

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In September, France is president of the Security Council.

France plans to organise a ministerial-level briefing on [Ukraine](#) during the General Assembly high-level week. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief.

In September, the Security Council will also hold a briefing on [peacekeeping](#) pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is the anticipated briefer.

African issues on the programme of work in September are:

- [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO);
- [Libya](#), consultations and the renewal of resolution 2240 to inspect and seize vessels smuggling migrants;
- [Somalia](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM);
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and

- [Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme are:

- [Iraq](#), renewal of the mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD);
- [Yemen](#), consultations;
- [Syria](#), monthly meetings on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks, as well as an informal interactive dialogue (IID) in accordance with resolution 2642 of 12 July; and
- [Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#), the monthly meeting.

There will also be the quarterly briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission in [Afghanistan](#) (UNAMA).

Other issues could also be raised in September depending on developments.

1 September 2022

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In Hindsight: The Security Council and Weapons of Mass Destruction

With the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference (RevCon) ending in disappointment last week, failing to step up to “the urgency of the moment”, what avenues exist for UN Security Council regulation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)?

The question is a critical one. In 2018, the Secretary-General said that the global disarmament agenda had not only stalled but was “moving in the wrong direction.” His signature 2021 report, *Our Common Agenda (OCA)*, amplified this concern, with multilateral disarmament negotiations long deadlocked, bilateral channels permitted to stagnate, limits on major conventional forces left aside, and no measures in place “to prevent rapid escalation resulting from strategic threats in new domains, including cyberspace and outer space” (OCA p. 3).

Recent UN Discussions

WMD have featured prominently in recent United Nations discussions. On 26 May, the Security Council voted on a US-initiated draft resolution updating and strengthening the North Korea (DPRK) sanctions regime imposed by UN Security Council Resolution 1718. The draft resolution was vetoed by China and Russia, arguing, among other things, that strengthening the sanctions regime would not help resolve tensions on the Korean peninsula, while the remaining 13 Council members voted in its favour. Consequently, on 8 June, the General Assembly held a debate on the DPRK sanctions regime in accordance with its resolution A/RES/76/262, which stipulates that the President of the General Assembly shall convene a formal meeting of the General Assembly within ten working days of a veto being cast by a permanent member of the Council.

In August, the five-yearly Review Conference of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty convened, having been postponed for two years due to COVID-19. NPT RevCons aims for state parties to produce a consensus document that assesses the treaty’s implementation, establishes updated commitments, and provides recommendations to advance the NPT’s objectives. NPT RevCons have been contentious, and this year’s was no different. After four weeks of negotiations, the conference concluded in failure on 26 August, over Russian objections to language on the safety of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. Experts found the rejected draft limited in ambition, in any case; the director of the US-based Arms Control Association remarked that the five declared nuclear-weapon states (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) had rejected “pragmatic proposals” for specific, time-bound commitments to fulfil their NPT disarmament obligations.

The world’s nuclear risks have grown in recent years, with extensive modernisation of nuclear arsenals reported in 2022 (and overall global military expenditure reaching \$2.1 trillion), according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. As well, a broad swath of arms control treaties negotiated outside the UN framework has been allowed to expire in recent years. While leaders have recently

reaffirmed the 1985 declaration by President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, nuclear signalling by senior Russian officials has heightened threat perceptions in this regard, particularly in connection with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Plans to resume the Strategic Stability Dialogue between Russia and the United States aimed at laying the groundwork for arms control and risk reduction measures were suspended following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The DPRK’s recent rhetoric concerning the use of nuclear weapons¹ and Iran’s uranium enrichment activities have also elevated nuclear tensions globally.

Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: Historic Security Council Responsibilities

The new realities, the Secretary-General says, demand that disarmament and non-proliferation be put at the centre of the work of the United Nations.² But what are the prospects for constructive Security Council attention to disarmament at a time when relations among nuclear powers have continued to deteriorate?

The Council has a historic responsibility under the UN Charter in this regard. According to Article 26 of the Charter, the Council is to formulate, with the Military Staff Committee, plans “for the establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments,” with the overall aim being “the least diversion for armaments” of the world’s human and economic resources.³ In January 1947⁴, the Council accepted as one of its most urgent tasks the global elimination of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, in line with General Assembly Resolution 41(1), underlining that the general reduction of armaments and armed forces was an important measure for strengthening international peace and security.⁵

Early Security Council WMD initiatives were soon overtaken by the Cold War, however, and the dissolutions of the Commission on Conventional Armaments and the Atomic Energy Committee in 1952 arguably marked the end of the Council’s substantive work on the regulation of armaments based on Article 26.⁶ The General Assembly stepped up, and has been instrumental in the adoption of treaties regulating WMD, including the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (1968), the Convention on the Prohibition of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons (1972), the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (1992), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1996), and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (2017).

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the Security Council undertook several non-proliferation initiatives. Resolution 1540, adopted in 2004 under Chapter VII of the Charter, requires all states to establish controls over WMD and the means to deliver them, and to enact and enforce the necessary national implementing legislation with the objective of prohibiting terrorists and other non-state actors from developing, acquiring and using WMD. (While the aim is often

1. On 26 April, Kim Jong-un said that the DPRK’s nuclear weapons “can never be confined to the single mission of war deterrent,” leading some analysts to speculate that the DPRK may be willing to use nuclear force preemptively.

