

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In June, Albania will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Albania plans to organise two signature events. The first signature event is an open debate on strengthening [accountability and justice](#) for violations of international law. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama is expected to chair. President of the International Court of Justice Joan Donoghue, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

The second signature event is a ministerial-level open debate on the role of regional organisations in implementing the [Women, Peace and Security](#) (WPS) agenda in contexts of political turmoil and seizures of power by force. The meeting will be chaired by Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Olta Xhaçka. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to provide opening remarks. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and high-level representatives from the African Union (AU), European Union (EU), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) are the anticipated briefers. A Council product is a possible outcome.

In June, the annual open debate on the [working methods of the Security Council](#) will take place, with a likely focus on the implementation of Note 507.

The Security Council is also scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for [Criminal Tribunals](#) (IRMCT).

African issues on the programme of work in June are:

- [Central Africa](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office in Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA);
- [Central African Republic](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA);
- [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and the mandate renewal of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee;

- [Libya](#), renewal of the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo, and briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- [Mali](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the mandate renewal of MINUSMA;
- [Somalia](#), briefing by the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee;
- [Sudan](#), renewal of the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and briefing by the Chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), meetings on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Golan Heights](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and renewal of the UNDOF mandate;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments;
- [Iraq](#), briefing on the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD);
- [Iran](#), briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme; and
- [Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#), the monthly meeting.

The Council is expected to meet on two European issues in June. A briefing on the maintenance of peace and security in [Ukraine](#) is expected to take place on 6 June.

The Security Council will also hold its annual meeting on strengthening [EU-UN cooperation](#). Xhaçka is expected to chair the meeting. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

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Overview

Rosemary DiCarlo are the anticipated briefers.

In terms of Asian issues, the Security Council will hold a debate on the UN Assistance Mission in [Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA).

On the Americas, there will be a briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Office in [Haiti](#) (BINUH).

On 9 June, the General Assembly is expected to [elect](#) five Security Council members for the 2023-2024 term: Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland.

Other issues could be raised in June depending on developments.

Security Council Elections 2022

The 76th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections on 9 June for five non-permanent seats of the Security Council for the 2022-2023 term.

Background

The five seats available for election in 2022, according to the regular distribution among regions, will be as follows:

- one seat for the African Group (currently held by Kenya);
- one seat for the Asia-Pacific Group (currently held by India);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRU-LAC, currently held by Mexico); and
- two seats for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG, currently held by Ireland and Norway).

The Eastern European Group is not contesting any seats this year, as its one seat, held by Albania through 2023, comes up for election every other year.

This year's elections are uncontested, as five member states—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland—are running for the five available seats. Three out of the five candidates have served on the Council previously: Japan has served eleven times, Ecuador three times, and Malta once. Mozambique and Switzerland have never served on the Council.

The five members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2023 and will serve until 31 December 2024.

The table below shows the number of seats available by region

their regional group and are running unopposed. Every candidate must obtain the votes of two-thirds of the member states present and voting at the General Assembly session. This means that a minimum of 129 positive votes are required to win a seat if all 193 UN member states are present and voting.

In theory, a member state running unopposed might not garner the requisite votes in the General Assembly in the first round and be challenged in subsequent rounds by a new candidate. This is possible, but unlikely.

There have been several instances in which extended rounds of voting were required to fill a contested seat, however. Such situations have usually been resolved when one of the contenders withdraws, or a compromise candidate comes forward. Exceptionally, countries competing for a seat have decided to split the term between them, but the only time this has happened since 1966 was in 2016, when Italy and the Netherlands agreed to split the 2017-2018 term.

Potential Dynamics in 2023

Council dynamics have become more difficult following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February. The crisis in Ukraine is expected to dominate discussion in the Council for the foreseeable future. Council engagement on Ukraine has followed several tracks, with a focus on the political, humanitarian and other dimensions of the conflict, such as issues of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue with the emergence of additional tracks, including on accountability, and the extent to which developments in

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2022	CANDIDATES AND PRIOR COUNCIL TERMS
Africa	1	Mozambique (never served)
Asia-Pacific	1	Japan (1958-1959, 1966-1967, 1971-1972, 1975-1976, 1981-1982, 1987-1988, 1992-1993, 1997-1998, 2005-2006, 2009-2010, 2016-2017)
Latin America and Caribbean	1	Ecuador (1950-1951, 1960-1961, 1991-1992)
Western Europe and Others	2	Malta (1983-1984) Switzerland (never served)

in the 2022 election, the declared candidates, and their prior terms in the Council.

Voting Procedures

Election to the Council, as with other principal organs of the UN, requires formal balloting even if candidates have been endorsed by

respect of Ukraine will influence the Council's ability to act in unison on other agenda items.

Council members remain broadly supportive of the fundamental value of UN peace operations. While the large majority of resolutions mandating these operations continue to be adopted unanimously, there are often disagreements about some aspects during negotiations, such

Security Council Elections 2022

as language on human rights; women, peace and security; and climate change. The incoming members are likely to support the integration of these thematic issues into the mandates of peace operations, perhaps generating disagreements with members such as China and Russia, which have a more traditional view of the UN Charter and the meaning of international peace and security. With a number of UN peacekeeping missions in the process of drawdown, reconfiguration and exit, there is a growing focus on peace operations transitions.

With Mozambique joining Gabon and Ghana on the Council, the three African members (A3) are likely to work closely in coordinating their positions and advancing the common African position on regional and thematic items on the Security Council's agenda. In 2021, the A3 (Kenya, Niger and Tunisia) delivered 53 joint statements on the African region and on thematic agenda items such as UN peacekeeping operations and children and armed conflict. The A3 are also expected to coordinate their positions on working methods and present joint commitments in this regard.

Tensions over the scope of the Council's mandate can be expected to remain in 2023. For example, several members believe that climate change and security is within the Council's mandate of maintaining international peace and security; most candidate countries have explicitly highlighted the promotion of climate change and security as one of their Council priorities. While they will find support from several members in the Council, they will encounter resistance from others: China, Russia and Brazil have long had reservations about the Council's work on this issue. In December 2021, a draft resolution on climate change and security failed to be adopted because of a veto by Russia. It received 12 votes in favour, two against (India and Russia) and one abstention (China).

The fight against terrorism and violent extremism is likely to remain a key focus of the Council's work in 2023, as this issue features in the campaign platform of some candidate countries. For instance, Mozambique is keen to forestall the expansion of terrorism in its northern province, while Malta has also indicated an interest on this issue and underscores the role of education in fighting violent extremism.

Disarmament and non-proliferation will continue to attract attention in 2023 with three of the candidate countries—Ecuador, Japan

and Switzerland—identifying the issue as a priority.

Small arms and light weapons continue to be raised in country-specific discussions and negotiations in the Council. This trend is likely to continue in 2023 with Ecuador and Mozambique highlighting the importance of this issue in their campaigns.

A focus on the women, peace and security agenda is expected to continue in 2023. All candidate countries have emphasised that this will be a priority of their Council tenures. In 2023, there will be new chairs of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security, as Ireland and Mexico, which co-chaired the IEG for the last two years, finish their Council terms in December. Candidate countries may join the WPS commitment, which started with the “trio” initiative of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. Among the permanent members, the UK, France and the US can be expected to remain strong proponents of this issue. Other member states, such as China and Russia, will probably continue to maintain that this agenda item should not be expanded to post-conflict situations and to emphasise that the issue of gender equality should not be within the Council's purview.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, several Council members have held signature events during their presidencies focusing on the crisis, and the Council has adopted two resolutions (S/RES/2532 and S/RES/2565) and one presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/10) to address its effects. Some candidate countries are interested in pandemics as an emerging challenge, and Ecuador, in particular, would like to keep the momentum on the Secretary-General's initiative on the global ceasefire.

While two members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group— Ireland and Norway—leave the Security Council at the end of 2022, two other members of this group—Ecuador and Switzerland—will replace them in 2023. The other ACT group members currently serving in the Security Council are Gabon and Ghana. These members might be keen to push for improving the Security Council's working methods based on proposals advocated by the ACT group.

For more background on the 9 June Security Council elections, including profiles of the candidate countries, please see our recent research report, *Security Council Elections 2022*.

Status Update since our May Forecast

Lebanon

On 9 May, Security Council members received their semi-annual briefing in closed consultations on the latest Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (S/2022/345). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. On 25 May, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the holding on 15 May of legislative elections in Lebanon and taking note of the findings and recommendations of electoral observer missions (SC/14905). The members of the Security Council also called for the prompt formation of a new inclusive government and the urgent implementation of reforms

while encouraging measures to enhance women's full, equal and meaningful political participation and representation.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 11 May (S/PV.9029). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt briefed on the latest report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), which covers the period from 16 October 2021 to 15 April (S/2022/374). Šefik Džaferović, the Bosniak member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic Presidency of BiH and the incumbent Chairman of the Presidency and representatives from Croatia and

Status Update since our May Forecast

Serbia participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. The discussion focused on the growing divisive rhetoric in BiH and Republika Srpska's withdrawal from state institutions. Council members were divided over the role of the OHR and the use of unilateral sanctions in contributing to peace and stability in the country.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 12 May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2630, extending the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 November without making changes to the force's mandate or structure. The resolution also extended 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, until 15 November.

DPRK

On 11 May, the Council convened for an open briefing to discuss ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK on 4 May and 7 May (S/PV.9030). Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Khaled Khiari briefed. Japan and the ROK participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. On 26 May, the Council voted on a draft resolution updating and strengthening the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime. China and Russia vetoed the resolution, and the remaining 13 members voted in favour of it. On 27 May, the Council held closed consultations to discuss the 90-day report regarding the work of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) briefed in her capacity as Chair of the Committee.

Iraq

On 17 May, the Council convened for a briefing on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/PV.9034). The briefers were Special Representative and head of UNAMI Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Hanaa Edwar, co-Founder and Chairperson of the Iraqi Al-Amal Association. Iraq participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. On 26 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2631, which extended UNAMI's mandate until 31 May 2023. Fifteen members voted in favour of the resolution.

G5 Sahel

On 18 May, the Security Council held its biannual briefing (S/PV.9035) on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). The meeting occurred on the heels of Mali's 15 May announcement that it was withdrawing from the FC-G5S, which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger formed in 2017 to combat terrorist groups in the Sahel. The Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee briefed, presenting the Secretary-General's latest report on the FC-G5S (S/2022/382). Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel Yemdaogo Eric Tiare and civil society representative Solange Bandiaky-Badji, Coordinator and President of the Rights and Resources Initiative, also briefed.

Conflict and food security

On 19 May, the Security Council held a ministerial-level open debate on conflict and food security (S/PV.9036). The debate's concept note (S/2022/391) highlighted how food insecurity is being exacerbated by the impact of the war in Ukraine. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken chaired the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres, World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley, Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Director-General Qu Dongyu, and Sara Menker, founder and CEO of Gro Intelligence, provided briefings. The US organised the debate as part of a "week of action" to combat rising global food insecurity.

Annual report to the General Assembly

On 20 May, the Security Council adopted its annual report to the General Assembly covering 1 January-31 December 2021 (S/PV.9037).

Technology and Security

On 23 May, the US convened a briefing on "The use of digital technologies in maintaining international peace and security" as one of the signature events of its Council presidency (S/PV.9039). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, GlobalVoices' Director of the Advox Project Nanjala Nyabola and McGill University Adjunct Professor Dirk Druet briefed. DiCarlo said that incidents of malicious use of digital technologies by state and non-state actors have nearly quadrupled since 2015. Nyabola noted the rise in surveillance technologies and their effects on the freedom of expression online, and Druet emphasised the UN's role as a purveyor of reliable information.

Protection of Civilians

On 25 May, the Council held its annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/PV.9042). The briefers were OCHA's Director of the Coordination Division Ramesh Rajasingham, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Director-General Robert Mardini, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) David Miliband, and Rachel Boketa, Country Director for Women for Women International in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 13 May, Security Council members issued a press statement strongly condemning the killing of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh while calling for accountability and for an immediate, thorough, transparent, fair and impartial investigation (SC/14891). On 26 May, the Security Council held an open briefing followed by closed consultations on: "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.9046). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed the Council. Daniel Munayer, the Executive Director of the civil society organisation (CSO) Musalaha and Robi Damelin, Spokesperson and Director of International Relations of the CSO Parents Circle-Families Forum, also briefed.

Status Update since our May Forecast

Myanmar

On 27 May, the Security Council convened a private meeting on Myanmar. The briefers were the UN Special Envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer and Cambodian Minister of Foreign Affairs Prak Sokhonn, who briefed in his capacity as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Special Envoy for Myanmar.

Gulf of Guinea Piracy

On 31 May, the Council adopted resolution 2634 on piracy in

the Gulf of Guinea that Ghana and Norway first proposed in January. Resolution 2634 emphasises the need to criminalise and prosecute in the region acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea, and to enhance and support national, regional, and international efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. The resolution requests the Secretary-General's report on the issue within five months. It was open to co-sponsorship by the wider UN membership.

Strengthening Accountability and Justice for Serious Violations of International Law

Expected Council Action

In June, Albania is organising a high-level open debate on “strengthening accountability and justice for serious violations of international law” as a signature event of its presidency. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama is expected to chair the meeting.

The expected briefers are Joan E. Donoghue, President of the International Court of Justice; Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and a representative of civil society.

Background

Accountability for serious violations of international law has received renewed attention from the international community following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Several reports of potential violations of international law in Ukraine have emerged in recent months. In a 3 April report, for example, Human Rights Watch documented a number of possible cases of Russian military forces committing war crimes against civilians in the Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Kyiv regions of Ukraine between 27 February and 14 March, including cases involving allegations of repeated rape, summary execution and unlawful violence.

These reports have led the international community to implement different measures that are designed to facilitate accountability for violations of international law committed in Ukraine. On 2 March, ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan announced that he had decided to proceed with an active investigation into the situation in Ukraine after receiving referrals from 39 ICC States Parties. After holding an “urgent debate on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression” on 3 and 4 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (ICIU). The ICIU's responsibilities include investigating “all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and related crimes in the context of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation”, as well as preserving information, documentation and evidence of such violations and abuses in view of any future legal proceedings.

Accountability for violations of international law is also an

important issue in several other files on the Council's agenda. In Syria, parties to the conflict continue “to commit with impunity serious violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other gross human rights abuses”, according to Amnesty International. A May 2014 draft resolution that would have referred the situation in Syria to the ICC was vetoed by China and Russia.

While the Council has found it difficult to reach agreement concerning accountability for violations of international law and human rights abuses in Syria, other organs of the UN have established mechanisms that seek to hold perpetrators accountable. In August 2011, the HRC established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Syria Arab Republic. Among other matters, its mandate includes investigating all alleged violations of international human rights law in Syria since March 2011 and, where possible, identifying those responsible with a view to ensuring they are held to account. In December 2016, the General Assembly created the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes Under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM). The IIIM is responsible for collecting, preserving, and analysing evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in order to facilitate fair and independent criminal proceedings.

The HRC has also created similar mechanisms for Myanmar, another country situation in which it has been difficult for the Council to achieve consensus concerning accountability. In March 2017, the HRC mandated the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM) to establish the facts and circumstances of alleged human rights violations by military and security forces in Myanmar. In August 2019, the IIFMM handed over the evidence it had gathered to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, a body created by the HRC in September 2018 to collect evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law in Myanmar and prepare files for criminal prosecution. The International Court of Justice is also hearing the case brought by the Gambia concerning alleged genocide against the

UN DOCUMENTS ON ACCOUNTABILITY Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1973 (17 March 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC. S/RES/1593 (31 March 2005) referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC.

Strengthening Accountability and Justice

Rohingya population of Myanmar.

Yemen is another file where the Council has been unable to take effective action on accountability. Council products on Yemen, for example, contain only limited language on accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Partly due to the lack of action from the Council in the face of apparent serious violations of international law, on 29 September 2017, the HRC created the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen. The Group was tasked with monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in Yemen, as well as conducting a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international law committed by all parties to the conflict, among other matters. In October 2021, the HRC voted against extending the mandate of the Group, reportedly after lobbying by Saudi Arabia and coalition allies.

The Security Council has referred two situations to the International Criminal Court (ICC): the situations in Darfur, in resolution 1593 (2005), and in Libya, in resolution 1970 (2011). While imposing an obligation on parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the ICC, the resolutions urged states other than Sudan and Libya to cooperate with the ICC but noted that they were under no obligation to do so.

National courts exercising universal jurisdiction are also playing a greater role in ensuring accountability for international crimes. In January, for example, a German court convicted Anwar Raslan, a senior official from the Assad regime, of crimes against humanity committed in Syria. International investigative mechanisms, including the IIIM, are increasingly working with national authorities to assist with these prosecutions. As at the end of January, the IIIM had assisted 13 jurisdictions with 143 discrete investigations into serious international crimes committed in Syria.

Albania has prepared a concept note ahead of the open debate. The concept note outlines several objectives for the meeting, such as drawing on past practices and current challenges to develop a strategy for the international community to enhance its role in holding perpetrators accountable for violations of international law; exploring ways to strengthen accountability mechanisms at the national, regional and international level; and bringing attention to the situation of victims. It also sets out questions to guide the discussion, including:

- What are the steps that the Council could take in order to strengthen and institutionalise international legal principles of accountability and the related mechanisms for them to have an impact in practice?
- What are some of the possible venues to enhance accountability, including through the creation of an accountability network

between the ICJ, ICC, OHCHR and different legal regimes and other regional justice institutions?

