuring that Council products drafted integrate strong WPS language, and
- holding WPS press stakeouts.

While other Council members have previously emphasised some of these aspects, this was the first time that a fairly broad list of WPS commitments has been undertaken across three consecutive presidencies. Through this initiative, members are following up on some of the commitments already expressed in the WPS resolutions. For instance, in resolution 2242 (2015), the Council expressed its intention to invite civil society briefers, including women's organisations, to country-specific and thematic meetings. In September, Ireland invited 16 women from civil society to brief the Council, 11 of whom briefed during country-specific meetings. In October, Kenya invited ten women civil society briefers, eight of whom briefed in country-specific meetings.²

In addition to following up on members' prior commitments, the list features novel elements. One of these has been the WPS press stakeouts which, according to the trio statement, are aimed at heightening the visibility of Council discussions on WPS. So far, there have been two of these stakeouts. The first, attended by Ireland and Mexico, followed the 28 September Council briefing on Somalia, which was held as part of the trio's commitment to focus one geographic meeting on WPS. The second was attended by all three members and was held on 10 November after the annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations, which had a focus on WPS as part of the trio initiative.

Though the presidency trio initiative may be an attempt to start moving away from the difficult climate that characterised Council initiatives on WPS in recent years, it seems that Council members still believe that the dynamics on this file are not conducive to the adoption of new products. Ahead of the WPS open debate, Council members discussed the possibility of a formal outcome, but the

1. See Christine Chinkin and Madeleine Rees, “Commentary on Security Council Resolution 2467: Continued State Obligation and Civil Society Action on Sexual Violence in Conflict”, LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security 15; Louise Allen and Laura J Shepherd, “In pursuing a new resolution on sexual violence Security Council significantly undermines women's reproductive rights”, LSE Women, Peace and Security blog, 25 April 2019; Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, “Gutting the Substance of a Security Council Resolution on Sexual Violence”, *Just Security*, 24 April 2019.

2. The figure for women civil society briefers does not include officials of international organisations. At the time of writing, complete data for November was not available.

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initiative did not find support and was abandoned.

Still, the recent period has seen some shift in Council dynamics. The US has recommitted to the provision of “sexual and reproductive health care and services for women around the world” (S/2021/375), and China and Russia now attend and intervene during IEG meetings.

Moreover, strong WPS language was recently included in resolution 2594, on UN peace operations transitions, adopted on 9 September. The resolution:

Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that comprehensive gender analysis and technical gender expertise are included throughout all stages of mission planning, mandate implementation and review and throughout the transition process, as well as mainstreaming of a gender perspective, and to ensure the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and the inclusion of youth, as well as measures to safeguard the interests of persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, differences of view persist among Council members on when and how WPS or gender are relevant to thematic and geographic situations. At the October open debate, Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia) said: “The link between women and peace and security was affirmed by the Council over 20 years ago, yet it continues to be questioned in almost all of our deliberations” (S/PV.8886). Deputy Permanent Representative Gennady Kuzmin (Russian Federation) countered that the Security Council “should focus on situations that pose an imminent threat to international peace and security” as the “work to promote the role of women” is already carried out by other UN bodies, such as the General Assembly.

While WPS language is regularly included in mission mandates, provisions advancing the agenda or going beyond agreed language in country-specific resolutions often remain difficult to agree. On 17 September, the Council extended UNAMA’s mandate until 17 March 2022 through resolution 2596. While earlier drafts of the resolution would have asked the Secretary-General to provide “strategic and operational recommendations for the mandate of UNAMA, in light of recent political, security and social developments, including the situation of women and girls”, the reference to the situation of women and girls was seemingly removed at the insistence of China and Russia. Resolution 2596 includes a preambular reference to “the importance of the establishment of an inclusive and representative government” and of the “full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and upholding human rights, including for women, children and minorities”.

Looking forward

Differences of view between Council members on gender and WPS are unlikely to wane anytime soon, and it does not appear that widening the outlook of WPS discussions beyond the established normative framework is among the Council’s imminent priorities. This year’s Secretary-General’s report on WPS (S/2021/827) paid particular attention to the need to reverse the upward trend in global military spending with the goal of encouraging “greater investment in the social infrastructure and services that buttress human security”. The report noted that while curbing military spending has long been a pivotal objective of women’s peace activism, it has received only scant attention within the WPS normative framework. During the WPS open debate, none of the P5 and only a small minority of the elected members referred to these elements in their statements. For instance, Ireland referred to the “strong correlation between militarization and gender inequality”, while Mexico called on states to refrain from transferring weapons in situations when there is a risk that they could be used for gender-based violence.

Currently, future Council engagement on WPS appears to be more likely to take the shape of initiatives like the presidency trio. At press time, it appeared that some Council members were considering building on the trio list of commitments to expand this initiative into one open to all Council members in their role as Council presidents. All five incoming elected members (Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, and the United Arab Emirates) referred to WPS in their election campaigns.³

During the October open debate, Celia Umenza Velasco, legal coordinator for the Indigenous Reservation of Tacueyó and member of the Association of Indigenous Cabildos of the North of Cauca (Colombia), urged the Council “to not allow this open debate to become yet another occasion where the Council listens to women civil society representatives but fails to act on our concerns” (S/PV.8886). Regarding future engagement, Council members may want to develop ways to meaningfully follow up on the information shared by civil society briefers. Another option is to develop ways to better capitalise on expertise and the recommendations shared during IEG meetings, including through continuing to encourage the participation of delegations’ country and other relevant experts alongside gender experts. For instance, it appears that during the 16 November IEG meeting, which focused on women protection advisors in peacekeeping and special political missions, Fifth Committee experts were invited to attend.

More generally, members supportive of the WPS agenda may want to continue to develop strategies to promote the holistic and substantive implementation of the agenda. This could include enhancing cross-presidency planning on WPS to promote sustained Council work on the agenda. The most important consideration, however, remains how Council-level initiatives have an impact on the ground.

3. See SCR, Security Council Elections 2021 (2 June 2021).

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 3 November, the Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and unanimously adopted resolution 2604, renewing the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) until 3 November 2022. The debate was marked by sharp divisions regarding the legitimacy of Christian Schmidt's appointment as the High Representative for BiH. It appears that China and Russia objected to a briefing by Schmidt and conditioned their support for EUFOR ALTHEA's reauthorisation on the removal of all references to the High Representative and his Office (OHR) in the resolution. Unable to reach a compromise on this issue, the Council did not mention the High Representative and the OHR in the resolution. At the debate (S/PV.8896), several Council members, including Norway and Estonia, expressed regret that the Security Council had failed to adopt a more substantial resolution. Russia described support for EUFOR ALTHEA's reauthorisation as the only "common denominator" among Council members on the issue of BiH.

International Court of Justice

On 5 November, the Security Council filled one open seat on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by electing Hilary Charlesworth (Australia) after a single round of voting (S/PV.8897). She received the required majority in the Council, as well as an absolute majority of votes in the General Assembly. Voting took place simultaneously in the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Myanmar

On 8 November, the Security Council convened a private meeting on Myanmar. The briefers were Peter Due, the Director of the Asia and Pacific Division of the UN Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), and Dato Erywan bin Pehin Yusof, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam, who briefed in his capacity as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Special Envoy for Myanmar. A draft press statement on Myanmar was circulated by the UK on 5 November and issued on 10 November (SC/14697). The press statement expressed concern over the recent violence across Myanmar and called for an immediate cessation of violence. In the press statement, members also "underlined the importance of steps to improve the health and humanitarian situation in Myanmar, including to facilitate the equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines".

Ethiopia (Tigray)

On 5 November, Council members issued a press statement expressing "deep concern about the expansion and intensification of military clashes in northern Ethiopia" (SC/14691). The statement also expressed concern at the conflict's impact on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia and on the stability of the country and the wider region. In the statement, the members of the Security Council called for the negotiation of a lasting ceasefire and the "creation of conditions for the start of an inclusive Ethiopian national dialogue". Council members also "called for refraining from inflammatory hate speech and incitement to violence and divisiveness". The statement welcomed the efforts of the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa Region, Olusegun Obasanjo, to achieve a ceasefire and a resolution of the conflict.

On 8 November, the Security Council held an open briefing followed by closed consultations on Ethiopia under the agenda item "Peace and Security in Africa" (S/PV.8899). The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Obasanjo. The meeting was requested by Council president Mexico, Ireland and the "A3 plus one" (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). The meeting was originally set to take place on 5 November, but was delayed until 8 November.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 8 November, the members of the Security Council convened for a meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" under "any other business". Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Lynn Hastings briefed. The meeting was requested by Tunisia to discuss the 22 October designation by Israel of six Palestinian non-governmental organisations as terrorist organisations and settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

On 30 November, the Security Council held its monthly meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland and Comfort Ero, the Interim Vice President of the International Crisis Group, briefed the Council.

Exclusion, Inequality and Conflict

On 9 November, the Security Council held a high-level open debate on "Exclusion, inequality and conflict" under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security" (S/PV.8900). Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador chaired the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and Lourdes Tibán Guala, an indigenous affairs expert, briefed. As an outcome of the meeting, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/22), which was spearheaded by Mexico. The statement reaffirms the links between development, peace and security, and human rights. It further notes that exclusion and inequality may have an effect as aggravating factors in situations considered by the Council and emphasises that inclusivity is key to advancing national peacebuilding processes and objectives.

Police Commissioners

On 10 November, the Security Council held its annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations (S/PV.8901). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) Police Commissioner Violet Lusala, and UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) Police Commissioner Patricia Boughani briefed the Council. The discussion was focused on women, peace and security (WPS) issues as part of the WPS presidency trio of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico in September, October and November, respectively. Building on the annual open debate on WPS (S/PV.8886), which took place on 21 October under the theme "Investing in women in peacekeeping and peacebuilding", Council members explored UN Police's contribution to the advancement of the WPS agenda, including through the implementation of gender-responsive policing.

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Belarus

On 11 November, Security Council members discussed the situation in Belarus under “any other business”. The focus of the meeting was the migrant crisis on the border between Belarus and EU member states Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. Estonia, France and Ireland requested the meeting, with support from Norway, the UK and the US. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, these six Council members, together with incoming Council member Albania, condemned Belarus for orchestrating the crisis and expressed the view that Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko has become a threat to regional stability. The statement also expressed concern at the dire situation of the migrants and urged the Belarusian authorities to provide and facilitate adequate protection and care. Prior to the meeting, Russia dismissed the narrative depicting Belarus as the perpetrator of the crisis and maintained that the migrants had arrived through legal channels. Russia also criticised the EU’s response as a violation of international conventions.

Central African Republic

On 12 November, the Security Council convened (S/PV.8902) to adopt resolution 2605, renewing the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for one year within its existing troop ceiling of 14,400 military personnel and 3,020 police personnel. The resolution retains the mission’s priority tasks, including the protection of civilians; good offices and support to the peace process and the Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR; and facilitation of the immediate, full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. The resolution received 13 votes in favour, while China and Russia abstained.

Arria-formula on Widows in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

On 15 November, Council members held an Arria-formula meeting on “Closing the Protection Gap for Widows in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings” via videoconference (VTC). The meeting was organised by Niger, the AU and the EU as co-chairs of the Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel. The meeting was co-hosted by Estonia, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, and Viet Nam, together with non-Council member Sierra Leone. Anita Bhatia, Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, provided opening remarks. The briefers were Heather Ibrahim-Leathers, founder and president of the Global Fund for Widows, and Mahboba Rawi, founder of Mahboba’s Promise. All Council members intervened during the meeting.

G5 Sahel Joint Force

On 12 November, the Security Council held a briefing followed by consultations on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) (S/PV.8903). The Council heard briefings by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Ambassador Ammo Aziza Baroud (Chad) on behalf of the Group of Five for the Sahel, and Ms. Fatimata Ouilma Sinaré, President of the Burkina Faso chapter of the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Space. During closed consultations, Director Rick Martin from the Division for Special Activities of the Department of Operational Support also briefed, as Council members discussed the options set

out in the Secretary-General’s 4 October letter for enhancing support to the FC-G5S (S/2021/850).

Preventive Diplomacy

On 16 November, the Security Council held an open debate on “Peace and security through preventive diplomacy: A common objective to all UN principal organs” under the agenda item “Maintenance of international peace and security” (S/PV.8906). The briefers were UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the General Assembly Abdulla Shahid, President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Collen Vixen Kelapile, and President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Joan E. Donoghue. At the debate, several Council members acknowledged the interdependence of security, sustainable development and human rights, and recognised the need for the UN’s principal organs to cooperatively pursue preventive strategies and actions. Some Council members, particularly Russia, expressed caution over the Council overstepping its mandate and urged the UN’s principal organs to adhere to the principle of division of labour.

The outcome of the debate was the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/23) emphasising the importance of a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace, recognising the contribution of the UN’s principal organs to the maintenance of international peace and security, and expressing the Council’s continued commitment to fostering regular interactions with the other principal organs, in accordance with their respective mandates, on matters relating to preventive diplomacy tools and mechanisms.

