SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT
Independent. Impartial. Informative.

May 2022

Monthly Forecast

1 Overview
2 In Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Veto
3 Status Update since our April Forecast
4 Ukraine
6 Lebanon
8 Bosnia and Herzegovina
10 Sudan/South Sudan
11 Yemen
13 Iraq
14 Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force
16 Conflict and Food Security
17 Somalia
18 Syria
20 DPRK (North Korea)
21 Sudan
23 Protection of Civilians
25 South Sudan
26 Libya

29 April 2022
This report is available online at **securitycouncilreport.org**.

For daily insights by SCR on evolving Security Council actions please subscribe to "What's In Blue" series at **securitycouncilreport.org** or follow **@SCRtweets** on Twitter.

Overview

In May, the US will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

The US plans to organise two signature events. The first signature event is a briefing on conflict and food security under the agenda item maintenance of international peace and security. The second signature event is a briefing on technology and security under the same agenda item.

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold its annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict based on the Secretary-General's annual report on this issue.

African issues on the programme of work in May are:

- Libya, briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and briefing by the Chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;
- Sahel, briefing and consultations on the G-5 Sahel;
- Somalia, briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and renewal of the UNSOM mandate;
- Sudan/South Sudan, mandate renewal of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA);
- Sudan, briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Transitional Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS); and
- South Sudan, renewal of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- Syria, meetings on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks;
- Yemen, monthly meeting on developments;
- Iraq, briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the UNAMI mandate renewal;
- Lebanon, consultations on the Secretary-General's 1559 report; and
- Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the monthly meeting.

The Council is expected to meet on two European issues this month. A briefing on the situation in Ukraine with particular focus on the protection of civilians is anticipated. Additional meetings on Ukraine may also be scheduled. The semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina is expected to take place as well.

In terms of Asian issues, Council members are expected to receive a regular briefing in consultations on the work of the 1718 DPRK sanctions committee.

The US intends to convene an informal meeting on peacekeeping performance and accountability to follow up on the implementation of resolution 2436 of 21 September 2018.

Other issues could be raised in April depending on developments, including Ethiopia and Myanmar, among others.

In Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Veto

The veto power conferred by the UN Charter is, after permanency itself, the most significant distinction between permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. The UN would not have been founded without the five permanent members having the power of the veto; indeed, the organisation was designed so that all major decisions would require the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the big powers.[1] But from the start, the veto has been a steady source of tension between the permanent members and the wider membership of the UN. Since the end of the Cold War, veto reform has been an element of many initiatives seeking structural reforms of the Council. These initiatives have come from member states that believe that the Council no longer reflects the ways the global order has changed since 1945. Frequently, member states also take up the perceived "abuse" of the veto in discussions of Council working methods, including during the body's annual working methods debate.

On 26 April, the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution A/RES/76/262, which calls for the General Assembly to meet whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. The President of the General Assembly will convene a formal meeting to hold a debate on the vetoed subject within ten working days and, on an exceptional basis, the member or members who have cast a veto will be given precedence in the speakers' list.

The vote was the culmination of an initiative led by Liechtenstein and a core group of countries.[2] Eighty-three members co-sponsored the resolution from every UN regional group, including three permanent members: France, the UK and the US. Although there have been veto initiatives in the past, this is the first time a UN body has taken action to modify the use of the veto.

Such initiatives have a history, though. In the mid-2000s, the deadlock over Syria led member states to search for ways to make veto use more difficult. In August 2015, France, with the support of Mexico, launched the 'Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocity'. The aim was to have the permanent members—the P5—voluntarily pledge not to use the veto in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes on a large scale. Among the veto-wielding permanent members, so far only France and the UK have supported this initiative. As at April 2022, 103 member states and two UN observers had signed the declaration.

This voluntary initiative to suspend veto powers has been dogged by the lack of definition of atrocity crimes. This may also explain why it hasn't come to the fore in connection with the current situation in Ukraine, as some members are wary of describing crimes there as "atrocity crimes" until they have been duly verified.

In a similar vein, in July 2015, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, which consists of 27 small and medium-sized states working to enhance the Council's effectiveness by strengthening its working methods, developed a code of conduct for member states regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The code is meant to encourage timely and decisive action by the Council to prevent or end the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. As with the later French-Mexican initiative, the code of conduct urges the permanent members to agree to refrain from using their veto in situations involving mass atrocity crimes, and also invites current and aspiring elected members to refrain from casting a negative vote in such cases, as it envisions the fight against atrocities as a collective responsibility of all member states. The code of conduct had been signed by 122 member states by 10 February 2022, including eight current elected Council members, two permanent members (France and the UK), and two observers.

The current Liechtenstein-led veto initiative was apparently conceived more than two years ago but was put aside as COVID-19 compelled the UN to work remotely. The return to more normal UN functioning, combined with Council deadlock over Ukraine sparking renewed interest in its reform, created the conditions for the initiative to be revived.

Backers of this initiative may also have been emboldened by the Security Council's referral of the situation in Ukraine to the General Assembly on 27 February. For the first time in 40 years, the Council adopted a "Uniting for Peace" resolution, whereby it refers to the General Assembly a situation on which its permanent members are deadlocked. This followed Russia's veto, on 25 February, of a resolution condemning Russian aggression against Ukraine. Since then, the General Assembly has adopted three resolutions directly related to the war in Ukraine. The first, which garnered 141 votes, expanded on the failed Council resolution condemning Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The second focused on the humanitarian consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, receiving 140 votes. A third resolution, which had the support of 93 member states, suspended Russia's membership in the UN Human Rights Council.

Since the UN's founding, all five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) have exercised the right to veto non-procedural decisions of the Council under article 27 (3) of the UN Charter. They have done so to varying degrees. The USSR/Russia has cast 119 vetoes, with 35 of these related to applications for UN membership in the organisation's early years. The US cast the first of its 82 vetoes on a draft resolution on 17 March 1970 (S/9696 and Corr. 1 and 2), at which point the USSR had vetoed 80 draft resolutions. France and the UK have not cast a veto since 23 December 1989 (S/21048) when, in tandem with the US, they prevented the Security Council from condemning the US invasion of Panama. The UK first used its veto on 30 October 1956 (S/3710) during the Suez Crisis and had cast 29 vetoes on draft resolutions before ceasing to use the veto at the end of 1989. France applied its veto for the first time on 26 June 1946 with respect to the Spanish Question (S/PV.49) and cast a total of 18 vetoes on draft resolutions through the end of 1989. Since the People's Republic of China assumed the seat previously held by the Republic of China on 25 October 1971, it has vetoed 16 draft resolutions.[3]

Veto usage since 2000 highlights changes in voting patterns among the permanent members. China has used its veto more

1. Article 27 (3) of the UN Charter states that decisions on all but procedural matters "shall be made by an affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members". In the early years of the UN, a norm developed that has held to this day whereby "concurring votes" included affirmative votes as well abstentions.
2. Australia, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Mexico, New Zealand, Qatar, Sweden, and Turkey.
3. Veto statistics are from the Dag Hammarskjöld library: https://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick. These numbers are for vetoes on draft resolutions and do not include vetoes on amendments and other proposals.

actively—13 of its 16 vetoes have been cast since 2000—and, in each of these cases, has done so with Russia. Together with Russia, it vetoed resolutions on Myanmar and Zimbabwe in 2007 and 2008, with its remaining 11 vetoes in this period being on resolutions related to Syria. Since 2000, Russia has vetoed 27 draft resolutions, 16 on Syria and three on Ukraine. It also vetoed resolutions on the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, Georgia, Yemen sanctions, Venezuela, and climate and security. The US is the only member of the P3 (France, UK and US) that has continued to use its veto—14 times since 2000, with all but two resolutions related to the Israel-Palestine conflict. It vetoed a resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2002 and its most recent veto was on a counter-terrorism resolution in August 2020.

As these numbers and issues indicate, vetoes affect the Council's ability to address some of the most serious violations of the UN Charter and international law. On Syria, the use of the veto has blocked the Security Council's condemnation of chemical weapons attacks, shut down a chemical weapons investigation mechanism and prevented a referral to the ICC. On Ukraine, the use of the veto has blocked investigations and the establishment of criminal tribunals, as well as condemnation of Russian aggression against Ukraine. On "the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", the veto has prevented condemnation of the building of illegal settlements, and the use of violence against Palestinians.

The 2020 US veto of a draft resolution on the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and Russia's 2021 veto of a draft resolution on climate and security may portend their new readiness to deploy the veto on thematic issues.

With veto abolition appearing unlikely, as the required Charter amendment needs the support of all permanent members, the General Assembly's 26 April decision is nonetheless a way of imposing greater accountability for veto use. Some analysts think its impact will be minimal: members already offer public explanations of their votes in the Council chamber, and simply having to explain their reasons to the larger membership may not act as a deterrent. As well, the mere threat of veto use can serve to block a Council decision and is nowhere recorded or explained. But the initiative breaks the ice on a long-stalled reform discussion. At a time when questions have been raised about the Council's ability to carry out its mandate according to the Charter and multilateralism is under severe strain, the General Assembly's recent actions may be a much-needed shot in the arm and a reminder of its capacity to take action in the face of Council gridlock.

Status Update since our April Forecast

DRC/Great Lakes Region

Council members issued a press statement on 5 April that condemned the attack on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC in Ituri that led to the death of one peacekeeper (SC/14855).

On 27 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the Great Lakes region (S/PV.9023). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed on the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework) for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region, which covers the period from 16 September 2021 to 15 March (S/2022/276). Executive Secretary of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) João Samuel Caholo and Dino Mahtani, an independent expert on the Great Lakes region, also briefed.

On 28 April, Council members adopted a press statement which welcomed the intensification of regional diplomacy in the Great Lakes region and recognised the progress in the implementation of the PSC Framework (SC/14872). In the statement, members also expressed concern over the military activities of armed groups in eastern DRC and in the region and took note of the outcome of the second regional heads of state conclave on the DRC held in Nairobi on 21 April. At the summit, regional leaders agreed to adopt a two-track approach: a political track to facilitate consultations between the DRC and armed groups, and a military track—through the establishment of a regional force—to fight armed groups that refuse political dialogue.

Biological Weapons

On 6 April, Russia organised an Arria-formula meeting titled "Threats to international peace and security emanating from military biological activities in regions across the globe". The Deputy Permanent Representative of Russia, Dmitry Polyanskiy, chaired the meeting. General Igor Kirillov, the Commander in Chief of Radiologic, Chemical and Biological Defense of the Russian Armed Forces; Bulgarian journalist Dilyana Gaytandzhieva; and Russian TV journalist and TV host Arkadiy Mamontov briefed the members.

Mali

On 7 April, the Security Council held a briefing on Mali (S/PV.9012), followed by closed consultations. The head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), El-Ghassim Wane, briefed, presenting the Secretary-General's latest report on Mali (S/2022/278). Bouaré Bintou Founé Samaké, the President of Women in Law and Development in Africa in Mali, also briefed. Council members were unable to agree on a press statement proposed by France the following day that apparently would have requested an independent investigation into the alleged killing of hundreds of civilians and suspected jihadists in the central Mali village of Mourah at the end of March.

COVID-19

On 11 April, the Security Council held a briefing on equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in conflict-affected areas or in humanitarian crisis situations (S/PV.9014). The Council heard briefings from

Ted Chaiban, the Global Lead Coordinator for COVID-19 Vaccine Country-Readiness and Delivery; Dr. Esperanza Martinez, the ICRC's Crisis Operations Manager; and Emmanuel Ojwang, the Health and Nutrition Coordinator of CARE South Sudan. Council members considered a UK-proposed draft press statement in connection with the meeting. However, it seems that the text was not agreed due to differences about how to reference World Trade Organization discussions around waiving intellectual property protections.

Colombia

On 12 April, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9015) on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2022/267). President Iván Duque of Colombia represented his country at the meeting.

Conflict-related Sexual Violence

On 13 April, the Security Council held its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, titled "Accountability as Prevention: Ending Cycles of Sexual Violence in Conflict" (S/PV.9016). The meeting was chaired by Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, UK Minister of State for South Asia, North Africa, the UN and the Commonwealth, and the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. The briefers were: Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten; 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and UN Office on Drugs and Crime Goodwill Ambassador Nadia Murad, co-founder of the civil society organisation Huquqyat Mariana Karkoutly; and Hilina Berhanu, who is the first Ethiopian civil society representative to brief the Council since the start of the conflict in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia

On 14 April, Security Council members discussed the situation in Ethiopia under "any other business". The meeting was requested by the A3 members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya). Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 19 April, Security Council members convened for closed consultations on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". China, France, Ireland, Norway, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) requested the meeting, following the recent tensions at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount site in Jerusalem's Old City. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed.

On 25 April, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.9021). Wennesland briefed. Among other issues, he said that the situation in Jerusalem remains "relatively calm" and called on political, religious and community leaders to work towards reducing tensions, upholding the status quo at the holy sites, and ensuring that their sanctity is respected by all. Wennesland said that the recent tensions have highlighted that "efforts to manage the conflict are not a substitute for real progress towards resolving it".

Afghanistan

On 20 April, Council members issued a press statement that condemned a terrorist attack against the Abdul Rahim-e Shahid High School and Mumtaz Education Centre in the Dasht-e-Barchi area of Kabul, Afghanistan, the day before (SC/14866). Several people died and dozens were wounded in the attack.

Kosovo

On 20 April, the Council held its first briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.9019). Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Ziadeh briefed on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2022/313). Nikola Selaković, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora of Kosovo, also addressed the Council. The discussion focused on reviving the EU-facilitated dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia, improving relations between Belgrade and Pristina, and addressing tensions arising from recent attacks against police in northern Kosovo.

Western Sahara

On 20 April, Council members held consultations to discuss the situation in Western Sahara. Personal Envoy Staffan de Mistura, who had taken office in November 2021, briefed, covering his recent visit to the region and interactions with counterparts from Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, the Polisario Front, and the Sahrawi people. Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of MINURSO Alexander Ivanko also addressed the Council, covering recent operations of the mission and security developments on the ground.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold an open briefing on the situation in Ukraine. Additional meetings on Ukraine are likely, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

In late March, the frontlines in the Ukraine war shifted following the withdrawal of Russian forces from northern areas near the cities

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9018 (19 April 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine, which focused on the situation of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and returnees. S/PV.9013 (11 April 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine under the agenda item "Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine". S/PV.9011 (5 April 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine under the agenda item "Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136)". **General Assembly Document** A/RES/ES-11/3 (7 April 2022) was a resolution suspending Russia's membership in the UN Human Rights Council.

of Kyiv and Chernihiv. Hostilities have since concentrated in the eastern and southern parts of the country—including the Donetsk, Luhansk and Kharkiv regions—as Russia has been focusing on its stated objective of controlling the entire eastern Donbas region and establishing a land corridor from Crimea to Russia.