- How can we ensure the right to appropriate reparation for victims so that they can obtain effective remedies for the harm they have suffered?

Key Issues and Options

Following the meeting, Albania could consider preparing a Chair's summary that captures the ideas and suggestions generated during the discussion. Given the number of files on the Council's agenda in which accountability for violations of international law is a major issue, Council members could create an Informal Expert Group on Accountability. This Group could push the Council to take a more consistent and concerted approach to facilitate accountability. It could also request a white paper from the Secretariat that makes recommendations as to how the Council could achieve this aim.

Council members could consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with legal experts to discuss ways in which accountability can be pursued in a complementary fashion with other aspects of transitional justice, such as reparations and truth-telling, in order to promote peace and security in post-conflict settings.

At a later date, the Council may also wish to consider requesting a briefing from a senior official from one of the investigative mechanisms, such as Catherine Marchi-Uhel, the head of the IIIM. This briefing could provide Council members with the opportunity to learn more about how the Council can support the work of these mechanisms.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics concerning accountability for serious violations of international law are difficult. Council members have generally been unable to agree on a consistent approach to accountability across the different files on its agenda and tend to tailor their response to individual cases based on their broader strategic interests. In Ukraine, for example, the P3 and other like-minded members have regularly called for accountability for violations of international law that have allegedly been committed by Russia. On the Yemen file, on the other hand, some of these members, several of whom are customarily at the forefront of pushing for accountability measures, have been reticent to call for accountability for apparent violations committed by the Saudi-led coalition. Similarly, Russia has advocated for accountability for alleged international crimes committed by the US in Afghanistan while resisting the implementation of accountability initiatives in Syria and Ukraine. These dynamics are likely to persist in the future.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to hold an open briefing

on the situation in Ukraine. The meeting will focus on the war's effects on women, including the increased risks of conflict-related

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2022/3 (6 May 2022) conveyed strong support for the Secretary-General's efforts in the search for a peaceful solution to the war in Ukraine. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9033 (13 May 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine, requested by Russia, which focused on allegations of military biological activities in the country. S/PV.9032 (12 May 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine, requested by France and Mexico, which focused on the effects of the war on children. S/PV.9027 (5 May 2022) was an open meeting on Ukraine.

Ukraine

sexual violence and trafficking. The anticipated briefers are Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and a civil society representative.

Additional meetings on Ukraine are likely, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council remains actively engaged on the situation in Ukraine, having convened three formal meetings and one Arria-formula meeting on the issue in May. On 5 May, the Council held an open briefing during which it received an update on recent developments, including Secretary-General António Guterres' trip to the region in late April. The following day, Russia organised an Arria-formula meeting to discuss its allegations that Ukrainian troops and militia had committed war crimes since Russia invaded the country on 24 February. On 12 May, at the request of France and Mexico, the Council convened a briefing on humanitarian developments, focusing on the effects of the war on children. The next day, a briefing was held at the request of Russia that focused on its allegations of military biological activities in the country. (For more information, see our 4 May, 5 May, and 11 May What's in Blue stories.)

In addition to these meetings, the war in Ukraine has been referenced during several other Council meetings. Notable in this regard were thematic meetings on conflict and food security (on 19 May), technology and security (on 22 May), the Arria-formula meeting on the protection of journalists (on 23 May), and the annual debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (on 25 May).

On 6 May, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement which expressed deep concern regarding the maintenance of peace and security in Ukraine, recalled states' obligation to settle their international disputes by peaceful means, and conveyed strong support for the Secretary-General's efforts in the search for a peaceful solution. This was the first Council product on Ukraine since resolution 2623 of 27 February, which called for an emergency special session of the General Assembly. While some have viewed the presidential statement as a positive development signalling that the Council is able to find common ground on a text advocating diplomacy, others have questioned its value, finding it merely symbolic. During the negotiations on the presidential statement, it appears that an explicit reference to the Secretary-General's good offices was removed at Russia's request, and the fact that there have been no apparent changes to the UN's role in Ukraine can be attributed to a lack of appetite for UN mediation regarding the Ukraine war.

Hostilities in the eastern and southern parts of Ukraine continue to exacerbate the country's humanitarian and displacement crises. As at 26 May, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had documented 8,691 civilian casualties, including 3,998 deaths, while noting that the true figures are likely to be considerably higher. Most casualties continue to be 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 24 February, approximately 14.3 million people—over a quarter of Ukraine's population—have been forcibly displaced, according to a 26 May OCHA humanitarian impact situation report. That includes eight million internally displaced people

and 6.3 million refugees who have fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries.

Moreover, significant damage to civilian housing and critical infrastructure has been reported. This includes the destruction of tens of thousands of civilian homes and hundreds of educational and medical facilities. On 10 May, European members of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted a resolution that condemned Russia's attacks on healthcare facilities and requested the WHO Secretariat to explore options for the relocation from Russia of its European office for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases. On 7 May, a Russian missile hit a school in the city of Bilohorivka, located in the eastern Luhansk region, where 90 people had reportedly sought shelter from the fighting. According to media reports, the Russian strike on the school killed around 60 people. On 12 May, at least three people were reportedly killed and 19 others injured in an airstrike that hit a school in the city of Novhorod-Siverskyi in the Chernihiv region.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In light of allegations of atrocities committed by the Russian armed forces in northern Ukraine and in the southern city of Mariupol, the Human Rights Council (HRC) convened a special session on 12 May to "address the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine stemming from Russian aggression". The meeting was requested by Ukraine, with the support of over 50 member states, including Security Council members Albania, France, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the UK, and the US. At the special session, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed shock at the scale of unlawful killings in areas to the north of Kyiv and of the destruction and reported violations in Mariupol, noting that her office had verified a dozen cases of sexual violence across the country. The Chair of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Ukraine, Erik Møse, said during the session that the commission will make recommendations on the full range of accountability measures, stressing that the COI is independent and has "no link to any particular country, party, or entity". Møse also noted that the commission had sought to establish contact with Russia and that it remains ready to communicate with Moscow. Russia did not attend the special session, calling the meeting biased.

Following the special session's debate, the HRC adopted resolution A/HRC/S-34/L.1, which, among other things, reiterated its demand for an immediate cessation of military hostilities against Ukraine and expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Mariupol and the effect of the conflict on food security globally. It called on all parties to refrain from any state-sponsored disinformation and urged Russia to provide UN staff with safe access to persons who have been transferred from conflict-affected areas and are held on Russian territory or areas occupied by Russian troops in Ukraine. Finally, it requested Bachelet to brief the HRC on the situation in Mariupol during the next regular session in June and for the COI to brief the HRC on the findings of its inquiry by the following regular session in September. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 33 in favour, two against and 12 abstentions. Security Council members Brazil, France, Gabon, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the US voted in favour, while China voted against the resolution, and India abstained.

Women, Peace and Security

On 4 May, UN Women and the NGO Care International issued a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) on the humanitarian crisis resulting from the war in Ukraine. Among other things, the RGA said that while women are playing a vital role in the humanitarian response to the conflict, the "centralization of power and increased role of the military has made it more difficult for women to exert influence in formal political and administrative decision-making processes". The RGA further stressed that women in Ukraine face high safety and protection risks—including domestic and conflict-related sexual violence—and that the war is exacerbating pre-existing inequalities

Ukraine

and discrimination.

Several Council members – including Albania, Brazil, France, Ireland, Norway, and the UK – referred to growing reports of rape and sexual violence in Ukraine during the 13 April annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence. Norway also noted the risks that Ukrainian women and girls are facing due to Russian attacks against civilian infrastructure, which force displacement and family separations and undermine access to essential health services. At the 5 May Council meeting on Ukraine, Bachelet said that her staff “heard about cases of women having been raped by Russian armed forces in areas that were under their control, as well as other allegations of sexual violence by both parties to the conflict”. Among other issues, the Advocacy Coordinator of the civil society organisation Right to Protection, Tetiana Luzan, called on states to provide shelter, protection from human trafficking and access to services to Ukrainians who have fled the country, a large majority of whom are women and children.

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 formats with restrictive attendance and no meeting record, such as an informal interactive dialogue or a closed Arria-formula meeting, to allow for a frank exchange of ideas between Council members and key actors on the situation on the ground.

Having adopted the 6 May presidential statement expressing support for the Secretary-General’s efforts, Council members may also wish to encourage the Secretary-General to appoint a personal envoy to explore openings for a peaceful settlement to the war. The Council’s endorsement could provide political backing, although the Secretary-General has the authority to appoint such an envoy at his own initiative.

Ensuring humanitarian access and respect for international humanitarian law remain key issues for the Security Council. The Council may choose to invite the Secretary-General to brief members on his ongoing efforts to establish a Humanitarian Contact Group—a UN-facilitated mechanism which would support dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian authorities on humanitarian issues.

Council members remain concerned about the war’s detrimental effects on women, children and other vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. In addition to next month’s scheduled briefing on the situation of women, including the increased risks of conflict-related sexual violence, Council members may seek to organise meetings highlighting other challenges relating to these groups.

Council and Wider 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—firmly intent on condemning Russia and isolating it from international forums. 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 indiscriminate killing and torture of civilians, conflict-related sexual violence and attacks against civilian infrastructure such as schools and hospitals by Russian forces, these Council members have stressed the need to ensure accountability for atrocities committed in Ukraine. On 25 May, the EU, the UK and the US launched the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group for Ukraine—a mechanism aimed at ensuring a coordinated approach to accountability efforts on the ground. These members have also justified the

use of unilateral sanctions, while emphasising that Russia is to blame for all the war’s consequences, including the humanitarian and displacement crises and the growing global food insecurity.

Russia categorically denies any allegations of atrocities by its troops in Ukraine. It has accused Ukraine and the West of fabricating evidence and spreading false narratives regarding the events in Bucha and other northern towns and has questioned the validity and impartiality of the investigations of the alleged atrocities. Russia has argued that Western sanctions and Kyiv’s unwillingness to engage on humanitarian corridors for foreign vessels in the Black Sea, rather than its own actions, are to blame for exacerbating global food insecurity. According to media reports, Turkey is currently negotiating an agreement between Russia and Ukraine to open a corridor through the Bosphorus strait for grain exports from Ukraine.

At the 12 May meeting on the situation of children, several Council members (Albania, Ireland, Mexico, and the US) called on the Secretary-General to include Ukraine as a situation of concern in his 2022 annual report on Children and Armed Conflict, which is due in late June. If the Secretary-General chooses to do so, his annual report will include descriptions of grave violations committed against children in Ukraine.

Some Council members have expressed concern that Russia may stage fraudulent referendums to justify its occupation and annex the occupied territories of Ukraine. On 24 May, the Russian-appointed civil-military administration of Ukraine’s southern Kherson region confirmed that it would “request to introduce the Kherson region as a full-fledged entity of the Russian Federation”. (Russia employed a similar tactic in March 2014 with regard to Crimea. In anticipation of the 16 March 2014 Crimean status referendum, the US tabled a draft resolution stating that Ukraine had not authorised the referendum and declaring that it had no validity. While the draft resolution failed to be adopted because of a Russian veto, a similar General Assembly resolution was subsequently adopted on 27 March 2014.)

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. For example, during the 19 May open debate on conflict and food security, Brazil said that the unilateral economic measures have had a secondary impact on the operation of markets, leading to increasing costs and hampering the availability of foodstuffs and fertilisers. Furthermore, while these members support an independent UN investigation to ensure accountability for alleged war crimes in Ukraine, some have been reluctant to accuse Russian forces of having committed atrocities in Ukraine before the conclusion of a full and transparent investigation. In explaining its vote on the 12 May HRC resolution, Brazil stressed that the HRC should remain impartial and “take decisions based on independent, objective and verifiable information”, while noting that “impartiality should not mean indifference” and affirming that “in view of the deteriorating human rights situation in Ukraine, it is clear that the [HRC] cannot remain silent”.

India continues to pursue a neutral stance on the issue, abstaining on the 12 May HRC resolution. Its stated priority remains the de-escalation of tensions and the promotion of dialogue and diplomacy, and it has emphasised the need to keep open channels of dialogue with Russia. China also remains unwilling to criticise Russia directly.

Instead, it has demonstrated support for Russian concerns about the European security architecture and what it calls “group politics and

bloc confrontation”. China remains opposed to unilateral sanctions and the transfer of arms to Ukraine.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In June, the 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), may also brief on the committee’s activities.

The Security Council is also expected to vote on a draft resolution renewing for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. The current authorisation expires on 3 June. The Secretary-General’s annual report on the implementation of the measures was issued on 28 April.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council first adopted the measures in support of the full implementation of the arms embargo on Libya in resolution 2292 of 14 June 2016. The interception of vessels bound to or from Libya was intended to curb the flow of arms to the country and to support the two-way arms embargo imposed on the country in resolution 1970 of 26 February 2011. The UK, the penholder in 2016 for resolution 2292, said in its explanation of vote that adopting those measures was a sign of support for the then-Government of National Accord (GNA) to facilitate its extension of state authority across the country. The UK also acknowledged that the arms embargo had not fully stopped the flow of weapons into the country, saying that resolution 2292 detailed concrete steps to curb the flow of arms.

The GNA has since been succeeded by the interim Government of National Unity (GNU), whose prime minister, Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, was elected in February 2021 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. Dbeibah’s leadership, however, is currently being challenged by a rival prime minister. On 10 February, the Tobruk-based House of Representatives appointed former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha prime minister, following the indefinite postponement of presidential and parliamentary elections that had been scheduled for 24 December 2021 under Dbeibah’s leadership. The stand-off culminated when violent clashes erupted in Tripoli on 17 May between forces loyal to Dbeibah and those supporting Bashagha, as the latter attempted to move his parallel government to the capital. After Bashagha abandoned his attempt, the situation in Tripoli returned to calm, as it remains at the time of writing. (Bashagha has appointed a parallel cabinet, which held its first meeting on 21 April in Sirte, where Bashagha has established his seat.)

The Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the

inspection authorisation (published in late April before the violent clashes in Tripoli) attests to its continued validity. Amid ongoing efforts by the UN to foster agreement among Libya’s state institutions on a constitutional basis for holding the postponed elections, the report says that “the arms embargo can continue to help facilitate a conducive environment for advancing the political process”. The report also references the finding of the 1970 Libya sanctions committee’s Panel of Experts that while fewer violations of the arms embargo had occurred during the 4 June 2021 and 28 April reporting period, armed groups active across Libya had acquired new types of military equipment.

The EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med Irini has remained the only regional organisation acting under the authorisation to inspect vessels. EUNAVFOR Med Irini reported that between 16 April 2021 and 15 April 2022, it conducted 3,642 hailings (calling on other vessels), 141 friendly approaches (consensual visits to vessels that can be carried out without flag state approval and without the use of enforcement measures), and 11 vessel inspections. It attempted, but did not carry out, three additional inspections because of an explicit refusal of consent by the flag state of the respective vessels. (The authorisation requires good-faith efforts to first obtain the consent of the vessel’s flag state prior to any inspections and calls upon all flag states to cooperate with such inspections.) None of the inspections resulted in the identification of prohibited cargo.

In his current report, the Secretary-General has expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the EU, through Operation Irini, to contribute to the full implementation of the arms embargo. He also highlighted the information the mission shares with the experts as an important contribution to the implementation of the arms embargo.

On 29 April, the Council adopted resolution 2629, renewing the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for three months. The resolution shortened the reporting cycle from 60 to 30 days. The Council last met on the situation in Libya on 26 May to receive an updated account of developments and UN activity. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed, noting a persisting political deadlock which hampered progress on the political, security and economic fronts, despite sustained UN mediation efforts.

Sanctions-Related Developments

In June, the Security Council is expected to receive the final report of the Panel of Experts, which is due before 15 June. The 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee met with the panel on 20 May to discuss the report and its recommendations. Following its submission to the Council, the document will be published.

Key Issues and Options

The recent clashes in Tripoli attest to the precarious security situation rooted in the absence of a unified political front. A key concern for the Council will be how to foster common political ground

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2578 (3 June 2021) renewed for 12 months the vessel inspection authorisation on the high seas off the coast of Libya. S/RES/2292 (14 June 2016) established an authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. S/RES/1970 (26 February 2011) imposed an arms embargo on Libya and established a sanctions committee. **Secretary-General’s Reports** S/2022/409 (20 May 2022) covered developments in Libya between 18 January and 20 May. S/2022/360 (28 April 2022) was the annual report on the implementation of resolution 2578. **Security Council Letter** S/2021/229 (8 March 2021) contained the Panel of Expert’s latest report on Libya.

Libya

between the two rival governments so that they can agree on a constitutional framework to pave the way for the holding of Libya's long-delayed elections. The Council may consider increasing UNSMIL's advisory capacity with additional experts on constitutional and electoral matters.

Since the Council first authorised inspections in 2016 to enforce the arms embargo, the annual renewals have been through a short text with technical updates. Given the continued need for full implementation of the arms embargo, the Council may consider another 12-month technical renewal.

How to fully implement the Libya arms embargo has been a long-standing issue for the Council. One option is for the Libya sanctions committee—which like all sanctions committees consists of the 15 members of the Council—to consider briefing interested member states on the inspection authorisation and other arms embargo measures to raise awareness and build capacity for their implementation. In addition, Council members could encourage member states to increase inspections authorised by resolution 2292 to complement the efforts of the EU operation.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics regarding Libya continue to be difficult. Different views among Council members regarding the role of UNSMIL, its leadership appointments, and its structure have resulted in several

short renewals of the mandate since September 2021. The core mandated tasks, however, have been maintained as set out in resolution 2542 of 15 September 2020 and paragraph 16 of resolution 2570 of 16 April 2021.