2. The terms “disarmament” and “non-proliferation” are at times used interchangeably, although their meanings are different; increasingly, “disarmament” appears as the catch-all term for the regulation of armaments.

3. Arts 11(1) and 47(1) of the Charter also pertain to the limitation of armaments.

4. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/042/14/PDF/NR004214.pdf?OpenElement>

5. Simma, Bruno (ed), *Commentary on the Charter of the United Nations*, OUP 1995, p. 419. Simma observes, however, that “[t]aken as a whole, the UN Charter gives little priority to the limitation of armaments,” especially when compared to the League of Nations Covenant, in which this had been enshrined “as a principle of international law,” and points out that “the concept of securing the peace, by military means, within the framework of a concept of collective security has always had priority over the concept of the limitation of armaments” (p. 420).

6. *Id.*

In Hindsight: The Security Council and Weapons of Mass Destruction

described as keeping WMD out of the wrong hands, former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said—and many activists believe—that there are no “right hands” for handling “these wrong weapons.” Following a spate of Council meetings in 2004-5, on 19 November 2008, Council member Costa Rica convened a thematic debate to consider Article 26 and the Council’s duty to promote peace with the least diversion of resources for armaments. And in September 2009, the Security Council held a summit-level meeting on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, adopting Resolution 1887 which, the UN noted, “affirmed its commitment to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and established a broad framework for reducing global nuclear dangers.”

Security Council Engagement Today – and Prospects for Tomorrow

Since 2010, the level of Council engagement has fallen. Debates on general disarmament and its role in the maintenance of international peace and security are rare. In January 2018, Kazakhstan held a debate on WMD and confidence-building, and in February 2020, the Council held a briefing on non-proliferation with a specific focus on supporting the NPT ahead of the 2020 RevCon. Last September, Ireland convened a briefing on the 25th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In the main, the Council addresses sanctions pertaining to WMD (as, currently, in the DPRK and Iran, in the latter case with six resolutions imposing sanctions between 2010 and 2015), and monitoring, verification or fact-finding (as in Iraq in the early-mid 2000s and, in Syria, through the Joint Investigative Mechanism with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) without necessarily overseeing the political processes seeking non-proliferation in these settings. It criticises nuclear tests, such as those by India and Pakistan in 1998 and the DPRK’s six tests between 2006 and 2017, and at times imposes sanctions as a result.

Currently, the three principal institutions of the UN disarmament machinery are the main negotiating body, the Geneva-based

Conference on Disarmament, and two General Assembly subsidiary bodies, the UN Disarmament Commission, which deliberates disarmament issues, both nuclear and conventional, and the First Committee, on Disarmament and International Security, which adopts resolutions. The UN Secretariat includes the Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA) and the Secretary-General’s Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters and, independently of the Secretariat, the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR).

Under present circumstances, is there merit in looking to Article 26 for a revival of Council engagement on WMD, or to the General Assembly to exercise its role? Reform advocates are scrutinising underutilised provisions of the UN Charter as holding out possible prospects for re-energising multilateralism. One initiative member states might consider, at the very least, would be to quash the widespread public belief that possession of nuclear weapons is a qualification for permanent membership of the UN Security Council – an obvious misperception, as at the time of the UN’s founding, only the United States possessed nuclear weapons.

With the nuclear weapons states tending to argue that the security environment is not conducive to disarmament, prospects today appear limited for the Security Council to advance the global regulation of nuclear weapons and the general reduction of armaments. Still, global security tensions are the very reason some Council members might search for innovative ways of pursuing this agenda. The issue of WMD has multiple potential entry points to the Council: experts have noted the impact of reframing the disarmament debate from a security issue into a pressing humanitarian concern, with an important precedent in the Ottawa Treaty banning anti-personnel landmines. The women, peace and security agenda is another option, with women having played significant roles in campaigning for disarmament. Youth engagement is another avenue. The Council’s referral to the General Assembly, earlier this year, of a matter on which they were deadlocked might appear to open up similar prospects for greater Assembly action on WMD.

Status Update since our August Forecast

Peace and Security in Africa: Capacity-building for sustaining peace

On 8 August, the Security Council convened an open debate on “Peace and security in Africa: Capacity-building for sustaining peace”. The briefers were Bankole Adeoye, the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the AU Commission; Ambassador Muhammad Abdul Muhith of Bangladesh, the chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC); and Under-Secretary-General Cristina Duarte, the Special Advisor on Africa to the UN Secretary-General (S/PV.9106, S/PV.9106 [Resumption 1]). A presidential statement was adopted on 31 August (S/PRST/2022/6) focusing on themes raised in the debate.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 8 August, the Security Council convened for an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9107). The United Arab Emirates (UAE), together with China, France, Ireland, and Norway, requested the emergency meeting to discuss the 5-7 August hostilities in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed. Representatives of Israel and the Observer State of Palestine participated in the open briefing.