Afghanistan

On 17 November, the Security Council convened for a briefing from Deborah Lyons, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (S/PV.8908). Lyons briefed on the situation in Afghanistan and UNAMA’s work. Freshta Karim, Director of Charmaghz, a non-governmental organisation based in Kabul that works with children, also briefed. Representatives of Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan participated in the meeting, which was followed by closed consultations.

Hitting the Ground Running Workshop

The 19th annual workshop for incoming members of the UN Security Council, titled “Hitting the Ground Running”, was held on 18 and 19 November on Long Island, New York. The government of Finland convened the workshop in cooperation with the Security Council Report and the Security Council Affairs Division of the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Former ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda gave the keynote address ahead of the opening dinner on 18 November. On 19 November, Council members held three sessions on the work of the Council: “State of the Council 2021: Taking Stock and Looking Ahead”; “Working Methods and Subsidiary Bodies”; and “Lessons Learned: Reflections of the Class of 2021”.

Small Arms

On 22 November, the Security Council held a ministerial-level open debate on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) (S/PV.8909). Mexican Foreign Secretary Marcelo Ebrard chaired the meeting. The discussion focused on the theme “The impact of the diversion

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and trafficking of arms on peace and security”. Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Robin Geiss and Maria Pía Devoto, a member of the Control Arms Governance Board (a coalition of 150 civil society member organisations), briefed the Council. More than 50 member states participated in the open debate; several of them highlighted the impact of SALW in exacerbating conflicts and discussed actions that should be taken to address this challenge.

Iraq

On 23 November, the Council held a briefing on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/PV.8910). The Special Representative and head of UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, briefed on Iraq’s 10 October parliamentary election and developments in the country since the election took place. Hennis-Plasschaert also discussed the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. Amal Kabashi, the Coordinator of the Iraqi Women Network, briefed the Council on the challenges Iraqi women face in realising their full, equal, and meaningful participation in Iraqi political life. Iraq participated in the meeting, which was followed by closed consultations.

Libya

On 23 November, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan briefed the Council on the court’s work in Libya (S/PV.8911). On 24 November,

the Security Council convened to discuss the situation in Libya (S/PV.8912). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Libya and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Jan Kubiš briefed. Lamees BenSaad, a member of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, also addressed the Council. Also on 24 November, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/24) that expressed strong support for electoral preparations in Libya and welcomed the Declaration of the 12 November Paris International Conference on Libya and the 5+5 Joint Military Committee Action Plan for the withdrawal of mercenaries and foreign forces in a synchronised manner, adopted on 8 October.

Lebanon

On 29 November, Council members received a briefing in consultations on the latest Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701. The briefers were Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, and UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Stefano Del Col.

DPRK

On 29 November, Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway), the chair of the 1718 Sanctions Committee, briefed Council members in consultations on the 90-day report on the committee’s work.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Expected Council Action

In December, Security Council members will hold consultations on the implementation of resolutions 2532 and 2565, which demanded, respectively, a cessation of hostilities in all situations on the Council’s agenda to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and a humanitarian pause to facilitate the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in areas of armed conflict.

Background and Key Recent Developments

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Secretary-General António Guterres called for a global ceasefire on 23 March 2020 to combat the pandemic in conflict situations. The Security Council eventually—after difficult negotiations because of China-US tensions over the pandemic—adopted resolution 2532 on 1 July 2020 to support the Secretary-General’s ceasefire appeal.

Following the development of several COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2565 on 26 February. Preceding the resolution’s adoption, the Council held a high-level debate earlier that month on “ensuring the equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in contexts affected by conflict and insecurity”. Resolution 2565 called for strengthening national and multilateral approaches and international cooperation, such as the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility, to facilitate equitable and

affordable access to the vaccine in armed conflict situations, post-conflict situations and humanitarian emergencies. It also stressed that equitable access to safe, efficacious and affordable COVID-19 vaccines was essential to ending the pandemic and expressed concern about uneven progress in vaccine access, recognising that those affected by conflict and insecurity were particularly at risk of being left behind.

Despite some initial positive responses to the Secretary-General’s ceasefire call, the appeal went largely unheeded, as UN officials have reported to the Council at meetings on resolution 2532’s implementation. Resolutions 2532 and 2565 both recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic “is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security”, and Council discussion has regularly considered the pandemic’s secondary socioeconomic effects, which have exacerbated conflict drivers such as unemployment, poverty and political tensions. At a Council meeting in January on resolution 2532, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo noted how inequalities in the global recovery and the failure to vaccinate populations could be further potential sources of unrest.

COVAX, a key mechanism for promoting the distribution of vaccines to low- and middle-income countries, is co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi Vaccine Alliance and the

UN DOCUMENTS ON COVID-19 Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2565 (26 February 2021) demanded humanitarian pauses to deliver vaccines. S/RES/2532 (1 July 2020) demanded a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on the Council’s agenda. Security Council Letters S/2021/157 (19 February 2021) contained the record of briefings and statements from Council members’ 17 February videoconference debate on equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. S/2021/90 (27 January 2021) contained the record of briefings and statements from Council members’ 25 January videoconference briefing on the implementation of resolution 2532.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) as its delivery partner. When Council members held their last meeting on the pandemic on 26 July to discuss the implementation of resolution 2565, in closed consultations, the rollout of COVAX vaccines was slow, with COVAX having delivered around 136 million vaccine doses, far off pace from meeting its target of distributing two billion vaccine doses during 2021.

Since then, vaccine supplies have become more available. On 16 November, the president of Gavi, Seth Berkley, announced that COVAX had delivered 500 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to 144 countries and territories around the world. He noted the challenges COVAX had faced “in the form of export bans, supply shortage and vaccine nationalism” but that deliveries “are now rapidly ramping up”. That same day, Gavi and the member agencies of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) announced the deliveries of the first vaccine doses from the COVAX Humanitarian Buffer. The COVAX Humanitarian Buffer was established to mitigate the risk to people living in areas of humanitarian crises and vulnerable groups such as refugees, asylum seekers and stateless people of being left out of national vaccine rollouts or where unavoidable gaps in coverage might arise. The first Humanitarian Buffer deliveries went to people in Iran displaced by conflict. A second batch of vaccines was expected to be delivered to high-risk groups in Thailand by the end of the year, according to a Gavi-IASC statement.

Conflict-affected countries still have some of the lowest vaccination rates. According to OCHA and the Centre for Humanitarian Data, less than two percent of the population has been vaccinated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, South Sudan, and Yemen as at 19 November. Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Sudan have received enough doses to cover only between two and five percent of their populations. Among other countries, Syria had received enough doses to vaccinate nine percent of its population, Central African Republic 10 percent and Ukraine 27 percent. Colombia has been the most successful of the 30 countries with UN humanitarian response plans, having received vaccine doses to cover 55 percent of the population.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths recently raised new warnings about the risk of pandemic-driven instability. In a 29 October Op-Ed for the global development news organisation Devex, Griffiths cited modelling by the University of Denver that found that the pandemic could lead to 15 new or resumed armed conflicts before 2023 and noted research by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on past pandemics showing that civil unrest peaks two years after the initial outbreak. He highlighted that the economies in low-income countries “are still reeling from the pandemic”, observing that in October, the IMF had downgraded the growth forecast of low-income countries. The revised forecast cited the slow rollout of vaccines as the main factor for their poor recovery.

Key Issues and Options

Combating the pandemic in conflict-affected countries and humanitarian settings, including by addressing the issue of vaccine inequity, is a key issue. A related, critical issue is the need to build up the capacity of many of these countries to administer the vaccines. A concern is that until this is done, as more vaccines become available, COVAX may steer them towards countries with a greater capacity to administer them, bypassing conflict-affected countries.

Another key issue is the secondary impact of the pandemic and the risk of increasing unrest over the next year, especially in countries that have low vaccination coverage and have not experienced the economic recovery occurring in wealthier countries.

Other issues include effective public messaging to address vaccine hesitancy, maintaining assistance to address other humanitarian needs and access challenges in conflict zones. The role of UN peacekeeping or special political missions in trying to support vaccine rollouts is a further important issue.

The Council may continue to hold periodic meetings to stay aware of and consider the possible destabilising effects of the pandemic. Such meetings could help prepare the Council to act quickly on looming peace and security threats as a result of the pandemic. Perhaps more significantly, they could also bring attention to threats posed by the pandemic’s socioeconomic impacts and vaccine inequities that may prompt other relevant actors to address such problems. For the upcoming December session, Council members could consider changing the meeting format from consultations to a public meeting to raise more awareness of these issues.

Council Dynamics

Council discussion around the pandemic this year has been much less divisive than in 2020. The Council swiftly agreed on resolution 2565 on COVID-19 vaccines, adopting it as a “presidential text”, meaning all 15 Council members co-sponsored the resolution. It also had a total of 115 member-state co-sponsors—the third-highest of any Council resolution.

Differences of views over sanctions sometimes arise in discussing responses to the pandemic. China, Russia and others often reiterate their view that unilaterally imposed sanctions should be waived as they can undermine countries’ capacity to respond to the pandemic. The US and European countries, in particular, push back against such references to sanctions in Council products. Some Council members, particularly developing countries, criticise what they perceive as wealthier countries’ failure to uphold their commitments to promote equitable access to vaccines.

France and Tunisia were the penholders on resolution 2532, and the UK was penholder on resolution 2565. These three countries requested the upcoming December session.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing and consultations on Yemen with UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA.

Key Recent Developments

The Houthi rebel group continues to press its offensive in Marib governorate, where the Yemeni government retains full control of only Marib City, home to an estimated 1.5 million to three million people, and the district of Marib Al Wadi, which covers the eastern half of the governorate and contains most of its oil and gas fields and infrastructure. During November, the Houthis took control of the critical Red Sea port city of Hodeidah after government-affiliated forces, in an unexpected move, withdrew from positions in which they had been largely entrenched since the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement established a ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate.

The withdrawals in Hodeidah by the government-aligned Joint Forces, which are comprised of several armed groups backed by the United Arab Emirates, occurred on 12 November. The Joint Forces withdrew from their positions in Hodeidah city, al-Durayhimi, Bayt al Faqih, and most of the areas under their control in al-Tahita district, establishing new front lines about 75 kilometres south of Hodeidah city near Al Khukhah city. The Houthis quickly took control of the vacated areas, although there were reports of fighting.

The UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), established in January 2019 to monitor the ceasefire and the redeployments of Houthi and government forces from Hodeidah city envisioned in the Stockholm Agreement, said that it had not been informed in advance of the movements. The Yemeni government also said that it was unaware of the plans. A 15 November statement by UNMHA described the developments as a “major shift” of front lines that “warrant discussions between the parties of the [Hodeidah] Agreement”. UNMHA added that the mission was prepared to facilitate such discussions within the framework of the agreement. According to OCHA, using figures provided by the government and the Houthis, the withdrawals and subsequent fighting prompted the displacement of around 13,500 civilians.

Statements by the Joint Forces and by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition—which supports the Yemeni government—said that the redeployments were done “to become more effective and operationally flexible” in the “national battle” after maintaining defensive positions for nearly three years. From a strategic perspective, the withdrawal eliminated the vulnerable position of the Joint Forces along the narrow coastal plain and supply lines that they have maintained over the past three years while freeing up units to support anti-Houthi forces elsewhere in Yemen.

On 10 November, the Houthis breached the US embassy compound in Sana’a, which had been closed since early 2015, and arrested US-employed local Yemeni security personnel guarding the diplomatic facility. The incursion followed arrests in the preceding three weeks, according to news reports, of at least 25 Yemenis working for the US. Commenting on these detentions on 9 November, the US State Department said that the majority of those detained had been released. In an 18 November press statement, Security

Council members condemned the Houthis’ seizure of the US embassy compound and called for the immediate withdrawal of all Houthi elements from the premises and the release of all those still under detention.

On 17 November, the UN announced that two of its staff in Sana’a had been arrested on 5 and 7 November, respectively, and that they remained in detention despite Houthi assurances that they would be released.

Special Envoy Grundberg continued his efforts to restart a political process. He undertook his first visit to Iran, which is the Houthis’ main ally, on 3 November. Starting on 7 November, he conducted his second visit to Yemen, meeting first with Yemeni government officials and representatives of the separatist Southern Transitional Authority (STC) in Aden. Grundberg also visited Taiz governorate, the first UN Special Envoy to do so. Over three days, he went to Taiz city, Turbah and Mokha, holding meetings with the governor, political party representatives, civil society, members of parliament, business leaders and journalists. In Mokha, he met with the Political Bureau of the National Resistance—the political wing established earlier this year by Tareq Saleh, who heads the Joint Forces’ Guardians of the Republic and is the nephew of former president Ali Abdullah Saleh—and the Al-Hirak al-Tahimi, a movement representing the Tihama people of Yemen’s western coastal region.