The Council's authorisations to inspect vessels suspected of violating the arms embargo have always been unanimous. However, Russia has voiced concerns over the implementation of these resolutions, including cautioning that the measures may be used to broaden the activities of the EUNAVFOR operations. As one example, Russia disagreed with the finding that jet A-1 fuel, seized in December 2020 from the vessel *Royal Diamond 7* travelling to Libya from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was "likely to be used for military purposes" and fell under the arms embargo. Others, including the European Council members, maintained that the seizure was in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

It has become regular practice for the Council to have an informal interactive dialogue (IID) ahead of the renewal of the authorisations to discuss their implementation. This year's IID took place on 24 May. Stefano Tomat, the Director of the Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate of the European External Action Service, participated in the meeting and briefed Council members on the recent activities of Operation Irini.

European member states have traditionally held the pen for the renewal of the measures. This year the penholder is France.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is due to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) before its expiration on 3 June in accordance with resolution 2579. The chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana), is expected to provide the quarterly briefing on the committee's work.

Key Recent Developments

More than three years have passed since former President Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April 2019. It has been over six months since the military coup d'état in October 2021, and the political situation remains deadlocked, with Sudan still under a state of emergency. "The promised transition to civilian rule and democracy is at risk of being derailed", and "there is a shrinking window of opportunity for Sudanese stakeholders to resolve the political crisis", according to the Secretary-General's latest report, covering 22 February to 5 May.

On 28 February, UNITAMS published a summary report on its consultations for a political process in Sudan, which the mission had launched on 8 January. Following these consultations, the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the UN formed a trilateral cooperation mechanism in support of a Sudanese-led process to end the political crisis and restore a civilian-led

transitional government. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, the mechanism has held meetings with various stakeholders focused primarily on transitional constitutional arrangements, the selection of a prime minister and cabinet, elections, government programmes, and a road map on the way forward.

During the reporting period, "levels of insecurity, including inter-communal clashes, armed conflict and criminality continued to pose a significant challenge for the authorities" and escalating violence in Darfur "resulted in a growing number of fatalities and significant new forced displacements", according to the Secretary-General's report. It noted some progress on the gradual start-up of the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee, which UNITAMS chairs, as well as progress in relation to the joint security-keeping force in Darfur, which was agreed to in the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) and is planned to number 12,000 troops. During the reporting period, approximately 2,000 signatory armed movement personnel assembled to be trained by the Sudanese Armed Forces, the report says.

The Secretary-General's report expressed concern over the human rights, humanitarian and economic situations in the country. It stated that security forces continue to use excessive force against protesters, including live ammunition, resulting in 13 civilian deaths and 1,708 injuries during the reporting period. The report also noted that the total number of internally displaced persons in Sudan

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/2022/400** (17 May 2022) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. **Security Council Letter S/2022/325** (18 April 2022) was a letter from Sudan containing priorities for UNITAMS. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9041** (24 May 2022) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS. **S/PV.9005** (28 March 2022) was the quarterly briefing on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Sudan

rose to over 3.1 million, with over 75,000 newly displaced in North, South and West Darfur and South Kordofan since January.

On 18 April, Sudan sent a letter to the Council with “a matrix containing 11 elements that [Sudan] views as guiding the role and work of UNITAMS”. Among others, these elements include: assistance for electoral preparations, resources to help build the capacity of judicial and police institutions, support for national human rights mechanisms, and support for the shift from humanitarian assistance to development. The letter notes that “this requires that UNITAMS redirect its priorities within its mandate to focus on those aspects, as noted in the matrix”.

The Council last renewed the mandate of UNITAMS on 3 June 2021, with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2579. The resolution retained the strategic objectives for UNITAMS outlined in resolution 2524, which established the mission on 3 June 2020, while making some adjustments. It also decided that UNITAMS should prioritise support for six specified areas during the mandate period. These areas include supporting ceasefire monitoring in Darfur, implementation of the National Plan for Civilian Protection and the constitution-drafting process. (For more, see our What’s in Blue story of 2 June 2021.)

On 24 May, the Council received a briefing on UNITAMS from Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS, Volker Perthes. He told the Council that the situation in the country remains precarious and that “time is short for the Sudanese to reach a political solution”. While violations still occur, Perthes noted that violence by security forces against protestors appears to have decreased overall. In relation to Darfur, he warned that “the risk of a new outbreak of violence remains high”.

Human Rights-Related Developments

[During its upcoming 50th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on 15 June on the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Sudan \(A/HRC/50/22\).](#)

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is to renew the mandate of UNITAMS and consider what changes to the mission’s mandate, if any, are necessary. In doing so, members are likely to assess the role of UNITAMS across the four strategic objectives for the mission, 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.

An option is for the Council to renew the mandate of UNITAMS for one year, maintaining its four strategic objectives while making some adjustments, including updating language to reflect the political situation since the 25 October 2021 coup; supporting the UN/AU/IGAD trilateral cooperation mechanism; condemning violence against protestors; and expressing concern over the deteriorating situation in Darfur. Another option is for members to assess the six priority areas identified in resolution 2579 and whether any changes are necessary. In doing so, Council members might consider the letter

sent by Sudan on 18 April.

Another possible option is to make no changes to the mandate and adopt a 12-month mandate renewal. At the time of writing, a draft deciding on a 12-month technical rollover had passed silence on 31 May.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns over the political, security, human rights, and humanitarian situations in Sudan. Members are supportive of the trilateral cooperation mechanism composed of the AU, UN and IGAD and welcome the start of the second phase of the intra-Sudanese dialogue facilitated by the mechanism. At the briefing on 24 May, the UK (the penholder on Sudan) emphasised that the Sudanese military must make progress on confidence-building measures, including by releasing all political detainees, ending the excessive use of force against protestors and lifting the state of emergency. Kenya, speaking on behalf of the three African members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya), noted that the mandate of UNITAMS remains valid and relevant and expressed support for its renewal, saying, “what is critical is for the Council to build the capacity of the mission to effectively and efficiently implement its mandate”. In its statement, Russia said that the Sudanese authorities must reaffirm their commitment to the JPA and declare their intention to conduct elections in July 2023. In relation to UNITAMS, Russia urged the mission to follow its mandate strictly, paying equal attention to all its components.

Negotiations on resolution 2579, which renewed the mandate of UNITAMS last year, went relatively smoothly, with areas of disagreement mostly centring on preambular language. In addition to addressing the views of Council members, the UK, the penholder on Sudan, apparently consulted with Sudan and took its views on the text into account. During the negotiations, China and Russia apparently opposed language on conflict-related sexual violence and climate change. (For more, see our What’s in Blue story of 2 June 2021.)

At the time of writing, Council members such as China, Gabon, Ghana, India, Kenya, and Russia apparently supported Sudan’s request for a technical rollover of the mandate. This follows Sudan’s disapproval of an earlier draft circulated by the penholder that updated preambular language to reflect the situation since the coup and made some adjustments to the mandate.

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.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Consultations are expected to follow.

The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

The last time the Council received a briefing on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of UNOCA was on 15 December 2021. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), updated Council members on a range of issues, including preparations by several countries in the region for crucial elections in 2022 and 2023, the institutional reform underway by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the fight against terrorist groups in the Lake Chad Basin, and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. He also provided information on the latest developments in several countries in the region, including Chad, the Central African Republic and Cameroon.

The Secretary-General's semi-annual UNOCA report, which was due by the end of May, is expected to provide updates on the latest peace, security and development trends in Central Africa since the last report and elaborate on the activities of UNOCA, including those in support of regional efforts on peace and security. Fall visited regional leaders to discuss peace and security issues before he was due to step down as Special Representative and head of UNOCA by the end of May.

On 19 January, the ECCAS heads of state and government held a summit in Brazzaville, during which they assessed the regional peace and security situation. They expressed concerns over the challenges facing the region, including terrorism and violent extremism, maritime insecurity, the spread of small arms and light weapons, and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. At the summit, Congolese President Denis Sassou Nguesso handed over the rotating ECCAS chairmanship to Democratic Republic of Congo President Félix Tshisekedi.

In Chad, President Mahamat Deby had promised in April 2021 to hold an inclusive national dialogue with various Chadian political stakeholders to come up with a new constitution and pave the way for elections. But the Chadian political opposition and military groups set conditions for their participation, including, among other things, a guarantee for the safety of their members returning to the country from abroad and the release of political prisoners. This led to a pre-dialogue meeting in March hosted by Qatar in Doha to set the stage for the inclusive national dialogue on 10 May in N'Djamena.

However, the pre-dialogue process was reportedly dragged out because of disagreements over additional demands by the political and military opposition, such as banning members of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) from running in the next elections, reform of the national army and a revision of the country's constitution. At Qatar's request, the TMC announced on 1 May the postponement of the national dialogue to a later date. The political

opposition and military groups apparently welcomed the decision, but they opposed the TMC's intention to extend the 18-month transition period, which is supposed to end with elections in December.

The security situation remains a concern in the Anglophone northwestern and southwestern regions of Cameroon, where there is fighting between separatists and the government. Recently, the government accused separatists of attacking a village located at the border with Nigeria, burning homes and killing several people. According to OCHA, the security situation in the two regions "continue[s] to lead to displacement and negatively impact access to basic services and social cohesion. The civilian population continues to be caught in between parties to the crisis". OCHA also reported difficulties in securing humanitarian access, attacks on healthcare and humanitarian workers, and an increasing number of incidents related to the use of improvised explosive devices.

In the Lake Chad Basin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), composed of forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, has intensified its military operations against Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). MNJTF spokesperson Muhammad Dole was quoted by the media on 17 April as saying that "well over a hundred terrorists have been neutralized, including over 10 top commanders...following intelligence-driven lethal airstrikes in the Lake Chad islands by the combined air task forces".

On 14 January, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) renewed the mandate of the MNJTF for another 12 months, effective from 1 February. The AUPSC also reaffirmed its support for the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (RSS) of the Boko Haram-affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region developed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the support of the AU. On 20 April, the Peacebuilding Commission also convened a meeting aimed at enhancing its support for the implementation of the regional strategy.

Key Issues and Options

The security situation in several parts of Central Africa remains a key concern for Council members. The dire security environment has also exacerbated humanitarian challenges in the region, displacing more than a million people. The mobilisation of international support to assist those displaced has been an issue. Council members may welcome the 27 April regional ministerial conference held in Yaoundé in collaboration with UNHCR on solutions to forced displacement.

The ongoing efforts to counter the continued threat of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea have also been matters of concern to Council members. In this regard, they may reiterate their support for the important role of the MNJTF in fighting Boko Haram and ISWAP. In January, Ghana and Norway proposed a draft resolution on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. Although the draft text did not garner the necessary consensus, it has been revived in recent weeks. At time of writing, a vote was scheduled on the draft on 31 May.

Another issue is the growing influence in the region of the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, and its involvement

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOCA Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/10 (12 September 2019) expressed the Council's full support for UNOCA. [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/975](#) (26 November 2021) was the semi-annual report on UNOCA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8933](#) (15 December 2021) was a meeting on the situation in Central Africa.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

in human rights abuses. Although there does not appear to be any indication of the group's presence in Cameroon, there seem to be concerns that deployment may be in the offing following the defence agreement the country signed with Russia on 21 April, which is said to renew a previous agreement signed in 2015.

Political transition in Chad and elections taking place in several countries in the region over the coming two years may also draw the attention of Council members. They may continue to call for inclusive and meaningful political dialogue to address grievances and create conditions for peaceful and credible elections.

Council Dynamics

There is broad support by Council members for a holistic regional approach to dealing with the peace and security challenges in Central Africa through cooperation between UNOCA and the various regional mechanisms. Council members were unable to reach

consensus on a presidential statement on UNOCA earlier this year, however, apparently because of differences on whether to refer to specific countries in the text and language related to climate change. In addition, language on the International Law of the Sea seemed to be the most contentious issue in the negotiations on the draft resolution on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Some of the country situations in the region continue to attract the attention of Council members. The UK and the US have expressed serious concerns about the situation in Cameroon, which other members, such as Russia and China, continue to consider an internal matter. Several members have also raised concerns about the destabilising role of the Wagner Group, while Russia has accused these members of instigating a coordinated campaign against the group.

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is expected to hold its monthly briefing on Yemen, followed by closed consultations. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and an OCHA official will brief. Major General Michael Beary, the head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), is expected to brief during consultations. The mandate of UNMHA expires on 15 July.

Key Recent Developments

The truce that started on 2 April between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group has largely held, marked by a sharp reduction in civilian casualties and a continued pause in cross-border attacks. With the truce set to expire in early June, attention has focused on securing its extension.

On 11 May, the UN and the Netherlands hosted a pledging event in The Hague for a UN-facilitated plan to resolve the threat posed by the FSO Safer, an ageing oil tanker off the Houthi-held port of Ras Isa that has served as floating storage and offloading facility since the 1980s. The vessel is at risk of breaking up or having a major oil leak or explosion due to lack of maintenance. The UN-facilitated plan requires \$144 million, including \$80 million, to immediately begin and complete its first phase, which involves transferring the oil from the Safer to a temporary vessel before more volatile winds and currents return in October, which increase the risks to the Safer and make the operation more difficult. The conference fell far short of this goal, generating \$40 million.

On 16 May, the first commercial flight in almost six years took off from Sana'a airport, travelling to Amman, Jordan, and carrying 130 Yemeni passengers. The flight was in keeping with the truce agreement, which allows two commercial flights per week in and out of Sana'a airport to Egypt and Jordan. The resumption of flights was initially delayed because of a dispute over Houthi-issued passports.

The government eventually agreed to allow Yemenis in rebel-held territories to travel using the Houthi-issued passports.

Council members held their monthly meeting on Yemen in closed consultations on 17 May. Grundberg told members that the truce is largely holding and that his priority is to secure agreement to extend it. In addition to the resumption of civilian flights, he noted the increased flow of fuel imports through Hodeidah ports. At a press conference after the meeting, Grundberg said that since the truce began, the Yemeni government had cleared 11 fuel ships to enter through Hodeidah, bringing more fuel than had arrived during the previous six months.

In the meeting, Grundberg also highlighted the importance of implementing the other elements of the truce agreement in order to secure its extension, including the re-opening of roads around Taiz. Taiz has been under Houthi siege for years, with access limited to one dangerous, mountainous road. During the press conference, Grundberg reported that the government had appointed representatives for a meeting under UN auspices on re-opening roads, which the UN will organise in Amman as soon as the Houthis appoint their representatives. He also continued to engage the parties on the establishment of a military mechanism to support the truce and on his framework for an inclusive, multi-track political process.

OCHA Acting Operations Director Ghada Eltahir Mudawi also briefed members during the consultations, reportedly highlighting that the truce had brought significant improvements in the protection of civilians and the humanitarian situation, including increased humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas. Despite the overall improvements, she noted low-intensity fighting in Marib and Taiz, including recent Houthi shelling that had killed civilians in Taiz. General Beary informed Council members that UNMHA had reached an agreement with the government to establish a permanent presence for the mission in Mocha city.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2624 (28 February 2022) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. S/RES/2586 (14 July 2021) extended the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 2022. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9017 (14 April 2022) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/14861 (13 April 2022) welcomed the creation of the Presidential Leadership Council of the government of Yemen.

Yemen

In press elements issued after the meeting, Council members welcomed all parties' efforts to uphold the truce, highlighting the Yemeni government's "flexibility in enabling the entry of fuel ships into Hodeidah and enabling flights between Sana'a and Amman". Members encouraged the parties to continue fulfilling the terms of the truce, especially in meeting to discuss opening roads to Taiz. They further urged the parties to extend the truce in coordination with the UN Envoy.

From 25 to 28 May, Yemeni government officials and Houthi representatives met under UN auspices in Amman, Jordan, to discuss options for opening roads in Taiz and other governorates. The meeting did not result in an agreement. In a statement at the talks' conclusion, Grundberg called on "the parties to conclude their internal deliberations urgently and deliver positive results to the Yemeni people".

Key Issues and Options

The two-month truce agreement is set to expire on 2 June, and a priority is securing its extension. As the UN Special Envoy has suggested, a key issue for an extension is progress on re-opening roads in and around Taiz.

A further key issue is making progress on restarting a political process, as the truce will be unsustainable without a process in place for a comprehensive political settlement. Grundberg has been developing a multi-track framework for an inclusive political process that he had hoped to present this spring, though it seems that, with the creation in April of the Yemeni government's new eight-member Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), completing this framework will take more time. Council members could encourage the parties' continued engagement with the UN Special Envoy to strengthen the truce and urge Grundberg to continue his consultations with Yemeni stakeholders to complete his framework for a political process, which

the Council could then endorse.

Notwithstanding the truce's positive impact on Yemen's humanitarian crisis, key issues remain, such as preventing famine, improving humanitarian access, supporting the economy, and raising funds for relief operations. Rising global food and energy prices since the start of the war in Ukraine present significant threats to efforts to ease Yemen's humanitarian crisis. Members could encourage donors to contribute to the UN's 2022 Yemen humanitarian response plan, which remains underfunded, as well as to fulfil remaining funding requirements to begin implementing the UN-facilitated plan for the FSO Safer.