After Ukrainian forces regained control of several cities and villages near Kyiv that Russia had taken, including Bucha, Irpin and Motyzhyn, reports emerged of atrocities committed by Russian forces while in control of these areas, including indiscriminate killing and torture of civilians and conflict-related sexual violence. On 13 April, following a trip to Bucha, ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan described Ukraine as a "crime scene" and said there were "reasonable grounds" to suggest Russia had committed war crimes during its military operation. Russia has denied these allegations, blaming Ukraine and the West for fabricating evidence and spreading false narratives. On 18 April, Russian President Vladimir Putin gave an honorary title to a brigade accused by Ukraine of having committed war crimes in Bucha.

Ukrainian and international interlocutors have emphasised the need to investigate and ensure accountability for war crimes reportedly committed by Russia in northern Ukraine and other parts of the country. On 25 March, Ukraine, together with Albania, Colombia, Denmark, the Marshall Islands, and the Netherlands, launched the Group of Friends of Accountability following the Aggression against Ukraine to promote the issue at the UN. On 27 April, Albania and France organised an Arria-formula meeting on "Ensuring accountability for atrocities committed in Ukraine" to encourage member states to join the Group of Friends and discuss ways in which all relevant stakeholders can support efforts to establish a chain of responsibility and accountability. (For more details, see our 26 April What's in Blue story.)

The widespread outrage over the reported atrocities also galvanised further actions to isolate Russia in international fora. On 7 April, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), with 93 votes in favour, 24 against and 58 abstentions. At the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), member states voted Russia out of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations on 13 April. Russia had been a member of the committee since its establishment in 1947. On 27 April, member states adopted a resolution suspending Russia's membership in the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

As at 28 April, OHCHR had documented 6,009 civilian casualties, including 2,829 deaths, while noting that the true figures are likely to be considerably higher. Most casualties have been attributed to the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area, such as shelling from heavy artillery, the use of multiple rocket launch systems, and air attacks. Since Russia invaded Ukraine on 24 February, approximately 13 million people—more than a quarter of Ukraine's population—have been forcibly displaced, according to a 26 April OCHA humanitarian impact situation report. That includes 7.7 million internally displaced people and 5.3 million refugees who have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries.

In a 24 April tweet, the UK's ministry of defence warned that Russia is planning a staged referendum in the southern city of Kherson "aimed at justifying its occupation", adding that Kherson is "key to Russia's objective of establishing a land bridge to Crimea and dominating southern Ukraine". Ukrainian civilians in Kherson and elsewhere, including most recently in Kharkiv, are reportedly organising volunteer efforts to resist the Russian occupation.

Most of Mariupol is currently under Russian control. However, several hundred Ukrainian troops and approximately 1,000 civilians remain in the Azovstal steel plant. Kyiv has urged Moscow to hold a "special round of talks" on evacuating troops and civilians that remain trapped in Azovstal. On 23 April, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy threatened to "withdraw from any negotiation process" if Russia kills the remaining Ukrainian troops in Mariupol. Peace talks have been stalled since the allegations of Russian atrocities in north Ukraine in early April; the last face-to-face meeting between Russian and Ukrainian delegations took place on 29 March.

On 20 April, Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric confirmed that the Secretary-General António Guterres had sent letters to Russia and Ukraine requesting meetings in Moscow and Kyiv. The Secretary-General travelled to Moscow and Kyiv on 26 April and 28 April, respectively. During his meetings with Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Guterres discussed proposals for a humanitarian ceasefire in Mariupol involving the UN and the ICRC. According to a 26 April readout issued by Dujarric, Putin agreed, in principle, to Guterres' proposal. On 28 April, Russia fired two cruise missiles into Kyiv while the Secretary-General was present in the city. The missiles hit a residential building, reportedly killing one person and injuring at least ten. Guterres and his team were not harmed by the strike. Russia's Defence Ministry claimed that the attack targeted a rocket production facility.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is determining what role it can play in facilitating an end to the conflict. While it can continue to hold regular Council meetings on the situation in Ukraine, members may also wish to consider informal formats which can allow members to interact with key actors on the situation on the ground, such as an informal interactive dialogue or Arria-formula meetings.

Ensuring humanitarian access and respect for international humanitarian law remain key issues for the Security Council. Council members will follow closely the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to establish a humanitarian ceasefire in Mariupol and may wish to invite Guterres to brief the Council on his visit to the region.

The protection of civilians and critical infrastructure is another key issue for the Council. Members may choose to organise meetings on the protection of critical infrastructure in Ukraine, including defending against cyber-attacks, such as those targeting power grids. Russia has reportedly targeted critical energy infrastructure since launching its invasion. This has resulted in significant shortages of gas, electricity and water in areas of heavy fighting.

The damage to Ukraine's economy resulting from Russia's invasion and the destruction of infrastructure is another important issue. Council members may wish to request a briefing on this matter and invite representatives from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank to assess the extent of damage to Ukrainian infrastructure incurred by Russia's military operation. According to a 10 April World Bank report, Ukraine's economy is expected to contract by 45 percent in 2022. The

report noted that "depending on the war's duration, the share of the population living below the actual Subsistence Minimum may reach 70 percent in 2022".

Council Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the situation in Ukraine, with Russia justifying its invasion and several Council members—including Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US—strongly condemning Russia. Members of the latter group have consistently called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine. More recently, as evidence has been mounting of Russian forces' indiscriminate killing and torture of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence, and attacks against civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals, these Council members have increasingly stressed the need to ensure accountability for atrocities committed in Ukraine.

Several elected Council members—including the A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) and Brazil—have tended to be critical of the Russian intervention but have been uncomfortable with sanctions and the inclusion of what they term "political" language in humanitarian texts. Furthermore, while most of these members support an independent UN investigation to ensure accountability for alleged war crimes in Ukraine, most have been hesitant to accuse Russian forces of having committed atrocities in Ukraine before the conclusion of a full and transparent investigation. (Gabon abstained from voting on HRC resolution 49/1, adopted on 4 March, which established the independent international Commission of Inquiry.)

India continues to pursue a more neutral stance on the issue, stressing the importance of de-escalation and the need to promote dialogue and diplomacy without condemning Russia. In April, several international interlocutors attempted to persuade India to take a stronger stance on Ukraine. On 1 April, Lavrov commended India's neutrality ahead of a meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. On 11 April, US President Joe Biden held virtual talks with Modi, which Biden described as a "constructive, direct conversation". This was followed by a visit to India by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on 21 April.

China has also been unwilling to criticise Russia directly during the crisis. Instead, it has demonstrated support for Russian views regarding European security architecture. It has also consistently criticised unilateral sanctions, maintaining during a 29 March Council briefing that the "ever-escalating, sweeping, indiscriminate sanctions" against Russia will give rise to "new humanitarian problems". Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping reiterated China's disapproval of unilateral sanctions and its opposition to NATO expansion. Addressing the annual Boao Forum for Asia on 21 April, Xi proposed a "global security initiative" that would, among other things, "reject Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc confrontation".

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In May, Council members expect to receive their bi-annual briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559. Adopted in 2004, this resolution called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all militias, and the extension of government control over the whole Lebanese territory. A copy of the Secretary-General's report, which is expected to serve as the basis for the briefing, was circulated to Council members on 22 April. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is the expected briefer.

Key Recent Developments

Parliamentary elections are scheduled in Lebanon for 15 May. While several political leaders, including Prime Minister Najib Mikati, have said publicly that the elections will be held without delays, several factors regarding the polls are a source of uncertainty. In February, the government approved an election budget of approximately $18 million, a $36 million decrease from the budget for the 2018 elections. According to data referenced by the Lebanese interior minister, public electricity provider Électricité du Liban may charge in excess of $16 million to provide power on the day of the elections, and the state may still have to use private generators to ensure the powering of polling centres. (Extensive power shortages have been one of the elements of Lebanon's ongoing socioeconomic crisis.)

In January, Sunni leader and former prime minister Saad Hariri announced that he was retiring from political life and would not stand in the elections. In April, Sunni-majority states Saudi Arabia and Kuwait returned their ambassadors to Lebanon after having recalled them in October 2021 when—in the context of already strained relationships between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia—critical comments by former Lebanese Information Minister George Kordahi on the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen came to light. (Kordahi made the negative comments—which included a comment that Iran-backed Houthis were defending themselves from "an external aggression"—before joining the government. He stepped down in December 2021.) Some analysts have argued that, among broader calculations, the rapprochement may be aimed at preventing the Shi'a group Hezbollah from increasing its influence in the context of the upcoming elections. The ambassadors of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, who were also recalled in the aftermath of Kordahi's comments, have yet to return to Lebanon.

The May elections will also be the first since the October 2019 mass protests against the Lebanese political establishment (for background, see our brief on Lebanon in the November 2019 Forecast). On 23 April, Al Jazeera reported that some independent candidates

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2591 (30 August 2021) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for another year until 31 August 2022. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over the whole territory of Lebanon. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2022/345 (22 April 2022) was the most recent report on the implementation of resolution 1559. S/2022/214 (11 March 2022) was the most recent report on the implementation of resolution 1701.

have faced intimidation and attacks, including a candidate who had some of her electoral billboards vandalised. In his 11 March report on the implementation of resolution 1701, Secretary-General António Guterres called upon the Lebanese authorities to prevent violence against women in politics and urged political actors to "commit to peaceful elections and freedom of expression, to work to calm tensions and to refrain from sectarian incitement and hate speech". Security Council members underscored the importance of holding free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections in the two most recent press statements on Lebanon, issued on 27 September 2021 and 4 February, "ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women as candidates and voters".

Lebanon continues to experience the effects of its severe socioeconomic crisis, with added concerns over the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on food security in Lebanon. (According to a recent FAO information note, Lebanon is among a group of countries that have, on average, imported half of their wheat purchases from Ukraine and Russia.) In this context, the situation of refugees in Lebanon remains dire. In March, the World Food Programme in Lebanon assisted 1,071,007 Syrian refugees and 6,431 refugees of other nationalities, in addition to 529,194 Lebanese people in need. On 24 March, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka visited the Burj Barajneh refugee camp, where she was briefed by officials of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the growing needs of Palestine refugees for UNRWA's services, including education, health, social services, and cash assistance.

On 23 April, a boat carrying a group of people intending to leave Lebanon sank off the coast of Tripoli in the north of the country, killing at least six people. According to media reports, some survivors accused the Lebanese navy of ramming the boat, causing it to sink, while the military reportedly said that the collision occurred as a result of the boat's attempted evasion manoeuvres. In a 24 April tweet, Wronecka said that the "tragedy is another signal of the urgent need for solutions to Lebanon's socio-economic crises and living hardships".

A delegation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) visited Lebanon from 28 March to 7 April. At the end of the visit, an IMF official announced that the Lebanese authorities and the IMF had reached a staff-level agreement (that is, a preliminary agreement) to potentially support Lebanon for 46 months with around $3 billion. The agreement has yet to be approved by the IMF management and Executive Board and is subject to the Lebanese authorities implementing a series of prior actions—including Parliamentary approval of the 2022 budget—as well as confirmation of international partners' financial support.

On 10 March, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) convicted Hezbollah-linked Hassan Habib Merhi and Hussein Hassan Oneissi, both tried in absentia, for being accomplices to intentional homicide, among other felonies, reversing on appeal its earlier acquittal. In a 22 March statement, the Secretary-General called for the decision of the tribunal to be respected and urged the international community to continue supporting the work of the STL. (The STL, a tribunal composed of Lebanese and international judges, began operating in 2009 to try those accused of carrying out the February 2005 bombing in which former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and 21 others were killed.) In a 13 March tweet, the US State Department welcomed the convictions of Merhi and Oneissi.

According to media reports, the Lebanese government has recently approved the demolition of the silos, which were seriously damaged in the August 2020 Beirut port explosion. This is despite concerns on the part of victims' families that the demolition may allow for the port to be reconstructed even in the absence of accountability for the explosion and that this may erase a visible reminder of the need for justice. To date, no significant progress has been achieved in the inquiry into the responsibility for the blast.

Adopted in August 2021, resolution 2591 extended UNIFIL's mandate until August 2022 and requested it to support the LAF through temporary and special measures consisting of "non-lethal material (fuel, food and medicine) and logistical support" for six months. (This provision was motivated by concerns about the impact of the socioeconomic crisis on the LAF's capacity to satisfactorily carry out its functions in UNIFIL's area of operations.) The six months expired at the end of February. In a 15 March letter, the Permanent Representative of Lebanon said that extending these measures is vital to ensuring the implementation of resolution 1701 and to strengthening the capacity of UNIFIL to carry out its activities. The letter requested that the temporary and special measures be extended for an additional year. During the 25 April quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", the representative of Lebanon expressed hope that the Council will look favourably at Lebanon's request. At the time of writing, it does not appear that Council members will consider whether to extend these measures before UNIFIL's mandate renewal in August.

On 25 April, a rocket was launched from southern Lebanon towards Israel. A UNIFIL statement issued later the same day says that the Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz was in immediate contact with the Lebanese and Israeli authorities to urge restraint but that "[n]onetheless, the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] fired back several dozen shells into Lebanon". According to media reports, the IDF suspects that Palestinian factions are responsible for the launch, possibly in connection with recent tensions in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. (For background, see our 18 and 24 April What's in Blue stories.) On 26 April, the IDF announced that it had seized a number of weapons—including machine guns and hand grenades—that were apparently intended to be smuggled into Israel. In February, Israeli fighter jets flew over Beirut following incursions by Hezbollah drones into Israel and declarations by Hezbollah's leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah that the group had become capable of converting standard rockets into precision missiles.

Women, Peace and Security

On 1 March, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women issued its Concluding Observations on the sixth periodic report of Lebanon under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Committee noted with concern that "women only represent 4.7 percent of parliamentarians and are still underrepresented in ministries and municipal councils, as well as in leadership positions". In view of the 15 May elections, the Committee urged Lebanon to "establish a minimum quota

of 30 percent for women candidates on the electoral lists of political parties". At the time of writing, no such measure has been adopted.

Key issues and Options

The substantial amount of weaponry held by Hezbollah and other non-state actors in Lebanon is a long-standing issue. This situation contributes to periodic tensions between Israel and Lebanon. Other key issues of interest for the Council are the timely holding of elections in May, the subsequent formation of a government, and the implementation of reforms aimed at addressing the ongoing socio-economic instability. Council members are likely to closely follow developments in these areas in the coming months, and may consider a product, as appropriate.

Council Dynamics

There is broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. Differences over Hezbollah remain among Council members. While some Council members distinguish between Hezbollah's political and military wings and have designated only its military wing as a terrorist organisation, members, including the UK and the US, have listed the Shi'a group in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. Russia, on the other hand, sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt is expected to brief on the latest report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR).