On 25 August, the Council held a briefing and consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9116). Wennesland, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

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(UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini and President of the US/Middle East Project Daniel Levy briefed the Council.

Counter-Terrorism

On 9 August, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.9108) on the Secretary-General's 15th biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism and head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov, Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) Weixiong Chen, and Martin Ewi, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Security Studies.

On 31 August, Council members convened for an Arria-formula meeting titled "Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Transnational Activities of Terrorist Groups". The meeting was initiated by Kenya and the UAE. The briefers at the meeting were Christian Emmanuel Mouaya Pouyi, Acting Head of the Training and Equipment Unit at the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism; James Rogers, Associate Professor in War Studies at the Danish Institute for Advanced Study; and Rose Gichure, a survivor of a terrorist attack.

Arria-formula Meeting on Penholdership

On 11 August, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting on penholdership. Aside from Council members, there was also participation from the wider UN membership. The Permanent Representative of Russia to the UN, Vassily Nebenzia, delivered opening remarks. During the meeting, Council members referred to the relevant provision of Note S/2017/507, which stipulates that any Council member may be a penholder, and highlighted recent co-penholdership arrangements as good practices. Several Council members supported a discussion on this issue within the framework of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

Lebanon

On 17 August, Council members held closed consultations on the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari briefed.

On 31 August, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2650, which extended the mandate of UNIFIL for another year

until 31 August 2023.

Georgia

On 15 August, Security Council members discussed the situation in Georgia under "any other business". The meeting, which marked the 14th anniversary of the 2008 conflict between Russia and Georgia, was requested by Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. Following the meeting, the members that had requested it, and incoming Council members Japan and Malta, delivered a joint statement at the press stakeout reaffirming their support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and condemning Russia's military presence in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia.

Maintenance of International Peace and Security: Promote Common Security through Dialogue and Cooperation

On 22 August, the Security Council convened for a briefing on "Maintenance of international peace and security: Promote common security through dialogue and cooperation" (S/PV.9112). The briefers were UN Secretary-General António Guterres and President of the Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Gustavo Zlauvinen. At the meeting, Council members discussed the importance of nuclear disarmament to reduce strategic risks, particularly in light of the escalating tensions among major nuclear powers. Several members also highlighted the need for Security Council reform.

Mali

On 30 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2649 renewing the Mali asset freeze and travel ban sanctions until 31 August 2023 and extending the mandate of the Mali Panel of Experts until 30 September 2023.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 30 August, the Council held closed consultations to discuss the 90-day report regarding the work of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. Deputy Permanent Representative Trine Heimerback of Norway, which chairs the committee, briefed.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council is expected to hold a high-level briefing on the situation in Ukraine. Additional meetings on Ukraine are possible, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

As fighting enters its seventh month, hostilities remain concentrated in Ukraine's eastern and southern regions. On 24 August, the Council held a briefing to mark six months since Russia's invasion of

Ukraine on 24 February, at the request of Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US. At the meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo described the ongoing adverse effects on the civilian population, including reported cases of forced disappearances and conflict-related sexual violence. As at 29 August, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had documented 13,718 civilian casualties, including 5,663 deaths.

In August, the Joint Coordination Centre (JCC) of the Black

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9115 (24 August 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US, marking six months since the outbreak of hostilities on 24 February. S/PV.9114 (23 August 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia, that focused on the situation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. S/PV.9109 (11 August 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia, that focused on the situation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

Ukraine

Sea Grain Initiative—a UN-brokered agreement signed by Russia, Ukraine and Türkiye on 22 July to facilitate the export of grain and related foodstuffs and fertilisers from Ukrainian ports—became fully operational. By 28 August, over 1.2 million metric tons of grain and foodstuffs had been exported from Ukrainian ports as part of the Black Sea Grain Initiative. This includes a vessel transporting Ukrainian wheat to support humanitarian operations in Ethiopia overseen by the World Food Programme, which departed from the port of Yuzhny on 16 August.

In addition to the Black Sea Grain Initiative, Russia and the UN signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on 22 July on the UN's scope of engagement to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food products and fertilisers to global markets. In this regard, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Rebeca Grynspan, in coordination with the Permanent Mission of Russia to the UN, is to engage with relevant authorities and the private sector to remove impediments that may arise in the sectors of finance, insurance and logistics. At a 24 August press stakeout, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) said that the MoU had not yet been implemented and cautioned that the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is set to expire on 19 November, will depend to a large extent on whether the MoU is also implemented.

From 17 to 20 August, Secretary-General António Guterres travelled to Ukraine (where he visited Lviv and Odesa), Moldova (Chisinau), and Türkiye (Istanbul). This was Guterres' second visit to Ukraine since the start of the war, as he had previously visited Kyiv on 28 April. At a press briefing following his trilateral meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on 18 August, the Secretary-General described the Black Sea Grain Initiative as “a victory for diplomacy [and] for multilateralism”.

Security incidents in early August at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in the city of Enerhodar have prompted concerns about the safety of nuclear sites in Ukraine. Russia requested two briefings on 11 and 23 August, which focused on the situation at the ZNPP. (For more information, see our 11 August and 23 August *What's in Blue* stories.) The precarious security situation around the plant had complicated a proposed visit to the ZNPP by a team of experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), as had the lack of agreement between Russia and Ukraine on the modalities for such a visit. However, in a 28 August tweet, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi announced that the IAEA mission was on its way to Zaporizhzhia and is expected to arrive “later this week”.