Council Dynamics

Council members have remained generally united over Yemen despite the increased polarisation in the Security Council since the start of the war in Ukraine. The P5 ambassadors to Yemen (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) have maintained coordination in support of the UN envoy's efforts. In the Council, members have encouraged the parties to uphold and extend the truce. They also want the parties to make progress towards starting a political process for a comprehensive settlement to end the war. Members have also welcomed the formation of the PLC, viewing its diverse representation as important to the Envoy's approach for a more inclusive political process, despite some concerns among members over Saudi Arabia's reported pressure on the unpopular president, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi, to step down. The United Arab Emirates, an elected Council member, is closely involved in the war as a member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition that backs the government and will strongly push for its views to be reflected in Council products.

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

Mali

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which expires on 30 June. Earlier in the month, the Council will hold its quarterly briefing on Mali, followed by closed consultations. Special Representative and head of MINUSMA El-Ghassim Wane is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

Uncertainty persists over the establishment of a new transition timetable in Mali to restore constitutional order following coups d'état in August 2020 and May 2021. Meanwhile, the security landscape has changed significantly as Mali's relations with traditional ally France and neighbouring Sahel states have deteriorated, and transition authorities have reportedly partnered with the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company.

Concerns mounted over reported increases in human rights

violations by Mali's security forces and the Wagner Group in counter-terrorism operations in central Mali. In the worst such incident, Wagner and Malian forces allegedly executed about 300 civilians and suspected terrorists in the village of Mourah from 27 to 30 March. Mali claimed to have killed 203 terrorist combatants during an operation from 23 to 31 March in Mourah.

Mali's military prosecutor in Mopti announced on 6 April that it was opening an investigation into the incident. However, the Malian authorities have denied MINUSMA access to Mourah. This comes at a time when MINUSMA's relations with the host country have become more difficult, with the mission facing increasing restrictions on its air and ground movements and areas of access, especially where Mali has been conducting military operations. On 22 March, a Malian armed forces helicopter fired rockets close to a MINUSMA patrol near Tessit. According to Wane's Council briefing on 7 April, there were no casualties, but the UN was investigating the incident.

On 112 April, the EU Training Mission in Mali announced the

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suspension of military training support to Mali's armed forces due to Mali's cooperation with the Wagner Group and recent civilian killings. This followed the decision in February by France and other European countries to withdraw their counter-terrorism operations, Operation Barkhane and Takuba Task Force, from Mali because of the Wagner Group's deployment. Despite concerns that Germany might end its participation in MINUSMA, the German parliament approved on 20 May the government's decision to remain in the mission, including an increase in its contribution by 300 troops. That same day, Benin, which has around 400 troops and police in MINUSMA, announced that it would end its participation in November. Benin's move occurred amid the rising threat of Sahelian terrorist groups to coastal West African countries.

On 19 April, France handed over its military base at Gossi to Mali's armed forces. Following the handover, Mali said that it had uncovered a mass grave near the base, while France released aerial video footage that it said had been recorded on 20 April showing Wagner and Malian security personnel burying bodies that were transferred to the site. On 2 May, Mali informed France that it was terminating the Defence Cooperation Treaty between France and Mali and its Status of Forces Agreement. France responded by saying that it would continue the orderly withdrawal of its forces. Council members discussed the Gossi developments on 3 May under "any other business" at the request of Russia after Mali sent a letter to Council members accusing France of espionage.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in a 5 May interview with French radio station RFI that an AU-authorized African force with a peace enforcement mandate may be more appropriate than MINUSMA, considering the security situation in Mali. In the same interview, however, Guterres stressed that he would not recommend ending the UN operation because the "consequences would be terrible".

On 15 May, Mali announced that it was withdrawing from all institutions of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel), including the G5 Sahel joint force (FC-G5S). Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger founded the G5 Sahel in 2014 and created the FC-G5S as a regional counter-terrorism force in 2017. Mali said that it made the decision after some G5 members blocked its assumption of the body's rotating presidency, which had been due to start in February. In a statement, Mali also criticised "a state outside the region for desperately seeking to isolate Mali".

Two days later, Mali announced that it had foiled an attempted coup d'état on the night of 11 and 12 May, which it claimed had been "supported by a Western state".

Mali and ECOWAS have remained at an impasse in talks to establish a new transition timeline. In March, ECOWAS rejected Mali's proposal for an additional two-year transition, calling instead for a 12-to-16-month extension. On 5 May, the foreign ministers of Mali and Togo announced that Togo's President Faure Gnassingbé would mediate between Bamako and ECOWAS.

In addition, implementation of the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement between the government and northern armed groups has been at a standstill. During his 7 April Council briefing, Wane said that the past three months had been "marked by worrisome actions and rhetoric, not in line with the spirit of the Agreement".

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of MINUSMA's mandate and how the Council should update it to reflect the changing environment in which MINUSMA must operate is the key issue facing the Council during June. This includes assessing MINUSMA's role in supporting the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement and the political transition. The lack of progress on the former has increased concerns about the risk of hostilities resuming between the government and northern armed groups. The transition is complicated by the continuing absence of a new timetable after Mali failed to meet the original ECOWAS-brokered 18-month period.

The mandate renewal process also involves considering the effects on MINUSMA of the departure of Operation Barkhane and the Takuba Task Force, which the Secretary-General's last report asserted creates a "security gap". MINUSMA was established in 2013 to carry out good offices and stabilisation activities and to protect civilians while parallel French forces would conduct counter-terrorism operations. Since then, the situation has evolved, and MINUSMA's role has expanded to address not only the crisis in the north but the situation in central Mali, where the greatest amount of violence, including civilian casualties, occurs. Related to this are persistent challenges for MINUSMA of capability shortfalls, such as air assets, and national caveats of troop- and police-contributing countries on how their troops may be used.

A further key issue is the deteriorating human rights situation, which MINUSMA is mandated to monitor and report on. MINUSMA's increasingly difficult relationship with Malian authorities and the authorities' position on the mandate renewal are important issues. The presence of the Wagner Group, which has a history of difficult relations with the UN peacekeeping operation in the Central African Republic, is another key issue.

In renewing MINUSMA's mandate, the Council could request that an independent strategic review of the situation in Mali be conducted in light of MINUSMA's new operating environment. The Council may further decide to identify areas where MINUSMA can concentrate its efforts. It may call on MINUSMA to place greater emphasis on supporting implementation of the 2015 peace agreement, the protection of civilians, and human rights reporting and monitoring.

With Mali's withdrawal from the FC-G5S, the Council is likely to adjust MINUSMA's mandate of supporting the joint force. Under the current mandate, MINUSMA provides engineering support and casualty and medical evacuation in Mali and the provision of life consumables, such as rations and fuel, for all FC-G5S contingents.

Council Dynamics

Council discussion on Mali has become increasingly polarised since reports emerged last fall about the possible deployment of the Wagner Group. Previously, the Council followed ECOWAS' lead and supported its positions on Mali's political transition, but Council members are no longer united over this approach, with Russia and China expressing sympathy with the Malian authorities over the challenges of holding elections because of the security situation and the risk of further political instability if elections take place prematurely.

The P3 and other European members criticise the Wagner

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Group's deployment, citing its history of human rights abuses, and are concerned about the risks it presents to MINUSMA and of MINUSMA indirectly supporting its activities. Russia and Mali deny the group's presence, claiming that Russian personnel in Mali are there as military instructors as part of their bilateral cooperation. Many members are further concerned about the increasing reports of human rights abuses by security forces and have called for independent investigations, while Russia and China have pushed back against such allegations. Several members have appeared frustrated that MINUSMA, at the time of this writing, had not yet released its quarterly report on human rights, usually published in April, and by the UN's caution in reporting on other obstructions by Malian

authorities. Such dynamics prevented agreement on statements on Mali in the Council in January on the political transition and in April on the incident in Mourah. They also played out at the 3 May meeting on Gossi.

Ghana is the West African Council member and champions ECOWAS' positions, with the support of the other African Council members, Gabon and Kenya. Its president, Nana Akufo-Addo, currently chairs the ECOWAS Authority.

France is the penholder on Mali. Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) chairs the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which was established in 2010 to carry out the remaining essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) after their respective closures. The IRMCT's president, Judge Carmel Agius, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate and to meet with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to that. A resolution extending the term of the prosecutor and the operating period of the IRMCT, both of which expire on 30 June, is expected to be adopted.

Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT—with branches in The Hague, Netherlands, and Arusha, Tanzania—focuses on the completion of trials and appeals from the ICTY, which closed in December 2017, and the ICTR, which closed in December 2015. Its tasks include locating and arresting the remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR—of the 93 persons indicted by the ICTR, four remain at large as at 18 May—and assisting national jurisdictions in handling requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

On 12 May, the IRMCT Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) confirmed the death of Protais Mpiranya, one of the remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR in 2000 who was alleged to have been a senior leader of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The OTP press release said that “following a challenging and intensive investigation, the OTP has determined that Mpiranya died on 5 October 2006 in Harare, Zimbabwe”. On 18 May, the OTP confirmed the death of Phénéas Munyarugarama, another remaining fugitive indicted by the ICTR. Munyarugarama, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Forces Armées Rwandaises, was first indicted by the ICTR in 2002 for genocide, direct and public incitement to commit genocide, and crimes against humanity. The press release said that “following

a comprehensive and challenging investigation, the OTP was able to conclude that Munyarugarama died from natural causes on or about 28 February 2002 in Kankwala, in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he was also buried”.

Under resolution 1966, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for subsequent periods of two years thereafter unless the Security Council decided otherwise. The Council most recently extended the IRMCT's operating period and Brammertz's term until 30 June with the adoption of resolution 2529 on 25 June 2020. It was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). The resolution requested the IRMCT to continue to take steps to enhance efficiency and effective and transparent management, including the production of clear and focused projections of completion timelines; to ensure geographic diversity and gender balance of staff; and to further reduce costs, such as through flexible staff engagement. It also requested that the IRMCT update the Council in its semi-annual reports on progress in implementing the resolution, with detailed information on staffing, workload and related costs, and detailed projections of the duration of residual functions.

At the time of writing, the judicial workload of the IRMCT consisted of three cases: Prosecutor v. Félicien Kabuga, which remains in the pre-trial phase because of the health of the accused; *Stanišić and Simatović*; and *Fatuma et al.* (formerly *Nzabonimpa et al.*). The *Stanišić and Simatović* and the *Fatuma et al.* cases have moved into the appeals phase since the respective judgements on 25 and 30 June 2021.

Agius and Brammertz briefed the Council during its last semi-annual debate on the IRMCT on 13 December 2021. Agius noted that while the IRMCT continues its various mandated functions, the decrease in its active caseload “is significant...because reductions in staffing and resources are a necessary consequence of the conclusion of key activities, owing to the Mechanism's nature as a downsizing and temporary institution”. Brammertz highlighted that “we are continuing our efforts to complete our remaining trials and appeals, which remains our first strategic priority”. He also emphasised that

UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2529 (25 June 2020) extended the term of the IRMCT's prosecutor until 30 June 2022. Security Council Letters S/2021/955 (16 November 2021) transmitted the bi-annual assessments of the IRMCT by the president and prosecutor. S/2021/694 (30 July 2021) transmitted the ninth annual report of the IRMCT, covering 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8927 (13 December 2021) was the semi-annual debate on the work of the IRMCT.

International Criminal Tribunals

South Africa has failed to arrest and provide critical information on the fugitive Fulgence Kayishema, referring to this as “among the most severe instances of non-cooperation my Office has faced since the Mechanism’s establishment”.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for Council members is to adopt a resolution appointing a prosecutor of the IRMCT as the term of the current prosecutor expires on 30 June.

A key issue is for members to continue monitoring the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, with the exception of Russia, which has been consistently critical of the ICTY. Russia has also been critical of the appointment of Brammertz, who was the ICTY prosecutor from 2008 until its closure in 2017, and it abstained on

previous resolutions re-appointing him in 2016, 2018 and 2020.

It seems that the negotiations on resolution 2529, which extended Brammertz’s term until 30 June, were lengthy and difficult. (For more, see our What’s in Blue story of 25 June 2020.) In explaining its abstention on resolution 2529, Russia referred to “the unsatisfactory work of that body, which continues not to allow the Council to proceed with its legal closure”. Russia also emphasised the importance of the protection of detainees of the Mechanism, including their access to medical care, specifically referring to the case of Ratko Mladić. It added that the IRMCT must produce “clear and focused projections of completion timelines at the earliest stage possible and disciplined adherence thereto”, as set out in resolution 2529.

At the last semi-annual briefing on 13 December 2021, Russia said that “there is no sign that the IRMCT is winding down” and called for “a plan for how the Court will be brought to a close”.

Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon) chairs the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

On 15 June, the Security Council will hold an open debate on the role of regional organisations in implementing the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda in contexts of political turmoil and seizures of power by force. One of the signature events of Albania’s presidency, the meeting will be convened at ministerial level and chaired by Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Olta Xhaçka. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to provide opening remarks. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and high-level representatives from the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are the anticipated briefers.

An outcome is possible.

Background and Key Recent Developments

It appears that Albania intends to use the open debate to highlight challenges to the implementation of the WPS agenda in situations of violent takeovers and political turmoil and to discuss ways in which regional organisations and the Security Council can better safeguard and advance the implementation of the agenda in these contexts. In this respect, the open debate is also aimed at sharing best practices, such as providing support to the work of women peacebuilders and civil society organisations and making gender analysis central to prevention and response strategies.

The latest Secretary-General’s annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, which was issued on 29 March, says that several recent unconstitutional takeovers—such as in Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sudan—were “followed by widespread insecurity, economic shocks and human rights violations, including the use of sexual

violence in the lead-up to, during, and in the wake of these events, to subjugate and humiliate opposition groups and rival communities”. The report also notes that some of the actors that seized power—including in Afghanistan and Myanmar—had been implicated in patterns of conflict-related sexual violence for several years.

Albania’s signature event is consistent with the 1 December 2021 statement of shared commitments on WPS, which Albania has undertaken with Brazil, Norway, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the UK and former Council member Niger. These countries committed to making WPS a “top priority” during their respective presidencies, including by striving for gender parity among briefers and focusing at least one geographic meeting on WPS or hosting a WPS signature event during each presidency. (The statement was premised on the WPS “presidency trio” initiative undertaken by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico during their consecutive Council presidencies in September, October and November 2021).

Regional organisations are among the key actors tasked with the implementation of the WPS agenda. Specifically, as stated in resolution 2242 (and restated in subsequent resolutions 2467 and 2493), while the primary role of implementing the WPS agenda rests with states, regional organisations and UN entities play an “important complementary role”. Through resolution 1888, adopted in 2009, the Security Council urged the heads of regional organisations—together with the UN Secretary-General and member states—to take measures to increase women’s representation in mediation and decision-making processes in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Resolution 1889, also adopted in 2009, expanded this language, urging these actors to enhance women’s participation in all stages of peace processes, “including by enhancing their engagement in political and economic decision-making at early stages of recovery

UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolution S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on WPS. Reaffirming women’s key role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, it called for the adoption of a gender perspective in peace agreements and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/272** (29 March 2022) was the Secretary-General’s annual report on conflict-related sexual violence.

Women, Peace and Security

processes” such as in aid management and planning and by supporting women’s organisations.

The role of regional organisations is also mentioned in the set of WPS resolutions focused on conflict-related sexual violence. For instance, through resolution 1820, which was adopted in 2008, the Security Council urged regional and sub-regional bodies to consider developing and implementing policies, activities and advocacy for women and girls affected by conflict-related sexual violence. Adopted in 2013, resolution 2106 requested that, where appropriate, regional organisations—as well as the UN Secretary-General and member states—ensure that mediators and envoys “engage on sexual violence issues, including with women, civil society, including women’s organizations and survivors of sexual violence, and ensure that such concerns are reflected in specific provisions of peace agreements”.

With a view to strengthening cooperation with regional organisations, the Council has held annual consultative meetings with the AU Peace and Security Council since 2007, as well as meetings on cooperation with several other bodies, including the EU, the OSCE and the LAS. Several outcome documents from these meetings reaffirm the important role of women in conflict prevention and resolution and welcome the efforts of regional organisations towards the implementation of the WPS agenda. For instance, the March 2022 presidential statement on cooperation with the LAS welcomed implementation efforts by the LAS, including through its regional action plan on WPS, and encouraged “efforts to promote women’s economic empowerment and the elimination of poverty in the Arab region”. Among other issues, the October 2021 presidential statement on cooperation with the AU reaffirmed the key role of women in peacekeeping and welcomed efforts to review “obstacles preventing women’s recruitment and professional advancement in Africa”. Adopted in 2019, resolution 2457 on cooperation with regional organisations stressed the need for joint UN and AU action to end conflict-related sexual violence and the importance of fully implementing measures for prevention and response already contained in relevant Security Council resolutions. A May 2016 presidential statement on cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations notes the need for the UN and the AU “to work to ensure that women and gender perspectives are fully integrated into all peace and security efforts undertaken by the two organizations”.

Since 2016, the Security Council has also held an annual meeting to discuss the Secretary-General’s annual report on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa. Among other issues, the latest report, published in August 2021, includes an update on UN-AU collaboration on WPS, which focuses on strengthening women’s participation in mediation and conflict prevention, detailing several joint initiatives by the AU and the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU). The Secretary-General also produces a biennial report on cooperation between the UN and regional organisations pursuant to Security Council resolution 1809, which was adopted in April 2008. The most recent report, published in September 2020, highlighted joint efforts by the LAS and UN Women to support LAS member states in developing and implementing national action plans on WPS, as well as the July 2020 launch of the Arab Women Mediators Network by the LAS and UN Women.

Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on WPS Bineta Diop has briefed the Security Council on multiple occasions, including during the 2021 annual WPS open debate. Briefings from representatives of other regional organisations to address WPS issues have been less frequent, but the then Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Michaëlle Jean, briefed during the 2017 annual WPS open debate.

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Security Council remains strengthening the substantive implementation of the WPS agenda. Albania, as the Council president for June, could prepare a chair’s summary of the meeting to capture the key themes of the discussion and convene a follow-up meeting in one year’s time. This meeting could focus specifically on how the Security Council and regional organisations can better support diverse women civil society organisations’ conflict prevention and peacebuilding work as well as their meaningful participation in peace negotiations. Another option could be to hold this follow-up meeting within the various regional organisations.

Council Dynamics

The Council’s dynamics on this file have not been directly tested since the failed adoption of a draft resolution on the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325, which was put forward by Russia in October 2020. At that time, several members perceived the text as lacking in balance by focusing on socioeconomic issues over rights-based aspects and questioned the added value of a resolution comprising mainly of previously agreed language. This followed the difficult negotiations of the two most recent WPS texts, both adopted in 2019: resolution 2493, reiterating the need for the “full implementation” of the agenda, and resolution 2467, on conflict-related sexual violence, which was the first WPS resolution not to be adopted unanimously.

Perhaps because of the uneasy climate which has characterised these initiatives, most Council members—and several civil society actors—have come to emphasise the importance of implementing the existing normative framework on WPS over its further development, in order to avoid language that is redundant or less robust than what is currently agreed in resolutions. Accordingly, it seems that in the lead-up to the October 2021 open debate, when some members informally discussed the possibility of pursuing a Council outcome, such as a presidential statement, the idea did not garner support and was set aside.

Although negotiations on a potential WPS product would, at least to some extent, depend on the substantive content of the proposed product, achieving a strong Council outcome on WPS may continue to prove difficult, especially at a time when Council dynamics are particularly strained as a consequence of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. These divisions are likely to widen the distance—never substantively bridged—in Council members’ views on the relevance of women and gender issues to “peace and security”.

The UK is the penholder on WPS, and the US is the penholder on conflict-related sexual violence. Ireland and Mexico are the co-chairs of the Informal Experts Group on WPS.

EU-UN Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its annual meeting on strengthening EU-UN cooperation under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”. Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Olta Xhaçka is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Strengthening cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations—as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter—has become an increasingly prominent theme for the Security Council. Cooperation between the UN and the EU has evolved significantly over the years. In addition to contributing troops and police for UN peacekeeping missions, the EU fields its own missions through the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), some of which are mandated by the Security Council.

The Council has maintained the practice of holding regular—usually annual—briefings on cooperation between the EU and the UN since 2010. (Briefings were not held in 2012 and 2018.) Since 2013, Council members have also held annual informal meetings with members of the EU Political and Security Committee.

The Council formally endorsed EU-UN cooperation in a 14 February 2014 presidential statement. Among other things, the statement welcomed the EU’s cooperation with the UN, its role in the maintenance of international peace and security and in the implementation of Council-mandated tasks.

Council briefings on EU-UN cooperation have generally addressed areas of cooperation between the two organisations, with Borrell presenting the EU’s main foreign policy priorities and objectives and addressing current crises that overlap on the EU and Security Council agendas. This year, the war in Ukraine is expected to be a central focus of Borrell’s briefing.

Borrell has insisted that the EU is not fighting against Russia but is defending Ukraine, saying on 9 May that rather than viewing the conflict as a “story of the West against Russia”, the war in Ukraine is “an issue about the [UN] Charter” and respect for state sovereignty and the territorial integrity of states. He has also sought to make a distinction between Russia and Russian President Vladimir Putin, noting that the EU is not “against the Russian people” and stressing instead that this is “one person’s war”.

The EU has adopted unprecedented economic and financial measures against Russia, imposing five major packages of sanctions since 23 February. These include financial sanctions on Russian officials, including Putin; removal of Russian banks from the SWIFT international financial system; denial of Russia’s borrowing privileges at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; a ban on Russian airlines in EU airspace; restrictions on exports to Russia of high-tech goods that could be used militarily; an increase in import tariffs; and a ban on Russian imported goods including iron, steel, coal, wood, cement, fertilisers, seafood, and liquor. In view of the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, the EU introduced humanitarian

exceptions on 13 April to some of its sanctions to ensure that organisations in Ukraine were able to circumvent restrictive measures as needed for the delivery of assistance.

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, the EU agreed, for the first time in its history, to finance the purchase and delivery of weapons to a country. On 28 February, the EU pledged 500 million euros towards supplies of lethal and non-lethal products to Ukraine. Three times since then, the EU has added a further 500 million euros (on 23 March, 13 April and 13 May), for a total of two billion euros since the start of the war. Borrell has recently advocated the seizure of frozen Russian foreign exchange reserves to help rebuild Ukraine after the war. Experts have estimated that the cost of rebuilding Ukraine could run into hundreds of billions of euros, of which Europe is expected to bear the main share. In an interview on 9 May, Borrell said, “This is one of the most important political questions on the table: who is going to pay for the reconstruction of Ukraine?”

Another EU foreign policy priority is contributing to stability in the Western Balkans. At a press conference on 27 February, Borrell said that Russian influence “will have an impact on the Western Balkans”, adding that countries in that region should align their foreign policy with the EU. Borrell visited the Western Balkans from 13 to 16 March, after which he maintained that “Russia’s insidious and well-documented disinformation campaigns” have increased substantially since the start of the war in Ukraine. During an informal dinner with leaders of Western Balkan states on 11 May, Borrell stressed that the EU and Western Balkan states “will act jointly to face Russia’s disruptive actions directly in the region—[such as] through disinformation and cyberattacks”.

The EU has also been heavily involved in efforts to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)—the agreement that limits Iran’s nuclear programme and provides sanctions relief. Borrell serves as the coordinator of the Joint Commission, which is composed of the parties to the agreement—at present, China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Iran. The agreement, which was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2231 (2015), has faced a precarious future since the US withdrew in May 2018, prompting Iran to begin violating terms of the agreement a year later. Negotiations to revive the JCPOA have been stalled for months. At a press briefing on 13 May, however, Borrell said that the negotiations “have been reopened” following a visit to Iran by Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS) Enrique Mora on 7 May.

Cooperation between the EU and the UN is especially evident in Africa. The EU contributes to salaries for the UN-authorized AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and provides training for Somali security forces through its CSDP framework. On 15 October 2021, the EU launched a new military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique) to help address the situation in Cabo Delgado, where violence perpetrated by non-state actors has displaced hundreds of thousands of people.

Council Dynamics

The EU members of the Council have sought to coordinate their positions and present a unified front on several issues on the

EU-UN Cooperation

Council's agenda, including Kosovo, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela. Another practice that has emerged over the last several years has been for the EU members of the Council (including incoming and recent former members) to make joint statements at the Council media stakeout.

Presently, three Council members—France, Ireland and Norway—are EU members. The UK, which is no longer a member of the EU since 31 January 2020, has occasionally joined EU members in making joint statements. Albania has been an official candidate for EU accession since June 2014, having applied for EU membership

on 28 April 2009. Accession talks began in March 2020.

At the June 2021 briefing on EU-UN cooperation, Russia said its relations with the EU were “at their lowest ebb in history”. The relationship between the two has deteriorated precipitously following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February. On 12 May, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov noted that the EU has gone from being a “constructive economic platform” to becoming “aggressive and bellicose”. Russia is expected to criticise the EU's use of sanctions and its supplying of arms to Ukraine.

Iran

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is due to receive the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The Council also expects reports from the Joint Commission and the Council's 2231 facilitator, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland). The Joint Commission was established to oversee the implementation of the JCPOA and comprises the current parties to the agreement: China, France, Germany, the UK, Russia, and Iran.

Key Recent Developments

Negotiations concerning the possible return of the US to the JCPOA, which have been taking place in Vienna and began in April 2021, have stalled in recent months. The US, which was originally a party to the JCPOA, withdrew in May 2018 at the behest of then-US President Donald Trump. Following its withdrawal, the US imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran as part of Trump's “maximum pressure” campaign. Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it subsequently took several steps that directly contravened its terms, such as enriching uranium to levels higher than the JCPOA-mandated limits. During his presidential campaign, US President Joe Biden promised to rejoin the JCPOA if Iran returns to strict compliance with its terms.

The US has been present in Vienna but has not participated directly in the talks, with other parties to the JCPOA instead serving as intermediaries with Iran because of Iran's refusal to attend meetings with the US. Six rounds of negotiations were held between April and June 2021, before a five-month hiatus that appears to have been caused by the 19 June 2021 election of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, an ultraconservative cleric and former judge with strong ties to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The seventh round of talks began on 29 November 2021. According to media reports, differences between the parties emerged quickly, with Iran seeking significant changes to a draft agreement that had been nearly complete before negotiations were paused in June. Progress was ultimately made, however, and the eighth round of negotiations commenced on 27 December 2021. Although discussions have been on hold for approximately ten weeks, the text of an

agreement is reportedly close to being finalised by the parties.

The major outstanding issue relates to the designation of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organisation (FTO) by the US. The IRGC is a military unit that operates under the direct control of Khamenei independently from the rest of Iran's armed forces. It has been linked with several militias that are active throughout the region and was designated as an FTO in 2019 as part of Trump's “maximum pressure” campaign. Iran has demanded that the US remove this designation during the negotiations. The US, on the other hand, has said that it will remove the designation only if the IRGC limits its regional activities and refrains from targeting US nationals. There is also strong bipartisan opposition to taking the IRGC off the FTO list among US politicians. On 4 May, the US Senate passed a non-binding motion which said that the FTO designation of the IRGC should not be removed, among other matters. The motion, which was voted for by 47 Republicans and 15 Democrats, also indicated that any new nuclear agreement with Iran should address Iran's support for the activities of regional militias.

EU Deputy Secretary-General Enrique Mora, the official coordinating the talks in Vienna on behalf of the EU, travelled to Tehran last week in an effort to restart the talks, which have been on hold since 11 March largely because of this issue. Mora reportedly told Iranian officials that the US may consider removing the IRGC's FTO designation once a nuclear agreement has been finalised, while Iran said that it was willing to resume discussing other matters concerning the agreement. During a news conference on the sidelines of a recent meeting of G7 foreign ministers, Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said that Mora's trip to Tehran had “gone better than expected” and that the talks had “reopened”.

However, according to media reports published on 24 May, Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett that he had finalised his decision to keep the IRGC on the US' FTO list during a call on 24 April. On 25 May, the US sanctioned “an international oil smuggling and money laundering network” led by an IRGC official and a former IRGC official. A US press statement said that this network “is backed by senior levels of the Russian Federation government and state-run economic enterprises” and has “facilitated the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of oil for the IRGC and Hezbollah”.

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231](#) (20 July 2015) was a resolution that endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran [Secretary-General's Report S/2021/995](#) (8 December 2021) was a report on the implementation of resolution 2231

Iran

There have been other areas of disagreement during the course of the negotiations. At different times in the discussion, Iran has refused to decrease its stockpiles of enriched uranium unless US sanctions are removed, while the US has said that it will not lift sanctions until Iran reduces those stockpiles. The US and Iran have also disagreed about which sanctions should be removed, and Iran has demanded a guarantee that any new agreement will not be reversed by a future US administration. The US has reportedly sought a longer deal that runs beyond the JCPOA's 2030 expiry date and encompasses a broader range of issues, including Iran's support for regional militias. Iran has also called for an agreement that the IAEA will end its ongoing investigation into uranium traces found at undeclared facilities to be incorporated into the deal.

According to media outlets claiming to have knowledge of a draft of the text, the new agreement begins with an initial phase where Iran suspends uranium enrichment above five percent, and a series of other measures are implemented, including the release of western nationals held in Iran and the unfreezing of \$7 billion of Iranian assets held in Republic of Korea (ROK) banks because of US sanctions. Under the terms of this draft agreement, sanctions will begin to be eased at different intervals once this phase is complete.

Iran's recent nuclear activity has resulted in a significant increase in its nuclear stockpiles. In a 10 May report to the European Parliament, Rafael Mariano Grossi, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium is estimated to be 42 kilograms, an increase of approximately 25 kilograms since November 2021. Grossi described this development as "serious cause for concern" and also noted that no other non-nuclear weapon party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) enriches uranium to this level.

In testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 25 May, US Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley said that he was "not particularly optimistic" that the negotiations in Vienna will reach a successful conclusion.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 March, during its 49th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, Javād Rehmān, and considered his report (A/HRC/49/75). On 1 April, the HRC adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the special rapporteur by a vote of 19 in favour; 12 against, including China, India and Russia; and 16 abstentions, including Brazil, Gabon and the UAE (A/HRC/49/L.7). The resolution called on the government to grant the special rapporteur access to the country.

The special rapporteur on the negative impact of the unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Alena Douhan, visited Iran from 7 to 18 May. In an 18 May statement, Douhan said that existing unilateral sanctions against Iran, together with secondary sanctions against third parties, over-compliance and zero-risking policies by businesses and financial institutions, exacerbate existing humanitarian and economic challenges and negatively affect the lives of the Iranian people, particularly the most vulnerable. On 17 May, the spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed alarm over the imminent execution in Iran of the Swedish-Iranian doctor and academic Ahmedreza Djalali and urgently called on the Iranian authorities to halt the execution and revoke his death sentence. Djalali was arrested in April 2016 while on a visit to Iran to attend academic workshops on disaster medicine and was charged with spying for Israel.

Key Issues and Options

The long-term survival of the JCPOA is in jeopardy. Analysts have suggested that the nuclear activities undertaken by Iran since the US withdrawal are likely to make a return to the original terms of the agreement and full compliance with those terms difficult, particularly given the institutional knowledge that Iran's nuclear programme has acquired as a result of these activities. US officials have, for example, reportedly concluded that Iran's nuclear programme has advanced too far to recreate the breakout period of approximately 12 months that is set out in the JCPOA.

Council members will therefore follow negotiations in Vienna closely. If the talks result in a revival of the JCPOA, the Council could consider issuing a statement welcoming this development. If a new agreement is reached, the Council may wish to adopt a resolution that endorses that agreement.

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

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their desire to see the negotiations in Vienna progress and are likely to urge Iran to comply with its obligations under resolution 2231. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and other like-minded states, are expected to call for Iran to resume its cooperation with the IAEA. These members may also choose to criticise Iran for its recent nuclear activities.

Conversely, China and Russia are expected to be more supportive of Iran. Both states have backed Iran's call for the US to provide a guarantee that it will not renege from any agreement reached in Vienna and have criticised the US for withdrawing from the JCPOA and imposing unilateral sanctions on Iran. China and Russia have also implemented measures that appear to demonstrate a willingness to support Iran. Following a 19 January meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Raisi, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that the two presidents had "agreed on the framework of a long-term agreement". The agreement is reportedly modelled on an economic and security cooperation agreement Iran negotiated with China in 2021. In the days following this meeting, China and Russia also held naval drills with Iran in the north Indian Ocean.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In June, the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), will deliver her 120-day periodic briefing to the Council on the activities of the committee.

Somalia sanctions measures expire on 15 November, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the Somalia Sanctions Committee expires on 15 December.

Key Recent Developments

The Council last met to receive a briefing by the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee on 24 February. The late Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland, Ambassador Jim Kelly, delivered the briefing on the committee's activities between 21 October 2021 and 24 February. This was the first time the chair had reported to the Council since the adoption of resolution 2607 (15 November 2021) renewing the Somalia sanctions measures.

The Secretary-General appointed the Panel of Experts to the Somalia Sanctions Committee on 16 December 2021. The panel presented its work programme to the committee on 11 February. During that meeting, the coordinator of the panel, Ahmed Himiche, noted that the panel will focus its work on the structure and financing of the armed terrorist group Al-Shabaab, the smuggling and trafficking of weapons and military equipment into Somalia, weapons and ammunition management within Somalia, the implementation of the charcoal ban, and child recruitment and gender-based violence perpetrated by Al-Shabaab.

Disrupting the activities of Al-Shabaab has been a key focus for the Council. On 18 February, the committee designated Ali Mohamed Rage, the spokesperson for Al-Shabaab, for “engaging in or providing support for acts that threaten the peace, security or stability of Somalia, including acts that threaten the peace and reconciliation process in Somalia, or threaten the Federal Government of Somalia or [the AU Assistance Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)] by force.”

The Secretary-General's 13 May report, covering the situation in Somalia between 1 February and 6 May, said that 236 security incidents had occurred in the country, most of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab. The report also noted an increase in Al-Shabaab attacks with the acceleration of the electoral process, including a 23 March attack on the Mogadishu International Airport area, where elections for the speakers of Somalia's upper and lower houses took place several weeks later. (The Mogadishu International Airport area is a fortified location hosting the UN and several diplomatic representations). On 3 May, Al-Shabaab attacked a base of the recently formed AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the successor mission to AMISOM. Several Burundian peacekeepers lost their lives in the attack. In February, three weeks of sustained hostilities by Al-Shabaab caused over 17,000 persons to flee their homes in Somalia's South-West State.

On 15 May, Somalia completed its long-delayed electoral process with the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who served as the

country's leader between 2012 and 2017, as president. In an 18 May media interview, Mohamud—referring to security in the country—said, “We will ask for support and collaboration from anyone who is willing to help us to ensure the security.” Mohamud assumed office on 23 May and is now in the process of constituting a government.