The current authorisation for the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) expires on 3 November 2022.

Key Recent Developments

BiH continues to experience political instability amid growing nationalist and separatist actions and rhetoric. On 8 October 2021, Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik announced that the RS would withdraw from key national institutions, including BiH's judicial system, the taxation authority and the armed forces. On 10 December 2021, the National Assembly of the RS (NARS) voted in favour of initiating the procedure to withdraw RS from BiH's institutions. The proposed provisions were expected to come into force following a six-month period, during which time the Assembly could draft new laws and, if needed, amend the RS constitution.

Two days prior to the voting session, the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) Steering Board, which serves as the executive arm of the PIC and provides the High Representative with political guidance, issued a statement deploring the actions taken by the NARS, which "seriously challenge the Dayton framework and damage the stability of BiH and the region". (The PIC was established in December 1995 to garner international support for the Dayton Agreement, which created two entities within BiH: RS and the predominantly Bosniak and Croat Federation of BiH, or FBiH.)

Since Dodik's announcement in October 2021, the NARS has passed several laws challenging the authority of federal BiH institutions and, in some cases, forming separate institutions within the RS to supersede them. On 20 October, NARS adopted a law on pharmaceuticals and medical devices that foresees the establishment of an independent body within the RS to assume the responsibilities of the national Agency for Medical Equipment and Drugs. The PIC Steering Board criticised the law on 8 December as challenging BiH's constitution. On 3 February, the NARS voted in favour of a draft law on amendments to the law on Republic administration, which seeks to establish the Agency for Medicines and Medical Devices in RS.

Furthermore, on 10 February, the NARS initiated proceedings to undermine BiH's judicial system, voting in favour of a draft law concerning the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. The draft law seeks to "annul the unconstitutional establishment of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of [BiH]" and envisages an autonomous judicial and prosecutorial agency within RS that would, among other functions, be responsible for appointing and dismissing judges. On the same day, the PIC Steering Board issued a statement describing the law as "a violation of the constitution and legal order of BiH".

During the same parliamentary session, the NARS adopted a law that seeks to establish RS's ownership of select property used by RS public authorities that previously belonged to BiH. However, on 12 April, when the law was due to enter into force, Schmidt issued a decree suspending the law until a final decision of BiH's Constitutional Court is rendered.

The decree was rejected by the RS, which has not recognised the High Representative's authority since October 2021. That was when a law passed by NARS on 30 July 2021 entered into force, declaring that a decision of the High Representative did not apply to the RS. The law was in response to then-High Representative Valentin Inzko's 22 July 2021 decree amending BiH's criminal code, which set prison terms for anyone who publicly denies or attempts to justify genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. According to the OHR, the law adopted by the NARS "prescribes that State-level legislation shall not be applicable in the RS and obliges the RS authorities not to cooperate with BiH institutions attempting to implement State-level law". Moreover, according to the High Representative's 5 November report, Dodik has "warned that any attempt by BiH judicial institutions or law enforcement agencies to intercede would be met with force".

On 9 January, the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska (RS) held a ceremony commemorating the 30th anniversary of its

UN DOCUMENTS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2604 (3 November 2021) renewed the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) for another year. **Security Council Letter** S/2021/912 (29 October 2021) transmitted the 60th report on the implementation of the Peace Agreement on BiH, prepared by the High Representative on BiH. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8896 (3 November 2021) was the semi-annual high-level debate on BiH. **General Assembly Resolution** A/RES/ES-11/1 (2 March 2021) was about aggression against Ukraine.

founding. The celebration of this holiday had been deemed unconstitutional by BiH's Constitutional Court in 2015 because the Court found it to be discriminatory to non-Bosnian Serbs in the RS. Riots broke out in several towns across the RS. According to media reports, participants sang nationalist and Islamophobic songs and carried banners of Ratko Mladić, the Bosnian Serb general who was convicted of genocide in 2017.

On 14 January, OHCHR Spokesperson Elizabeth Throssell said that OHCHR was "deeply concerned" by recent incidents "that saw individuals glorify atrocity crimes and convicted war criminals, target certain communities with hate speech, and, in some cases, directly incite violence".

On 24 February, the same day that Russia launched its military operation in Ukraine, EUFOR announced that it would double the number of its military forces, deploying an additional 600 troops to BiH as a "precautionary measure". It cited the potential for the deteriorating global security situation to spread instability to BiH. Such concerns have also led to increased calls for renewed consideration of BiH's EU membership

Key Issues and Options

The role of the OHR remains a key issue for the Council. The RS has not recognised Schmidt's authority as High Representative since the Security Council failed to adopt a draft resolution tabled by China and Russia on 22 July 2021 that, while supporting Schmidt's appointment as High Representative for BiH, also called for the closure of the OHR on 31 July 2022. The resolution received two votes in favour (China and Russia) and 13 abstentions. During the November 2021 debate on BiH, Russia apparently blocked Schmidt's briefing by threatening to veto the Council's renewal of EUFOR ALTHEA's authorisation. As Council president in May, the US may try to invite Schmidt to brief the Council, understanding that China and Russia would likely not be able to garner sufficient support from Council members to block his participation by calling for a procedural vote.

Other key issues include the need to tackle the growing nationalist rhetoric, particularly ahead of BiH's general elections on 2 October, and the need to address the RS's increased efforts to withdraw from BiH institutions. Schmidt's decree suspending NARS' law regarding property used by RS authorities will serve as a litmus test, determining the extent to which the RS leadership is willing to undermine Schmidt's authority and the extent to which Schmidt is willing to enforce his orders should the RS choose to do so.

Council members may consider issuing a presidential statement endorsing the continued relevance of the Dayton Agreement and urging all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric and actions. It could also propose a review of OHR's future role in exchange for RS's recognition of Schmidt's legitimacy as High Representative and the return of full authority to the BiH institutions.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Deep divisions related to BiH's Euro-Atlantic integration and possible accession to NATO, particularly between Russia on the one hand and the US and European members of the Council on the other, colour Council dynamics on BiH. The situation in Ukraine is likely to permeate the Council's engagement on BiH and contribute to further division between these two camps.

On several occasions, Moscow has threatened action should BiH seek NATO membership. On 17 March, the Russian Ambassador to BiH, Igor Kalbukhov, reportedly told reporters that "Ukraine's example shows what to expect" by way of a Russian response should BiH take steps to join NATO. On the same day, the US embassy in Sarajevo described Kalbukhov's statement as "dangerous, irresponsible, and unacceptable", adding that "no third party has a say in security arrangements between NATO and sovereign countries".

RS and FBiH remain starkly divided on the situation in Ukraine. After BiH announced that it would co-sponsor the 2 March General Assembly resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Dodik submitted a letter to Russia on 28 February, in its capacity as Security Council president in February, describing BiH's move as "unilateral and unauthorized" and declaring that BiH had not "reached a unanimous stand on the events in eastern Ukraine in terms of condemning the Russian Federation".

Council members largely share concerns over BiH's divisive ethnic politics and support efforts to reform BiH's constitution and electoral system. Since mid-2021, the EU and the US have facilitated negotiations on a comprehensive package of constitutional and electoral reforms in an effort to resolve long-standing issues impeding the functioning of BiH's political institutions.

Most members are critical of the RS leaders' divisive rhetoric and recent measures to withdraw from BiH institutions, which they view as challenging BiH's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, however, tends to be more supportive of the positions of the RS authorities and has long been critical of the OHR, contending that its reporting is not objective. Neither China nor Russia recognise Schmidt's authority as High Representative and may once again call for the early closure of the OHR.

The BiH Coordination and Drafting Group, which is responsible for preparing the first draft of Council products on BiH, currently consists of Albania, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK, and the US.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support for the JBVMM expire on 15 May.

Background and Key Recent Developments

For more than ten years, the governments of Sudan and South Sudan have made no significant progress in resolving the final status of Abyei, the disputed area along the Sudan-South Sudan border. In recent months, Sudan and South Sudan have been more focused on their internal situations following the 25 October 2021 military coup in Sudan and political challenges in South Sudan. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report, covering 16 October 2021 to 15 April, "the security situation in the Abyei Area remained mostly calm, despite sporadic incidents, including killings; shootings; cattle-rustling; violence against women, including rape; and migration-related incidents". The report expressed concern over the outbreak of violence between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities in the Agok area in February and March and two armed attacks against UNISFA in early March.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report, "the Abyei Area continued to face significant humanitarian challenges resulting from outbreaks of violence, the presence of armed elements, population displacement and economic challenges in both the Sudan and South Sudan". According to OCHA's March humanitarian situation overview, inter-communal tensions in February and March increased in the Abyei Administrative Area, reportedly because of territorial disputes, inter-tribal tensions and revenge-seeking. It noted that 76,000 people were internally displaced; 240,000 people were in need of assistance; and, since the outbreak of violence in early February, around 60 people have reportedly been killed between Agok and Amiet common market.

UNISFA continues to face challenges in the implementation of its mandate, including the delayed issuance of visas, the opening of the Anthony airstrip and the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission (as requested by the Council in May 2019). According to the Secretary-General's report, UNISFA faced challenges documenting human rights violations and abuses in the absence of human rights expertise as mandated in Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2609. The report noted that for the first time since the establishment of the mission, temporary visas were granted to two human rights officers.

Last year, tensions in the region affected the mission, including public calls from Sudan for the replacement of all Ethiopian troops. Since the mission's establishment in 2011, Ethiopia had been the sole troop-contributing country until recently. The Secretary-General's report noted that the reconfiguration of UNISFA's military component was ongoing. The Ethiopian contingent departed Abyei on 10 April, except for a rear party that will be repatriated in the near future, the report said. On 24 April, news sources reported that 528 Ethiopian peacekeepers from Tigray had refused to return to Ethiopia, fearing for their safety, and that Sudanese authorities are being assisted by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to aid those seeking asylum. According to the Secretary-General's report, as of 10 April, most of the Ghanaian troops had arrived, as had more than half of the Pakistani troops, the full Nepali headquarters support unit, and the majority of the Bangladeshi members of the Force Protection Unit, who had taken up their responsibilities relating to the JBVMM.

Following a one-month technical rollover in November 2021, the Council renewed UNISFA's mandate until 15 May with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2609 on 15 December 2021. It reduced the authorised troop ceiling from 3,550 to 3,250 and maintained the authorised police ceiling at 640 police personnel, including 148 individual police officers and three formed police units. (For more, see our What's in Blue story of 14 December 2021.)

The Council was briefed on Abyei on 21 April by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh. (This was Tetteh's first briefing to the Council since her appointment in February.) Lacroix reported that, since October 2021, intercommunal violence had resulted in the deaths of 29 people and the humanitarian situation had deteriorated. There has been no progress on the deployment of the three formed police units mandated by the Council, he said, nor on re-opening JBVMM team sites 11 and 12 and the headquarters of Sector 1 in Gok Machar after UNISFA was forced to relocate following violence there last year. He echoed the recommendation made in the Secretary-General's report to extend the mandate for six months.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council leading up to UNISFA's renewal in May is what modifications to make, if any, to the mandate and force structure in light of the situation on the ground, including the outbreak of violence in February and March as well as the humanitarian situation. A likely option is for Council members to consider the findings of the Secretary-General's report and the recommendation that the mission's mandate be extended for six months.

An option would be to renew the mandate without any changes, given the uncertain internal political situations in Sudan and South Sudan. (In the past, the three African members, supported by China and, to a lesser extent some other members, have proposed this as an option.)

A further issue that Council members are likely to follow relates to the operational difficulties faced by UNISFA and the JBVMM. It is likely that, among other issues, the visa-issuance problems, attacks against UNISFA, restrictions on its freedom of movement, and the protracted difficulties with appointing a civilian deputy head of mission will be discussed during negotiations on UNISFA's mandate renewal resolution. Regarding the stalled political situation, the Council may consider encouraging the AU to intensify its mediation efforts, as called for in the Secretary-General's report.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2609 (15 December 2021) renewed the mandate of UNISFA until 15 May 2022. S/RES/2606 (15 November 2021) was a technical rollover of UNISFA's mandate for one month. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/316 (14 April 2022) was on the situation in Abyei. **Security Council Letter** S/2021/805 (17 September 2021) was from the Secretary-General, transmitting the strategic review of UNISFA. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.9020 (21 April 2022) was a briefing on UNISFA and Sudan/South Sudan. S/PV.8932 (15 December 2021) was the meeting to adopt resolution 2609

Council Dynamics

Council members agree on the important roles that UNISFA and the JBVMM play in support of achieving peace, security and stability in Abyei and the broader region. Members also have a shared concern over the obstruction of UNISFA's mandate. It seems that the negotiations on resolution 2609, which renewed UNISFA's mandate in December 2021, centred on several issues, including UNISFA's reconfiguration, the mission's performance and effectiveness, and facilitating the safety, security, access, and freedom of movement of UNISFA personnel. The issue of an exit strategy for UNISFA—which has been raised by the US, the penholder on Abyei, in previous Council discussions on the mission—was also raised during the negotiations. (For more, see our What's in Blue story of 14 December 2021.)

In a statement following the adoption of resolution 2609, Russia expressed regret that the US "insisted on maintaining a stronger accusatory slant, blaming both states for the unresolved tasks before the mission" while acknowledging that issues remain "when it comes to staffing UNISFA's police contingent, the appointment of a civilian Head of Mission and access to the Anthony airstrip".

At the briefing on 21 April, the US regretted that no meetings of any of the joint institutions or mechanisms had been held since the last briefing to the Council in October 2021, noting that the status quo is unacceptable. In a joint statement, the three African members—Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (the A3) emphasised that a high-level role for the AU, and the support of the international community, are essential to resolving the final status of Abyei. The A3 also expressed concern over intercommunal violence and the humanitarian situation, as did most other members. Brazil, along with others, encouraged the AU to intensify its mediation efforts and noted that regional support could be strengthened. Russia highlighted that the positions of Sudan and South Sudan must be considered in the renewal of UNISFA's mandate. China noted that it was a new troop contributor to the mission, with the contribution of a helicopter unit, and that a quick reaction force would be deployed as soon as possible, adding that it supports the renewal of UNISFA's mandate in principle.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is expected to hold its monthly briefing on Yemen, followed by closed consultations. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and an official from OCHA will brief. Major General Michael Beary, the head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), is expected to brief during consultations.

Key Recent Developments

On 1 April, Special Envoy Grundberg announced that the conflict parties had agreed—for the first time since 2016—to a nationwide truce for two months, from 2 April until 2 June, with the possibility of an extension. The truce, which the UN proposed for the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, entails halting all offensive ground, aerial and maritime military operations inside and outside Yemen and freezing current military positions on the ground.