At the 18 August press briefing, Guterres also discussed the investigation of the 29 July incident at a detention facility near Olenivka—an urban-type settlement in the eastern Donetsk region, which is controlled by Russian-backed separatists—in which over 50 Ukrainian prisoners of war were reportedly killed. Russia and Ukraine have traded accusations regarding the incident; Russia has alleged that Ukraine launched a missile attack at the facility, while Ukraine has claimed that the soldiers were killed by a blast instigated by Russia. Many of the prisoners in the detention centre had fought in the city of Mariupol and were besieged in the Azovstal steel plant until their

surrender in May. Guterres said that the terms of reference of the fact-finding mission that he established on 3 August, including the team's make-up and leadership appointment, had been shared with Russia and Ukraine and that efforts were being made to secure the necessary assurances to guarantee the team's safe access to Olenivka.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 August, a group of UN human rights experts issued a joint statement that expressed concern about the situation of children with disabilities in Ukraine, including their displacement to other institutional settings either within Ukraine or in third countries and the lack of information regarding their whereabouts for their families.

On 23 August, OHCHR expressed concern over reports that Russia and affiliated armed groups in the Donetsk region were planning to put Ukrainian prisoners of war on trial in Mariupol. At the 24 August Security Council briefing on Ukraine, DiCarlo said that “any tribunal must respect the protections afforded to all prisoners of war by international law, including fair trial guarantees”, stressing that “the failure to uphold these standards could amount to a war crime”.

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) will receive an oral update on 23 September from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, followed by an interactive dialogue. On 4 October, the HRC will hold an interactive dialogue at which the High Commissioner for Human Rights is expected to make an oral presentation of the findings of OHCHR's periodic report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to facilitate an end to the conflict. Agreement on Council products on Ukraine is difficult because of the direct involvement of a permanent member in the conflict and members' sharply diverging positions on the issue. Members can continue to hold regular open briefings on the situation in Ukraine with the aim of keeping the international community abreast of developments on the ground. Members may also wish to consider formats with restrictive attendance and no meeting record, such as private or closed Arria-formula meetings, to allow for a frank exchange of ideas between Council members and key actors on the situation on the ground.

Another key issue for the Council is determining how it can help promote the safety of the ZNPP and reduce the risk of a nuclear incident in Ukraine. While the Council has held several open briefings focused on the situation at the ZNPP, members may wish to convene an informal interactive dialogue (IID) or a private meeting with Grossi to convey their support for the IAEA's work on the matter and discuss proposals for a permanent IAEA mission to oversee the safety of the ZNPP.

Council Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the situation in Ukraine, with Russia justifying its invasion, which it refers to as a “special military operation”, while several Council members—including Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US—are firmly intent on condemning Russia for what they consider an unprovoked war. Members of the latter group have consistently called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

While apparently united in condemning Russia in the days following its intervention in Ukraine, divisions between the US and the

Ukraine

European members, on the one hand, and other members, on the other hand, have become more pronounced in recent months. That has been the case particularly on matters related to the use of sanctions, perceptions of neutrality in addressing the humanitarian situation, and the approach to the pursuit of accountability for alleged atrocities committed in Ukraine. Nonetheless, Council members are united on some aspects of the war, including on the urgency of an IAEA visit to the ZNPP.

While nearly all members expressed support for a prompt IAEA visit to the ZNPP, only the European members and the US called on Russia to return full control of the ZNPP to Ukraine. These members argue that Russia bears full responsibility for the critical situation surrounding the ZNPP. They also contend that Russia aims to disconnect the ZNPP from Ukraine's energy grid, cut off electricity

to Ukrainian government-controlled areas in the south of the country and redirect power to Crimea.

Some Council members have expressed concern that Russia may stage fraudulent referendums, possibly coinciding with regional elections on 11 September, to annex the territories it has occupied in Ukraine. At the 24 August Council briefing on Ukraine, the UK referred to such reports, stressing that "any such attempt would fool no one". (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.)

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold a briefing on peacekeeping reform pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is the anticipated briefer.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2378 requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on reform of UN peacekeeping every 12 months, to be followed by a debate. In September 2021, Ireland convened the annual debate at the ministerial level, focusing on peacekeeping transitions. The outcome was resolution 2594 of 9 September 2021, which requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on the status of transitions across relevant UN peace operations before 30 June. This report was submitted to the Council on 29 June and provides, along with the status update, an analysis of trends that have emerged in transition processes. The report underscored "the need for improved planning for and adequate resourcing of transitions, as well as the need to consider implications for the post-mandate period, to ensure that the hard-won gains of peace operations mandates are safeguarded and that the countries hosting peace operations are placed on a sustainable footing towards durable peace and prosperity".