On 16 May, US President Joe Biden approved the deployment of some 500 US troops to Somalia to further support Somalia in degrading Al-Shabaab and eventually take sole responsibility for its safety in accordance with its Transition Plan—the document that foresees the gradual handover of security responsibilities from international to Somali security forces. The previous US administration had decided to withdraw the troops. Somalia's newly elected president has welcomed the latest decision to redeploy US troops.

On 27 May, the Somalia Sanctions Committee met with Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba. Resolution 2607 requests Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to share relevant information with the committee. The Secretary-General's report in that regard notes that from 1 February to 31 March, the UN had verified 372 grave violations against 368 children, 217 of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab.

Key Issues and Options

How to defeat Al-Shabaab and equip the Somali government with the means and capacity to establish and maintain a stable security environment is a key concern for the Council. The text of resolution 2607 focused on “the need to target Al-Shabaab's finances, improve maritime domain awareness, prevent illicit revenue generation, including from the sale of charcoal, and reduce the threat posed by [improvised explosive devices (IEDs)]”. Effective weapons and ammunition management by the Somali government would be an important step towards building the capacity of Somali security forces to counter Al-Shabaab and for the Council to review the arms embargo. To that end, the Council requested in resolution 2607 that the Secretary-General undertake a technical assessment of Somalia's weapons and ammunition management capabilities and provide recommendations by 15 September to improve them, including benchmarks that could assist the Council in reviewing the arms embargo. The Council could consider calling for the international community to strictly comply with the sanctions measures and for sustained support in building Somalia's security capacity.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Although resolution 2607 was adopted with two abstentions (China and Russia), the Council is united in its support for the sanctions measures. Disagreements during the sanctions renewal that led the two members to abstain were related to references in the text to the unresolved border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. The relationship between Djibouti and Eritrea has been addressed in Somalia-related sanctions resolutions since the adoption of resolution 1907 of 23 December 2009, which linked Djibouti-Eritrean relations to the peace process in Somalia. Although the Council lifted

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2632](#) (26 May 2022) extended the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia's mandate until 31 October 2022. [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/2607](#) (15 November 2021) renewed the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces; the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports, charcoal exports, and IED components; and humanitarian exemptions to the regime until 15 November 2022. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/392](#) (13 May 2022) was on the situation in Somalia covering developments from 1 February to 13 May. [Security Council Letter S/2021/858](#) (29 September 2021) was from the Secretary-General to the Security Council president requesting an extension of the deadlines to submit a proposal on a reconfigured AMISOM. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8905](#) (15 November 2021) covered the adoption of resolution 2607. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2021/849](#) (5 October 2021) was the final report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia, attesting that Al-Shabaab remained the most immediate threat to the peace, security and stability of Somalia.

Somalia

sanctions on Eritrea and terminated the mandate of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group to establish a Panel of Experts solely focused on Somalia in resolution 2444 of 14 November 2018, several Council members hold the view that the Council should continue monitoring the rapprochement between Eritrea and Djibouti.

The election of Mohamud may also affect regional dynamics. For

Council member Kenya, which shares land and sea borders with Somalia, degrading Al-Shabaab has been a priority issue. However, the relationship between the two countries has been strained, including due to an ongoing maritime border dispute. On 16 May, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta congratulated Mohamud and assured him of Kenya's cooperation.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to extend for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 30 June. Ahead of the mandate renewal, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 1 June, and the most recent developments.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 18 March, noted that while the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was generally being maintained, ongoing violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement persist—including firing by Israeli forces across the ceasefire line, the presence of Syrian forces in the area of separation and the existence of unauthorised weapons in the limitation area on the Alpha and Bravo sides. As such, the report “urge[s] the parties to the Agreement to exercise utmost restraint and comply with the Agreement”.

Israel and Syria have continued to send letters to the Security Council accusing each other of violating the 1974 agreement. In a 4 January letter addressed to the Council and the Secretary-General, Israel wrote that “Syrian violations of the Alpha line and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily”. Syria, in turn, wrote to the Council and the Secretary-General on 9 February, accusing Israel of “launching a two-pronged aerial attack against the environs of Damascus, firing salvos of missiles...from a point south-east of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, and surface-to-surface missiles from the occupied Syrian Golan”. In a 10 April letter to the Secretary-General and the Council, Syria also said that on 9 April an Israeli fighter plane had “targeted parts of the central region of Syria before being confronted by the Syrian air defence”.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue this month is the renewal of UNDOF's mandate, which, at the time of writing, is scheduled to take place on 29 June. The Council will most likely renew the mandate of the mission for the standard six-month period.

Another issue for Council members is the ongoing violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974. The Council could consider pursuing a statement urging parties to adhere to their commitments under the agreement, while expressing concern about the risk of escalation resulting from these violations and the potential danger they pose to the safety of peacekeepers.

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2613 on 21 December 2021, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, demonstrated that the Council remains unified in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. There was little apparent disagreement in the negotiations, and no member states felt the need to give an explanation of vote following the adoption.

Despite deep divisions overall on the Council regarding the Syria file, as well as opposing positions held by co-penholders Russia and the US about who holds sovereignty over the Golan Heights, the two countries have considered UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. It is not clear whether the conflict in Ukraine will have any effect on this dynamic during the negotiations on the mandate this month.

Council members India and Ireland have a particular interest in UNDOF, as both contribute a significant number of uniformed personnel to the mission. As at 18 February, UNDOF included 199 Indian uniformed personnel and 133 Irish uniformed personnel.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, which members expect to receive by 13 June.

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

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF Security Council Resolution S/RES/2613 (21 December 2021) renewed the UNDOF mandate for six months. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/247** (18 March 2022) is the UNDOF report. **Security Council Letters S/2022/304** (11 April 2022) was a letter from Syria to the Secretary-General and the Council. **S/2022/102** (9 February 2022) was a letter from Syria to the Council and the Secretary-General. **S/2022/9** (4 January 2022) was a letter from Israel to the Council and the Secretary-General.

South Sudan

Key Recent Developments

Overall implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) remains slow, selective and significantly behind schedule. The government has said elections will take place next year, but it has not yet set an electoral timetable. Sub-national and intercommunal conflict continues. In May, relative calm was reported in Leer County, Unity State, following waves of brutal violence. The humanitarian situation there, however, is dire. Since the violence began there in January, some 181 people are estimated to have been killed, including 23 children, according to a 6 May UNMISS statement. In addition, there were 101 reported incidents of sexual violence and abductions of 26 women and children in Leer. The statement said approximately 40,000 people in this county had fled their homes. A 10 May UNMISS statement said that despite an overall decrease in violence against civilians in South Sudan, cases of conflict-related sexual violence more than doubled compared to the same period last year, according to a report prepared by the mission's Human Rights Division covering January to March.

Human rights, humanitarian, food security, and economic conditions remain difficult across the country, with an enormously detrimental effect on civilians. South Sudan is projected to suffer a fourth consecutive year of extreme flooding over the coming months. On 7 May, OCHA announced that the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund and the Central Emergency Response Fund had released \$19 million to help communities in South Sudan prepare for severe flooding expected during the rainy season. The funding will go to UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to prepare and protect people in the Bentiu camp for internally displaced people and surrounding areas in Unity State, which are among the areas most exposed to severe flooding.

On 26 May, the Council adopted resolution 2633, which renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime for one year—including targeted sanctions and the arms embargo—and the mandate of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts. China, Gabon, India, Kenya and Russia abstained. The resolution reiterates the Council's readiness to review the arms embargo, through modification, suspension, or progressive lifting of these measures, in light of progress achieved on the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577. It also encourages South Sudanese authorities to achieve further progress in this regard and requests the Secretary-General to submit an assessment report on progress achieved on the benchmarks by 15 April 2023. The resolution contains a new paragraph that decides that the arms embargo will not apply to the supply, sale or transfer of non-lethal military equipment solely in support of the implementation of the terms of the peace agreement.

Council members were last briefed on South Sudan on 7 March. Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas 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 William Yuyada, a civil society representative, also briefed.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 May, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris began a three-day mission to South Sudan, followed by a visit to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In South Sudan, Brands Kehris met national and local authorities, civil society representatives, human rights defenders, and international and regional partners. She also held discussions with UNMISS and the UN Country Team to discuss ongoing efforts to promote human rights, peace and justice, and visited sites for internally displaced people in Juba and in the town of Yei.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 28 April, the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee transmitted its final report to the Council. It said that "almost every component of the [R-ARCSS] is now hostage to the political calculations of the country's military and security elites, who use a combination of violence, misappropriated public resources and patronage to pursue their own narrow interests". It added that "much of the [R-ARCSS] remains gridlocked by political disputes between its principal signatories" and that "there remains an urgent need for increased engagement to salvage" it. The panel found that "leaders have...tried to channel public resources into costly military procurement, including the import of armoured personnel carriers, in violation of the arms embargo".

On 3 May, the Secretary-General transmitted his assessment of progress achieved on the key benchmarks established in paragraph 2 of resolution 2577, which renewed the sanctions regime in 2021. The report found that the government had made limited progress in the implementation of the five benchmarks set out in resolution 2577 and that "further efforts are needed". It added that the continued support of regional and subregional actors, in particular the AU and IGAD, and of the international community will remain critical.

Key Issues and Options

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

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

Council Dynamics

Differences of view on issues such as how to depict the situation on the ground in South Sudan, the utility of sanctions and the effects of climate change continue to influence Council dynamics, as they have in previous years. Most Council members remain concerned about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, ongoing intercommunal violence, high levels of sexual violence and the economic and humanitarian crises.

Sanctions on South Sudan remain a divisive issue in the Council. Negotiations this year were once again very difficult. It seems that members such as China, India and Russia were of the view that the resolution should contain language on the easing or lifting of sanctions. These members apparently expressed strong opposition to a renewal of the regime without this language; however, several

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2633](#) (26 May 2022) renewed the sanctions regime for one year. [S/RES/2625](#) (15 March 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 15 March 2023. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2022/370](#) (3 May 2022) was the assessment of progress achieved on the key benchmarks established in paragraph 2 of resolution 2577, which renewed the sanctions regime. [S/2022/156](#) (25 February 2022) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. [Security Council Letters S/2022/359](#) (28 April 2022) was the final report of the Panel of Experts. [S/2022/42](#) (20 January 2022) was on the appointment of the Panel of Experts. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8987](#) (7 March 2022) was a briefing on South Sudan.

South Sudan

members shared the view that there had not been adequate progress on the benchmarks to warrant consideration of the easing or lifting of sanctions at this time. (For more, see our 25 May story.)

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

Syria

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria. The briefing on the chemical weapons track will not take place this month.

Key Recent Developments

The EU-sponsored sixth Brussels Conference, titled “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”, was convened on 9-10 May. The conference—which was intended to support the UN’s efforts to find a political solution to the war in Syria and mobilise financial support for Syrian refugees and their host communities—invited 55 countries and various UN entities, among other international organisations. The EU did not invite Russia to participate, which led to the UN’s decision not to co-host the meeting with the EU. At a 10 May press briefing, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell said that “Russia has not been invited because we are inviting those partners who have a genuine, a real interest to contribute to peace in the world. And Russia, with its aggression against Ukraine, has shown that clearly it has not such interest, to maintain peace in the world”.

Conference participants pledged \$4.3 billion for 2022 and \$2.4 billion for future years. Loans of \$1.8 billion were also pledged by international financial institutions. The amount pledged was higher than last year’s annual Brussels conference, but less than the \$10.5 billion the UN has said is required to assist Syrians in need in 2022. In this regard, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths told participants that “\$4.4 billion of that is for the response inside Syria, and another \$6.1 billion for the refugees and host communities in the region”. Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen also addressed the delegates, reiterating his commitment to continue “to engage all key actors, Syrian and international, on the importance of contributing not only to alleviating suffering but to confidence-building and a political path out of this crisis”.

On 16 May, the UN conducted a cross-line delivery of humanitarian aid in northwest Syria (that is, across domestic frontlines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control). This was the fourth cross-line delivery since the July 2021 adoption of resolution 2585, which mandated the delivery of cross-line aid as well as cross-border humanitarian aid from Turkey into Syria through the Bab al-Hawa crossing.

Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya visited Syria from 16-18 May, where she met with families dealing with the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, humanitarian service providers, and Syrian officials. An 18 May OCHA statement said that during her visit, she discussed “possible ways to

expand humanitarian access to reach communities in need, protect civilians and help affected Syrians envision a better future” with Syria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad, and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bashar Jaafari. It also quoted Msuya as saying that she was “struck by the courage and incredible resilience of Syrian people” she met on her visit.

On 20 May, the Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Griffiths and Farida Almouslem of the Syrian American Medical Society briefed. Griffiths said that “cross-line operations cannot under current conditions replace the size or the scope of the massive UN cross-border operation”, adding that “failure to renew the [cross-border] authorization would disrupt life-saving aid for people living in the northwest”. Almouslem described her experience working as an obstetrician-gynaecologist in Aleppo from 2011 to 2016, echoing Griffiths’ emphasis on the importance of cross-border humanitarian assistance in Syria.

In a 29 April press statement, Council members 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 (CWC). Council members reaffirmed their commitment to “exclude completely...the use of chemical weapons anywhere, at any time by anyone”, as well as to the complete destruction of chemical weapons. They also reaffirmed that the development, production, and use of chemical weapons, as prohibited by the Convention, remain a clear threat to international peace and security.

Council members held a meeting on the Syria chemical weapons track on 27 May. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu provided the briefing.

The Syria Constitutional Committee’s eighth round began in Geneva on 28 May and was expected to end on 3 June. Following the conclusion of the seventh round (21-25 March in Geneva), which failed to achieve meaningful progress, Pedersen said, “I will do everything I can to bring closer viewpoints among the members through exerting my good offices, which is plainly needed”.

At the time of writing, Pedersen was scheduled to brief Council members on the political situation in Syria on 31 May.

Key Issues and Options

The humanitarian crisis in Syria remains an ongoing concern for Council members. The country continues to contend with an ever-worsening economic situation, rising food and fuel prices, water scarcity, and high unemployment. One option for Council members is to hold a closed Arria-formula meeting with civil society representatives who can speak to the importance of early recovery projects in Syria

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2585](#) (9 July 2021) renewed the mandate of the cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism in Syria. [Security Council Meeting S/PV.9038](#) (20 May 2022) was a meeting on the humanitarian situation in Syria. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14876](#) (29 April 2022) is a press statement marking 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 (CWC).

Syria

and provide their input on the types of projects that would be most beneficial to the welfare of Syrians. Given the upcoming expiration of the cross-border aid mechanism—and the difficult nature of the negotiations in recent years—Council members may decide to begin negotiations in earnest during the current month.

Another key issue is the ongoing stalemate in the work of the Constitutional Committee. If little progress is made in the eighth round of meetings of the committee, the Council could consider adopting a presidential statement that supports the Special Envoy's efforts to reinvigorate the political track.

Council Dynamics

There are significant differences on Syria among Council members on all three areas of Council engagement: the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks. On the political front, while there is general support for the Constitutional Committee's work, several Council members have expressed frustration with the lack of progress since its launch two and a half years ago. Some members—such as Albania, Ireland and the P3 (France, the UK and the US)—tend to accuse the Syrian government of not engaging in the process in good faith. On the other hand, Russia, a close ally of the Syrian government, has cautioned against imposing artificial deadlines on the committee's work.

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 supplant cross-border deliveries sooner rather than later, and India has argued that the cross-border aid mechanism violates Syria's sovereignty. (The delivery of cross-border aid authorised by the Security Council does not require the consent of the Syrian government.) There is likely to be considerable focus on the cross-border aid mechanism in the Council as the July expiration of resolution 2585 approaches. (The penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria have traditionally been elected members of the Council, including current penholders Ireland and Norway.)

Council members also continue to hold starkly different views on the chemical weapons track in Syria, disputing the evidence regarding responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the country and the credibility of the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). While several members have consistently expressed support for the OPCW's work, maintaining that it is credible and essential, other members, such as China and Russia, claim that its work is biased and politicised.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), Helen La Lime, on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH, due by 10 June. A civil society representative may also brief. The meeting may be followed by closed consultations.

Key Recent Developments

Since the Council last met to discuss the situation in Haiti on 18 February, the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the country has remained a key concern. On 24 April, clashes erupted between the rival gangs "Chen Mechan" and "400 Mawazo" in the communes of Croix-des Bouquets, Tabarre and Cité Soleil in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. Over the course of several days, the fighting extended gradually across additional communes of the capital. In a 4 May report, OCHA estimated that some 9,000 persons had fled the areas, adding to the roughly 19,000 already internally displaced persons in Port-au-Prince who had fled their homes due to gang activity since June 2021.

The escalation in violence prompted Mexico and the US to call for a Council meeting on 17 May under "any other business". La Lime briefed Council members on the humanitarian effects of the violent gang activity on the local population; on the challenges faced

by the Haitian National Police, which lacks crucial staffing, financial and material resources; and on the need for sustained international commitment to support Haiti in overcoming its security crisis. In a press release issued that day, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said that "armed violence has reached unimaginable and intolerable levels" and called for "urgent steps to be taken to restore the rule of law, to protect people from armed violence and to hold to account the political and economic sponsors of these gangs", along with the need to strengthen state institutions.

Bachelet's office reported that between 24 April and 16 May, at least 92 people unaffiliated with gangs and some 96 alleged to be gang members were reportedly killed during coordinated armed attacks in Port-au-Prince. Another 113 were injured, 12 were reportedly missing, and 49 were kidnapped for ransom.