On 11 November, Grundberg briefed Security Council members from Aden during closed consultations. Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ramesh Rajasingham also briefed, elaborating on a framework developed by the UN to address Yemen’s economic collapse, which is a major driver of Yemen’s humanitarian crisis.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 9 November, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee imposed travel ban and asset freeze sanctions on three Houthi military figures: Chief of General Staff Muhammad Abd Al-Karim Al-Ghamari, who plays a leading role in Houthi military efforts, including the offensive against Marib and cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia; Yusuf Al-Madani, a prominent leader of Houthi forces who has been assigned to the Marib offensive since April 2021; and Assistant Defence Minister Saleh Mesfer Saleh Al Shaer, who has assisted the Houthis in acquiring smuggled arms and weapons and in the unlawful appropriation of privately owned assets and entities. The UK had proposed the designations.

Women, Peace and Security

On 18 November, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women published the advance version of its concluding observations on Yemen (CEDAW/C/YEM/CO/7-8). While the committee welcomed the approval of Yemen’s 2020-2022 National Action Plan (NAP) on women, peace and security, it expressed concern at the lack of inclusivity, allocated budget and implementation of the NAP. The committee urged Yemen to ensure women’s inclusive participation in the implementation of the NAP, including through the allocation of sufficient resources and the development of indicators to monitor progress. It also expressed deep concern about the systematic exclusion of Yemeni women from formal peace negotiations and urged Yemen to ensure the meaningful participation of women from different backgrounds in all stages of the peace process, in reconstruction initiatives, and in transitional justice processes.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Press Statements SC/14707 (18 November 2021) condemned the Houthi seizure of the compound formerly used as the US embassy in Sana’a. SC/14671 (20 October 2021) stressed the need for de-escalation by all, including an immediate end to the Houthi escalation in Marib. Sanctions Committee Document SC/14695 (9 November 2021) announced the addition of three entries to the Yemen sanctions list.

Yemen

Key Issues and Options

Grundberg's effort to restart an inclusive political process for a negotiated settlement to the conflict remains a critical issue. This challenging task is becoming more difficult because of the pace of changing military dynamics—notably, Houthi gains in their multi-front offensive in Marib governorate, the fall of which would be a major blow to the government, and in Hodeidah. In recent months, the Houthis have also consolidated control over the central al Bayda governorate and seized several districts in southern Shabwa governorate, helping them to expand their offensive in Marib. Receiving an update on developments in Hodeidah and the impact they will have on UNMHA's role is another key issue.

Council members have made multiple calls since 2020 for an end to the Houthi escalation in Marib and for a nationwide ceasefire, most recently in a 20 October press statement. Members may encourage Grundberg, who became UN envoy in September, to continue consulting with Yemeni parties and relevant regional countries to develop a framework or road map for a political process, which the Council could then support.

Key issues related to Yemen's humanitarian crisis include preventing famine, protecting civilians, improving humanitarian access, and supporting the economy. The UN has repeatedly warned about the potential for the Houthis' Marib offensive to worsen the humanitarian situation if it triggers a new wave of mass displacement.

The threat posed by the FSO Safer oil tanker, which holds around 1.15 million barrels of oil and is moored in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held Ras Isa oil terminal, is an ongoing issue of concern. The Houthis have still not allowed a UN technical team to conduct an assessment of the decrepit ship, which risks causing an environmental catastrophe in the event of an oil spill or fire.

Council Dynamics

Council members support UN-led mediation efforts and share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the environmental threat posed by the Safer oil tanker. Despite this general unity among members, differences exist. For example, European members and the US tend to be more critical of the Houthis, while Russia often objects to singling out the group—a dynamic that plays out during negotiations on Council products. Last month's sanctions designations may make reaching agreement in the Council on Yemen more complicated. Russia sought to have the 2140 Committee reverse the recent designations after it had failed to raise objections within the time frame allotted for committee members to block proposed designations. When this did not occur, it apparently indicated that the failure to do so would make Council unity on Yemen more difficult to achieve.

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

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is scheduled to vote on two resolutions on Somalia: one to reauthorise the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the other to renew counter-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia. The AMISOM authorisation expires on 31 December and the counter-piracy measures on 4 December. The Council received the annual report on piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia on 4 November.

Key Recent Developments

On 12 March, the Council adopted resolution 2568, reauthorising AMISOM until the end of this year. Several actions were anticipated during this authorisation period that would inform the Council's discussion on a future AU mission in Somalia. Resolution 2568 called for an update of AMISOM's concept of operations (CONOPS), to be conducted by the AU and the government of Somalia, and presented to the Council by the end of August. It requested a proposal from the Secretary-General on the strategic objectives, size and composition of a reconfigured AU mission, to be completed jointly with the AU, the Somali federal government and donors, and presented to the Council by the end of September. It further requested options from the Secretary-General for continued UN logistical support for UNSOM and the Somali security forces alongside a reconfigured

AU mission “for consideration by the Security Council by the end of October 2021”.

However, divergent views on the future of AMISOM have hampered the completion of these steps. On 30 May, the AU issued its own assessment, concluding that an AU-UN hybrid mission was the most suitable way forward, contrary to the 8 January assessment of the UN Secretary-General, which recommended a reconfiguration of AMISOM. The AU felt that its approach would address, among other things, concerns about sustainable financing, given the Security Council's reluctance to support AU peace operations through UN-assessed contributions. Meanwhile, the Somali federal government has repeatedly endorsed the option of a reconfigured AMISOM, as proposed by the UN, as being most consistent with its 2021 Somalia Transition Plan (STP), which outlines steps towards the gradual handover of security responsibilities from international forces to the government.

The disagreement has strained AU-Somali relations. The AU and the Somali government have repeatedly engaged in trying to bridge their differences but have so far not been able to reach an agreement. An AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) communiqué issued on 7 October endorsed the AU-UN hybrid mission model and requested African members of the UN Security Council “to promote and advocate for the option of transition to an AU-UN Multidimensional

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2568](#) (12 March 2021) reauthorised the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until 31 December 2021. [S/RES/2554](#) (4 December 2020) renewed for twelve months the authorisation granted to states and regional organisations cooperating with Somali authorities in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/944](#) (11 November 2021) was on the situation in Somalia covering developments from 1 August to 4 November 2021. [S/2021/920](#) (3 November 2021) was the annual report on the situation regarding piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. [Security Council Letters S/2021/260](#) (12 March 2021) transmitted the draft resolution later adopted as resolution 2568, voting results, explanations of vote (China, India, Kenya, and the UK), and a statement by Somalia. [S/2021/859](#) (4 October 2021) was a letter from the Security Council in response to the Secretary-General's request for an extension of the deadlines to submit a proposal on a reconfigured AMISOM.

Somalia

Transition Mission in Somalia as adopted in this Communiqué and to engage with other members of the Security Council to ensure a favourable outcome to these discussions”. On 4 November, Somalia’s foreign ministry declared Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia Simon Mulongo “persona non grata” for “activities [that are] incompatible with AMISOM’s mandate and Somalia’s security strategy”. In late October, the Somali federal government reportedly accused the AU and AMISOM of obstructing the implementation of the STP.

Prior to voting on a draft resolution renewing anti-piracy measures, Council members will have considered the Secretary-General’s annual report on the situation with respect to piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia, which covers events from 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021. The report recorded no piracy incidents off the Somali coastline for the second consecutive year; however, it cautioned that suspicious approaches towards merchant vessels observed in the region indicate that “progress achieved in combatting piracy could be reversed, if not consolidated”. It further reported that piracy activities had been further suppressed through the combined efforts of naval forces and the shipping industries’ implementation of strategies outlined in the guidebook *Best Management Practices to Deter Piracy and Enhance Maritime Security in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean, and Arabian Sea*.

Women, Peace and Security

On 30 June, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women and Peace and Security met to discuss the situation in Somalia. Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) James Swan and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia and head of AMISOM Francisco Madeira briefed Council members at the meeting. In addition, regarding the upcoming negotiations on AMISOM’s reauthorisation, UN Women, as the IEG secretariat, recommended including language calling for “gender analysis and consultations with women’s organisations to inform the transfer of security responsibilities to the Somali authorities”. UN Women also recommended that the Security Council retain all language on women, peace and security from resolution 2568, the latest resolution reauthorising the mission. Among other things, the resolution urged AMISOM to integrate a gender perspective in the delivery of its mandate and to “ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of women across its operations”. This was the first time the IEG met on Somalia and the first time that a non-UN briefer (Madeira) addressed an IEG meeting.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 48th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted resolution 48/22 without a vote on 11 October, extending the mandate of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia for one year (A/HRC/48/L.15/Rev.1). It requested the independent expert to report to the HRC at its 50th session and to the General Assembly at its 77th session and to provide an update to the HRC on progress regarding the implementation of the benchmarks and indicators in the transition plan to inform future action by the HRC. It also requested the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant UN agencies to provide the independent expert with all the human, technical and financial assistance necessary to carry out the mandate effectively.

Key Issues and Options

How to find consensus regarding the future of AMISOM will be one of the key issues. Time is fast running out ahead of the mission’s reauthorisation in December, and it seems unlikely that agreement will be reached anytime soon. The 7 October AUPSC communiqué appealed to the Council to consider a technical rollover of the AMISOM reauthorisation “while discussions continue on the details

and modalities for transition towards the post-2021 arrangement”. An International Crisis Group report on AMISOM published on 15 November recommended a six-month extension to allow sufficient time to draft a reconfiguration plan and seek funding for the mission, as well as to provide Somalia the opportunity to address several political challenges. Among these challenges, the report notes, is finalising the transition of power and advancing reconciliation between the federal government and its member states, among other things to help create increased support for building the national security forces. While the six-month extension may be agreeable to some Council members, others may argue for a shorter extension to maintain pressure on the relevant parties (that is, the government of Somalia and the AU) to reach consensus.

Following the renewal of the anti-piracy measures through the adoption of resolution 2554 of 4 December 2020, Somalia noted in a statement to the Council that it had “witnessed a drastic reduction in the number of piracy incidents, in particular in the last three years”.

One option for the Council is to maintain the anti-piracy measures without making changes to the mandate. However, with no piracy incidents reported in the past year, another option could be to phase out the measures in place.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members had the opportunity to voice their views on the future of AMISOM when they discussed the situation in Somalia on 17 November. The UK noted a broad range of views on the future of security support for Somalia and concluded that an AU-UN hybrid mission would not be a realistic and affordable option. The US supported this view, noting that a restructured AU-led mission would be best positioned to maintain pressure on Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group which continues to pose significant threats to peace and security in Somalia.

For other Council members, particularly the “A3 plus one” (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the funding of AMISOM and future security arrangements in Somalia are priority issues. During Council briefings on Somalia, they have repeatedly argued in favour of more predictable and sustainable funding for the mission and prefer the option of an AU-UN hybrid mission financed through UN assessed contributions instead of voluntary donor funding. This option, however, is unlikely to find support from some other Council members, including the US. Currently, the EU is one of the major donors to AMISOM, and while several European Council members, including Estonia and Ireland, support the EU’s continued financial support for the mission, the scope of future contributions was still under discussion in Brussels at the time of writing. As it has done in past Council sessions, France argued for a more lasting and sustainable solution to AMISOM financing. Russia said that the views of the host country should be taken into consideration.

The anti-piracy measures have in the past found broad support from the Council, reflected in the unanimous adoption of resolution 2554. The EU supports implementation of this resolution through the deployment of the naval mission EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta, which is mandated to deter, prevent and repress piracy and to protect vulnerable vessels and humanitarian shipments off the coast of Somalia.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia. The US holds the pen for the anti-piracy resolution.

Counter-terrorism

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is scheduled to receive its annual briefing from the chairs of its counter-terrorism committees: Ambassador Trine Heimerback (Norway), chair of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Tarek Ladeb (Tunisia), chair of the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC); and Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico), chair of the 1540 Committee.

The Council is expected to adopt two resolutions concerning counter-terrorism in December. The first will renew the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED), and the second will update the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaeda sanctions regime, including by renewing the mandates of the 1267/1988 Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team (Monitoring Team) and the Office of the Ombudsperson.

Background

1373 Committee and Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate

On 28 September 2001, the Council adopted resolution 1373, which, among other matters, decided that all states shall prevent and criminalise the financing of terrorist acts and called on member states to cooperate on administrative and judicial matters to prevent the commission of terrorist acts. Resolution 1373 also established the CTC and directed it to monitor the implementation of the measures outlined in the resolution. On 26 March 2004, resolution 1535 established CTED as a special political mission to support the work of the CTC by, among other things, enhancing the CTC's ability to monitor the implementation of resolution 1373. CTED has since worked to fulfil this mandate by conducting country visits that assess member states' counter-terrorism efforts and producing reports that outline CTED's findings and make recommendations for the relevant member state to consider.

Over time, CTED's mandate has gradually expanded. A series of resolutions has directed it to undertake additional tasks, including:

- assessing the implementation of resolution 1624, which called on member states to criminalise the incitement to commit terrorist acts;
- identifying emerging issues, trends and developments related to resolutions 1373 and 1624; and
- advising the CTC on practical ways for states to implement these resolutions.

The Council has also encouraged CTED to consider various thematic issues, such as the impact of terrorism on children and children's rights, and to facilitate technical assistance to member states.