This year, France appears to have chosen to convene the annual meeting in a briefing format but, at the time of writing, the focus of the meeting was not clear. Lacroix is expected to brief on the implementation of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative and the follow-up of other peacekeeping issues as mandated by several Security Council resolutions. There is also some expectation that the meeting may provide an opportunity for Council members to reflect on the challenges that some of the bigger UN peacekeeping operations in Africa are facing in their relations with host governments and communities. For instance, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has faced difficulties in

carrying out troop rotations. On 14 July, Mali announced that it was suspending all MINUSMA troop rotations for "national security" reasons. A few days earlier, Malian authorities arrested MINUSMA soldiers from Côte d'Ivoire upon their arrival at the airport, allegedly for not having the necessary permission. The mission's spokesperson was expelled from the country for having posted about the incident on Twitter. These developments followed a ban on troop rotations of West African countries' contingents to MINUSMA since February in retaliation by Malian authorities over ECOWAS sanctions. (Rotations were allowed to resume on 14 August after an agreement between MINUSMA and Mali on new procedures for informing authorities).

Another larger UN mission, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), has been criticised by communities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for failing to stabilise the situation in that region. In July, violent anti-MONUSCO protests led to the deaths of three peacekeepers and several demonstrators. These protests took place against the backdrop of ongoing fighting between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), a rebel group formerly active in the North Kivu province that has resumed its military activities in recent months. Following these protests, the Congolese government announced its intention to reassess MONUSCO's transition plan and request an early exit of the mission. (The transition plan, developed in close consultation with the government and other relevant stakeholders, was endorsed by the Security Council through resolution 2612 of 20 December 2021). The Congolese government also expelled the MONUSCO spokesperson, allegedly for inappropriate statements that contributed to tensions between local communities and the mission.

Disinformation campaigns against UN peace operations have drawn increasing attention in the Council. The issue was discussed at a high-level debate on strategic communications in peacekeeping convened by Brazil on 12 July. The outcome of the meeting

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2378 (20 September 2017) requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on reform of UN peacekeeping every 12 months, to be followed by a debate. S/RES/2594 (9 September 2021) was on peace operations transitions. Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2022/5 (12 July 2022) was on strategic communications in peacekeeping. S/PRST/2022/6 (31 August 2022) was on peace and security in Africa.

UN Peacekeeping

was a presidential statement that underscored the significance of strategic communications for UN peacekeeping operations to build trust and support with host governments and local communities, counter disinformation and misinformation, enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers, and strengthen their ability to implement their mandate.

The discussion on the financing of AU-led peace support operations from UN assessed contributions has also been revived recently. On 27 July, Ghana convened an Arria-formula meeting on “Collective security through equitable burden sharing: strengthening regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security”. One of the briefers was the AU High Representative for the AU Peace Fund, who provided an update on the steps being taken to make the fund fully operational.

On 8 August, China convened a Security Council open debate on capacity-building for sustaining peace, during which the financing issue was again raised. Following the meeting, China proposed a draft presidential statement, which was adopted on 31 August. Among other things, it requests the Secretary-General to provide the Security Council, by 30 April 2023, a report on progress made by the UN and the AU to fulfil the commitments set out in resolution 2320 of 8 November 2016 on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations and resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017 on peacekeeping reform. The report is also expected to include “recommendations...that reflect good practices and lessons-learned with the view to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible resources”.

Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for Council members to consider is how UN peace operations can foster trust with host governments and communities. Some Council members may continue to stress the importance of listening to the views and concerns of host governments and communities in the design and implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

A related issue is how UN peace operations can enhance their efforts in responding to disinformation directed against them propagated through social media and other digital platforms. Council members may look forward to the outcome of the strategic review requested by the presidential statement of 12 July, which is expected to identify gaps and challenges in UN peacekeeping operations’ strategic communications and propose the way forward.

Another important issue is how to advance the discussion on the longstanding request for UN support to AU-led peace support operations through the use of assessed contributions. A likely option for Council members is to hold a discussion at the level of

the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations to take stock of the progress on addressing outstanding issues based on resolutions 2320 of 18 November 2016 and 2378 of 20 September 2017 and on the 6 December 2018 joint declaration by the UN Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission. They may also want to discuss it during the annual consultation between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), which is expected to take place in October.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Negotiations on the mandate renewals of UN peace operations have become increasingly divisive, with some members abstaining on the votes because they insist on the need to consider the views and concerns of host countries. While this may be agreeable in principle to all Council members, the extent to which host countries should be accommodated in mandate renewal processes remains an issue. For instance, MINUSMA has a mandate for the protection and promotion of human rights, but when the Council renewed MINUSMA’s mandate in June, the Malian Permanent Representative stated that “Mali is not in a position to guarantee the freedom of movement for MINUSMA investigations [on allegations concerning human rights violations] without the prior agreement of the Government”.

Regarding the financing of AU-led peace support operations, some momentum seems to be building to advance the issue in the Security Council. The majority of Council members and the wider UN membership have been supportive of this issue. However, the US, during the Trump administration, opposed the draft resolution on the financing issue proposed by African members in December 2018 and threatened to use its veto to block it. South Africa tried to facilitate progress on this issue in 2019, but the AUPSC called on the African members to suspend their efforts until the AU had a common position on outstanding issues. Accordingly, a draft common position paper has been discussed by the AUPSC committee of experts and was expected to be endorsed by the AU policy organs. At the time of writing, the status of the draft document was unclear.