The dire security situation, lack of economic opportunities and insufficient access to basic services have prompted many Haitians to leave their country. A significant number are being repatriated by the US: the International Organization for Migration reported in April that 11,620 Haitian migrants had returned to Haiti since January (compared to 2,520 Haitian nationals who returned during the same period in 2021). Of those, 74 percent were repatriated by the US. Repatriation of Haitians arriving in the US has increased since autumn 2021, when some 12,000 Haitians travelled via South and Central American countries to Del Rio, Texas, a town on the

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2600](#) (15 October 2021) renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for nine months until 15 July 2022. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/7](#) (24 March 2021) expressed deep concern regarding the protracted political, constitutional, humanitarian, and security crises in Haiti. [Security Council Letter S/2022/369](#) (29 April 2022) was a letter from the Secretary-General to the Security Council conveying the findings of a strategic assessment of BINUH. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/117](#) (15 February 2022) was the latest 120-day report on Haiti and the special political mission. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8969](#) (18 February 2022) was on the situation in Haiti. [Security Council Press Statements SC/14574](#) (7 July 2021) condemned the assassination of the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse. [SC/14571](#) (1 July 2021) reiterated the deep concern of Council members regarding the deteriorating political, security and humanitarian conditions in Haiti.

Haiti

border with Mexico. The Biden administration has pursued a policy of repatriating Haitians who crossed the border but has also indicated that it could release some on a case-by-case basis. The first repatriation flights left the US for Port-au-Prince on 19 September 2021. Despite the policy, many Haitians continue to venture abroad. On 12 May, a vessel carrying mostly Haitian migrants capsized near Puerto Rico. Eleven migrants drowned; close to 40 were rescued by the US Coast Guard.

Two main political factions are competing for power and have charted opposing plans to lead Haiti out of its political crisis: a group supporting Prime Minister Ariel Henry and his plan to hold a constitutional referendum followed by elections by the end of 2022, with Henry leading the country until then; and supporters of the “Montana Accord,” for whom the constitutional referendum is not a priority and who seek a two-year transitional government under different interim leadership, with elections to be held in 2023. Henry and representatives of the Montana Group are currently engaging in mediation meetings and dialogue.

During a speech on 18 May, a national holiday, Henry called for an inclusive national dialogue and said the government was working tirelessly to create an environment with the necessary security for holding elections. Only then, he said, would the country be stable enough to create job opportunities and attract investment.

Henry has yet to appoint a new Provisional Electoral Council. This body, which was disbanded in September 2021, is responsible for organising Haiti’s long-overdue elections and overseeing a constitutional referendum (a project initiated by late President Jovenel Moïse, who was assassinated on 7 July 2021). Meanwhile, the investigation into Moïse’s assassination has not gained any traction.

On 15 March, US President Biden signed a spending bill that contains several provisions concerning Haiti. These include requirements for the State Department to report to Congress on the status of the ongoing investigation into Moïse’s murder, Haiti’s ability to carry out an inquiry into the assassination and the support that the Biden administration has provided to Haiti’s judiciary to assist in the inquiry.

On 18 April, the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti released its annual report to the Council on its activities, with several recommendations for the Council’s consideration. These include that the Council urgently address the political crisis and the mounting insecurity in Haiti, with the establishment of an inclusive national dialogue with a view to creating the conditions for holding elections. It further recommends a holistic approach to establishing security and to strengthen Haiti’s police.

On 29 April, Council members received a letter from the Secretary-General conveying the findings of a strategic assessment of BINUH’s mandate. The Council mandated the assessment in resolution 2600 of October 2021 to determine whether and how the mandate could be adjusted to address Haiti’s challenges and to increase the effectiveness of the mission. The review determined that BINUH is well placed to create space for political dialogue and called for the continuation of the mandate. Based on the review findings, the Secretary-General said, BINUH “should be empowered

to continue its good offices, scale-up police support to curb armed gang violence and reach out to all sectors of society, including communities in areas controlled by gangs”. In this regard, he added that the mission should engage more systematically with all Haitian stakeholders to promote national dialogue and that BINUH should be given the resources needed to increase “its advisory support to strengthen the capacity of the national police to fight gangs, reopen police commissariats in areas affected by gang violence and stem illicit financial flows”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to determine how the elements of the strategic assessment will inform its future engagement on Haiti, given the significant governance, security and humanitarian challenges facing the government. Another important issue is addressing the insecurity in Port-au-Prince and its attendant humanitarian consequences.

Council members could consider a presidential statement that calls on the international community to provide sustained financial, material and technical support in a coordinated manner and in consultation with the Haitian government. They could also encourage UN member states to provide bilateral support to Haiti’s rule of law institutions in the statement.

Council Dynamics

Dynamics concerning Haiti have been difficult, and divergent views on the future of the UN presence in the country may re-emerge. Although united in the view that Haiti faces grave political, economic, security, and humanitarian challenges, Council members hold different opinions on how these should be addressed. During the last BINUH mandate renewal in October 2021, China advocated a strategic review with a view to identifying a strategy for the mission’s drawdown, placing emphasis on the government’s primary responsibility for addressing the country’s challenges. Several Council members—including Kenya and other elected members that have since left the Council (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Niger and Tunisia) also requested a strategic assessment, but with a view to determining how the mission’s mandate could be strengthened.

During the 18 February Council meeting on Haiti, China expressed the view that the UN system had provided large amounts of funding without the desired impact and that synergies with the UN agencies’ funds and programmes or regional organisations should be explored. At the same meeting, the US called on Haiti’s partners to increase support, particularly for community violence-reduction initiatives, while Russia emphasised that BINUH should prioritise supporting an effective national dialogue.

The US and Mexico are the co-penholders on Haiti.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will discuss the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza will brief the Council for the first time since her appointment on 24 February.

The mandate of MINUSCA expires on 15 November 2022. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2022, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2022.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council met on 22 February to discuss the situation in the CAR. During the meeting, some Council members accused the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, of committing serious human rights abuses, including the summary execution of 30 people in Aïgbando, Haute-Kotto Prefecture, in January. Russia, however, said the accusations against "Russian instructors" in the CAR were based on unverified information.

In a report released on 3 May, Human Rights Watch accused "Russian linked forces" of committing grave abuses against civilians in CAR, including arbitrary detention, torture and summary execution, based on what it said was "compelling evidence" gathered through interviews with victims and witnesses between February 2019 and November 2021.

On 21 February, four MINUSCA peacekeepers were arrested by the CAR gendarmerie in Bangui while escorting a senior military officer of the mission. The peacekeepers were accused on social media of planning to assassinate President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, which the UN strongly denied. The Secretary-General condemned the arrest in a statement and pointed out that the CAR authorities did not follow the 2014 status of forces agreement with the UN, which outlines specific procedures in cases where peacekeepers are suspected of committing an offence. He called on the CAR authorities to respect the agreement and release the peacekeepers unconditionally and without delay. The peacekeepers were subsequently released, but the incident was seen as an indication of the prevailing mistrust between the CAR authorities and the mission. In his previous reports, the Secretary-General highlighted disinformation campaigns against MINUSCA as a major challenge posing a threat to the safety and security of peacekeepers.

Civilians continue to suffer the brunt of the ongoing conflict and violence in CAR. OCHA's report, issued in May, described the increasing threat of explosive devices to civilians. The report also noted that the number of internally displaced persons surged by 2.8 percent in March compared to February because of increasing military activities by armed groups in certain localities. On 27 April, a regional ministerial conference was held in Yaoundé in collaboration with UNHCR that aimed to find a solution to the displacement of more than one million Central Africans in the protracted conflict in the CAR. The conference concluded with the adoption of a declaration that underscored the need for a regional approach to the challenges facing refugees, internally displaced persons, and returnees from CAR.

The long-awaited republican dialogue, promised by President Touadéra after his re-election in 2020, was finally held from 21 to 27 March in Bangui. The process was marred by controversy, however, as opposition parties boycotted the dialogue and armed groups were not invited. Media reports indicated that the dialogue, which was supposed to advance peace, concluded without achieving this result. During the dialogue, it seems a proposal for a constitutional amendment to allow the president to run for a third term had created tension but was later withdrawn, according to media reports. The participants in the dialogue issued recommendations at the end of the meeting; among them was a call for the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on CAR by the Council.

Local elections are supposed to be held in September, but media have quoted CAR authorities as saying that the elections could be postponed because of a lack of funds.

The CAR Special Criminal Court, established in 2015 with the objective of investigating and prosecuting grave violations of human rights committed in the CAR, started its first trial on 19 April with three suspects from the Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R) armed group, who are accused of committing serious crimes in the country's northwest in May 2019. This was considered an important milestone in fighting impunity in the country. The first hearing was adjourned on 25 April, reportedly because the defence lawyers, who had complained about insufficient fees, were not present. The court met again on 16 May to hear from the first defendants.

On 14 March, Chadian authorities surrendered Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, who belonged to the anti-Balaka movement supportive of former CAR president François Bozizé, to the ICC. The court had issued an arrest warrant on him in December 2018 for allegedly committing war crimes and crimes against humanity between December 2013 and December 2014. On 22 March, Mokom appeared before the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 30 March, during its 49th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held a high-level interactive dialogue on the human rights situation in the CAR with the participation of the independent expert on the human rights situation in the CAR, Yao Agetse, and representatives of the government, the UN, the AU, the CAR's Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, and civil society. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet briefed and noted that the "increasing number of incidents involving serious human rights violations and abuses – and the rising role of the nation's defence forces and their allies in those violations – are matters of utmost concern".

Sanctions-Related Developments

Although the Council decided to extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 31 August through the adoption of resolution 2588 on 29 July 2021, Russia placed a hold on the appointment of panel members for several months, calling for increased geographical diversity. On 18 April, the Secretary-General appointed three panel members. They are from Costa Rica, the Republic of the Congo and Kenya.

Key Issues and Options

A major preoccupation for Council members is how to advance peace and reconciliation in the CAR through the implementation of the 2019 peace agreement and the joint roadmap of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Council members could be interested to hear about the republican dialogue held in March. They will

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2605 (12 November 2021) extended the mandate of MINUSCA for one year until 15 November 2022. Thirteen Council members voted in favour, with China and Russia abstaining. S/RES/2588 (29 July 2021) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2022 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2022. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2022/119 (16 February 2022) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

also be keen to know more about the state of preparations for local elections, expected to be held in September for the first time in more than 30 years. One option could be to hold a closed informal meeting (such as an informal interactive dialogue or a closed Arria-formula meeting) with CAR government officials and representatives of other political parties for an exchange of views on how to advance the peace process.

How to address the continued insecurity in CAR and reduce the threats to civilians is another key challenge for Council members. The Council could, in this respect, consider asking for a briefing from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the effects of the Wagner Group on the overall security environment in the country.

An additional issue for Council members is how to promote accountability and justice in the face of grave violations of human rights committed by various actors in CAR. They may continue to support the role of national courts, the hybrid special criminal court and the ICC in the country.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are supportive of regional efforts on CAR and have underscored the need to implement the joint roadmap of the ICGLR. But the role of the Wagner Group and its alleged involvement in human rights abuses has been a contentious issue. Russia has consistently rejected such accusations and says that calls for investigations by some Council members are hypocritical. In this regard, at the 22 February Council meeting, Russia asked why these members have not demanded the results of investigation on airstrikes in Afghanistan and Iraq that led to casualties.

There is also no agreement on CAR's request for the lifting of the arms embargo. African members, China and Russia support the request, but France, the UK and the US oppose it in the face of increasing violence and the spread of arms.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. An official from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and a representative of Afghan civil society are expected to brief. The Council is also scheduled to receive a briefing from Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths. This briefing will cover the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

Key Recent Developments

On 7 May, Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban's supreme leader, issued a decree requiring Afghan women to cover their faces in public. According to media reports, the decree, which was announced by an official from the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at a news conference, said that "women, unless they are very young or very old, must cover their faces except for their eyes" whenever they meet a man to whom they are not related. The decree also said that "they should wear a chadori [head-to-toe burqa], as it is traditional and respectful" and encouraged women to stay home, advising that "the best way to observe hijab is to not go out unless it's necessary". Several punishments for male relatives of women who fail to comply are outlined in the decree, including possible jail time and termination or suspension of employment for those who work for the Taliban's administration.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expressed deep concern about the decree in a 7 May statement, which said that "this decision contradicts numerous assurances regarding respect for and protection of all Afghans' human rights, including those of women and girls, that had been provided to the international community by Taliban representatives during discussions and negotiations over the past decade". UNAMA's information suggests that the decree is a formal directive that will be enforced, the mission said.

The decree is one of several measures introduced by the Taliban directed at women and girls. On 23 March, the Taliban announced that girls' high schools would be closed, thereby preventing girls above the sixth grade from attending school. The announcement was an abrupt reversal of the Taliban's 21 March decision to reopen all schools at the beginning of the spring semester, and reportedly came hours after high schools for girls had reopened for the first time in months. On 27 March, Council members issued a press statement that expressed deep concern regarding this decision and called on the Taliban to "respect the right to education and adhere to their commitments to reopen schools for all female students without further delay", among other matters. On 19 May, the Taliban announced that it had asked television broadcasters to ensure that female presenters on local stations cover their faces when on air.

In guidance issued on 26 December 2021, the Taliban's Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice prohibited women from travelling more than 72 kilometres from their homes unless accompanied by a close male relative. A similar restriction was introduced on 27 March, when the Taliban sent airlines in Afghanistan a letter directing them to prevent women from boarding without a male chaperone. According to media reports, the Taliban have also prevented women in some parts of the country from receiving medical treatment unless accompanied by a male guardian.

On 12 May, Council members convened for closed consultations to discuss the increased restrictions on the human rights and freedoms of girls and women in Afghanistan that have been imposed by the Taliban. Lyons briefed, and it appears that she provided an update regarding her recent engagement with the Taliban, including the meeting that took place in the week commencing 9 May. In a 10 May tweet, UNAMA noted that Lyons had met with the Taliban and "called for women's rights to be expanded not curtailed, for

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2626 (17 March 2022) extended the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2023. Security Council Press Statement SC/14902 (24 May 2022) expressed deep concern regarding the erosion of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan by the Taliban.

Afghanistan

secondary schools to reopen to girls and for women to be able to fully participate in work and public life”.

On 24 May, Council members issued a press statement which expressed deep concern regarding the erosion of respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls in Afghanistan by the Taliban and emphasised that the restrictions imposed contradict the expectations of the international community and the Taliban’s commitments. The press statement also called on the Taliban to swiftly reverse these policies and practices and addressed other issues, including terrorism, drug trafficking, and the humanitarian and economic situation in the country.

The Taliban’s decision to prevent girls from returning to high school prompted the World Bank to announce that it was suspending four projects worth \$600 million focusing on agriculture, education, health, and livelihoods. On 19 April, the World Bank said that it had resumed work on the projects concentrating on health, agriculture, and livelihoods but that it would continue to withhold \$150 million from education projects.

Afghanistan continues to face an ongoing humanitarian crisis. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report on Afghanistan, which was issued on 9 May, 19.7 million Afghans, or 47 percent of the population, are currently facing high levels of acute food insecurity. In a 9 May statement, the international NGO Save the Children said that approximately 9.6 million children in Afghanistan “are going hungry every day due to a dire combination of economic collapse, the impacts of the war in Ukraine and the ongoing drought”. On 31 March, the Secretary-General convened a high-level pledging conference to help fund the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan 2022, which calls for \$4.4 billion in aid to allow humanitarian organisations “to reach 22.1 million people with life-saving multi-sectoral assistance”. According to media reports, donor countries pledged \$2.44 billion during this conference. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General appealed to donors to “provide unconditional and flexible funding as soon as possible”.

The economic situation in Afghanistan remains dire. In its April development update on Afghanistan, the World Bank said that there had been a 34 percent decline in per capita income in Afghanistan between the last four months of 2020 and the last four months of 2021. The update also noted that growth will remain stagnant under current conditions and suggested that “widespread poverty will pose important displacement, extremism, and fragility risks”. On 14 May, the Taliban’s Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi announced that Afghanistan faces a \$501 million budget deficit for this financial year.

In a 16 May announcement, the Taliban said that it had dissolved five entities established by the former government, including the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution of Afghanistan, and the High Council for National Reconciliation.

The security situation in Afghanistan appears to be worsening. A spate of terrorist attacks has taken place in different parts of the country in recent weeks, including the 29 April bombing of a mosque in Kabul that killed more than 50 people. The Afghan affiliate of the

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), the Islamic State in Khorasan Province, claimed responsibility for several of these attacks. Council members issued four press statements between 20 April and 30 April condemning a number of the attacks.

On 16 April, at least 47 people were reportedly killed by air strikes in the eastern provinces of Khost and Kunar, near the border with Pakistan. On the same day, a Taliban official claimed that the strikes were carried out by Pakistan, a claim that Islamabad denies. In a 17 April statement, Pakistani authorities said that Pakistan’s security forces were increasingly being targeted in cross-border attacks from Afghanistan and called on the Taliban to prevent the attacks. On 18 May, the Taliban announced that it had mediated a temporary cease-fire between Pakistan and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a Pakistani militant group allied with the Taliban that is seeking to establish an Islamic caliphate in Pakistan under sharia law.

On 7 May, a spokesperson for the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), an insurgency against the Taliban based in Panjshir province in northern Afghanistan, said it had “liberated” three districts in Panjshir. The Taliban subsequently denied this claim.