CTED's mandate was last renewed on 21 December 2017 when resolution 2395 was adopted. Among other matters, this resolution sought to delineate the various cross-cutting tasks allocated to CTED in different resolutions and reiterated that CTED's essential role includes identifying and assessing issues, trends, and developments relating to the implementation of several Council resolutions relating to counter-terrorism, including resolutions 1373 and 1624. Resolution 2395 also described how CTED should cooperate with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), which was established by the General Assembly on 15 June 2017.

1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Regime

On 17 December 2015, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2253, which reformulated the Al-Qaeda sanctions regime in light of the threat posed by ISIL, including by strengthening different aspects of the regime and renaming its sanctions list the "ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions List". This resolution also requested the Secretary-General to bolster the Ombudsperson "by providing necessary resources" and making "necessary arrangements to ensure its continued ability to carry out its mandate". The Ombudsperson reviews requests for removal from the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions List.

The Council subsequently adopted resolution 2368 of 20 July 2017, which was intended to further strengthen the regime. This resolution focused on addressing the repatriation of foreign terrorist fighters, Al-Qaeda and ISIL's human trafficking activities, kidnappings conducted by Al-Qaeda and ISIL, and the financing of Al-Qaeda and ISIL's operations. It also reiterated the request for the Secretary-General to provide the Ombudsperson with "necessary resources" and extended the mandates of both the Ombudsperson and the Monitoring Team until December 2021. The Monitoring Team supports the work of the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee, including by submitting written reports on various issues, assisting the Ombudsperson, and regularly reviewing names on the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions List.

On 29 December 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2560. Recognising "the need to take measures to increase fairness, and the effectiveness of the rules and procedures of the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee", this resolution requested the Monitoring Team to study the exemptions to the asset freeze measures outlined in resolution 2368 and provide recommendations as to whether the exemptions should be updated.

The current Ombudsperson, Daniel Kipfer Fasciati, presented his resignation to the Secretary-General on 3 June, effective 17 December. In his resignation letter, Fasciati expressed regret that it had not been possible to create an "institutionally independent Office and to grant the Ombudsperson the contractual arrangements appropriate for the function, its status, and its independence".

1540 Committee

Adopted in 2004, resolution 1540 aims to address the concern that non-state actors might use weapons of mass destruction for terrorist purposes. Among other matters, it imposes obligations on all member states to adopt legislation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery and to establish appropriate controls over related materials to prevent their illicit trafficking. Resolution 1540 also created the 1540 Committee, which is responsible for reporting to the Council regarding its implementation.

Resolution 2325, which was adopted on 15 December 2016, decided that the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee, the 1373 Committee and the 1540 Committee would brief the Council jointly on their cooperation once a year.

Counter-terrorism

Key Issues and Options

The structure of the Office of the Ombudsperson and the way in which the Ombudsperson works are key issues for the Council ahead of the renewal of the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime. Given the concerns Fasciati raised in his resignation letter about the Ombudsperson's lack of institutional independence, the Council may wish to consider reformulating the Ombudsperson as a distinct entity. The Office of the Ombudsperson is currently part of the Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch. The Council could also choose to call for the allocation of more resources to the Ombudsperson.

The Council is expected to review the Monitoring Team's recommendations regarding the exemptions to the asset freeze measures in resolution 2368, which were outlined in the Monitoring Team's report to the Council earlier this year. The Council could choose to implement all or some of those recommendations.

The humanitarian impact of the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime is another issue for the Council to consider. In a statement delivered during a joint special meeting of the CTC and the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee on terrorist financing trends and the implementation of resolution 2462, Laetitia Courtois, the ICRC's Permanent Observer of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the UN, outlined some of the difficulties that UN sanctions can create for humanitarian organisations. Courtois described the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime as having "far-reaching impact" and said that "it is therefore more critical than ever that during the upcoming renewal more protective action for humanitarian action is included". In light of these comments, which echo the position of other humanitarian organisations, the Council may wish to consider formulating appropriate humanitarian exemptions to the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime.

Member states' responses to CTED's reports are also an issue for the Council. At present, member states are encouraged, but not

required, to report back to CTED regarding their implementation of CTED's recommendations. The Council could decide to implement a mechanism that either requires member states to follow up on any recommendations made by CTED or empowers CTED to put pressure on member states to respond.

CTED's engagement with civil society organisations may be an issue for the Council. Before consulting with civil society organisations while conducting a review, CTED currently requires consent from the host member state. The Council could decide to formalise consultation with civil society as part of CTED's work by encouraging it to meet with civil society without first seeking consent. The Council could also choose to revisit the relationship between UNOCT and CTED with a view to determining whether there are areas for possible improvement.

Council Dynamics

In general, counter-terrorism enjoys the support of all Council members. Some differences exist, however, regarding the four pillars of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (GCTS), which were reaffirmed by the General Assembly on 30 June. The pillars are, first, addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; second, measures to prevent and combat terrorism; third, measures to build states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and to strengthen the role of the UN system in that regard; and fourth, measures to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism. The fourth pillar does not enjoy equal support among all Council members. Some members favour a counter-terrorism approach that is founded on human rights, prevention, and the involvement of civil society, while other members focus more closely on security and law enforcement.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will convene to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Bintou Keita, the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), is the anticipated briefer. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing. The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of MONUSCO, which expires on 20 December.

Key Recent Developments

The Council last met to consider the situation in the DRC on 5 October. Keita briefed on the current situation in the country, particularly on the implementation of the "state of siege" in North Kivu and Ituri provinces and the support provided by MONUSCO to the armed forces of the DRC (FARDC) to restore state authority in those provinces. (With the state of siege, civilian governance

was transferred to a military governor and a police vice-governor in North Kivu and Ituri, and increased powers of search and arrest were given to police and military.) Keita also presented MONUSCO's transition plan, submitted to the Council as an annex to the latest report of the Secretary-General on 17 September. She pointed out that the implementation of the transition plan is closely linked to the programme of action adopted by the government in April and its ability to finance its priorities to create conditions for the mission's orderly and responsible withdrawal.

The security situation in the eastern provinces of the DRC remains a source of grave concern. The state of siege was extended for the 11th time in November, but lawmakers reportedly challenged the government's decision in parliament. They opposed the extension amid the deterioration of the security situation. Media reports indicate that there has been an upsurge in attacks by armed groups in North Kivu and Ituri provinces in recent weeks that has resulted

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2594 (9 September 2021) was the first resolution on peace operations transitions. **S/RES/2556** (18 December 2020) extended the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2021. Fourteen members voted in favour of the resolution, while Russia abstained. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/19** (20 October 2021) was on the situation in the Great Lakes region. **Secretary-General's Report S/2021/807** (17 September 2021) covered developments in the DRC from 19 June to 17 September, including progress towards the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8873** (5 October 2021) was a Security Council briefing on the situation in the DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

in the loss of lives, the burning of houses, and the mass displacement of people.

The political situation also remains tense in relation to the 2023 elections. Influential Catholic and Protestant leaders and opposition parties reportedly objected to the appointment of Denis Kadima—a former executive director of the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA), based in South Africa—to head the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) because of his alleged affiliation with President Félix Tshisekedi. Thousands of Congolese also came out to the streets of Kinshasa to protest the decision and call for a neutral electoral commission.

Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix conducted a six-day working mission to the DRC in October and held discussions with Congolese authorities on a range of issues, including the elections planned for 2023, the security situation in the eastern provinces, and the gradual and phased withdrawal of MONUSCO. According to media reports, he said that the transition plan should not be seen as providing an artificial timeline for the mission's departure, which is not inevitable.

The Chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Abdou Abarry of Niger, also visited Kinshasa in November and discussed the implementation of the sanctions regime with Congolese stakeholders. The Congolese government requested the Council to lift the measures imposed in paragraph 5 of resolution 1807 (2008) on advance notification to the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee of any shipment of arms and related material for the DRC, or any provision of assistance, advice or training related to the military activities of the FARDC. The current mandate of the DRC sanctions regime expires on 1 July 2022, as per resolution 2582.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 October, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution during its 48th session on technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights in the DRC (A/HRC/48/L.2). The resolution decided to renew the mandate of the Team of International Experts on the situation in the Kasai and to extend it to the entire national territory of the DRC. It requested the team to present its final report to the Council at its 51st session and an oral update at its 49th session. It also requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide an oral update at its 49th session and to prepare a comprehensive report for its 51st session.

Women, Peace and Security

During the 5 October briefing on the DRC, Nelly Godelieve Madioka Mbangi, Coordinator of Sauti Ya Mama Mukongomani/Voice of Congolese Women, briefed the Security Council (S/PV.8873). Mbangi concentrated her remarks on the dire security and socio-economic situation in eastern DRC. She called on the Security Council to strengthen MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade to "enable it to restore peace" in eastern DRC. She also called on the Security Council to support the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process and to set up an international investigative mechanism to "establish responsibility for the crimes against humanity and genocide crimes committed against the people of the eastern [DRC]". Mbangi further drew the Council's attention to the contribution made by women in eastern DRC to the peacebuilding process and called for increased support for women's organisations "which are on the front lines of looking after victims of sexual violence and other trauma related to violent extremism in conflict".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members to consider is how to address the security and humanitarian challenge in the eastern provinces and create the necessary political conditions for holding elections in 2023. In renewing the MONUSCO mandate, they may wish to:

- reiterate their call for enhanced joint operations by MONUSCO and the FARDC to respond to the threats posed by armed groups in full compliance with the UN's human rights due diligence policy on UN support to non-UN security forces;
- call for carrying out the disarmament, demobilisation, community recovery and stabilisation programme that was launched by the government in July to sustainably disarm those groups;
- continue to encourage the search for non-military solutions to the long-standing security challenge in the eastern provinces through regional cooperation;
- call for international support for the 2021 humanitarian response plan;
- reiterate their condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as the use of hate speech, which is fuelling intercommunal violence; and
- express concern over the increasing polarisation in the country and urge Congolese political stakeholders to resolve their differences through dialogue to create conditions favourable for holding peaceful and credible elections in 2023.

Regarding MONUSCO's transition plan, one option for the penholder is to convene an informal meeting of Council members, troop- and police-contributing countries, the host state, and other relevant stakeholders ahead of the discussion on the mandate renewal to create a better understanding about the way forward. In renewing the mandate of the mission, the Council could also consider requesting the Secretary-General to provide updates on follow-up and implementation of the transition plan as part of his regular report.

Council Dynamics

There appears to be general support among Council members for MONUSCO's work and for the mission's gradual drawdown. Several members have welcomed the development of the mission's transition plan with the government and with the involvement of civil society representatives. However, differences could possibly emerge in the upcoming mandate renewal process. Some members may advocate for strict implementation of the benchmarks and timelines outlined in the transition plan, while others are likely to favour a flexible approach based on an assessment of the evolving security situation on the ground. Ireland might be keen to reference resolution 2594 of 9 September 2021 on peace operations transitions.

In the face of a deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces and its impact on the civilian population, the protection of civilians will continue to be paramount in MONUSCO's mandate. Issues of performance, conduct and discipline might also be raised during the upcoming negotiations. Some members may express serious concerns over several new cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in the mission and underscore the need to ensure accountability, while others may attach importance to the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Regarding the implementation of the state of siege, the Congolese government has been clear that it will be maintained until the insecurity in the eastern provinces is addressed. Some members have, however, expressed concern over its effects on access to justice, pre-trial detention, and prison overcrowding. These members may wish to include in the mandate renewal a strong reference to accountability and justice and the need for strict adherence to international

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humanitarian law and human rights law. The possible links between the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) operating in the eastern part of the DRC and the Islamic State/Daesh could also be raised in this month's meeting, particularly in light of the recent terrorist attacks in Kampala, allegedly by groups affiliated with the ADF.

In relation to the discussion in October on the illegal exploitation

of natural resources, Kenya might be keen to strengthen the language in the MONUSCO resolution by referencing the presidential statement adopted on 20 October during its Council Presidency.

France is the penholder on the DRC; Ambassador Abdou Abarry of Niger chairs the 1533 Sanctions Committee.

Briefing by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Expected Council Action

In December, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will brief the Council. The briefing will focus on the situation of refugees in several country-specific situations on the Council's agenda. No outcome is expected.

Background

Since the 1990s, the Security Council has increasingly considered the links between the situation of refugees and threats to international peace and security. The High Commissioner for Refugees has briefed the Council several times about specific country situations on the Council's agenda, including the Sahel in December 2012 and Syria in December 2015. In addition to country-specific briefings, the Council has received several briefings under the agenda item "Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", which allows for a general update by the High Commissioner on the situation of refugees pertaining to various settings on the Council's agenda.

The first of these briefings took place on 10 November 2000 by then-High Commissioner Sadako Ogata. Since then, the Council has received four briefings under this agenda item, most recently in June 2020 under the French presidency. At that meeting, Grandi highlighted the impact of cross-border threats on refugees, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

In addition to formal Security Council briefings, Council members held an informal Arria-formula meeting in June 2019 with the participation of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The meeting—organised by former Council members Equatorial Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and South Africa, in conjunction with the AU Permanent Observer Mission to the UN—focused on "Responding effectively to the needs of refugees, displaced persons and returnees: the role of the United Nations Security Council and its members".