The truce agreement also sets out humanitarian measures. During the two-month period, the Yemeni government and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition committed to allow 18 fuel ships to enter the Houthi rebel group-held ports in Hodeidah governorate and two commercial flights per week in and out of Sana'a Airport to Egypt and Jordan. The Special Envoy is also expected to convene a meeting of the parties to agree on opening roads in various governorates to facilitate the movement of civilians, including Taiz governorate, where the Houthis have maintained a siege of Taiz city for years.

The truce was followed by a second major development. In the early hours of 7 April, Yemeni President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi dismissed his controversial vice-president, Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, who had been in office since 2016. Hadi subsequently issued a presidential declaration that "irrevocably" transferred his own "full powers in accordance with the constitution and the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanism" to a new eight-person Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). These moves took place at the end of inter-Yemeni consultations that had started on 29 March in Riyadh, which were sponsored by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and brought together various anti-Houthi factions.

The PLC comprises leaders of several key groups. Rashad al-Alimi, a former interior minister in the early 2000s, was appointed as its president. The PLC's other members are Marib Governor Sultan al-Arada, National Resistance Forces leader Tareq Saleh, Giants Brigades commander Abdulrahman Abu Zara'a, Chief of Staff of the Presidential Office Abdullah al-Alimi Bawazeer, Member of Parliament Othman al-Majali, Southern Transitional Council president Aidarous al-Zubaidi, and Hadramawt Governor Faraj al-Bahsani.

According to the presidential declaration, the PLC's functions include managing Yemen's political, military and security affairs. The declaration stated that the PLC "is in charge of negotiating with Ansar Allah (the Houthis) for a permanent ceasefire…and sitting at the negotiating table to reach a final and comprehensive political solution that includes a transitional phase that will move Yemen from a state of war to a state of peace". The declaration also appointed a 50-person Consultation and Reconciliation Commission, a legal team, and an economic team to support the PLC. The declaration ended the period of Hadi's presidency, which began in February 2012 and was intended to last for the two years of political transition following President Ali Abdullah Saleh's resignation.

A Security Council press statement on 13 April welcomed the creation of the PLC and its assumption of powers. Council members "expressed their hope and expectation that the creation of the PLC will form an important step towards stability and an inclusive

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2624 (28 February 2022) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.9017(14 April 2022) was a briefing on Yemen. **Security Council Press Statements** SC/14861 (13 April 2022) welcomed the creation of the Presidential Leadership Council of the Government of Yemen. SC/14853 (4 April 2022) welcomed the 1 April call by the Special Envoy for a two-month truce in Yemen and the positive response from the parties. SC/14852 (4 April 2022) strongly condemned the Houthi cross-border terrorist attacks against Saudi Arabia on 20 March and 25 March, which struck critical civilian infrastructure.

Yemeni-led and -owned political settlement", noting the PLC's intention to form a negotiating team for the UN-led talks. Previously, on 4 April, Council members issued two press statements, one condemning the 20 March and 25 March cross-border "terrorist attacks" by the Houthis against Saudi Arabia that struck critical civilian infrastructure and the other welcoming the Special Envoy's 1 April call for a truce and the parties' positive response.

From 11 to 13 April, Grundberg conducted his first visit to Sana'a since assuming his role as Special Envoy in September 2021. According to Grundberg, Houthi leaders expressed their commitment to implementing all aspects of the truce, with discussions focused on strengthening the agreement and the next steps beyond the two-month truce period.

On 14 April, Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed the Council. Grundberg reported a significant reduction of violence since the truce and confirmed that there had been no airstrikes inside Yemen or cross-border attacks emanating from Yemen. According to Griffiths, the truce was already improving the humanitarian situation as civilian casualties had fallen to their lowest levels in months, and increased fuel imports were easing Yemen's fuel shortage. At the same time, both briefers noted reports of military operations, particularly around Marib and Taiz, that Grundberg said must be addressed urgently through the mechanisms established by the truce.

Following the formation of the PLC, Saudi Arabia announced a $3 billion economic package for Yemen and $300 million for the UN 2022 Yemen humanitarian response plan (HRP). The package includes $2 billion that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will jointly contribute to Yemen's central bank to stabilise the Yemeni rial—the news of which had already strengthened the currency by 25 percent, according to Griffiths at the 14 April briefing. During his briefing, Griffiths also reported that work on a UN-facilitated plan to transfer oil to another ship from the FSO Safer oil tanker, moored in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held port Ras Isa, could begin in May if the $80 million donor funding for the operation is raised.

On 17 April, Grundberg met in Riyadh with PLC President Rashad al-Alimi. On 19 April, Alimi and the other members of the PLC were sworn in at a ceremony in Aden, which Grundberg attended.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is to make sure that the parties uphold, implement and extend the truce. Reported hostilities, especially in Marib, are therefore of concern. Moreover, it is critical that there be progress on restarting an inclusive political process during the truce. Members could agree to closely monitor the parties' compliance and encourage Grundberg to engage the sides to strengthen the truce and complete his multi-track framework for a political process, which the Council could then endorse.

Despite the truce's positive impact on Yemen's humanitarian crisis, key issues remain, such as preventing famine and protecting civilians, improving humanitarian access, supporting the economy, and raising funds for relief efforts. Even with the recent Saudi announcement, the HRP has received commitments of only $1.6 billion of a required $4.27 billion. Council members could encourage the parties to implement the truce's humanitarian elements, including opening roads in Taiz and urge UN member states to fulfil their pledges to the HRP.

Resolving the issue of the FSO Safer is an ongoing issue. During the first half of May, the Netherlands is expected to host a donor conference to raise funding for the oil transfer operation.

Council Dynamics

Council members welcomed the truce announcement. Despite some concerns about Saudi Arabia's reportedly pressuring Hadi to transfer power, members appeared to view the political reconfiguration favourably as Hadi had been an unpopular leader and the new PLC encompasses members of key groups crucial to the negotiation of a political settlement with the Houthis. Members have also been supportive of the new UN plan to resolve the threat posed by the FSO Safer.

The UAE is a key member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition. It pushed for the Council to take stronger positions against the Houthis after the group's seizure of an Emirati flag vessel and missile and drone attacks targeting Abu Dhabi earlier this year. The US announced in April that it would lead a new maritime operation to prevent arms and other illicit trafficking in the Red Sea and off Yemen's southern coast, which prompted Houthi criticism. Russia has often opposed singling out the Houthis in Council products. This made its vote in favour of resolution 2624, which called the Houthis a "terrorist group", an unusual move, but it occurred against the backdrop of UAE abstentions on two Council resolutions addressing Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, and Norway abstained on resolution 2624, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime, because of their concerns about labelling the Houthis as a terrorist group. The ambassadors to Yemen of the Council's five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) continue to work closely to support the Special Envoy's efforts.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania) chairs the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). UNAMI's current mandate expires on 27 May. The Special Representative and head of UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, is scheduled to brief the Council on recent developments in Iraq and the Secretary-General's upcoming reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Both reports are due in May. The briefing will be followed by closed consultations.

The eighth report of the Special Adviser and Head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) is also due in May.

Key Recent Developments

Iraq's political system remains deadlocked in the aftermath of the 10 October 2021 parliamentary election. Under the Iraqi constitution, the government formation process that follows ratification of the election results involves a series of steps that must be completed within specific timeframes. The first of these steps took place on 9 January when Iraq's parliament convened and elected Mohamed al-Halbousi, the leader of the Sunni Taqaddum party, as speaker.

The deadline for the next step in the process, election of the president by parliament, was 8 February. By political convention designed to prevent sectarian violence, the president is traditionally Kurdish. In previous years, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) has nominated the president pursuant to an informal power-sharing agreement with the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). In line with this arrangement, the PUK nominated incumbent President Barham Salih in early February. The KDP broke with convention, however, and put forward former finance minister Hoshyar Zebari for the role.

Several members of the Iraqi parliament subsequently commenced legal proceedings challenging Zebari's nomination, arguing that he did not meet the good character requirements for the president outlined in Iraq's constitution due to allegations of corruption stemming from his time as finance minister. On 6 February, the day before parliament was scheduled to elect the new president, Iraq's Supreme Court decided to temporarily suspend Zebari's candidature while it considered the case against him.

The Court's decision led to a boycott of the vote by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's movement, which controls the largest bloc in parliament, and also by the Taqaddum party and the KDP, among others. As a result of the boycott, there was a lack of quorum in the parliament and the vote was postponed. The president was thus not elected within the constitutional timeframe. The Supreme Court ultimately barred Zebari from running for president in a ruling issued on 13 February. A new government cannot be formed until the president has been appointed, as the president is responsible for appointing the prime minister, who in turn is charged with selecting a cabinet. The formation process is complete once the cabinet is approved by parliament.

On 24 March, al-Sadr announced that his movement had forged an alliance with several other parties, including the KDP, the Taqqadum party, and members of Sunni businessman Khamis al-Khanjar's Azm Alliance. The new grouping, known as the Coalition for Saving the Homeland, nominated KDP politician Rebar Ahmed Khalid as its presidential candidate and Jaafar al-Sadr, Muqtada al-Sadr's cousin and Iraq's ambassador to the UK, as its candidate for prime minister.

A second vote to elect a new president was scheduled for 26 March. This vote was boycotted by the Shiite Coordination Framework (SCF), a group that comprises several pro-Iranian Shiite political parties, leading to another postponement due to lack of quorum. A third vote that was slated for 30 March was also postponed for similar reasons.

The difficulties that have arisen with selecting a president are emblematic of the sharp divide that has emerged among Iraqi political parties during the government formation process. Al-Sadr and the Coalition for Saving the Homeland are reportedly pushing to form a majority government controlled by their alliance. The SCF, on the other hand, is in favour of a consensus government in which power is shared among various political parties. In a 31 March tweet, al-Sadr announced that he was stepping back from the process for 40 days to give his opponents, including the SCF, a chance to form a government without his bloc and the parties aligned with it.

On 13 March, Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) claimed responsibility for a series of ballistic missile attacks that struck Erbil, the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan region, that day. According to media reports, the missiles appeared to target the US and its allies and exploded near a new US consulate building, injuring one Iraqi civilian. The IRGC said in a statement that the attack was directed against an Israeli "strategic centre". Several analysts have suggested that the missile attack was retaliation for an alleged Israeli air strike in Syria that killed four people on 9 March, including two members of the IRGC. On 28 March, supporters of groups linked to Iran reportedly attacked the Baghdad office of the KDP, prompting the KDP to cease its operations in the capital.

In a 15 February judgment, Iraq's Supreme Court ruled that a 2007 law regulating the oil industry in Iraqi Kurdistan enacted by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) was unconstitutional. The judgment also directed the KRG to hand control of its crude oil supplies to the federal government and declared null and void the KRG's oil contracts with third parties. On 28 February, the KRG's presidency announced that it rejected the ruling and said that the KRG will "exhaust all available means in order to safeguard the Kurdistan region's constitutional power and rights".

Rising food prices have also been an issue in Iraq. On 9 March, approximately 500 people reportedly gathered in Nasiriya to protest increases in the price of cooking oil and flour. The previous day, Iraq's caretaker government announced a series of measures that were intended to address this issue. A spokesperson for the trade ministry blamed the war in Ukraine for the higher cost of cooking oil.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) continues to be active in Iraq. On 9 April, ISIL fighters attacked Iraqi soldiers in Anbar province under the cover of a sandstorm. According to media reports, ISIL claimed 120 attacks in Iraq during the first quarter of 2022.

On 18 April, Turkey announced that it had launched a new offensive against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in northern Iraq. The offensive, which Turkey refers to as Operation Claw-Lock, reportedly involved commando units, special forces, unmanned

UN DOCUMENT ON IRAQ Security Council Resolution S/RES/2576 (27 May 2021) renewed the mandate of UNAMI until 27 May 2022.

aerial vehicles, and attack helicopters. At the time of writing, at least 19 PKK fighters and four Turkish soldiers have been killed during the attack.

Key Issues and Options

Council members are following developments in Iraq closely, particularly in the aftermath of the 10 October 2021 election. A key issue for the Council is reinforcing the importance of maintaining stability and security following the election. Depending on how the situation evolves, Council members may wish to issue a product that addresses issues of concern, such as the need to resolve political disputes through dialogue and within the applicable legal framework without resorting to violence. The Council could also consider urging the parties to reach an agreement on government formation as soon as possible.

The renewal of UNAMI's mandate is another key issue for the Council. Council members may wish to consider whether there is a need to amend UNAMI's mandate given the Iraqi government's request for technical assistance, advice, support, and monitoring from UNAMI during the upcoming October elections in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and the current political deadlock in the country. The Council could, for example, add language regarding the political impasse to the paragraph that requests UNAMI to prioritise the provision of advice, support, and assistance on advancing inclusive political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation.

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, as demonstrated by the recent attack carried out by the IRGC in Erbil. The Iraqi government routinely states that it does not wish to become a theatre for Iran-US tensions, while Turkey continues to conduct military operations in different parts of Iraq, despite Iraq's objections.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general and the UK is the penholder on Iraqi-Kuwaiti issues.

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council is expected to hold a briefing on the counter-terrorism Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S), established in 2017 by Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger (G5 Sahel).

Key Recent Developments

The continued deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel has increased political instability in the region, undermining the unity and effectiveness of the FC-G5S. Earlier this year, Burkina Faso became the latest G5 Sahel country to experience a coup d'état. Meanwhile, contingents from Mali, which had coups d'état in 2020 and 2021, have not been participating in the joint force. The G5 Sahel defence ministers have not met since November 2021, and the annual heads of state summit of the G5 Sahel, usually held in February, has not yet taken place. Mali would have acceded to its rotating presidency at the summit, but other G5 members reportedly oppose that. For now, Chad remains in this role. Relations are particularly strained between Mali and Niger.

Negotiations continued between Mali's transitional authorities and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on establishing a new timeline to hold elections and restore constitutional order. Since ECOWAS imposed economic and financial sanctions on Mali in January because of the delay in fulfilling the original 18-month transition calendar, the sides have moved closer to agreeing on a new timetable. In March, transition president and coup leader Assimi Goïta proposed an additional two-year extension of the transition. At a 25 March summit in Accra, ECOWAS reacted by calling for an extension of 12 to 16 months.

Meanwhile, France decided to withdraw from Mali its troops that are part of its Sahel-wide counter-terrorism force, Operation Barkhane, amid deteriorating relations with transition authorities and the reported deployment in December 2021 of personnel from the Wagner Group, the Russian private security company. On 17 February, France, allied European countries and Canada announced that they would fully withdraw their forces from Operation Barkhane and Task Force Takuba—the European special forces mission—from Mali within six months. "Due to the multiple obstructions… the political, operational and legal conditions are no longer met to effectively continue their current military engagement in the fight against terrorism in Mali", according to a joint statement by France, Canada, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, and 20 other European and African countries. The statement said they would "continue their joint action against terrorism in the Sahel region", focusing on Niger and West African coastal countries, and had begun consultations to determine the form of this cooperation by June 2022. On 22 April, Niger's parliament approved the deployment of "foreign forces" to the country to fight "terrorism", which has been seen as endorsing the re-deployment to Niger of units from Barkhane and Takuba in Mali.