Human Rights Related Developments

The special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, undertook his first visit to the country from 15 to 26 May. He engaged with the de facto authorities and a broad range of stakeholders to assess the situation of human rights, including with regard to the implementation of obligations under international human rights instruments ratified by Afghanistan, and to offer assistance to address and prevent violations and abuses. The special rapporteur will deliver his findings in a report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) and the General Assembly later this year. In a 26 May statement, Bennett said that Afghanistan faces serious human rights challenges and urged the Taliban to take the path that brings stability and freedom to all Afghans, especially women.

In a 25 April statement, a group of experts from the special procedures of the HRC called on the US to unfreeze more than \$7 billion of assets belonging to the Afghan central bank currently held in the US. The statement noted that states have an obligation under international human rights law to guarantee that activity in their jurisdiction or under their control does not result in human rights violations, and urged the US, in line with this obligation, “to reverse this unilateral measure and decisively contribute to” international efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Key Issues and Options

The situation of women and girls in Afghanistan is an important issue for the Council. Council members could hold an informal meeting with an official from UN Women and women from Afghan and international civil society to discuss what the Council can do to help women and girls in Afghanistan.

The humanitarian and economic crises in Afghanistan are another issue for the Council to consider. An informal, closed meeting with humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan could enable Council members to engage in dialogue with these organisations and learn more about the challenges facing those working to deliver aid in the country.

The rising incidence of terrorism in Afghanistan is also a major concern for the Council. The Council could request a briefing from a counter-terrorism expert, which would provide an opportunity for Council members to discuss the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and help generate ideas for bolstering the Council’s work in this area.

Afghanistan

Council Dynamics

Council members appear to be divided regarding Afghanistan. During the negotiations concerning UNAMA's mandate, which took place in March, China and Russia apparently contended that UNAMA should focus primarily on assisting with efforts to address the humanitarian and economic crises in the country. A majority of other Council members strongly supported a more robust mandate for UNAMA spanning several additional areas, including the protection of human rights and the promotion of inclusive governance and gender equality; these components were ultimately included in UNAMA's mandate.

Another key difference that emerged in the negotiation related to the language used to describe the Taliban. It seems that China and Russia preferred referring to the Taliban as the "de facto authorities", with both members suggesting that this term accurately reflects the situation on the ground. It appears that other members, including the US, were not comfortable with this language and argued that it may imply de facto recognition of the Taliban regime. As a compromise, the resolution refers to "all relevant Afghan political actors and stakeholders", "all relevant Afghan political actors", and "all relevant Afghan stakeholders". China objected to these formulations but nonetheless voted in favour of the resolution.

Council members also differed over risk management and the oversight of aid. It seems that some Council members, including France, India, the UK, and the US, favoured a strong risk management role for UNAMA and argued that its activities in this area should consider the potential diversion of aid. China and Russia, however, apparently expressed concerns regarding this aspect of UNAMA's mandate and questioned whether there is a need to closely monitor the provision of UN assistance in Afghanistan. The final resolution directs UNAMA to coordinate the overall risk management approach of the UN in Afghanistan and monitor risks related to the assistance coordinated by the UN in Afghanistan, including the risk of aid diversion.

China and Russia also sought to include language that attributed the economic crisis in Afghanistan to sanctions, the cessation of development aid, restrictions on the financial system and the freezing of assets belonging to the Afghan central bank. This proposal was rejected by other Council members, some of whom argued that the Taliban's takeover is the real cause of the country's economic woes, and it was not incorporated into the resolution.

The negotiations on the 24 May press statement were also difficult. Norway, the penholder on the file, initially circulated a draft presidential statement ahead of the closed consultations on 12 May. Despite general support for this draft from other Council members, it seems that China and Russia took issue with the text proposed by Norway, with both states arguing that it was unbalanced and focused too heavily on human rights and the situation of women and girls. Both members apparently suggested adding language on other issues to the draft, including the humanitarian and economic crises, the security situation, terrorism, and the effect of asset freezes and sanctions, and also resisted the inclusion of previously agreed language, such as text relating to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It appears that China and Russia repeatedly broke silence over multiple revised drafts of the presidential statement because of these issues. Ultimately, consensus could not be reached, and a press statement was pursued instead.

China and Russia have also demonstrated a greater willingness to work with the Taliban without preconditions. On 24 March, the day after the Taliban prevented girls from returning to high school, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul to discuss political and economic ties. On 31 March, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced that Russia had accredited a Taliban diplomat in Moscow. Conversely, in a 9 May statement, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said that the US will increase its pressure on the Taliban if the group fails to unwind its decisions concerning women and girls.

Working Methods Debate

Expected Council Action

In June, Albania is organising an open debate on the Council's working methods. Albania, the chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG), is expected to circulate a concept note ahead of the debate. The debate will be held under the agenda item "Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2017/507)", referring to the most recent version of the comprehensive compendium of Council working methods.

Recent Key Developments

The Council held its most recent open debate on working

methods on 16 June 2021. It was the Council's 13th annual working methods debate and was organised under the theme "Agility and Innovation: lessons for the future from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic". The elected members (E10) delivered a joint statement for the third time. With pandemic restrictions still partially in place, the meeting was limited to Council members, with the larger membership submitting written statements.

In 2021, then-chair of the IWG Saint Vincent and the Grenadines presented draft presidential notes on 12 topics to members of the IWG, of which the IWG adopted five. The four notes adopted in July 2021 were on: training opportunities for incoming members, multilingualism, the role of the president of the Council, and the role

UN DOCUMENTS ON WORKING METHODS Notes by the President of the Security Council S/2021/645 (12 July 2021) addressed the need for capacity building for elected members in working methods. S/2021/646 (12 July 2021) focused on the role of those who coordinate the monthly activities of the Council. S/2021/647 (12 July 2021) underscored the role of the Council President in the implementation of the notes. S/2021/648 (12 July 2021) addressed the issue of multilingualism. S/2021/1074 (22 December 2021) affirmed the Council's commitment to maintaining its state of readiness under all circumstances. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8798** (16 June 2021) was the annual debate on working methods. **Security Council Letter S/2022/88** (25 January 2022) was a letter from the permanent representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as the 2020-2021 chair of the IWG. **Selected Other Document S/2021/860** was a summary of the 2021 open debate.

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of the political coordinators in the implementation of Note 507 and subsequently adopted notes. The final note of 2021 focused on the Council's commitment to "maintaining its state of readiness in all circumstances" in order to function continuously.

The IWG has met twice in 2022: on 18 March and 6 May. At the first meeting, the chair, Albania, introduced the idea of a tracking mechanism for the implementation of Note 507. The proposed mechanism would include data indicators on the implementation of relevant working methods of the Council to be tracked by either the Security Council Affairs Department or the Council President. It seems the IWG has also agreed to issue an annual report starting this year. The IWG retreat, planned by the chair for early March, was postponed to later in the year following the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine.

The selection of subsidiary body chairs in 2021 was protracted and divisive. Competition for several subsidiary bodies and reluctance to take on others led to an impasse, with one member finally choosing not to chair any subsidiary bodies. Note 507 sets a 1 October deadline for the agreement on the chairs of subsidiary bodies, which has yet to be met. In 2020 and 2021, the chairs of subsidiary bodies had not been formalised by the start of the new year.

The Council travelled to Mali and the Sahel in October 2021. This was the first visiting mission in two and a half years due to pandemic-related travel restrictions.

Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue is the implementation of Note 507 and subsequently adopted notes by the president. The emerging practice of Council presidents preparing monthly working methods commitments is a step in the right direction, and making this a more formal part of the presidency would provide a comprehensive record of implementation over time. For greater transparency, each presidency could include its commitments and an assessment of their implementation in their presidency assessments.

A related issue is promoting incoming members' familiarity with Note 507 and subsequent notes. To this end, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines published "Note 507 Plus", containing an index of all the areas covered to date by working methods notes. Incoming members could also be offered capacity building on working methods by the Secretariat immediately after the June elections. An annual report and a letter from the outgoing chair, such as the one produced by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in January 2022, would also be useful references.

Another issue is whether the IWG wishes to consider new notes, including those that were not agreed to last year, such as a more detailed note on the Council's commitment to maintaining a state of readiness in order to be prepared for situations that might disrupt its functioning. There may also be interest in addressing new working methods in a note, such as the commitments made by Council presidents on women, peace and security.

A significant issue is concluding the selection of the chairs of subsidiary bodies in a timely manner. This requires early consultations among incoming members and willingness to be flexible during the process. A workshop by current chairs or the Secretariat for incoming members on the role of the chair of different subsidiary bodies

may be useful soon after the election. A more ambitious option might be to review the selection process and agree that the decision of who is to fill the chairs of subsidiary bodies should be left in the hands of the incoming members without requiring sign-off by the permanent members.

A long-term issue is that of elected members chairing subsidiary bodies while they rarely hold the pen on country-specific issues. (The penholder refers to the member of the Council that leads the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on a particular Council agenda item.) France, the UK and the US are the penholders on the majority of country files. While there have been calls for greater sharing of pens between permanent and elected members, this remains rare. However, in 2021, Ireland took the pen on Tigray, Ethiopia, and in 2022, Albania has emerged as the co-penholder on Ukraine with the US. Mexico has also begun to play a key role on issues in its region by co-drafting outcomes with the UK on Colombia and the US on Haiti. With these developments, some members may choose to push for a discussion on creating more pen-sharing opportunities for elected members.

With only one visiting mission in the past two and a half years, Council members have largely missed the benefit of a first-hand view of fragile field settings and of being able to deliver messages directly to key stakeholders. With travel restrictions now largely lifted, Council members may wish to assess strategically which situations could benefit most from a Council visit in the second half of the year. If full visiting missions prove not feasible, the Council may want to consider mini-missions or virtual visits as alternatives.

A continuing issue is the balance between transparency and privacy. Members regularly raise the need for a balance between public and private meetings in working methods debates. Members may wish to offer suggestions on how best to maintain transparency while maximising the Council's effectiveness, encouraging interactivity and building consensus. One option may be to encourage press elements following closed meetings as a regular practice.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Working methods can be a divisive and politically sensitive area for Council members. Permanent members have generally been reluctant to record the Council's working methods, arguing that these practices should remain flexible and adaptable. In line with this thinking, they are more cautious about the topics for new presidential notes and are more likely to stress implementation of existing practices.

Elected members have continued to be united on working methods, and the E10 are likely to deliver a joint statement for the fourth consecutive year. Among the issues that may be raised is the women, peace and security monthly commitments, transparency and due process in sanctions regimes, as well as the erratic use of rule 37, which provides for the participation of member states when their interests are affected. The need for a more equitable distribution of work and greater burden sharing may also be raised as the selection process for chairs of subsidiary bodies will have started following the election of five new members on 9 June. Members may also choose to highlight the practice that has developed around monthly commitments on working methods by the president and ideas

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for monitoring the implementation of Note 507 and the 13 notes adopted since 2017.

Some members are keen to record COVID-era practices for the Council's working methods during periods when it is unable to function normally, including suggestions for improvements. However, existing differences may make this difficult, Russia has made clear that the VTC format used during 2020 and part of 2021 were temporary measures and should not be considered formal meetings of the Council.

In addition, some members favour increased public meetings to enhance the transparency of the Council's work, while others underscore the need for more private forms of discussion, which are

conducive to interactive exchanges and building consensus.

The issue of working methods is one of great interest to the wider membership, and after two years of only being able to provide written statements, many member states are expected to participate in the debate. Among the areas they are likely to cover include the importance of participation of the wider membership in Council open debates and the wrap-up sessions. The Council's use of Uniting for Peace, which has led to a larger role for the General Assembly in addressing the Ukraine situation, and the recent veto initiative, may prompt some members to raise issues around reform of the Security Council.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Bintou Keita, the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), is expected to brief.

This month the Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts, which are due to expire on 1 July and on 1 August, respectively.

Key Recent Developments

On 20 December 2021, the Security Council received updates on the situation in the DRC and the activities of MONUSCO. Keita briefed about the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC due to the increasing military activities of armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and the M23 Movement. It has been a year since the government declared a "state of siege" to address insecurity in the eastern provinces, under which the military took over governance responsibilities in Ituri and North Kivu and military courts substituted civil courts. The declaration was for an initial period of 30 days, with the possibility of a two-week extension. So far, the parliament has extended it more than 22 times upon the government's request. However, violence and insecurity in the eastern provinces have worsened; the killing and abduction of innocent civilians and the destruction of property have also significantly increased, according to reports by various human rights organisations. Because of growing public dissatisfaction, the government has reportedly decided to convene a roundtable to decide on the future of the "state of siege".

The security situation in eastern DRC has also been a focus of two regional mini-summits hosted by Kenyan President and current Chair of the East African Community (EAC) Uhuru Kenyatta on 8 and 21 April. The regional leaders agreed to make progress on two tracks: 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 to take part in political dialogue. In a 28 April press statement, Security Council members took note of the regional leaders' commitment to implement this two-track approach. The first round of consultations between the Congolese government and around 20 armed groups operating in the eastern provinces took place in Nairobi during the last week of April. At the time of writing, another round of consultations was expected to be convened before regional leaders met again by the end of May to assess the outcome of the consultations.

MONUSCO has enhanced its operations where armed groups are active in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces. On 5 April, a Nepali peacekeeper died in Ituri province while fighting militia-men belonging to CODECO. This armed group was also behind the 8 May attack on a gold mine in the same province, which left 38 civilians dead and others missing or displaced. Persistent attacks by armed groups targeting sites for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the increasing use of improvised explosive devices have also increased the challenges of protecting civilians affected by conflict. In light of these challenges, MONUSCO has increased its stabilisation efforts by enhancing its deterrent posture, conducting offensive operations against armed groups, and providing protection to IDP sites. On 22 May, fighting was reported in Shangi, North Kivu, where M23 members attacked both the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and MONUSCO. In a 23 May statement, however, the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) complained about rocket shelling by the FARDC on Rwandan territory and requested an investigation by the regional Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM) of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

MONUSCO is in the process of implementing the benchmarks and indicators set out by its transition plan. The mission is expected to withdraw from Tanganyika province in June based on its exit strategy. It has been coordinating with the provincial authorities and the UN country team to preserve gains through the implementation of a humanitarian, development and peace nexus approach. One of the key milestones in the mission's transition is the adoption of a national framework for disarmament and demobilisation, including

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2612](#) (20 December 2021) extended the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2022. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9007](#) (29 March 2022) was a Security Council briefing on the situation in the DRC. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14855](#) (5 April 2022) was on the attack against MONUSCO in Ituri province in which a Nepali peacekeeper was killed.

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community reintegration. On 17 March, the Congolese government adopted a national strategy for the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Recovery and Stabilization Program (P-DDRCS). The full and effective implementation of this program is believed to be critical for stabilising eastern DRC and enabling the Congolese government to take over MONUSCO's tasks as the mission continues gradually to draw down.

The other important milestone is the organisation of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections within the constitutional timeframe. In her last briefing to the Council, Keita underscored the significance of a consensus-based review of the electoral law and, in this regard, welcomed the commitment expressed by the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) to facilitate this objective. The country held provincial elections on 6 May, which was seen as CENI's trial run ahead of national elections in 2023. Candidates from the Union sacrée de la Nation, the ruling coalition, reportedly won in 11 of the 14 provinces where elections took place.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 49th session, the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue on 29 March, during which it considered the oral updates of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the team of international experts on the situation in Kasai. The Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, said the human rights situation "continued to be compounded by increased and persistent attacks by armed groups against civilians, notably in the eastern provinces" and expressed particular concern over "the shrinking humanitarian space throughout conflict-affected provinces". Bacre Ndiaye briefed as a member of the team of international experts, emphasising the need for capacity-building – including more administrators, judges and police officers – to combat corruption.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members is how to address the growing insecurity in eastern DRC and the continued threat to civilians. Council members have raised continued concerns about respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in relation to the implementation of the state of siege. In this regard, they could be interested to hear about the consultations on the fate of this emergency measure. In addition, Council members have been supportive

of an integrated regional approach in addressing the threats posed by armed groups and may be keen to know more about the prospect of ongoing consultations between the government and armed groups in Nairobi under the auspices of the EAC. In this regard, they could also consider holding an informal interactive dialogue with EAC and DRC representatives to learn more about the consultations.

Council members have also called for non-military measures to address the security challenges in eastern DRC. In this context, the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants has been considered especially critical. Council members may welcome the adoption of the national strategy for the implementation of the P-DDRCS and call for its full and effective implementation.

Another key issue is related to the political situation in the country and the ongoing preparations for the 2023 elections. Council members could stress the significance of the electoral law review process to ensure credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections.

Council Dynamics

Council members support MONUSCO's work and the mission's gradual drawdown. Nonetheless, they remain very concerned about the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC, especially the protection of civilians in the face of increasing attacks against IDP camps and the use of improvised explosive devices.

Council members are supportive of regional cooperation in addressing the security challenges in the DRC, including the joint military operations by FARDC and the Ugandan People's Defense Forces (UPDF). In searching for non-military solutions to the security problems in eastern DRC, they have underscored the significance of the P-DDRCS in stabilising the situation in eastern DRC, and African members, in particular, have called for the mobilisation of financial and material resources to support its implementation.

Council members also continue to raise the issue of illegal exploitation of natural resources as a major destabilising factor, and some have stressed the work of the 1533 DRC sanctions regime in sanctioning individuals and entities involved in illegal mining.

France is the penholder on the DRC. Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon) chairs the 1533 Sanctions Committee.

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