In the past decade, UN member states have shown significant concern over the issue of forced displacement. In 2016, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, reaffirming the importance of the international refugee regime and paving the way for its affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) two years later. The GCR remains a key global framework for addressing the issue of forced displacement through more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing and offers guidance for states and international organisations about how to support refugees and meet their needs in ways that benefit them and their host communities. Its objectives are to ease pressures on

host countries, promote refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin to facilitate refugees' safe return. The main vehicles for follow-up and review under the GCR include the Global Refugee Forums (GRF) held every four years, the High-Level Officials Meeting held two years after each GRF, the biennial GCR indicator report and the High Commissioner's annual reporting to the General Assembly. The first High-Level Officials Meeting will take place on 14 and 15 December at the International Conference Centre (CICG) in Geneva.

Key Recent Developments

Nearly 18 months have passed since Grandi last briefed the Council, and the number of displaced people in the world remains at an all-time high. According to UNHCR's 2021 Mid-Year Trends report, the number of forcibly displaced people—a term encompassing refugees, asylum-seekers, internally displaced people (IDPs), and Venezuelans displaced abroad (a category referring specifically to Venezuelans who may require international protection under the Cartagena Declaration criteria, but who have not applied for asylum in the country in which they are present)—rose by 1.6 million between January and June, exceeding 84 million people by mid-2021. More specifically, the number of refugees increased by roughly 172,000 and IDPs by 2.9 million.

On 16 November, UNHCR released the first GCR indicator report analysing the progress made since 2016 towards achieving the four GCR objectives. The report provided evidence of tangible progress, such as increases in bilateral official development assistance to refugee situations in developing countries, more partnerships supporting refugee responses, broadened legal access to decent work, and effective implementation of policies aimed at mitigating poverty and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees and host communities. The report also showed the need for more third-country opportunities, targeted support to boost refugees' self-reliance, more assistance to refugee-hosting countries, and greater focus on addressing the root causes to foster conditions favourable to refugees' voluntary repatriation.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to address forced displacement in country situations on its agenda. Nearly half (47 percent) of all refugees come from three situations on its agenda: Afghanistan, South Sudan and Syria. Syria's crisis, now in its 11th year, continues to be

Briefing by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

the world's greatest source of displacement, accounting for 27 percent (6.7 million) of all refugees. In Afghanistan, more than half a million people were internally displaced between January and June 2021 as a result of intensified violence. Several thousand Afghans fled the country when the Taliban took control in August 2021. On 27 August, UNHCR projected that half a million more Afghans would become refugees by the end of the year. The number of refugees from South Sudan rose by one million (to 2.2 million) during the first six months of 2021 amid increasing violence and deteriorating conditions. South Sudan remains the largest refugee crisis in Africa.

Other key issues for Council members are how to promote unhindered humanitarian access to forcibly displaced populations and the depoliticisation of humanitarian action. The humanitarian situation in several country situations on the Council's agenda has become progressively dire in recent years. At the same time, the space in which humanitarian aid is carried out has become more tightly circumscribed. In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, where over 60,000 people have been forced to flee across the border into Sudan since the outbreak of violence in November 2020, seven UN officials were declared "persona non grata" and given 72 hours to leave the country by the Ethiopian authorities on 30 September. According to the UN, this decision may have affected aid distribution to the region.

An additional issue is how to address the instrumentalisation of forced displacement and migration for political ends. In Belarus, thousands of migrants and refugees have been trapped in the border areas between Belarus and its neighbouring countries because of apparent manipulation of migration by the Belarusian authorities. EU member states have accused Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko of abetting migration across the Belarus border to pressure the EU to lift the sanctions that the bloc has imposed on Minsk. They allege that Belarusian authorities are orchestrating the crisis by encouraging migrants and refugees to travel to Belarus and facilitating their illegal crossing into EU countries. Poland and Lithuania have both declared a state of emergency and have banned journalists and aid workers from their border zones. As a result, a UNHCR team has been granted access to the Belarus-Poland border only four times since the beginning of the crisis and only from the Belarusian side.

The Council may also wish to consider how to address the impact of cross-border threats, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, on displaced populations. The latest report of the High Commissioner for Refugees, covering the period July 2020 to June 2021, maintains that the COVID-19 pandemic "exacerbated existing humanitarian and protection challenges" and that solutions were limited in that regard. Separately, in a decision issued on 7 January

2020, the Human Rights Committee—composed of 18 independent human rights experts established to monitor states parties' compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights—determined that countries may not deport individuals facing "climate change-induced conditions that violate the right to life".

Council members could consider convening private meetings or informal interactive dialogues to discuss the many challenges related to displacement in particular cases. Unlike closed consultations, these meeting formats allow for the participation of non-Council member states. As a result, they could enable a frank exchange of ideas among Council members and affected countries that may be conducive to strategic thinking and problem solving.

Council members may also use the opportunity to ask Grandi for further information on country-specific situations, as occurred during his 9 April 2019 briefing, and on how member states can better advance principled, safe, voluntary, dignified and informed refugee returns, as occurred during his 22 June 2020 briefing.

Council Dynamics

The Council is generally united in its support for UNHCR and the work of the High Commissioner. It appears, however, that political sensitivities in the Council over issues such as Syria and Myanmar have affected Council deliberations on the issue of refugees. While all Council members agree on the need to promote the safe and voluntary return of refugees, there is a divergence of views on whether such conditions for return have already been met in these countries. For example, during the June 2020 briefing by the High Commissioner, Russia suggested that Syrian refugees were being prevented from returning to their homes and maintained that significant progress had been made with regard to returns despite "barefaced efforts" to block this progress. Other Council members, notably the P3 (France, the UK and the US), expressed the view that conditions had not been met in Syria for the safe return of refugees and voiced concerns about possible reprisals against returnees. At that briefing, Grandi called on the international community to keep working with Syrian authorities to establish confidence for returnees and urged Council members to depoliticise humanitarian issues.

The briefing is also expected to highlight divisions among Council members in relation to the migrant and refugee crisis on the border of Belarus and neighbouring EU countries. EU member states have accused Belarusian authorities of orchestrating the crisis. Russia, however, has insisted that the migrants and refugees arrived through legal means and criticised the EU's response as a violation of international conventions.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Syria's overall humanitarian situation remains dire, and its worsening economic situation has exacerbated the country's already difficult food crisis. According to the World Food Programme (WFP), 90 percent of Syrians live below the poverty line, and approximately 12.4 million people—nearly 60 percent of Syria's population—are now considered food insecure, representing a 57 percent increase since 2019. During a 9 to 12 November visit to Syria, WFP Executive Director David Beasley cautioned that “more Syrians are in the grip of hunger today than at any time during their country's decade-long conflict”.

The humanitarian situation in the northwest of Syria is particularly dismal. According to OCHA, 2.8 million people in the region are currently displaced, including approximately two million people who live in temporary camps. Briefing the Council on 27 October, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths said that these camps often consist of “flimsy shelters, in valleys that flood, or on rocky hillsides exposed to the elements”, making them particularly vulnerable to the onset of harsh winter conditions. A fuel shortage also means that one-third of households in the northwest will not have access to heating during the upcoming winter.

In Syria's northeast, the humanitarian situation is also precarious, especially given the historically low water level in the Euphrates River, which has contributed to power outages, reduced access to clean drinking water, loss of crops, and an increase in water-borne diseases. According to recent media reports, the water level at one of the two main dams providing electricity in the northeast is decreasing at a rate that could see it lose all functionality by the end of December, threatening the well-being of some three to five million people.

While OCHA continues to deliver assistance via the Bab al-Hawa crossing at the Turkish-Syrian border, it has recently also taken steps to facilitate cross-line assistance into the northwest. On 27 October, Griffiths told the Council that WFP is preparing another cross-line delivery in November, building on its August delivery of assistance from government-controlled territory in Aleppo into opposition-held territory in northwest Syria. (At the time of writing, this had yet to happen.)

Griffiths also said that OCHA had elaborated a plan for “a series of regular and predictable inter-agency cross-line operations” in the coming six months and that a request for the first of such deliveries had been made to the government in Damascus. During closed consultations on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria on 15 November, Griffiths apparently told Council members that the Syrian government had accepted the plan, but it is unclear whether an agreement had been reached to allow the requested delivery.

The political track in Syria has made little progress since Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen organised the last round of the Constitutional Committee from 18 to 22 October. While the delegations submitted draft constitutional texts, they were unable to agree

on a mechanism to revise the texts and thus failed to begin a drafting phase for a new constitution. They also did not agree on dates for future rounds of discussions.

During closed consultations on 15 November, Pedersen apparently explained to Council members that he was deepening his engagement with key international actors to help move the political process forward. At that meeting, some Council members apparently raised concerns about the effects that improving diplomatic and economic ties between Syria and other countries in the region, notably Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, could have on the Constitutional Committee's work. Analysts have suggested that the “normalization” process may cause Damascus to demonstrate less commitment to the political track.

Finally, hostilities continue in Syria's northwest, with government forces shelling numerous areas around Idlib and Aleppo in recent weeks and reports that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), an armed opposition group that is designated by the Security Council as a terrorist organisation and controls parts of Syria's northwest, has increased its shelling of government forces near the de-escalation zone near Idlib. In Syria's northeast, violence involving Turkish forces and Kurdish-led forces persisted in November. International media continue to report that Turkey may be preparing a large-scale incursion into the area.

Key Issues and Options

A primary issue for Council members in December will be the humanitarian situation in Syria, especially as it relates to the delivery of humanitarian assistance across internal frontlines. Council members will be focussing on the contents of the Secretary-General's “substantive report” on this issue, which is likely to be issued in mid-December.

Another issue that Council members will be following closely is any development involving the Constitutional Committee. Given that the committee made very limited progress during the sixth round of meetings in October, Council members may wish to step up political backing to the Special Envoy's continued diplomatic efforts. This could be done through issuing a press statement calling on all parties to work in good faith towards a new constitution in line with resolution 2254 and offering concrete benchmarks for the committee to achieve.

Council Dynamics

Despite the unanimous adoption of resolution 2585 in July, several issues continue to divide the Council on the humanitarian file. Key divisions relate to the efficacy of cross-line deliveries and the length of the cross-border mechanism mandate. France, the UK and the US, joined by most elected members, assert that the resolution ensures the automatic continuation of the cross-border mechanism for delivery of humanitarian assistance through the border crossing at Bab al-Hawa for a full year, but Russia has intimated on several occasions that it has a different understanding of the resolution, arguing that it can be interpreted to mean that the mandate will not be automatically rolled over in January. Speaking to the Council on 15 September, the Russian representative noted that “resolution

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. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. Secretary-General's Report S/2021/890 (21 October 2021) was the latest report on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8888 (27 October 2021) was a meeting on the humanitarian and political situations in Syria.

Syria

2585 foresees no automatism...[E]verything will depend on whether its provisions have been properly implemented”.

The Council also remains divided on the work of the Constitutional Committee. Some Council members, such as Russia and China, have argued that the Council should not put undue pressure

on the committee, maintaining that its work should proceed at its own pace without outside influence. Other Council members, however, have raised serious concerns that the committee has met only twice in 2021 and bemoan the limited progress on the political track and on the implementation of resolution 2254.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is expected to extend for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 31 December. Ahead of the mandate renewal, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 1 December, and the most recent developments.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 28 September, noted that while the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was generally being maintained, ongoing violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement persist—including firing by Israeli forces over the ceasefire line, the presence of Syrian forces in the area of separation and the existence of unauthorised weapons in the limitation area. As such, the report notes, the overall security situation in the UNDOF area of operations remains volatile, as does the security situation, raising concerns about the safety and security of UNDOF personnel.

In addition to the violations highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, there have been ongoing tensions in and around the Golan Heights in recent weeks, and several high-profile developments have affected the area since Council members last met in closed consultations to discuss UNDOF on 5 October. Speaking at the Golan Heights Conference on Economics and Regional Development in Hispin on 10 October, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett told participants that “the Golan Heights is Israeli, full stop” and that “the horrors taking place in Syria may make it seem as if it would be preferable for the Golan to prosper under Israeli hands”. This, he argued, should be the case even if the situation in Syria changed or if other countries' diplomatic relations with the current government in Damascus improved. Bennett also announced that Israel intended to build new settlements in the area, with the aim of doubling or even quadrupling the size of the Israeli population in the Golan Heights. He added that a plan that will “change the face of the Golan Heights” would be put forward in November or December. (At the time of writing, no such plan has been proffered.)

Bennett's statement came in the context of reports in June that the US—a co-penholder on the UNDOF file—intended to rescind its recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. (On 25 March 2019, then-US President Donald Trump signed a presidential proclamation recognising Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, making the US the only UN member state to do so). On 25

June, the US State Department tweeted that “US policy regarding the Golan has not changed, and reports to the contrary are false”. For its part, Russia, the other co-penholder on the file, continues to maintain a policy that recognises Syria's sovereignty over the territory. Addressing the Council during the open debate on “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Russia asserted that Israel continued to undertake “unilateral actions that are fraught with dangerous consequences, among them...construction of settlements, including construction plans for the occupied Syrian Golan Heights”.