Malian forces, bolstered by the reported deployment of the Wagner personnel, launched a new counter-terrorism offensive in its central region at the start of the year, achieving some military gains. Simultaneously, reports of human rights violations by security forces increased. In the worst such incident, Wagner and Malian forces allegedly executed around 300 civilians and suspected terrorists in the central Mali village of Mourah from 27 to 30 March. Mali claimed that it had killed 203 terrorist combatants during an operation from 23 to 31 March in Mourah.

Amid rising public anger over insecurity in Burkina Faso, military

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE **Security Council Letter** S/2021/850 (4 October 2021) was from the Secretary-General, containing "detailed and operational" options to support the FC-G5S, other than through MINUSMA. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8903 (12 November 2021) was a briefing on the G5 Sahel Joint Force. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/14790 (9 February 2022) expressed serious concern about the unconstitutional change of government in Burkina Faso.

officers carried out a coup d'état against Burkinabe President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. On 24 January, soldiers from the previously unknown Patriotic Movement for Preservation and Restoration (MPSR), led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, announced that they had deposed Kaboré because of the "ongoing degradation of the security situation".

Damiba was sworn in as transition president on 16 February. In a 23 February report to Damiba, a commission established by the MPSR to develop a draft transitional charter and agenda reportedly proposed a 30-month transition period. On 1 March, Damiba signed a charter outlining a 36-month transition. As with Mali, ECOWAS has been leading negotiations with the new authorities on a calendar for restoring constitutional order. At its 25 March summit, ECOWAS, which suspended Burkina Faso from the regional body in January, called for an "acceptable transition timetable" by 25 April, failing which "economic and financial sanctions will be applied immediately". In a 26 April statement, ECOWAS said that it would send a mission to Burkina Faso ahead of its next summit, the date of which was not specified.

Despite the military's overthrow of Kaboré over his handling of the jihadist insurgency, widespread insecurity persists. During two separate clashes on 20 March with militants in the southeastern provinces of Gourma and Koulpelogo, 13 and 11 soldiers were killed, respectively. At least 12 soldiers and four paramilitary fighters were killed in an 8 April attack on a base in Burkina's north.

A 14 April OCHA humanitarian update reported that there are 1.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Burkina Faso, 350,000 (IDPs) in Mali, and 140,000 in Niger, with an additional 140,000 refugees in the region. During the month of March alone, according to the OCHA update, there were 407 security incidents in the central Sahel region, causing the death of 1,402 people. Niger faces the additional threat of the terrorist group Boko Haram in its southeast. Chad is the third G5 Sahel country conducting a political transition following the death of long-time president Idriss Déby in April 2021 during fighting with rebels and the military unconstitutionally acceding to power.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how developments in the region have negatively affected the effectiveness of the FC-G5S and unity among G5 Sahel countries.

In this context, a related issue is the emergence of other security initiatives in the region to address the expanding terrorism threat. These include the Accra Initiative, launched in 2017 by Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo, and the still-developing plans to reconfigure Operation Barkhane and increase cooperation between France, other European countries, Niger, and coastal West African states. The UN is planning a joint assessment of security in the Sahel with the AU, ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel.

The question of international support for the FC-G5S is an ongoing issue. Council members may consider backing the idea of a dedicated political forum, suggested by the Secretary-General in a 4 October 2021 letter to Council members on options to enhance support. He contended that a political forum—comprising representatives of the G5 Sahel and other international and regional organisations, such as the AU, ECOWAS, the UN and the EU, as well as Security Council members—could promote regional ownership, foster enhanced international support, and help align the operations of the FC-G5S with important political processes, such as the implementation of the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement.

The compliance of the FC-G5S with international humanitarian law, which is critical for effective counter-terrorism operations, is another ongoing issue. Complementing security initiatives with stronger approaches to addressing root causes of instability, such as underdevelopment, governance and climate change in the Sahel, including through the UN's Sahel strategy, remains a key issue. In June, the Council will renew the mandate of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In doing so, it may address issues related to reported human rights violations by Malian security forces and the implementation of Mali's Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, which is also viewed as critical for addressing the region's structural instability.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics on the FC-G5S have often revolved around how to support the joint force, with members being divided over whether to authorise a UN office to provide logistical support and more predictable funding. At this time, however, the proposal appears to be sidelined, given the divisions among G5 Sahel member states.

Ghana, as the West African Council member, has championed ECOWAS responses to the coups d'état in Mali and Burkina Faso. Ghana signed the February joint statement on the decision by France and European countries to withdraw their counter-terrorism operations from Mali and to undertake consultations on strengthening cooperation with Niger and coastal West African states to combat the terrorism threat in the Sahel. Mali's decision to accept the deployment of Wagner appeared to be the final straw for France and other European countries to end their military missions in Mali amidst their growing frustration with the authorities.

Since reports about the deployment of the Wagner Group to Mali, Russia has been supportive of Mali's transitional authorities, often with China's backing, making agreement on Council products on Mali more difficult. Russia also apparently softened language in the initial press statement drafted by the A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) that Council members issued on the coup d'état in Burkina Faso.

Council members conducted a visiting mission to the Sahel on the situation in Mali and the FC-G5S last October. France, Kenya and outgoing Council member Niger co-led this mission, which was the first Council trip abroad since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conflict and Food Security

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold a briefing on conflict and food security as a signature event of the US Council presidency.

Background and Key Recent Developments

May will mark the fourth anniversary of the Council's adoption of resolution 2417 on 24 May 2018. The resolution identified how conflict contributes to hunger—through the direct effects of war, such as displacement from farming or grazing land and the destruction of agricultural assets, or indirectly by disrupting markets and increasing food prices, among other things. The resolution called on conflict parties to comply with relevant international law, including the Geneva Conventions, condemned the use of starvation as a method of warfare, and recalled that the Council has adopted and can consider adopting new sanctions on those responsible for obstructing humanitarian assistance.

The Council adopted resolution 2417 amid a resurgence in global food insecurity, primarily being driven by conflict. This trend has continued. Between 2018 and 2021, the number of people experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity or worse, in which conflict was the primary factor, increased from 73 million to 139 million, according to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Chief Economist Máximo Torero Cullen. He provided that statistic when he briefed Council members at a 21 April Arria-formula meeting on conflict and hunger, organised by Ireland. The 139 million people facing acute hunger due to conflict in 2021 was an increase from 99 million in 2020 and represented about three-quarters of the 193 million people experiencing acute food insecurity from all causes last year.

This year is forecast to be the most food-insecure on record globally. A 26 January FAO and World Food Programme (WFP) report on "Hunger Hotspots", which provided an outlook for the period from February to May, noted that Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen are at the highest alert levels, with parts of their populations identified as experiencing or projected to experience starvation. It warned that acute food insecurity is likely to worsen in 20 countries and cited Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, Honduras, Sudan, Syria, and the Sahel region, especially the Central Sahel, as situations of particular concern. Organised violence is the primary driver of hunger in most of these places. The DRC has the largest number of people projected to face acute food insecurity (approximately 26 million), followed by Afghanistan (22.8 million) and Nigeria (18.1 million people, of whom 100,000 are at risk of starvation).

The effects of the war in Ukraine on the global food system have further exacerbated food insecurity. Russia and Ukraine are among the most important producers of agricultural commodities and, in the case of Russia, of fertilisers. A 25 March FAO information note said that the war raises concern about the loss of farmland in Ukraine and access to the Black Sea for Ukrainian exports. It also highlights uncertainty over Russian exports because of the economic sanctions imposed on Moscow. Further complicating the situation, as the note underlines, is that many low-income countries, including conflict-affected countries, are highly dependent on imports of foodstuffs and fertilisers from Russia and Ukraine. Torero Cullen observed during last month's Arria-formula meeting that food prices reached historical highs in March in real and nominal terms, and the situation will affect next season's agricultural productivity because of reduced access to and higher prices for fertilisers.

Resolution 2417 called on the Secretary-General to report to the Council swiftly when there is a risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity in the context of armed conflict and to update the Council on the resolution's implementation every 12 months during his annual briefing on the protection of civilians. Since its adoption, OCHA has sought to alert the Council to such situations on several occasions by submitting "white notes" to the Council on conflict-induced hunger and the risk of famine. The notes raised these concerns about South Sudan in August 2018; Yemen in October 2018; the DRC, northeast Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen in September 2020; and the Tigray region of Ethiopia in May 2021. These notes prompted Council meetings on South Sudan (under "any other business" in closed consultations) and on Yemen, as well as a wide-ranging discussion on situations of conflict-induced hunger in September 2020 and an informal interactive dialogue on Tigray.

The latest formal Council meeting on conflict and hunger occurred in March 2021 as a high-level open debate, also under the US presidency. Resolution 2573, adopted at a 27 April 2021 debate on the protection of critical civilian infrastructure in conflict, recalled from resolution 2417 that conflict parties should ensure the proper functioning of food systems and markets in situations of armed conflict.

In addition, the Council focal points on conflict-induced hunger have organised two informal meetings a year for Council members to consider the bi-annual FAO-WFP joint reports on "Monitoring food security in countries with conflict situations". Ireland, which is the current focal point, is planning the next meeting on the report during May.

Key Issues and Options

The worsening trend in conflict-induced hunger and identifying existing or potential conflict-related food security crises are key issues for the Council. Related to this is the Council's responsibility to maintain humanitarian access, protect aid workers and hold conflict parties accountable for depriving civilians of food or targeting food production and systems. As recalled in resolution 2417, the Council may impose sanctions on those who obstruct the delivery of, access to, or distribution of humanitarian assistance.

The impact of the Ukraine war on food insecurity is another prominent issue. This includes the war's effects on Ukraine's agricultural productivity and exports and the possible consequences for the global food system of the sanctions imposed on Russia.

Factors contributing to hunger that are often present in conflict situations—such as economic shocks, including the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change—are also prominent issues.

An additional key issue is reporting to the Council on situations

UN DOCUMENTS ON CONFLICT AND HUNGER **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2417 (24 May 2018) requested the Secretary-General to report to the Council when there is a risk that armed conflict is leading to famine or widespread food insecurity. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2020/6 (29 April 2020) encouraged member states to support early-warning systems to identify and respond to emerging food insecurity. **Security Council Letters** S/2021/1011 (6 December 2021) was a letter from Ireland and Niger circulating the ninth joint FAO/WFP update on "Monitoring food security in countries with conflict situations." S/2021/250 (16 March 2021) contained the record of briefings and statements at the Council's 11 March 2021 videoconference open debate on conflict and food security.

of food insecurity. Despite worsening conflict-induced food insecurity, the last OCHA white note was sent almost a year ago, while the Secretary-General's reporting on the implementation of resolution 2417 in his annual protection of civilians report tends to be limited to a page or less.

Council members could request the Secretariat to submit white notes more regularly on conflict-induced hunger. Related to this is whether the information is sufficiently detailed for the Council to take action: members could encourage the Secretariat to provide more information that identifies conflict parties and violations of international humanitarian law that cause food insecurity. Members could also consider supporting a proposal to create a UN special envoy or a focal point on the implementation of resolution 2417. Such an envoy or focal point could provide the Council with reports outlining the complex and systemic nature of food insecurity in conflict situations to promote holistic responses.

Council Dynamics

Several members are keen to see the Council be more active in considering and addressing conflict-induced hunger. Council members France, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the UK, and the US are part of a 12-member Group of Friends of Action on Conflict and Hunger. The group also includes recent Council members Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Niger, and Sweden.

Other members have expressed scepticism about the Council's consideration of conflict and hunger. Russia has argued that the Council is not the appropriate body to consider food insecurity as a thematic issue since other UN organs are mandated to address hunger, which can have multiple causes. Some members have also been wary that the issue of hunger could be a pretext for adding situations to the Council's agenda.

There are also differences over the reporting that the Council should receive from the Secretariat on hunger and conflict. Last year, the Council failed to agree on a US-proposed presidential statement for the March 2021 debate that would have requested two Secretary-General's reports a year on hunger and conflict, as some members felt that the current reporting structures were adequate. At the April Arria-formula meeting, the US called on OCHA to provide two white notes per year on the issue.

Another more recent dynamic is members' diverging views about the role of the Ukraine war on global hunger. Some members highlight Russia's responsibility for having invaded Ukraine, while Russia points to the negative effect of unilateral sanctions. The US has stressed that the sanctions on Russia do not include food and agricultural products.

Ireland is the Council's focal point on conflict and hunger. Until this year, two elected members served jointly as focal points. However, no Council members have come forward to replace Niger, which departed the Council at the end of last year.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia. Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) James Swan and an AU representative are the expected briefers. The Council is also scheduled to vote on a resolution renewing the mandate of UNSOM.

Key Recent Developments

At the time of writing, Somalia was in the final stretches of completing its parliamentary elections. By the end of April, all seats for both parliamentary chambers had been filled, ending an electoral process which commenced in 2021. The newly elected parliamentarians convened during the last week of April to vote for their respective speakers, electing Abdi Hashi Abdullahi as Speaker of the upper house (the Senate) and Sheikh Adan Mohamed Nur as Speaker of the lower house (House of the People) on 26 and 27 April, respectively.

Ahead of the vote to elect the speaker of the lower house, disagreements emerged between President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmaajo" and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble regarding security arrangements for the site of that election—a hangar located in the Mogadishu International Airport area and secured jointly by Somali and AU security forces. (The Mogadishu International Airport area is a fortified location hosting the UN and several diplomatic representations). The location was the target of an attack by the terrorist group Al-Shabaab on 23 March. Security concerns prompted Roble to request the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in a 26 April statement to "immediately take over security of the air force hangar". Farmaajo rejected the move, stating that an electoral security committee led by the Somali police with the support of ATMIS would maintain security responsibilities.

There was concern that this disagreement over security issues could cause the vote to be postponed, but the election eventually took place. With both speakers now in place, Somalia is on track to organise its presidential election in the coming weeks. Farmaajo is standing for re-election and will run against former Presidents Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud as well as against former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire.