It seems the Biden administration, which announced its Africa strategy recently, is now keen to strengthen US relations with Africa. It has also announced its plans to host the US-Africa Summit in December. In this context, there seems to be a window of opportunity to make progress on the financing issue. Two African members, namely Gabon and Ghana, will take over the Council presidency in October and November, respectively and may highlight the UN-AU partnership, in general, and the issue of financing of AU-led peace support operations, in particular, as part of their consecutive presidencies.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia. Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) James Swan and an AU representative are the anticipated briefers.

Key Recent Developments

On 23 May, the Council received a briefing from Swan and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, on the latest situation in Somalia. The meeting took place after Somalia's electoral process had concluded with the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as the tenth president of Somalia. He previously served in the same position from 2012 to 2017. Council members welcomed this development and congratulated the newly elected president.

On 26 May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2632, which extended the mandate of UNSOM until 31 October. It also requested the Secretary-General to undertake a strategic review of the mission in consultation with the Somali government and submit a report by 30 September with recommendations for clearly defined, measurable and realistic benchmarks to track the implementation of the mission's mandate. Addressing the Security Council after the adoption of the resolution, Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman, the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the UN, set out his country's position on the strategic review, underscoring the need to align UN support with national priorities. He also stressed that "the end state must be clear, encompassing a common understanding and a shared vision of the road map for the transition from special political mission to United Nations country team".

Mohamud, who was inaugurated on 9 June, has identified the following priorities: promoting national reconciliation, strengthening federalism and improving relations between Mogadishu and the regional states, intensifying the fight against Al-Shabaab, finalising the constitutional review process and judicial reform, and addressing the humanitarian situation. Accordingly, he has met twice with regional state leaders since his inauguration and visited Baidoa and Dismareb, the capitals of South West and Galmudug states, respectively.

On 15 June, Mohamud appointed Hamza Abdi Barre, a Somali politician from the Ogaden branch of the Darod clan, as the prime minister. On 2 August, Barre announced a new cabinet composed of 75 members, including 26 ministers.

Mohamud has vowed to defeat Al-Shabaab, which continues to pose serious security threats. In a defiant move aimed at the new Somali government, Al-Shabaab militants stormed a hotel in Mogadishu on 19 August. The siege, which reportedly lasted more than 30 hours, left 21 people dead and 110 wounded. In July, the group also launched a cross-border attack in the Somali region of Ethiopia in which 17 people, including Ethiopian police officers and civilians, were killed, according to media reports. This attack came at a time when Ethiopia is facing domestic challenges, which seem to have encouraged Al-Shabaab's regional ambitions.

Somalia is facing its worst drought in four decades, and Mohamud

has appointed Abdirahman Abdishakur Warsame, a Somali politician and leader of the Wadajir Party, as his Special Envoy to mobilise international support for drought response. According to the UN, a failed rainy season, rising food prices and inadequate international assistance have contributed to the severe humanitarian situation, displacing more than a million people and leaving 7.8 million people acutely food insecure.

Since his inauguration, President Mohamud has visited several countries. His first foreign trip took him to Abu Dhabi, a sign of improved relations between Somalia and the United Arab Emirates. He also visited Ankara in a demonstration of his desire to maintain strong relations with Turkey, which has significantly enhanced its diplomatic presence and development support in Somalia over the past decade. Mohamud also visited Somali soldiers undergoing military training in Asmara, Eritrea. These soldiers allegedly participated in the war in Ethiopia, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. As part of his election campaign, Mohamud promised the families of the soldiers that he would bring them back home. He also visited Cairo, Djibouti, Nairobi, and Kampala to cement regional ties, as well as Arusha, to advance Somalia's bid to join the East African Community.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 3 June, the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to receive a briefing from the Panel of Experts on Somalia on its midterm update, covering the period from 16 December 2021 to 27 April. On 21 June, committee Chair Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) briefed the Security Council on the activities of the committee for the period from 25 February to 21 June.

Pursuant to resolution 2607 of 15 November 2021, the Secretary-General is expected to present a technical assessment of Somalia's weapons and ammunition management capability no later than 15 September.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 5 October with the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan, and consider her most recent report (A/HRC/51/65).

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members is the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia and how international support can be mobilised to avert a looming famine. On 19 August, UN Emergency Humanitarian Coordinator Martin Griffith announced his decision to release \$10 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to support emergency assistance to Somalia. One possible option is to invite him to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the country.

The other major issue is how to support the newly elected government of Somalia in implementing its national priorities. In this regard, Council members may draw on the outcome of the UNSOM strategic review due to be submitted by the end of September.

Furthermore, the benchmarks and indicators requested by the Security Council pursuant to resolution 2628 of 31 March, which reconfigured the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) into the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), is an important issue. In

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2632 (26 May 2022) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) until 31 October 2022. **S/RES/2628** (31 March 2022) reconfigured the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) into the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). **S/RES/2607** (15 November 2021) renewed the 751 Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2022 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 15 December 2022. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/392** (13 May 2022) was on the situation in Somalia, covering developments from 1 February to 6 May 2022.