On 15 October, Medhat al-Saleh, the director of the Golan Affairs department at the Syrian prime minister's office and a former Syrian parliamentarian representing the Druze minority in the Golan Heights, was assassinated by sniper fire in the town of Ein el-Tinneh, a village inside Syria near the line of separation. Though no actors have claimed responsibility, the Syrian government maintains that Israel was behind the assassination. Israeli officials have not claimed responsibility for the killing. Israeli defence officials have said that al-Saleh had been working with Iran to enhance Iran's presence along the Syrian-Israeli border.

Key Issues and Options

As the Council holds consultations on DPO's briefing, the key issue will be the renewal of UNDOF's mandate, which, at the time of writing, is scheduled to take place on 21 December.

Another issue for Council members is the ongoing violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974. The Council could consider pursuing a statement urging parties to adhere to the commitments under the agreement.

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2581 on 29 June, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, illustrated that the Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. There was little apparent disagreement amongst Council members in the negotiations, which were relatively straightforward, and no states felt the need to give explanations of their votes following the adoption.

Despite deep divisions overall on the Council regarding the Syria file, as well as opposing positions held by co-penholders Russia and the US about who holds sovereignty over the Golan Heights, the two countries continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree.

Council members India and Ireland have a particular interest

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

in UNDOF, as both contribute a significant number of uniformed personnel to the mission. As at 30 September, UNDOF included

198 Indian uniformed personnel and 130 Irish uniformed personnel.

Climate Change and Security

Expected Council Action

In December, Niger is planning to convene an open debate on “Security in the context of climate change”. Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat are the anticipated briefers. Ambassador Mamman Nuhu, the Executive Director of the Lake Chad Basin Authority and Head of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), might brief as well.

Key Recent Developments

In recent months, the Security Council has focussed considerable attention on the negative security implications of climate change. On 23 September, the Council held a high-level open debate on the “Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Climate and Security”. Ireland’s Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Micheál Martin chaired the meeting. Guterres and Ilwad Elman, the chief operating officer of the Mogadishu-based Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre, briefed. During the meeting, Guterres emphasised that “climate change and environmental mismanagement are risk multipliers” and that when “coping capacities are limited and there is high dependence on shrinking natural resources and ecosystem services such as water and fertile land, grievances and tensions can explode, complicating efforts to prevent conflict and sustain peace”. He underscored the need for all countries to work towards preventing temperatures from rising above 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the worst effects of global warming. Elman said that her organisation had realised that their peacebuilding goals and mediation work “could not succeed or be sustained unless we addressed the broader environmental issues related to security — whether it be the locust- and drought-induced scarcity of resources that multiplies the threat of intraclan conflict, the decrease of tuna swarms that drives Somali fishing communities towards piracy, or the flooding that continues to drive regional displacement and vulnerable people to violent extremist groups”. She called on the UN, including the Security Council, to be receptive to bottom-up, local efforts to build resilience to the adverse effects of climate change.

An Arria-formula meeting on “Sea-Level Rise and Implications for International Peace and Security” was held on 18 October in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. Viet Nam, Ireland, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tunisia organised the meeting, which was co-sponsored by several non-Council members, including the Dominican Republic, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Saint Lucia, and Tuvalu. The briefers were: Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari; Valérie Masson-Delmotte, Co-Chair of Working Group I at the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which assesses the physical science of climate change; and Coral Pasisi, Senior Adviser to the Director

General of the Sustainable Pacific Consultancy.

The 26th UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) was held in Glasgow, UK, from 31 October to 13 November. At the end of the conference, its president, British MP and former minister Alok Sharma, said that the goal of keeping global warming to an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius would “only survive if we keep our promises and translate commitments into rapid action”. At COP26, commitments were made to cease deforestation, significantly decrease methane emissions and “phase down” the use of coal. Developed countries also reaffirmed an unfulfilled commitment to contribute \$100 billion per year in climate financing to the developing world.

On 29 November, a thematic draft resolution on climate change and security spearheaded by Ireland and Niger was placed under silence. While most Council members support the draft, China, India and Russia have strong reservations about it.

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-roots 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 his or 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

Although 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—support 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

UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2011/15 (20 July 2011) was a presidential statement on climate change. Security Council Meeting S/PV.8864 (23 September 2021) was the high-level open debate under the Irish presidency on climate and security.

Climate Change and Security

increase the risk of violent conflict in addition to their devastating effects on human security.

China, India and Russia 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. Russia has

expressed concern that focusing on climate change diverts the Council's attention from more traditional security threats.

Looking ahead, Albania, Gabon, Ghana, and the UAE—four of the five members entering the Council in 2022—are strong proponents of Council engagement on this issue. The fifth, Brazil, is wary of a Council role on this thematic issue.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In December, 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 3 December. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing. The mandate of UNITAMS expires on 3 June 2022.

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 Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which expires on 15 December. (Abyei is the disputed area straddling the Sudan-South Sudan border).

Key Recent Developments

On 25 October, the Chairperson of the Transitional Sovereign Council, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, declared a nationwide state of emergency and the suspension of key provisions of the Constitutional Document. He also announced that the military would oversee Sudan's transition until elections, to be held in July 2023. The military detained Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and his wife and placed them under house arrest. Government officials, including ministers and civilian members of the Sovereign Council, were also arrested.

The military's seizure of power was met with international opprobrium. On 25 October, in a statement made through his spokesperson, UN Secretary-General António Guterres condemned "the ongoing military coup d'état in Khartoum and all actions that could jeopardize Sudan's political transition and stability". Guterres also called for "the immediate reconstitution of the governing arrangements provided for under the Constitutional Document".

At a 26 October meeting on Sudan, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) adopted a communiqué that expressed "deep concern over the military takeover in Sudan" and strongly condemned the "seizure of power by the Sudanese military". The PSC decided to immediately suspend Sudan across all AU activities "until the effective restoration of the civilian-led Transitional Authority". The US halted \$700 million in emergency assistance to Sudan.

On 21 November, Hamdok was reportedly released from house arrest and appeared on television with al-Burhan to announce a new power-sharing agreement, including his own reinstatement as

Prime Minister and the release of all political detainees. According to agreement, the parties agreed to "[a]ccelerate the completion of all transitional governance institutions including the Transitional Legislative Council and the Constitutional Court", and to form "a civilian government of independent national experts (technocrats)". At the time of writing, several parties had rejected the agreement, including the main opposition alliance, the Forces for Freedom and Change Coalition (FFC). The AU PSC adopted a communiqué on 24 November, taking note of the 21 November agreement and deciding "to promptly dispatch a mission to Sudan to engage with the authorities and other relevant stakeholders with a view to facilitating and supporting the ongoing transition process".

In the preceding weeks, mass demonstrations opposing the military's seizure of power took place in the capital, Khartoum, and across the country. In several instances, protesters were met with excessive force, including the use of live ammunition. At the time of writing, security forces had killed at least 39 people, including 15 people reportedly shot dead during protests on 17 November, and had injured hundreds, according to an 18 November statement by High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. Political leaders and journalists were also arrested. The military authorities imposed a nationwide internet shutdown on 25 October. A Sudanese court ordered the internet's restoration on 9 November. On 17 November, the military imposed a total shutdown of phone and mobile communications throughout the country. On 18 November, the military authorities announced that there would be a gradual restoration of the internet, although the extent to which this had occurred remained unclear at the time of writing.

The military takeover pre-empted the transfer of the Sovereign Council chair from the military to the civilian government in November, which had been agreed in the Constitutional Document. It followed an unsuccessful coup attempt on 21 September by loyalists of ousted President Omar Al Bashir, which Security Council members condemned in a press statement on 22 September. Tensions between and within the military and civilian components of the transitional government had been increasing for several months prior to the military takeover, as noted in the Secretary-General's report covering 2 May to 20 August. The report also noted "growing popular frustration over the country's political and economic challenges" and significant humanitarian needs due to, among other things, inter-communal conflict and localised armed clashes in Darfur, South

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2606](#) (15 November 2021) was a technical rollover resolution extending the mandate of UNISFA until 15 December 2021. [S/RES/2579](#) (3 June 2021) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/766](#) (1 September 2021) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8857](#) (14 September 2021) was a briefing on UNITAMS. [Security Council Press Statements SC/14678](#) (28 October 2021) expressed serious concern about the military takeover in Sudan on 25 October. [SC/14643](#) (22 September 2021) condemned the attempt on 21 September to disrupt Sudan's transition by force.

Sudan

Kordofan, West Kordofan, and Port Sudan. It further referred to the Ethiopian refugee crisis in eastern parts of the country as well as high food prices and rising inflation, which have increased food insecurity.

In November, there was a significant rise in intercommunal clashes in North Darfur and Jebel Moon, West Darfur, resulting in the death of civilians, burning of villages, and the displacement of thousands, along with reports of rape and child abductions. UNITAMS issued a statement on 25 November expressing grave concern over the situation.

On 26 October, Council members convened for closed consultations to discuss the situation in Sudan. Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes briefed. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 26 October.) In a 28 October press statement, Council members expressed "serious concern about the military takeover" and called on Sudan's military authorities to restore the civilian-led transitional government. Among other things, Council members urged all parties to refrain from violence and emphasised the importance of "full respect for human rights, including the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression".

On 11 November, Council members again convened for closed consultations to receive an update from Perthes on the latest developments in Sudan, further details about the mediation efforts underway and UNITAMS' role in this regard. In a 1 November press conference, Perthes said that multiple mediation efforts were being undertaken in Khartoum by "a host of actors" and that the UN continued to play a good offices role in supporting some of these initiatives, including by providing ideas and coordinating with some of the mediators. Perthes emphasised that UNITAMS was engaging with all Sudanese actors across the political spectrum and with regional and international interlocutors, with the AU being a main partner. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 10 November.)

On 15 November, the Council adopted a technical rollover resolution extending the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 December. The decision to do so was influenced by the situation in Sudan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Human Rights Council (HRC) held a special session on Sudan on 5 November, following a request by the UK, the US, Norway, and Germany (with the support of at least one-third of the HRC's members). Bachelet briefed, saying that "the whereabouts of most of those arrested remains unknown" and that the "disproportionate and deadly use of force by the Sudan Armed Forces, the Rapid Support Forces, and other security forces... must end immediately". She also noted that all radio stations and television channels in the country had ceased broadcasting, except for channels controlled by the military authorities. Bachelet added that several offices of civil society organisations had been raided. At the 5 November meeting, the HRC adopted a resolution, without a vote, that "condemns in the strongest possible terms the military takeover" and requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to designate without delay an expert on human rights in Sudan (A/HRC/RES/S-32/1). Council members China and Russia, which are currently on the HRC, disassociated themselves from the consensus on the resolution. On 12 November, Bachelet designated Adama Dieng as an expert

on human rights in Sudan, as requested by the HRC.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is monitoring the evolving situation in Sudan following the agreement between Hamdok and al-Burhan. One option would be to issue another press statement that condemns the killing of protestors by security forces and the communications restrictions in Sudan while welcoming efforts to resolve the current political crisis.

In this regard, Council members will closely follow mediation efforts, including the role played by UNITAMS, and could seek one or more updates from the mission's leadership on political developments, in addition to the expected briefing on UNITAMS.

Broadly, UNITAMS' strategic objectives, as set out in resolution 2579, are: (i) assisting the political transition; (ii) supporting the peace processes and the implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA); (iii) assisting peacebuilding, protection of civilians and rule of law, particularly in Darfur and the Two Areas (that is, South Kordofan and Blue Nile); and (iv) supporting the mobilisation of economic and development assistance, and coordination of humanitarian and peacebuilding assistance.

Another issue that Council members will want to follow closely is the security situation in Darfur, particularly in light of the completed drawdown of the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur in June.

Council Dynamics

Prior to the 25 October seizure of power, Council members welcomed and were strongly supportive of the overall commitments made by the transitional government to peace and the transition to democracy in Sudan. However, members also emphasised the need for the full implementation of the JPA and Constitutional Document in light of limited progress. The dire economic and humanitarian situations have been particularly worrisome to many members.

Following the events of 25 October, it seems that there were some areas of disagreement during the negotiations on the press statement adopted on 28 October. Apparently, the UK and several other members would have preferred stronger language condemning, rather than expressing concern over, the situation. (Council members had previously adopted a press statement on 22 September that "condemned in the strongest terms the attempt on 21 September to disrupt Sudan's transition by force".) Members agreed on the term "military takeover" rather than "coup" in the 28 October press statement. Council members such as the UK, Estonia and Norway referred to it as a "coup", including at media stakeouts on 26 October. Apparently, Russia and the US did not characterise it as a "coup". The Troika on Sudan (the UK, the US and Norway) also referred to it as a "military takeover", as did the AU PSC in its communiqué.