On 1 April, the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) transitioned to ATMIS, following the 8 March decision of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to reconfigure the mission and the adoption of resolution 2628 of 31 March by the Security Council, authorising the AU presence in Somalia in accordance with the PSC's decision. Similar to its predecessor mission, ATMIS will support the Somali

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2628 (31 March 2022) endorsed the decision by the AU Peace and Security Council to reconfigure the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) into the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). S/RES/2608 (3 December 2021) renewed the anti-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia for three months. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2022/101 (8 February 2022) was on the situation in Somalia, covering developments from 6 November 2021 to 31 January 2022. S/2021/920 (3 November 2021) was the annual report on piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia. **Security Council Letter** S/2021/859 (4 October 2021) responded to the Secretary-General's request for an extension of the deadlines to submit proposals on a reconfigured AMISOM and options for continued UN logistical support to the AU mission, UNSOM and the Somali security forces.

security forces with implementing the Somalia transition plan, with a view to fully handing over security responsibilities to Somalia by 2024. Thus far, the same troop and police-contributing countries that served with AMISOM—Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda—remain within ATMIS. However, ATMIS's mandate foresees the option for additional member states to join. When the mission commenced operations at the beginning of April, its funding modalities remained unsettled. The EU, the largest contributor to AMISOM, announced on 21 April its decision to establish an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support AU peace operations with a total budget of €600 million, starting this year until 2024.

The leadership of ATMIS has been the subject of controversy, and the issue showcased the strained relationship between Farmaajo and Roble. On 6 April, Roble ordered the expulsion of the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) Francisco Madeira from the country for "acts that are incompatible with his status as a representative of the AU Commission". The move was reportedly based on leaked audio files of Madeira apparently accusing Roble of attempts to actively prevent Farmaajo's re-election. Farmaajo opposed the move, stating that the expulsion of accredited diplomats was not within the purview of the prime minister's office. Madeira, who was outside Somalia on 6 April, has not returned to the country. Media sources indicate that the AU may soon appoint a new representative to Somalia.

Within this turbulent political and security environment, Somalia has continued to grapple with a severe drought that has caused some 81,000 Somalis to face extreme food shortages, according to a 12 April joint FAO, OCHA, UNICEF and WFP statement. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the situation, causing a spike in food prices.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council continues to be the finalisation of Somalia's electoral process. With the conditions now in place to elect a new president through Somalia's indirect voting model, the focus of the Council is likely to be on the holding of the presidential vote. That election is expected to take place before a crucial 17 May deadline, when the new government is expected to endorse the IMF's programme for Somalia or risk losing vital IMF support.

With the completion of the electoral process, the Council may refocus its attention on stabilising the security situation, consolidating the federal model, promoting national reconciliation and addressing the dire humanitarian situation.

In resolution 2592 of 30 August 2021, which renewed the mandate of UNSOM until 31 May, the Council requested a strategic review of the mission "after the electoral process has concluded". With the renewal date of UNSOM's mandate approaching, the presidential election still forthcoming, and taking into account that a new government may require time to appoint ministers and formulate its programme, the Council may consider a short technical rollover of UNSOM's mandate to ensure the mission is best positioned to support the needs of a new administration.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The outcome of the presidential elections may also affect Council dynamics. Throughout Somalia's electoral period, the Council was united in calling on the Somali government to prioritise the conduct of elections within the agreed timelines. Divisions had emerged, however, over the Council's role in promoting the process, with some Council members preferring sustained Council involvement and others preferring that the Council provide space for Somalia to address any issues hampering the electoral process.

The A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) may continue to advance the AU position on sustainable and predictable funding for ATMIS to preserve the gains made in Somalia. Kenya may want the successor government to place a sustained focus on the fight against Al-Shabaab and may also wish to re-discuss the maritime border dispute with a new administration, the case having strained its relations with Farmaajo.

In terms of the wider regional dynamics, how the new government will position itself in the neighbourhood will have implications in terms of realignment of regional politics and may affect the tripartite alliance of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. The outcome of the election will also affect Somalia's relations with Gulf countries. Qatar is said to have supported Farmaajo's re-election, whereas the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has maintained ties with Roble and some of the federal member states.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meetings on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

Released on 22 February, OCHA's 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview indicated that 14.6 million people in Syria (including 6.5 million children) are in need of humanitarian assistance. In an 11 March statement marking the 11th anniversary of the Syrian conflict, Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised the need to reach a negotiated political settlement. He lamented that the conflict has "exacted an unconscionable human cost" and that Syrians "have been subjected to human rights violations on a massive and systematic scale". The reauthorisation of resolution 2585 in July, when it is set to expire, is "a moral and humanitarian imperative", he said. Resolution 2585 mandates the delivery of cross-line (that is, across domestic frontlines from Syrian government-held areas into

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2585 (9 July 2021) renewed the mandate of the cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism to Syria. **S/RES/2254** (18 December 2015) focused on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.9026 (29 April 2022) was a meeting on the chemical weapons track in Syria. S/PV.9022 (26 April 2022) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/330 (19 April 2022) was the 60-day report on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

areas outside government control) and cross-border humanitarian aid (from Turkey into Syria through the Bab al-Hawa crossing) and welcomes early recovery projects in Syria.

The seventh round of the Syria Constitutional Committee was held from 21-25 March in Geneva. The parties discussed four principles during the first four days of the session— Basics of Governance, State Identity, State Symbols, and Structure and Functions of Public Authorities. On the final day, they discussed their amendments to proposals on constitutional principles.

Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen released a statement at the conclusion of the session. He said: "All delegations offered at least some revisions to some of the texts presented. Some of these embodied amendments indicat[e] an attempt to reflect the content of the discussions and narrow differences. Others contained no changes". Pedersen added: "I will do everything I can to bring closer viewpoints among the members through exerting my good offices, which is plainly needed". A spokesperson for the opposition co-chair, Hadi AlBahra, said that there had "been no meaningful progress" in the talks and that the opposition had been "unsatisfied with the government's engagement".

At the time of writing, media reports indicated that Russia was recruiting Syrian troops to assist its war effort in Ukraine. While thousands of Syrian fighters have registered to fight, it remains unclear how many have arrived in Ukraine.

On 26 April, the Security Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Pedersen, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya, and Nirvana Shawky, the Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa for CARE International, briefed. Pedersen announced that the 8th session of the Constitutional Committee is scheduled for 28 May to 3 June in Geneva. He and Msuya emphasised that the crisis in Syria must not be forgotten. Msuya and Shawky called for the Council to renew the mandate of the cross-border aid mechanism in July. Shawky noted the importance of early recovery programs in Syria in allowing schools and hospitals to remain open and supporting livelihood opportunities.

On 28 March, fighting broke out at the al-Hol refugee camp in north-east Syria between camp residents reportedly aligned with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL\Da'esh) and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a predominantly Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government, that oversees the camp. At least three people were killed and ten wounded in the incident. Al-Hol is home to approximately 56,000 people, many of whom are women and children associated with apprehended or deceased ISIL fighters. The overcrowded camp has been plagued by high levels of violence in recent months.

On 29 April, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed the Council on the Syria chemical weapons track. She reiterated that gaps remain in Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons stockpiles. Consultations followed the briefing. On the same day, Council members issued a press statement initiated by the UK that marked the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction.

Women, Peace and Security

On 13 April, Mariana Karkoutly, co-founder of the civil society organisation Huquqyat, briefed the Security Council during the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. She said that both Syrian government forces and armed groups "continue to murder, torture and use sexual and gender-based violence against civilians as a matter of policy". In particular, she explained that women in Syria have been detained for opposing the regime, or as a punishment for their male relatives having done so, and have often faced sexual and gender-based violence while in detention. Karkoutly said that the Council "has failed to take actions to hold perpetrators accountable" and called for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC. She urged the Council to adopt a resolution on the situation of detainees and missing persons underscoring the Syrian government's legal obligations and reflecting the priorities identified by victims and survivors' associations. She also urged the Council to renew the cross-border mechanism for at least 12 months and reauthorise access through all crossing points.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how it can support the Special Envoy's efforts to promote positive momentum on the political track in Syria.

The humanitarian crisis in the country remains an ongoing concern for Council members. The country continues to contend with an ever-worsening economic situation, rising food and fuel prices, and high unemployment.

One option for the Council is to adopt a statement that supports the Special Envoy's efforts to reinvigorate the political track.

Another option would be for Council members to hold a closed Arria-formula meeting with civil society representatives who can speak to the importance of early recovery projects in Syria and provide their input on the types of projects that would be most beneficial to the welfare of Syrians.

Council Dynamics

There are stark differences in the Council on Syria. China and Russia tend to be sympathetic to the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and drawing connections between unilateral sanctions on Syria and the challenging humanitarian situation in the country. On the other hand, the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and others are highly critical of the government for violating international human rights law and international humanitarian law, arbitrarily detaining people, and not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue.

Although most members have repeatedly emphasised that the cross-border aid mechanism is an essential humanitarian tool in Syria, China and Russia maintain that cross-line deliveries should ultimately supplant cross-border deliveries, and India argues that the cross-border mechanism undermines Syria's sovereignty. There is likely to be a heightened focus on the cross-border aid mechanism in the Council as the July expiration of resolution 2585 approaches.

The war in Ukraine also appears to be having an impact on Council dynamics on many issues, including Syria. In the meeting on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria on 24 March, Russia said that Secretary-General António Guterres had abandoned his usual neutral language with regard to Ukraine. At the same meeting, the US accused Moscow of using "some of the same barbaric tactics" in Ukraine as in Syria, adding that it was troubling that Russia was recruiting Syrians to fight in Ukraine. And at the 26 April meeting,

the UK said that the rising cost of food in Syria has been exacerbated by Russia's "premeditated and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine".

Ireland and Norway are the humanitarian penholders on Syria.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In May, the Chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway), is expected to brief Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report regarding the Committee's work.

Key Recent Developments

On 24 March, Japan announced that the DPRK had conducted its first intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test since November 2017, ending a self-imposed moratorium on testing ICBMs that began in 2018. The following day, Council members held an open meeting, followed by closed consultations, to discuss the test. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed, and Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. It appears that the US proposed press elements which, among other matters, would have urged the DPRK to comply with its obligations under Council resolutions and engage in dialogue on denuclearisation. China and Russia apparently opposed this proposal and the elements were not agreed upon.

In a report delivered to the ROK's National Assembly on 29 March, the country's Ministry of National Defense said that the DPRK's 24 March ICBM test involved the Hwasong-15 missile, rather than the more powerful Hwasong-17 that the DPRK claimed to have tested. The report also linked the test to a failed launch on 16 March, saying of the DPRK's intentions that "now that Pyongyang citizens had witnessed the failure, they needed to send a message of success and do so quickly in order to prevent rumours from spreading and to ensure regime stability…so they launched a Hwasong-15 model whose reliability had been confirmed through a test in 2017". Prior to the publication of the report, several analysts queried the veracity of the DPRK's claim that it had tested the Hwasong-17.

According to media reports, both US and ROK officials have expressed concern that the DPRK will soon conduct a nuclear test for the first time since 2017. The DPRK has reportedly resumed restoration work at Punggye-ri, a nuclear test site that was closed and partly dismantled in 2018, and on 28 March, the DPRK's state news agency reported Kim Jong-un as saying that he plans to develop more "powerful striking capabilities".

On 1 April, the US imposed new sanctions on five entities linked to the DPRK's weapons programmes. This followed its 24 March decision to sanction two Russian companies and a DPRK entity for their involvement in the DPRK's missile programme.

Although Kim Jong-un and outgoing ROK president Moon Jae-in sent each other "letters of friendship" during the week commencing 17 April, the DPRK and the ROK have otherwise exchanged inflammatory rhetoric in recent weeks. In a 1 April statement, ROK Defense Minister Suh Wook said that the ROK military has missiles that can "accurately and quickly hit any target in the DPRK". On 5 April, Kim Yo-jong, Kim Jong-un's sister, reportedly warned that the DPRK would use nuclear weapons in response to an attack by the ROK. The following day, advisers to ROK president-elect Yoon Suk-yeol told reporters that during a recent visit to Washington they had asked the US to redeploy strategic assets to the ROK, including nuclear bombers and submarines.

In the lead-up to the 15 April celebrations of the 110th anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung, a US Navy spokesperson said on 12 April that the US had sent a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to international waters between the ROK and Japan, the first deployment of such a carrier to these waters since November 2017. During a 23 April visit to the carrier, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi promised that Japan would "significantly strengthen" its defence capabilities and work closely with the US to maintain regional security.

On 17 April, the ROK military announced that the DPRK had tested two short-range missiles, launching them from Hamhung, a city on the DPRK's east coast. The missiles reportedly travelled for 110 kilometres and reached an altitude of 25 kilometres. Earlier on the same day, DPRK state media said that Kim Jong-un had overseen a test of a "new-type tactical guided weapon" that was of "great significance" in "enhancing the efficiency in the operation of tactical nukes".

The following day, the US began scheduled military drills with the ROK. US Special Representative for the DPRK Sung Kim said that the US and the ROK would maintain "the strongest possible joint deterrent" in response to the DPRK's "escalatory actions". Kim also noted that it was "extremely important for the [Security Council] to send a clear signal to the DPRK that we will not accept its escalatory tests as normal".

A delegation of foreign policy aides to ROK president-elect Yoon Suk-yeol met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on 26 April. According to media reports, Kishida said that "there is no time to waste to improve ties between Japan and [the ROK]", while the head of the ROK delegation noted that they had agreed to work towards forward-looking relations and for their mutual interests.

On 26 April, the DPRK held a large military parade to celebrate the 90th anniversary of its armed forces. In remarks delivered during the parade, Kim Jong-un said that the DPRK's nuclear weapons "can never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent", before adding "if any forces try to violate the fundamental interests of our state, our nuclear forces will have to decisively accomplish an unexpected second mission". Some analysts have speculated that this rhetoric may suggest that the DPRK is willing to use nuclear force pre-emptively. Kim also said that the DPRK would expand its nuclear arsenal "at the fastest possible speed" during this speech.

Cryptocurrency and cyberattacks appear to be playing a growing role in the DPRK's efforts to evade sanctions. On 18 April, the FBI, the US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, and the US Department of Treasury issued a joint advisory regarding the risk of cyber threats involving cryptocurrency from the DPRK. The

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2627 (25 March 2022) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee until 30 April 2023. S/RES/2397 (22 December 2017) tightened sanctions on the DPRK. **Sanctions Committee Document** S/2022/132 (1 March 2022) was the final report of the Panel of Experts.

advisory indicated that hackers linked to the DPRK had successfully targeted different organisations in the cryptocurrency industry. In its 1 March final report, the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee noted that cyberattacks on cryptocurrency assets "remain an important revenue source for the [DPRK]".

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Tomás Ojea Quintana, and considered his report (A/HRC/49/74). In his statement, the special rapporteur emphasised that it is imperative for the government to cease its ongoing crimes against humanity. He noted that efforts should be made to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court or to create an ad hoc tribunal or comparable mechanism to determine individual criminal responsibility. He added that alternatives based on principles of universal or extraterritorial jurisdiction should also be pursued, while the preservation of information that may be used in future processes needed to continue.