Somalia

consultation with the Somali government, the AU, EU and other donors, the UN is expected to submit by the end of September a proposal for benchmarks and indicators for the effectiveness of ATMIS and the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan and National Security Architecture.

The technical assessment of Somalia's weapons and ammunition management capability is also a key issue in light of the upcoming negotiations in November to renew the measures imposed under the 751 Somalia sanctions regime.

Council Dynamics

Council members welcome the progress in Somalia and expect the

new government to build on the momentum to promote political stability and accelerate reform. But they also recognise the many challenges facing the country, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. Council members may emphasise the need for progress in implementing the Somali Transition Plan and look forward to the benchmarks and indicators requested by resolution 2628. African members may continue to raise the funding challenge facing ATMIS and appeal for adequate, sustainable and predictable financing in line with the communiqué adopted by the AU Peace and Security Council on 27 July 2022.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In September, Council members are expected to hold the monthly briefing on Yemen in closed consultations. Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, an OCHA official, and Major General Michael Beary, the head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), are the expected briefers.

Key Recent Developments

On 2 August, the parties to the conflict agreed to extend the truce in Yemen until 2 October. In announcing the renewal, Grundberg said that the parties had committed to intensifying negotiations to reach an expanded truce as soon as possible. According to Grundberg, his proposed expanded truce agreement includes creating a mechanism to pay civil servants' salaries and pensions, opening roads in Taiz and other governorates, establishing additional international destinations from Sana'a airport, and providing for the regular flow of fuel into Hodeidah port. It would also extend the duration of the truce beyond its customary two-month time span since the start of the armistice on 2 April to give more space to negotiate a formal ceasefire, conduct talks on economic and security issues, and prepare to resume a political process for a negotiated settlement to the war.

Council members welcomed the renewal of the truce in a 4 August press statement and called on the parties urgently to intensify negotiations on the expanded truce proposal. They expressed concerns over the lack of progress on opening roads around Taiz city—which is under Houthi siege and is a key element in the original truce agreement that has not been implemented—and called on the Houthi rebel group to act with flexibility in the negotiations to open roads. While welcoming the continued reduction in violence brought on by the truce, members condemned all attacks that threaten the truce, including the 23 July attack in Taiz in which a child was killed and ten people were injured.

At the Council's 15 August monthly briefing on Yemen, Grundberg highlighted his intention to reach an expanded truce agreement by 2 October. Despite the reduction in violence since the truce, OCHA Acting Director of Operations and Advocacy Ghada Eltahir

Mudawi warned that some areas of the country continued to face the threat of famine. She also highlighted that the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM) would be forced to shut down in September if it does not receive the \$3.5 million it needs to operate for the rest of the year. The UNVIM has facilitated commercial shipping into Hodeidah ports since 2016. The UNVIM has been critical during the truce in supporting the increase in fuel shipments to Yemen, Mudawi said.

While the truce held, tensions heightened during August among the coalition of anti-Houthi forces, demonstrating the fragility of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), which replaced President Abdo Raboo Mansour Hadi in April. On 6 August, the governor of Shabwa governorate dismissed a local military commander, Brigadier General Abd Rabbo Laakab, which angered the Islah Party, Yemen's main Islamist party. After Yemen's interior minister reinstated Laakab, fighting erupted on 8 August in the provincial capital of Ataq between Islah-affiliated security forces on one side and, on the other, the Shabwani Defence Forces and the Giants Brigade, reportedly supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) drone strikes. After four days of fighting, the Shabwani Defence Forces and the Giants Brigade took control of Ataq. Islah's representative on the PLC, Abdullah al-Alimi, resigned but was persuaded to rescind his decision.

On 22 August, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, who is a PLC member and leads the UAE-backed separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), announced a military operation in Abyan governorate to "cleanse [Abyan] of terrorist organisations", including al-Qaeda, while also securing Yemen's temporary capital of Aden against terrorist groups. PLC chairman Rashad al-Alimi issued a notice to al-Zubaidi ordering the halt of all military operations in Yemen's south until the implementation of a troop redeployment as stipulated in the 2019 Riyadh Agreement between the Yemeni government and the STC.

Key Issues and Options

Maintaining the truce and expanding it, as the Special Envoy has

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2643 (13 July 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 14 July 2023. S/RES/2624 (28 February 2022) extended the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9110 (15 August 2022) was a briefing on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/14992 (4 August 2022) welcomed the renewal of the truce in Yemen.

Yemen

proposed, is a key issue. The Houthis' continued refusal to re-open roads in Taiz is a cause for concern, undermining confidence between the parties and the prospects for agreement on an expanded armistice framework. A further key issue is restarting a political process based on Grundberg's multitrack framework dealing with political, security and economic issues for a negotiated settlement to the conflict. Emerging issues are the fighting and divisions among different groups that make up the PLC. Closed consultations in September could be an opportunity for Council members to have a frank discussion about Grundberg's efforts to secure an expanded truce agreement and discuss challenges such as infighting within the anti-Houthi coalition.