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.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which was established in 2010 to carry out the remaining essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) after their respective closures. The IRMCT's president, Judge Carmel Agius, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate and to meet with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to that.

Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT—with branches in The Hague, Netherlands, and in Arusha, Tanzania—focuses on the completion of trials and appeals from the ICTY, which closed in December 2017, and the ICTR, which closed in December 2015. Its tasks include locating and arresting the remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR—of the 93 persons indicted by the ICTR, six remain at large—and assisting national jurisdictions in handling requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

The Council most recently extended the IRMCT's operating period and Brammertz's term until 30 June 2022 with the adoption of resolution 2529 on 25 June 2020. The resolution requested the IRMCT to continue to take steps to enhance efficient, effective and transparent management, including clear and focused projections of completion timelines. The resolution also stressed the need for continued efforts to ensure geographic diversity and gender balance of staff and to reduce costs by using flexible staff engagement.

The IRMCT delivered three landmark judgements in June. On 8 June, the Appeals Chamber of the IRMCT delivered its judgement in the appeals filed by Ratko Mladić and the prosecution against the 22 November 2017 judgement by a Trial Chamber of the ICTY. The Appeals Chamber dismissed Mladić's appeal and affirmed his convictions for genocide, persecution, extermination, murder, deportation, and other inhumane acts consisting in forcible transfer as crimes against humanity and for murder, terror, unlawful attacks on civilians, and hostage-taking as violations of the laws or customs of war. It also dismissed the prosecution's appeal and affirmed the Trial Chamber's finding that Mladić was not guilty of genocide in relation to crimes committed in certain municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Appeals Chamber affirmed Mladić's sentence of life imprisonment, imposed by the Trial Chamber.

On 25 June, judgement was delivered in the contempt case of

Prosecutor v. Anselme Nzabonimpa et al. (formerly *Turinabo et al.*), convicting Augustin Ndirabatware, Anselme Nzabonimpa, Jean de Dieu Ndagijimana, and Marie Rose Fatuma of contempt for witness interference. Ndirabatware was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Nzabonimpa, Ndagijimana and Fatuma were sentenced to time served, having spent over 11 months in pre-trial detention.

On 30 June, the Trial Chamber of the IRMCT delivered its judgement in the case of *Prosecutor v. Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović*, finding them responsible for aiding and abetting the crime of murder, as a violation of the laws or customs of war and a crime against humanity, and the crimes of deportation, forcible transfer, and persecution, as crimes against humanity, committed by Serb forces following the takeover of Bosanski Šamac in April 1992. They were each sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment.

At the time of writing, the judicial workload of the IRMCT consisted of the case of *Prosecutor v. Félicien Kabuga*, in which pre-trial preparations are underway, and the *Stanišić* and *Simatović* and *Nzabonimpa et al.* cases, which have moved into the appeals phase since the respective judgements on 25 and 30 June.

Agius and Brammertz briefed the Council during its last semi-annual debate on the IRMCT on 8 June. Agius said that the 8 June Mladić judgement was “another tremendous step towards the finalization of [the IRMCT's] core judicial work”, adding that the case “is also a testament to what can be achieved through international justice processes when States have the will to cooperate and overcome geopolitical roadblocks”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is for members to continue monitoring the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate, including the areas specified in resolution 2529.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, with the exception of Russia, which has been consistently critical of the ICTY. Russia has also been critical of the appointment of Brammertz, who was the prosecutor of the ICTY from 2008 until its closure in 2017, and it abstained on previous resolutions appointing him in 2016 and 2018. At the most recent semi-annual debate, Russia expressed strong criticism of the appeal judgement in the Mladić case.

Viet Nam is the chair of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals.

Security Council's Subsidiary Bodies: Briefings by the Outgoing Chairs

Expected Council Action

As is customary in December, the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies are expected to provide a briefing on their experiences. The five representatives of the countries completing their two-year terms on the Council at the end of 2021 and their respective chairmanships

are:

- Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia)—the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee and the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee;
- Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger)—the 2127 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee, the 1533 Democratic

UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2529 (25 June 2020) extended the term of the IRMCT's prosecutor until 30 June 2022. Security Council Letter S/2021/487 (17 May 2020) transmitted the bi-annual assessments of the president and prosecutor on the IRMCT. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8790 (8 June 2021) was the semi-annual debate held on the work of the IRMCT.

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Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee and the 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism;

- Ambassador Tarek Ladeb (Tunisia)—the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations;
- Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)—the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee and the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions; and
- Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy (Vietnam)—the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, the Informal Working Work on International Tribunals, and the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee.

Background

The practice of briefings by the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies was established during the Colombian presidency of the Council in December 2002. It is considered an important element of efforts to promote transparency in the work of the sanctions committees and working groups. Since not all subsidiary bodies produce an annual report, this December briefing has also served over the years as a means of creating a publicly accessible institutional memory of a body's activities.

Key Recent Developments

At this briefing, each chair will be able to review developments within the relevant committee or working group during their two-year term, assess their experience, suggest recommendations for improvements, and provide advice to their respective successors. Because of the restrictions related to COVID-19, many meetings took place under the “informal informal” format via videoconference during the chairs' tenures in 2020-2021.

Ambassador Jürgenson may note that the Committee urged signatories of the Juba peace agreement to stop recruiting fighters, and Darfuri non-signatory groups to engage in peace talks with the government in February. Jürgenson may also discuss the removal of individuals and entities from the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee over the past two years.

Ambassador Abarry may address some of the important discussions in the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee regarding natural resource exploitation and sexual violence in conflict during his tenure. In November, he visited the DRC and discussed the implementation of the sanctions regime with the Congolese authorities. Abarry may discuss the joint informal consultations that the DRC Sanctions Committee and the CAR Sanctions Committee held in August 2021 with Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as amendments to the DRC and CAR sanctions lists during his tenure as chair of these committees. The 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism, which Niger also chaired, has remained dormant in 2020-2021.

Ambassador Ladeb may discuss the progress that has been made in counter-terrorism in the 20 years since the adoption of resolution 1373. In this regard, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, which he chairs, held a meeting on 4 November to commemorate the 20th anniversary and issued an outcome document that noted the strides made in implementing resolution 1373, including, among

other things, “a significant increase in the number of States becoming party to the international counter-terrorism instruments, the criminalization of terrorist offences...and the introduction of robust measures to combat terrorist financing and measures to enhance cooperation at the political, technical and operational levels”. On 18 November, the CTC held a joint meeting with the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee that focused on countering terrorist financing.

During Tunisia's chairmanship, the Guinea-Bissau 2048 Sanctions Committee met once, in October 2020, to consider the annual report of the Secretary-General on progress made with regard to the stabilisation and restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau. Since the closure of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) at the end of last year, the Committee has not met.

Ladeb may also speak about discussions in the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations on UN peace operation transitions and policing.

Ambassador King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) will reflect on the work of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee. Resolution 2511, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime in February 2020, highlighted that sexual violence in armed conflict, or the recruitment or use of children in armed conflict in violation of international law, could represent a “sanctionable act of engaging in or providing support for acts that threaten the peace, security or stability of Yemen”, thus falling under the Yemen Sanctions Committee's existing designation criteria.

In 2021, the first new entries to the Yemen sanctions list occurred since April 2015. Resolution 2564 in February designated Houthi official Sultan Saleh Aida Aida Zabin for his role in a policy of intimidation and the use of systematic arrest, detention, torture, sexual violence, and rape of politically active women. On 9 November, the Sanctions Committee designated three additional Houthi military figures: the new designations became controversial when Russia failed to raise its objections within the allotted time period and sought, unsuccessfully, that the decision be rescinded.

King is also likely to speak about her experiences chairing the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG). King may describe how the Council adapted its working methods under the extraordinary circumstances posed by COVID-19. Furthermore, she may note the agreement reached recently on four additional presidential notes (on multilingualism, monthly working methods commitments of Council presidencies, the role of political coordinators, and training opportunities for incoming elected members).

Ambassador Dang has chaired the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee during the past two years. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba briefed the Committee in October 2020 and October 2021. The Committee also held a closed videoconference meeting with Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten on 26 February. Dang and members of the 2206 Committee visited South Sudan in November, which Dang may discuss in his statement.

As chair of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals, Dang might describe the Working Group's meeting with the

Security Council's Subsidiary Bodies: Briefings by the Outgoing Chairs

president and prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), ahead of their respective semi-annual briefings to the Council in June and December. On 25 June 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2529, which was drafted by Viet Nam and extended the term of Serge Brammertz as Prosecutor of the IRMCT until 30 June 2022.

Dang's other chairmanship was of the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee, which is dormant.

Council Dynamics

After the elections to the Security Council were moved from October to June in 2016, there have been significant changes in the process of appointing chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies. In July 2016,

Council members agreed on a presidential note concerning the preparation of newly elected members during the transitional period between the election and the beginning of their term, including the selection and preparation of chairs of subsidiary bodies. The note established a more consultative process for the chairs' appointment, co-led by a permanent member and by the chair of the IWG, and stipulated that the appointments should be completed by 1 October. That deadline has so far never been met. At the time of writing, the new appointments for 2022 had not been finalised.

Elected members chair all sanctions committees and other formal subsidiary bodies of the Council. While many elected members find the chairing of subsidiary bodies rewarding, some of them believe that the permanent members should share in this responsibility.

Iran

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is due to receive the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The Council also expects reports from the Joint Commission and the Council's 2231 facilitator, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland). The Joint Commission was established to oversee the implementation of the JCPOA and comprises the current parties to the agreement: China, France, Germany, the UK, Russia, and Iran. Byrne Nason, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, and a representative of the EU in its capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission are expected to brief the Council.

Key Recent Developments

In early April, the current parties to the JCPOA convened a series of meetings in Vienna to discuss its possible revival. The US, which was originally a party to the JCPOA, withdrew in May 2018 at the behest of then-US President Donald Trump, who went on to impose unilateral sanctions against Iran. Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it subsequently took several steps that directly contravened its terms, such as resuming uranium enrichment at levels higher than JCPOA-mandated limits.

The US was present in Vienna but did not participate directly in the talks. Six rounds of negotiations took place and, when the sixth round concluded in late June, officials involved in the negotiations believed that a deal was close to being finalised, which would see the US re-join the JCPOA and Iran return to full compliance. On 1 July, for example, a spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry told the media that sizeable progress had been made and said that Russia expected the talks to conclude successfully by 14 July.

The 19 June election of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, an ultra-conservative cleric and former judge with strong ties to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, appears to have disrupted the negotiations. In mid-July, Iranian negotiators apparently advised European officials that Iran would not return to the negotiating table until Raisi had been

inaugurated in early August. In the weeks and months following Raisi's inauguration, Iran repeatedly refused to resume negotiations despite growing pressure for it to do so. On 4 September, Raisi gave an interview to Iranian state television in which he suggested that Iran would not restart talks while under "pressure", an apparent reference to US sanctions on Iran.

In addition to refusing to re-join the talks in Vienna, Iran began ramping up its nuclear activities after Raisi was elected. On 6 July, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran had begun producing uranium metal enriched to 20 percent for the first time, thereby contravening the terms of the JCPOA, which prohibits Iran from producing or acquiring uranium metal for 15 years. In late August, Iran reportedly resumed producing component parts of centrifuges, which are used to produce enriched uranium, at an assembly plant in Karaj. Following an initial announcement regarding its intentions on 16 April, Iran also continued to enrich uranium to 60 percent purity, a level just below that required to produce a nuclear weapon and well above the limit of 3.67 percent imposed by the JCPOA. In a 19 August statement, France, Germany, and the UK accused Iran of committing "serious violations of [its] commitments under the JCPOA" and "establishing facts on the ground which make a return to the JCPOA more complicated".

Iran's recent nuclear activity has resulted in a significant increase in its nuclear stockpiles. In a 13 September report, the Institute for Science and International Security, a non-profit group that focuses on stopping the spread of nuclear weapons, estimated that Iran now holds enough enriched uranium to produce weapons-grade uranium for "over two" nuclear weapons and may be able to produce enough fuel for a single weapon within a month, should it choose to do so. According to media reports, a 17 November report issued by the IAEA estimated that Iran now holds 17.7 kilograms of uranium enriched to 60 percent purity, an increase of approximately eight kilograms since August.

International monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities has been disrupted in recent months. On 24 June, a February 2021 agreement that allowed the IAEA to continue monitoring Iran's nuclear activity

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231](#) (20 July 2015) was a resolution that endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/582](#) (21 June 2021) was a report on the implementation of resolution 2231.

Iran

expired and was not immediately renewed. Despite earlier assurances from Iran, IAEA inspectors were also denied access to the Karaj centrifuge assembly plant in mid-September. In a 23 October interview with NBC News, IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the agency's nuclear monitoring programme in Iran was no longer "intact" and that there was a possibility the international community would be unable "to reconstruct the picture" of Iran's nuclear activity. On 22 November, Grossi met with Iranian officials, including Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian, to push for enhanced monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities by the IAEA. Grossi left Iran the following day without agreeing a deal for better access.