On 1 April, the HRC adopted resolution 49/22 on the situation of human rights in the DPRK without a vote. The resolution extends the mandate of the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK for one year. Among other things, it requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights "to include additional options for strengthening, institutionalising and further advancing work on accountability in the DPRK" in a report to be submitted to the HRC at its 52nd session.

Key Issues and Options

The DPRK's recent missile tests have escalated tensions throughout northeast Asia and created a major issue for the Council. The DPRK has now conducted 13 missile tests in 2022, a dramatic increase compared to the previous two years. At the public meeting following the 24 March ICBM launch, the US announced that it would introduce a draft Chapter VII resolution "to update and strengthen the sanctions regime". Deciding whether to adopt this resolution is the Council's main priority on the DPRK file. At the time of writing, negotiations concerning the resolution continued.

Sanctions evasion is another important issue. In its final report, the Panel of Experts noted that "sophisticated evasion of maritime sanctions continued, facilitated by deliberately obfuscated financial and ownership networks". The overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime is also a problem for the Council, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have increased its nuclear arsenal since the regime was introduced. Other issues for the Council are the DPRK's continuing refusal to return to the negotiating table and the humanitarian situation in the country.

If the US-initiated draft resolution updating the sanctions regime is not adopted, the Council could instead choose to pursue a product that condemns the recent missile tests, urges member states to comply with Council resolutions on the sanctions regime, and calls for the DPRK to return to diplomatic talks. At the committee level, the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee may wish to consider requesting a report from the Panel of Experts that analyses whether stricter sanctions enforcement is possible.

Another option is to convene an informal interactive dialogue with key regional stakeholders to discuss new ways of addressing the security threat posed by the DPRK.

Council Dynamics

Council members are sharply divided regarding the DPRK. The P3 (France, the UK and the US), together with other like-minded states, frequently condemn its ballistic missile tests, arguing that they violate Council resolutions and destabilise the Korean peninsula. These members also emphasise the importance of dialogue, maintaining the sanctions regime, and addressing sanctions evasion. China and Russia, on the other hand, often argue that more information is needed to determine whether particular missile tests violate Council resolutions and also contend that sanctions should be eased because of their effect on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK. China and Russia have also suggested that easing sanctions may entice the DPRK to engage in dialogue and have criticised the US for not offering the DPRK incentives to return to negotiations.

In line with these positions, and with the exception of China and Russia, there appears to be general support among Council members for the US draft resolution on the sanctions regime. Some Council members have, however, expressed concern regarding the overall efficacy of sanctions in their public statements. At the 25 March meeting, for example, Mexico said, "it is clear that the sanctions that the Council has imposed to curb the nuclear and ballistic missile programme of the [DPRK] are not working", while Gabon noted that "lessons must be urgently drawn from the inability of sanctions to offer an appropriate and effective response".

In October 2021, China circulated a draft resolution that would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK, citing their humanitarian consequences. Although Russia is in favour of this draft resolution, it appears to have little support among other members. Despite this lack of support, China and Russia have both continued to advocate for this initiative. A previous attempt by China and Russia to promote a draft resolution easing sanctions on the DPRK in December 2019 was unsuccessful because of insufficient support from other Council members.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK. Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) chairs the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2579 (3 June 2021) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/172 (2 March 2022) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. **Security Council Letter** S/2022/256 (22 March 2022) was from Sudan, containing observations, comments and reactions to the Secretary-General's 2 March report on UNITAMS. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.9005 (28 March 2022) was the quarterly briefing on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. S/PV.9006 (28 March 2022) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS.

Sudan

Key Recent Developments

Sudan continues to face "significant setbacks and challenges" following the military coup d'état of 25 October 2021, as noted in the Secretary-General's most recent report, dated 2 March. Demonstrations and mass protests against the coup, and increasingly also the economic situation, have continued, with security forces often responding with excessive force, including live ammunition. "The ensuing political crisis has seriously set back the transition in the Sudan, rolled back key achievements and jeopardized the country's economic recovery, financial viability and much-needed relief assistance," the report said. It also noted that the security situation continued to deteriorate throughout the country due to armed conflict; intercommunal clashes; human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence; and criminal activity, and that humanitarian needs have increased since last year, with over 14.3 million people—one in three people in the country—expected to require humanitarian assistance this year.

On 28 February, UNITAMS published a summary report on its consultations for a political process in Sudan, which were launched by the mission on 8 January. According to the report, for over five weeks, UNITAMS conducted bilateral consultations with a range of stakeholders, including over 110 meetings with over 800 participants, and analysed over 80 written proposals, the report said. Briefing the Council on 28 March, Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes outlined four priorities that had emerged from these consultations: "first, interim constitutional arrangements, including the executive, legislative and judicial organs of the transitions, as well as their structure and functions; secondly, the criteria and mechanisms to appoint a Prime Minister and a cabinet; thirdly, a roadmap for the transitional period and a Government programme focusing on an achievable set of priority areas; including, fourthly, the type, timing and necessary conditions for elections at the end of that period". He added that UNITAMS, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have been working together to agree on a common approach. Perthes told the Council that upcoming talks amongst stakeholders will have "a narrow and clearly defined aim: to return to constitutional order and the transition, with an empowered civilian led Government". He emphasised that "unless the current trajectory is corrected, the country will head towards an economic and security collapse and significant humanitarian suffering".

In a 22 March letter, Sudan provided the Council with "observations, comments and reactions" to the Secretary-General's 2 March report, including that "although UNITAMS was deployed at the request of the Government of Sudan, the methodology used in its report to collect and present information does not reflect a spirit of cooperation and transparency".

On 1 April, Chairperson of the Sovereign Council and Commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan reportedly threatened to expel Perthes, saying he was "overstepping the mandate of the UN mission" and "interfering in Sudanese affairs". This criticism seemed to be in response to Perthes' briefing to the Council on 28 March. The Sudanese Foreign Ministry announced on 21 April that the Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Nadir Youssif al-Tayeb, was visiting the UN in New York to hand over a document that included the Sudanese government's demands of UNITAMS.

On 27 April, Security Council members discussed the situation in Sudan under "any other business". Perthes briefed during the meeting, which was requested by the UK (the penholder on Sudan), together with Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, and the US, in response to the escalation of violence reported in West Darfur. At the time of writing, according to media reports, at least 159 people were killed in Kerenik, West Darfur, on 22 and 24 April. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 26 April.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 7 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an enhanced interactive dialogue on High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet's oral update on the human rights situation in Sudan since the military takeover. In her statement, the High Commissioner expressed concern over "the sharp reversal of human rights achievements following the military coup", noting that "a wide range of human rights violations have been documented since the coup, in a context of total impunity". Credible medical sources reported that as at 3 March, 85 people, including one woman and 11 children, have been killed because of disproportionate use of force by security forces during protests, she said. The High Commissioner noted that the Joint Human Rights Office reported that more than 1,000 people were arrested for opposing the coup and its consequences between 25 October 2021 and 3 March. Bachelet also said that, since the end of February, the UN had verified more than 200 violations against children, including the arrest and detention of children who participated in protests. She expressed shock over 25 allegations of rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence against women, girls and men since 25 October 2021. The Joint Human Rights Office recorded at least 50 incidents of violations against journalists and media institutions since the coup, she said, adding that trade unionists, lawyers, female activists, and pro-democracy activists have all been targeted.

In a 27 April statement, Bachelet called on the Sudanese authorities to protect the population of West Darfur and take urgent steps to prevent further outbreaks of violence after over a hundred people were killed in attacks by armed assailants between 22 and 24 April.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 13 March, the Secretary-General informed the Council of the appointment of five experts to the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until 12 March 2023.

On 28 March, the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana), provided the quarterly briefing on the committee's work. Sudan made a statement at the briefing, including reference to resolution 2620, in which the Council expressed the intention to consider establishing by 31 August clear, well-identified, and realistic key benchmarks for reviewing the sanctions regime.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is monitoring the political situation in Sudan. In this regard, Council members will closely follow mediation efforts, including the role played by UNITAMS. Another key issue is assessing the role of UNITAMS across the four strategic objectives for the mission contained in resolution 2579, namely assisting Sudan's political transition; supporting the peace processes and implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement and future peace agreements; assisting peacebuilding, civilian protection and rule of law, in particular in Darfur and the Two Areas (that is, South Kordofan and Blue Nile); and supporting the mobilisation of economic and development assistance, and coordination of humanitarian and

peacebuilding assistance.

A related issue for the Council is to consider what changes to the mission's mandate, if any, are necessary ahead of its expiration on 3 June. In doing so, Council members' thinking will be informed by the findings and recommendations of the upcoming 90-day report of the Secretary-General, expected in mid-May.

Another key issue is the crackdown on protesters since 25 October 2021. Some Council members may seek to emphasise the need to conduct timely investigations into casualties during the demonstrations and the importance of accountability for this violence.

A further issue is the situation in Darfur, including following the escalation of violence in West Darfur. In the briefing on 28 March, Perthes told the Council that "crime and lawlessness are on the rise and intercommunal conflict in Darfur has intensified".

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns over the situation in Sudan. At the briefing on 28 March, the UK (penholder on Sudan) said that the "suffering of ordinary Sudanese people has increased" since the October 2021 coup, including "sexual violence; human rights abuses; economic hardship; and humanitarian crises". Many members raised concerns over the killing of protesters, delays in implementing the Juba Peace Agreement, increased violence in Darfur, and the dire economic and humanitarian situations. China, in its statement, appeared to be more positive about the situation in the country, saying that "Sudan's political transition continues to move in the right direction [and] the international community should remain patient".

Several members emphasised different aspects of the current mandate of UNITAMS. China called on UNITAMS to "actively mobilize economic and development assistance…in accordance with its mandate". France, the UK and the US highlighted that the mission is mandated to monitor and report on the situation in the Sudan, including the human rights situation. In a joint statement, the three African members—Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (the A3)—encouraged UNITAMS to "adequately utilize the necessary confidence-building measures in the implementation of its mandate" and noted that they "remain engaged with the penholder" ahead of the mission's mandate renewal. Norway noted that UNITAMS "plays an important supporting role in preventing conflict and protecting civilians, in line with its mandate".

China, the A3, India, Russia, and the UK referred to Sudan's 22 March letter to the Council raising concerns with the Secretary-General's March report on UNITAMS. Russia expressed its support for the concerns and assessments contained in Sudan's letter.

Some members referred to the impact of the situation in Ukraine in their statements. The A3, Albania, France, and Ireland noted its effect on the rise in food and fuel prices. Russia said that "a potential food crisis will be caused not by the Russian special military operation in Ukraine but by the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by the West".

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions. Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Protection of Civilians

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council will hold its annual open debate on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict. Council members are expected to receive the Secretary-General's annual PoC report by mid-May.

Key Recent Developments

The last annual debate on PoC in armed conflict was held on 25 May 2021 with a particular focus on the protection of medical care. The meeting coincided with the five-year anniversary of resolution 2286 of 3 May 2016, which addressed the protection of the sick or wounded and of medical and humanitarian personnel carrying out medical duties in a conflict setting. The Secretary-General's annual report on PoC, which provided updates on the state of protection of medical care in armed conflict five years after the adoption of resolution 2286, formed the basis for discussion.

As Council president in January, Norway convened a high-level open debate on PoC under the theme "Wars in cities: protection of civilians in urban settings". During the meeting, several speakers highlighted the devastating effect of urban warfare in conflict situations around the world and the need for effective action to end impunity and improve humanitarian response. Norway had sought agreement on a presidential statement as a possible outcome of the debate. However, Russia objected to language in the draft calling on states to take action to ensure the protection of civilians in urban settings, saying that this infringed upon the sovereignty of states and suggesting that the draft text limit itself to agreed language on international humanitarian law. Because of this, the draft could not achieve the necessary consensus to be adopted.

The Secretary-General's upcoming PoC report is expected to take stock of the status of several related topics, including the state of PoC in armed conflict; the issue of principled humanitarian action and access; the links between PoC and priorities such as the Secretary-General's Common Agenda, climate change and others; the impact of urban warfare; PoC in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the use of explosives in populated areas. The report is expected to cover the period from January to December 2021 and highlight PoC trends in the context of country situations. In this regard, the situation in Ukraine may be mentioned, but the report is unlikely to provide detailed information on events that occurred after the reporting period. A senior UN official who will brief the Council might reference Ukraine and other country situations to illustrate

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2573 (27 April 2021) was on attacks on civilian infrastructure in conflict. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2021/423 (3 May 2021) was on protection of civilians. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8953 (25 January 2022) was the open debate on protection of civilians in armed conflict.

the current state of PoC in armed conflicts.

The images of civilians killed in Bucha, a Ukrainian town on the outskirts of the capital city Kyiv, which became public following the withdrawal of Russian forces from the area in early April, sparked strong reactions from the UN. In her 4 April statement on the situation in Bucha, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said that this raised "serious and disturbing questions about possible war crimes, grave breaches of international humanitarian law and serious violations of international human rights law". Speaking at the 5 April Security Council meeting on Ukraine, Guterres expressed deep shock at the images of the civilians killed in Bucha and called for an independent investigation to guarantee effective accountability. During a special emergency session on the war in Ukraine on 7 April, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.

On 11 April, the Security Council held a briefing session on Ukraine, during which the impact of the war on women and children was discussed, among other matters. The meeting was prompted by mounting reports of atrocities in the ongoing conflict, including killing and torture of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence and attacks against civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals.

Other country situations such as Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Mali, and the Sahel are likely to feature in the open debate.

Key Issues and Options

The annual open debate provides the opportunity for Council members and the wider UN membership to discuss PoC as a thematic issue and highlight their priorities in this regard. Council members and others could:

- underscore the need to prevent and address the devastating effect of conflicts on civilians, particularly on vulnerable sections of society such as women and children, and reiterate their call on all parties to conflict, including state and non-state actors, to comply fully with international humanitarian law;
- stress the need to promote accountability and justice for crimes and atrocities committed against civilians and urge a thorough investigation of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law to hold those responsible accountable;
- strongly condemn the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools and medical facilities, and emphasise the need for the full and effective implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on the protection of civilian infrastructure;
- draw attention to the protection challenge of those displaced by armed conflict and the need to address the increasing concerns over attacks against internally displaced persons' sites;
- underline the need to respond to the unprecedented number of attacks against humanitarian workers, which has made the delivery of humanitarian assistance extremely difficult; and
- stress the need to address acute food insecurity and prevent famine in conflict situations—which has become a major challenge, particularly considering the developments in some country situations under discussion by the Council, such as Ethiopia and Ukraine—and reaffirm the importance of implementing resolution 2317 on conflict and hunger.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There has been a broad consensus in the Council on the concept of PoC, but differences are emerging over some aspects of the agenda, and discussions may also be affected by the difficult Council dynamics around the situation in Ukraine. There also seems to be concern that May's open debate, intended as a thematic discussion that allows member states to reaffirm their commitment to the PoC agenda, could be overshadowed by a particular focus on the situation in Ukraine.