On 2 November, the European External Action Service announced that negotiations to revive the JCPOA will resume on 29 November and that Iran will participate in the talks. Several analysts predict that the next round of negotiations is likely to be difficult. The US has indicated that the talks should resume at the point where they were paused in June, while Raisi's administration, which is expected to take a harder line than the previous regime, has signalled that it may wish to revisit points that have already been agreed. In late October, Amirabdollahian said that Iran "[does not] want to enter the Vienna negotiations from the deadlock point of the Vienna negotiations". On 19 November, French Foreign Minister Jean Yves Le Drian told *Le Monde* that France wanted to establish whether the talks would resume from the same point and, in an apparent warning to Iran, said that "if this discussion is a sham, then we will have to consider the JCPOA empty".

Before the recent pause, the primary points of contention in the negotiations were well defined. Iran has refused to decrease its stockpiles of enriched uranium unless US sanctions are removed, while the US has said that it will not lift its sanctions until Iran reduces those stockpiles. The US and Iran also differ regarding which sanctions should be removed.

There have been other areas of disagreement. Iran has demanded a guarantee that any agreement which might be reached in Vienna will not be reversed by a future US administration, and has recently suggested that it may seek sanctions relief that is broader than what it originally received under the JCPOA. The US, on the other hand, has reportedly sought a longer deal that runs beyond the JCPOA's 2030 expiry date and encompasses a broader range of issues, including Iran's ballistic missile programme and its support for regional

militias.

On 20 October, a drone strike targeted a US military base in southern Syria. According to media reports, several US and Israeli officials, who spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity, believe that the strike was Iranian retaliation for Israeli airstrikes in Syria. The US has not publicly accused Iran of carrying out the attack, and Iran has not claimed responsibility for it.

On 18 November, the US announced that it had indicted two Iranians for interfering with the 2020 presidential election. The Department of the Treasury also sanctioned six Iranian officials and one Iranian entity for their alleged role in the plan.

Key Issues and Options

The long-term survival of the JCPOA is under threat. Analysts have suggested that the nuclear activities undertaken by Iran since the US withdrawal are likely to make a return to full compliance difficult, particularly given the institutional knowledge that Iran's nuclear programme has acquired as a result of these activities. Council members will therefore follow negotiations in Vienna closely. If the talks result in a revival of the JCPOA, the Council could consider issuing a statement welcoming this development. Should a new agreement be reached, the Council may wish to adopt a resolution that endorses that agreement.

Given Iran's non-compliance with the terms of the JCPOA, Council members could initiate the "snapback mechanism" in resolution 2231 if the Vienna talks collapse. This would reinstate the sanctions that were in place before resolution 2231 was adopted.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their desire to see the negotiations in Vienna progress and are likely to urge Iran to comply with its obligations under resolution 2231. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and other like-minded states, are expected to call for Iran to resume its cooperation with the IAEA. These members may also choose to criticise Iran for its recent nuclear activities. Conversely, China and Russia are expected to be more supportive of Iran. Both states have backed Iran's call for the US to provide a guarantee that it will not renege from any agreement reached in Vienna and have also criticised the US for withdrawing from the JCPOA and imposing unilateral sanctions on Iran.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In December, Special Representative and head of UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicolas Haysom is scheduled to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, which members expect to receive by 7 December. Ambassador Dang Dinh Quy (Viet Nam), chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to brief on the work of the

Committee. Consultations will follow the briefing.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 15 March 2022.

Key Recent Developments

On 12 September, South Sudan marked the third anniversary of the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2606](#) (15 November 2021) was a technical rollover resolution extending the mandate of UNISFA until 15 December 2021. [S/RES/2514](#) (12 March 2020) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 15 March 2021. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/20](#) (27 October 2021) requested the Secretary-General to establish an integrated electoral assistance team led by UNMISS. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/784](#) (9 September 2021) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8859](#) (15 September 2021) was a briefing on South Sudan. [Security Council Letter S/2021/661](#) (15 July 2021) was from the Secretary-General, transmitting the needs assessment to create an enabling environment for elections, requested in resolution 2567.

South Sudan

Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), but progress in its implementation remains slow. The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (RJMEC), which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS, said in its most recent quarterly report (covering 1 July to 30 September) that any progress made, such as the August establishment of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, “is overshadowed by the failure of the [government] to make inroads in key areas of the R-ARCSS”, particularly the graduation and deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF). The report identifies several obstacles, including “insufficient political will among the Parties to compromise where needed; trust deficit and lack of confidence among the Parties including intra-Party disagreements and infighting; delays and lack of prioritisation of key tasks; and lack of sufficient funding and resources”.

Localised ethnic and intercommunal violence continues unabated, including in the Tambura region in Western Equatoria. At a briefing on 9 November, the spokesperson of the Secretary-General said that recent conflict between armed groups in and around Tambura has resulted in civilian deaths and injuries, the displacement of over 80,000 people, and the disruption of humanitarian activities. The mission has established a temporary base in Tambura to carry out patrols, protect over 9,000 people who have sought refuge nearby, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance, the spokesperson said.

The human rights, humanitarian, food security, and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormously detrimental effect on civilians. Ongoing floods in the country are estimated to be the worst in 60 years. As at 3 November, flooding since May has affected approximately 760,000 people in eight of the ten states, according to OCHA’s October Humanitarian Snapshot.

Earlier this year, government officials said that the elections envisioned to take place in 2022 would be delayed until 2023. The parties to the R-ARCSS, however, 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 transmitted a needs assessment to the Council in a letter that included security, procedural and logistical requirements to create an enabling environment for elections in South Sudan, as requested in resolution 2567. It recommended that the UN provide electoral assistance to South Sudan in an integrated manner, and as outlined in an annex to the letter, in two phases (namely in the immediate term and in the medium- to long-term, until the end of December 2023).

On 27 October, the Council adopted a presidential statement taking note of the Secretary-General’s 15 July letter and requesting “the Secretary-General to establish an integrated electoral assistance team led by UNMISS...to implement the electoral assistance activities set forth in phase 1 of the Annex to his 15 July 2021 letter”. It also urged “progress on key milestones that include: the necessary security arrangements; the establishment of the legal framework for elections [including the electoral system, dispute resolution mechanisms, and other matters]; the establishment of the composition and functioning of the National Election Commission and the designation of its members, both in Juba and at the sub-national level; and the allocation of resources for the operating costs of the National Election Commission and a budget for elections operations”.

On 15 November, the Council adopted a technical rollover resolution extending the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 December. The decision to extend the

mission for one month was influenced by the military takeover in Sudan, announced on 25 October.

The Council was last briefed on South Sudan on 15 September by Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom, OCHA’s Director for Operations and Advocacy Reena Ghelani, and a representative of civil society, Merikaje Lorna Nanjia. (For more, see our What’s In Blue story of 14 September.) During his briefing, Haysom emphasised the need for reconstituting the sub-national state legislatures and passing critical legislation, as well as the importance of the constitution-making process. In relation to elections, he warned that “[u]nless there are adequate technical and political preparations, [the election] could be a catastrophe instead of a national turning point”. Haysom also expressed concern over the increase in subnational violence, the proliferation of weapons, increasing restrictions in civic space, a deteriorating humanitarian situation, and rising attacks on aid workers.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 48th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an enhanced interactive dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan on 23 September. The commission presented a paper that “highlighted how the systematic, illicit diversion of State resources has severely undermined the economic, social and cultural rights of citizens” (A/HRC/48/CRP.3). According to investigations carried out by the commission over the past two years, more than \$73 million has been diverted since 2018, including transactions worth almost \$39 million in a period of less than two months. On 20 October, the commission released a statement expressing “alarm and dismay [over] the ongoing threats, harassment and intimidation of prominent human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors”.

Sanctions-Related Developments

Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba briefed the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee during informal consultations on 15 October. Members of the Committee travelled to South Sudan from 17 to 19 November.

Key Issues and Options

Significant political and security challenges persist in South Sudan related to the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. Council members will likely closely follow whether progress is made on the “key milestones” in relation to elections preparations, as outlined in the presidential statement adopted on 27 October. 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 R-ARCSS. The IID is a closed format that, unlike consultations, allows for the participation of non-UN officials and briefers.

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 remain concerned about the delays in implementing key elements of the R-ARCSS. At the briefing on 15 September, most members called for the parties to accelerate the implementation of the R-ARCSS, particularly in relation to transitional security arrangements. Several members emphasised the need to expeditiously enact the necessary legislation in this regard. Members also expressed concern over the dire humanitarian situation and attacks on humanitarian aid workers.

South Sudan

There has also been a focus on preparations for the elections. In the 15 September meeting, the US noted that “credible elections that reflect the will of the people must be preceded by an inclusive, transparent constitution-drafting process carried out in an environment that permits freedom of expression and provides space for political dissent”. The “A3 plus one” (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Ireland, Mexico, and Viet Nam

emphasised the importance of the 35 percent quota for women’s participation in the transitional government as agreed to in the R-ARC-SS. China, Russia and Viet Nam expressed the need to review the sanctions measures.

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

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

In December, François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), is expected to brief the Security Council on the Secretary-General’s semi-annual report on UNOCA. Consultations are expected to follow.

The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

When he last briefed the Council on 7 June, Fall said that while Central Africa was “facing a fragile political and security context”, Central African leaders were determined to offer regional responses to these challenges. To facilitate such an approach, Fall has recently visited several countries in the mission area, meeting leaders as well as heads of UN offices and peace operations.

In the Central African Republic (CAR), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) adopted a “Joint Roadmap for Peace” on 16 September, which, among other key steps, called for the CAR government to declare a ceasefire. This was followed by a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at building support for the roadmap and the ceasefire. From 5 to 7 October, Fall and Mankeur Ndiaye, the Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), visited Angola, where they met with Angolan President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, the ICGLR’s current chairperson, to discuss steps the region could take to facilitate a ceasefire. Fall and Ndiaye subsequently met with CAR President Faustin-Archange Touadéra in Bangui on 8 October to discuss how to advance the peace process and bring about the ceasefire. On 15 October, Touadéra announced that his government would begin implementing a unilateral ceasefire effective 16 October.

On 12 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2605, renewing MINUSCA’s mandate for one year within its existing troop ceiling of 14,400 military personnel and 3,020 police personnel. The resolution retains the mission’s priority tasks, including the protection of civilians; good offices and support to the peace process and the Political Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR; and facilitation of the immediate, full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. The resolution received 13 votes in favour, while China and Russia abstained.

The security situation remains precarious in Cameroon’s anglophone northwestern and southwestern regions, where fighting

between separatists and the Cameroonian government persists. In recent weeks, several high-profile violent incidents took place, disrupting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and heightening insecurity. On 15 September, armed separatists declared a lockdown in the region, forcing OCHA to suspend humanitarian activities for two weeks, which resulted in approximately 200,000 people not receiving vital food assistance. On 5 October, gunshots were fired near a venue in Douala where Cameroonian Prime Minister Dion Ngute was speaking. On 14 October, a local policeman in Buea killed a five-year-old girl when he fired at a car whose driver did not stop at a checkpoint; a crowd subsequently lynched the police officer in response. Another child was killed on 12 November in the northwest’s regional capital, Bamenda, when police fired on a nearby vehicle; the next day, schools and businesses remained shut as large crowds demonstrated. On 29 October, the Cameroonian government announced that its military had killed some 40 anglophone separatists in the northwest of the country over the previous two weeks.

In Chad, Mahamat Idriss Déby, the head of the Transitional Military Council (CMT), which took power in April, appointed a 93-member National Transitional Council (CNT) to serve as an interim parliament until elections are held next year. On 2 October, Chad’s main opposition alliance, Wakit Tama, organised marches in N’Djamena against the CMT. A police officer was killed and ten people were injured when police fired tear gas on the protesters.

Fall, along with Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), visited Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger from 18 October to 2 November to promote implementation of resolution 2349, which addresses the negative effects of the Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad Basin. During the visits, they encouraged the four countries to work together to confront Boko Haram.

Key Issues and Options

The security and human rights situations in several parts of Central Africa remain a key concern for the Council. The threat of climate change to peace and security in the region is also of concern to a number of Council members. (In his 7 June briefing, Fall described several areas in the region where “climate security had impacted human security”).

The Council may wish to adopt a presidential statement endorsing UNOCA’s efforts to address security concerns in the region.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Council Dynamics

In August, UNOCA's mandate was renewed for three years. (UNOCA's mandate was established and is renewed through an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the Council, rather than through the adoption of a resolution).

While there appears to be overall support in the Council for UNOCA's role in Central Africa—with a 12 September 2019 presidential statement demonstrating the Council's consensus on UNOCA's mandate—Council members were unable to reach consensus on a presidential statement on UNOCA in the context of August's mandate renewal. Differences apparently emerged on whether to refer to specific countries in the text.

Some Council members, such as the UK and the US, have expressed concern about the situation in Cameroon, arguing that UNOCA should focus on the security and humanitarian conditions in that country. Other members, such as China and Russia, maintain that the situation is an internal matter and that the Council should intervene only upon Cameroon's request.

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA. Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

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