During the annual open debate, some Council members tend to highlight their particular protection priorities. However, Council members such as Russia have argued that this can lead to the fragmentation of the PoC agenda. PoC has been a major priority for Ireland and Norway. Norway has highlighted attacks against schools and the impact of urban warfare, while Ireland has focused on the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. Other members have drawn attention to PoC in peacekeeping and the issue of accountability, and the impact of gender-based violence as well as conflict and hunger. Kenya has raised the issue of sanctions and their humanitarian implications in discussions on the situation in Ukraine.

There have been sharp disagreements over how humanitarian principles should be referenced in Council products related to PoC. Resolution 2286, adopted in May 2016, reaffirmed "the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance". In recent years, however, China and Russia have insisted on including reference to the UN guiding principles for humanitarian assistance adopted by the General Assembly in 1991, which stress state sovereignty and consent of the concerned member state. These divisions have affected the negotiations of several recent Council products.

Council members remain divided over other aspects related to the PoC agenda, including accountability mechanisms and emerging threats to peace and security. Russia has previously objected to including references to international tribunals and international prosecution in PoC-related Council products. Several Council members have also objected to specific language on emerging threats, such as climate change, in PoC products.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council expects to vote on a draft resolution to renew the South Sudan sanctions regime—including targeted sanctions and the arms embargo—which expires on 31 May and the mandate of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts, which expires on 1 July, as set out in resolution 2577.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 15 March 2023.

Key Recent Developments

Political and security tensions escalated in March, following clashes between the South Sudan People's Defense Forces (SSPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) in Upper Nile and Unity states, with both sides accusing each other of starting the attacks. On 22 March, First Vice President Riek Machar, head of the SPLM/A-IO, announced his party's withdrawal from monitoring and verification mechanisms under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), including the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Verification Mechanism, National Transitional Committee, and Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission. Following talks between the parties and Sudan's mediation, the SPLM/A-IO said on 3 April it would again participate in the bodies from which they withdrew in March. The parties also signed an agreement on security arrangements in relation to a unified command-and-control structure that will oversee the 83,000 unified forces once they graduate.

While overall implementation of the R-ARCSS remains significantly behind schedule, there has recently been some further progress, in addition to the 3 April agreement mentioned above, including the launch of a nationwide consultative process on 5 April for the establishment of the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, as agreed to in the R-ARCSS, and a 12 April Presidential Decree integrating the SPLM/A-IO and the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) into a unified army.

Sub-national and intercommunal conflict continues across the country. In April, UNMISS increased patrols in Leer, Unity State, in response to a surge in intercommunal violence, including reports of sexual violence, looting and destruction of property, that resulted in the displacement of thousands of people. The human rights, humanitarian, food security, and economic conditions in the country remain dire, with an enormously detrimental effect on civilians. An estimated 7.7 million people—approximately 63 percent of the population—are likely to face crisis or worse levels of food insecurity through July.

The government has said elections will take place next year, but it has not yet set an electoral timetable. In a press conference on 14 April, Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom noted that there are ten months left in the 36-month transitional period and that "upon the invitation from the government, the mission stands ready to support the South Sudanese in holding elections and in building their political institutions required to manage those elections".

On 28 May 2021, the Council adopted resolution 2577, which renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime for one year—including targeted sanctions and the arms embargo—and the mandate of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts. The resolution contained five benchmarks for the review of the arms embargo, namely completion of the Strategic Defense and Security Review process contained in the R-ARCSS; formation of the Necessary Unified Forces; progress in establishing and implementing the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process; progress in properly managing existing arms and ammunition stockpiles; and implementation of the Joint Action Plan for the Armed Forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to conduct an assessment of progress achieved on the benchmarks by 15 April, and the South Sudan authorities to report to the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee on the progress achieved on the benchmarks, also by 15 April. At the time of writing, the report had not yet been published.

Council members were last briefed on South Sudan on 7 March. Haysom briefed the Council on the 90-day report of the Secretary-General. Major General (Retired) Charles Tai Gituai, Interim Chairperson of the reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and Riya Williams Yuyada, a civil society representative, also briefed. On 15 March, the Council adopted resolution 2625, extending the mandate of UNMISS for one year, with 13 votes in favour. China and Russia abstained. (For more, see our What's in Blue story of 14 March.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan published a conference room paper on conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan. It concluded that "widespread and pervasive conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan takes place in the context of persistent conflict and insecurity, drastic gender inequity, and prevailing impunity, which exacerbate its prevalence and contribute to its normalization" (A/HRC/49/CRP.4). The paper contains a series of recommendations addressed to the government, AU, IGAD and UNMISS.

On 31 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted resolution 49/2 on advancing human rights in South Sudan by a vote of 19 in favour, 11 against (including China and Russia) and 17 abstentions (including Brazil, Gabon, India, and the United Arab Emirates). On 1 April, the HRC adopted without a vote resolution 49/35 on technical assistance and capacity-building for South Sudan.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 22 April, the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to receive a briefing from the Panel of Experts on its final report and to discuss its recommendations. The final report, due by 1 May, was not yet publicly available at the time of writing. (The panel was only appointed on 20 January following several months of delays apparently because of holds placed by Russia. As a result, it was not able to submit an interim report by 1 December 2021, as requested in resolution 2577.)

Key Issues and Options

An immediate key issue for the Council is the renewal of the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts. Another key issue is assessing progress achieved on the five benchmarks contained in resolution 2577. Council members are likely to be guided by the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2625 (15 March 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 15 March 2023. S/RES/2577 (28 May 2021) renewed the sanctions regime until 31 May 2022. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/156 (25 February 2022) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. **Security Council Letters** S/2022/42 (20 January 2022) was on the appointment of the Panel of Experts. S/2021/518 (28 May 2021) was the voting results for resolution 2577, including explanations of vote. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8987 (7 March 2022) was a briefing on South Sudan.

findings in the Secretary-General's assessment report, requested in resolution 2577. An option is to renew the sanctions regime, retaining the benchmarks contained in resolution 2577 and calling for further progress in their implementation.

Another key issue for the Council is the implementation of the arms embargo and targeted sanctions. The findings and recommendations of the panel's final report are likely to inform the Council's further consideration regarding implementation of the sanctions regime.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Sanctions on South Sudan remain a divisive issue in the Council. When the Council last renewed the sanctions regime in May 2021 through resolution 2577, Kenya and India abstained. During negotiations, members supported the inclusion of benchmarks in principle; the initial draft circulated by the US (the penholder) set out ten benchmarks. The scope and specificity of the benchmarks, however, proved to be the most difficult aspect of the negotiations. (For more details, see our What's in Blue story of 28 May 2021.)

In its explanation of vote, China noted that it did not support the arms embargo on South Sudan. India expressed the view that resolution 2577 does not take into consideration "positive developments in South Sudan" and that "some of these benchmarks are administrative in nature". Kenya said it "strongly believes that more flexibility could have been extended to make the eventual lifting of the sanctions realistic and certain".

Several members of the Council (France, the US, the UK, and others) believe that sanctions are a useful tool to foster stability in South Sudan and to maintain pressure on the parties to implement the R-ARCSS. They generally hold the view that the arms embargo has reduced the flow of weapons to South Sudan, contributing to the reduction of violence, and have expressed concern that the absence of an arms embargo would negatively affect the security situation.

Other Council members have a less favourable view of the sanctions regime. These members tend to underscore the need for the Council to encourage progress in the political and security spheres and believe that current measures could be counterproductive in this regard. China and Russia have had long-standing concerns about the South Sudan sanctions regime. They both abstained in July 2018 on resolution 2428, which initially imposed the arms embargo on South Sudan, in May 2019 on resolution 2471, and in May 2020 on resolution 2521, which extended the sanctions regime for one year.

The AU Peace and Security Council and IGAD have repeatedly called for lifting all punitive measures on South Sudan, and several regional states have expressed opposition to the arms embargo.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan. Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon) chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the situation in Libya. As the Secretary-General has yet to appoint a Special Envoy, a representative of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs may brief the Council. The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti (India), is also scheduled to brief on the committee's activities.

Key Recent Developments

The stand-off to determine Libya's leadership has continued. The clash is between the incumbent prime minister, Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, elected in February 2021 to head the interim Government of National Unity (GNU) by the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF)—an assembly consisting of 75 participants representing the main Libyan geographical, social and political constituencies, which was responsible for charting the way towards elections—and former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha, who was elected interim prime minister by the House of Representatives on 10 February. This represents a broader institutional power struggle between the authority of the Tripoli-based GNU and the Tobruk-based House of Representatives, which was established following the 2014 parliamentary elections and is aligned with General Khalifa Haftar. Haftar stepped down from his position as General of the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF, also known as the Libyan National Army, or LNA) to run in the presidential elections, which were scheduled for 24 December 2021, but are now postponed indefinitely. The House of Representatives based their appointment of Bashagha, and his mandate to form a new government, on the GNU's failure to hold elections as planned.

On 21 April, the Bashagha-led cabinet sworn in by the House of Representatives held its first meeting in the southern city of Sabha, reportedly to discuss his cabinet's work plan, the public budget, and the recent closure of many Libyan oil fields and ports by protesters who reportedly demanded that Dbeibah step down and hand over power to Bashagha. Bashagha has not been able to establish his government in Tripoli, despite several attempts to move there and visits to neighbouring countries to secure support for his political programme, as Dbeibah continues to proclaim the validity of his mandate and his intention to hand over power only to a government elected by the Libyan people.

UN Special Advisor on Libya Stephanie Turco Williams initiated a dialogue forum to accelerate holding Libya's long-delayed elections and promote dialogue between the rival political factions, which have put forward competing electoral roadmaps. Participating

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2619 (31 January 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 30 April 2022. S/RES/2599 (30 September 2021) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 January 2022. S/RES/2595 (15 September 2021) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 30 September 2021. S/RES/2542 (5 September 2020) renewed UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September 2021. **Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2021/24 (24 November 2021) welcomed the Paris International Conference and the Libya Stabilisation Conference. S/PRST/2021/12 (15 July 2021) welcomed the second Berlin Conference on Libya, which was held on 23 June 2021. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/31 (17 January 2022) covered developments in Libya between 25 August 2021 and 17 January 2022. **Security Council Letters** S/2021/958 (17 November 2021) was submitted to the Council by Germany, France, Italy and Libya, transmitting the declaration of the 12 November 2021 Paris Conference on Libya. S/2021/716 (6 August 2021) was from the Secretary-General, transmitting the strategic review of UNSMIL.

were members of the High Council of State (the executive institution and constitutional authority established by the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement that is mandated to propose policies and recommendations on various political issues) and of the House of Representatives. The dialogue forum—hosted in Cairo—took place from 13 to 18 April. Participants intended to agree on a consensual constitutional framework to hold national elections as soon as possible and within mutually agreed timelines. As the week of talks ended without an agreement, Williams released a statement announcing that the joint committee would reconvene after the Eid al-Fitr holiday to continue its consultations.

The deepening rift in Libyan politics has severely affected the country's oil production. Repeated waves of protesters, demanding the handover of government affairs from Dbeibah to Bashagha, entered oilfield production sites and ports vital to the oil industry, prevented access by workers, and caused a shutdown in production and exports. The protests, followed by violent clashes, started on 16 April and caused Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC) to declare "force majeure" at several of Libya's oilfields. Force majeure in this context indicates that the NOC is unable to meet its contractual obligations to deliver oil to the international market. The corporation also warned of its impending inability to service the local market, and in a 22 April press release, cautioned that the shutdown of production at the coastal city of Sirte "will have implications for the stability of the public electricity network, especially in the eastern regions".

Representatives of the GNU and the House of Representatives have since engaged with protesters to end the blockade and resume oil production. The shutdown followed a March dip in oil production and is said to have had a negative impact on Libya's ability to bridge global supply gaps and capitalise on the current price spike in the global energy market.

The political crisis also reverberated within the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC)—which consists of five representatives each from the former Government of National Accord (GNA) and from the LNA and is entrusted with overseeing the implementation of the 23 October 2020 ceasefire agreement. On 9 April, JMC members associated with former LAAF General Khalifa Haftar reportedly announced they were halting engagement with their counterparts to press for a handover of power from Dbeibah to Bashagha.

In this regard, they called for the suspension or reversal of several confidence-building measures—agreed to and since implemented under the umbrella of the ceasefire agreement.

As the political situation in Libya grows more complex, the search continues for a Special Envoy—and subsequently a Special Representative—to lead the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

Key Issues and Options

Concerns about Libya's security situation are mounting. The ceasefire continues to hold, but there is a build-up of armed forces supporting both political factions in Tripoli and other locations. How to reinstate the functionality of the JMC and prevent a return to civil war is a key issue for Council members and the wider international community.

Another key issue is whether instability in Libya may further accelerate migration from and through Libya, mainly towards Europe, and the flow of arms and fighters across north Africa.

Another key concern for several Council members is how Libya can take advantage of its oil wealth in a fair and transparent manner and help ease the strained global availability of oil and natural gas because of the war in Ukraine.

During the upcoming meeting, Council members could consider adopting a presidential statement to send a united message of support to the ongoing UN mediation efforts and reaffirm support to Libya on its path towards elections. Council members could also express support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in finding a suitable candidate to take over UNSMIL's leadership.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics on Libya have been difficult. On 29 April, the Council adopted resolution 2629, renewing UNSMIL's mandate for three months, until 31 July. Although the vote was unanimous, the negotiations were contentious, as Council members' views diverged regarding the duration of the mandate (the UK, penholder on Libya, had suggested a twelve-months renewal) and the frequency of the Secretary-General's reporting to the Council.

Prior to the 29 April adoption, the Council had renewed UNSMIL's mandate three times since September 2021 through short-term technical rollovers because of disagreements among Council members concerning the length of the mandate, the restructuring of the mission, and language regarding the appointment of UNSMIL's leadership. Several Council members—including France, the UK and the US—have in the past expressed support for Williams and her initiatives on the ground. Russia, on the other hand, has repeatedly called for the Secretary-General quickly to appoint a new head of UNSMIL, saying that the prospective candidate should be acceptable to Libyans, regional stakeholders and the Council. The three African members of the Council (Kenya, Gabon and Ghana) have expressed a preference for an African candidate to lead the mission.

The Council appears to remain united on the view that Libyans themselves have to decide their political fate. Only Russia has announced its support for Bashagha since his appointment, but it has also indicated that it will respect any leadership decision the Libyans may take.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Tiffany Jenkins
Policy Analyst

Lindiwe Knutson
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Publications Assistant

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

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 6394
Fax +1 212 759 4038
Web securitycouncilreport.org

Follow **@SCRtweets** on Twitter