The rise in global food and energy prices this year has presented a significant obstacle to efforts to ease the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, which depends on commercial imports. Key challenges to relief efforts also include funding gaps and threats against and intimidation of humanitarian workers. Members could encourage donors that have pledged humanitarian and economic financing—including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which announced a \$2 billion aid package in April—to disburse these funds. Council members could further encourage donors to fund UNVIM and fill the remaining funding requirements (approximately \$16 billion) to begin implementing the UN-facilitated plan to remove oil from the moored FSO Safer oil tanker off the Ras Issa port in Hodeidah. The vessel remains at imminent risk of an oil leak or explosion that would have devastating environmental, economic and humanitarian consequences.

During September, the Yemen 2140 Sanctions Committee will meet with the Yemen Panel of Experts to consider the panel's mid-term update, which was submitted at the end of July and is not a

public document. The panel still has not been fully constituted since its mandate was extended at the end of February in resolution 2624, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime. Of its five members, the Secretary-General had not appointed, at the time of writing, the panel's regional expert and armed groups expert, following objections by Russia and the UAE to the proposed candidates.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members have encouraged the parties to uphold the truce and want to see it translated into a durable ceasefire, which could facilitate progress on a political process for a comprehensive settlement to end the war. The UAE—an elected Council member that has been closely involved in the conflict as a member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition battling the Houthis—has a strong interest in the situation and actively pushes for its views, particularly regarding the Houthis, to be reflected in Council products. Russia traditionally resists language in Council products that it perceives as too critical of the Houthis or not balanced. This year, however, Russia has been more flexible in Council negotiations on Yemen, which appears to reflect the importance of its bilateral relations with the UAE. The US Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, has coordinated closely with the UN in support of Grundberg's efforts to advance a political process. While Saudi Arabia exercises leverage on the Yemeni government, Oman often plays an important role as an interlocutor with the Houthis. Ahead of the latest truce renewal, an Omani delegation visited Sana'a to help secure its extension.

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

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), which members expect to receive by 1 September. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing. 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.

The mandate of UNITAMS expires on 3 June 2023.

Key Recent Developments

It has been almost one year since the military coup d'état in October 2021. In a statement on 7 August, Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes said that "time is not on Sudan's side" and that "the continuation of the political impasse will lead to more losses of recent national gains". He noted that the UN's primary goal has been to help facilitate an agreement on a civilian-led transitional arrangement based on an agreed constitutional framework and reiterated the need for full Sudanese ownership of the political process.

The Trilateral Mechanism, founded to coordinate the efforts of UNITAMS, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in support of a Sudanese-led process to end the political crisis and restore a civilian-led transitional government, continues to hold meetings with stakeholders. On 8 June, the Mechanism held its first general session, which included representatives of the military and civilian groups. However, the Forces for Freedom and Change-Central Council (FFC-CC), the Communist Party and the Resistance Committees refused to participate. On 9 June, the FFC-CC and the military met publicly for the first time since the coup, hosted by the US and Saudi Arabia in Khartoum.

On 4 July, Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's military leader, announced that the military would withdraw from ongoing political talks in order to allow the formation of a civilian transitional government. He said that a new Supreme Council of the Armed Forces would be created after the formation of the government, which would be responsible for security and defence tasks and "related responsibilities". The announcement followed days of large-scale protests demanding an end to military rule. Since this

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2636 (3 June 2022) 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 Meeting Records S/PV.9113** (23 August 2022) was the semi-annual ICC briefing. **S/PV.9041** (24 May 2022) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS.

Sudan

announcement, the Trilateral Mechanism has continued to facilitate meetings with non-military stakeholders, noting in a 6 July statement that the “format of military-civilian dialogue no longer exists for the time being”. Recent engagement by the Mechanism to establish common ground on the way forward included a meeting with the FFC-CC on 21 August.

Insecurity, including intercommunal clashes, armed conflict and criminality, persists across several areas. At the end of July, over 31,000 people were displaced following intercommunal violence in Ganis town, Blue Nile State, according to the local authorities. The current rainy season has significantly worsened the humanitarian situation. As at 22 August, over 146,200 people were affected by flooding, according to the government’s Humanitarian Aid Commission, with Central and South Darfur the hardest-hit states. More than 460,000 people could be affected by the floods this year, according to the 2022 Sudan Emergency Response Plan.

On 3 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2636, renewing UNITAMS for one year, with no change to its core mandate. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Security Council every 90 days. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 2 June.)

The Council was last briefed on UNITAMS on 24 May by 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”. He warned that “the risk of a new outbreak of violence remains high” in Darfur.

On 23 August, the Council received the semi-annual briefing of ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, via videoconference from Khartoum. He noted that Sudan’s cooperation with the court has “taken a step backwards” in recent months.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 19 August, the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee met to discuss the interim report of its Panel of Experts. (The interim report is not made public.) On 15 February, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2620, extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts for one year. The resolution expressed the Council’s intention to consider establishing clear, well-identified and realistic key benchmarks by 31 August, by which to consider adjusting the sanctions measures. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 14 February.) At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a draft resolution on benchmarks.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is monitoring changes in the political situation in Sudan. In this regard, Council members will closely follow mediation efforts, including the role played by UNITAMS and the Trilateral Mechanism. A related issue is what role the Council can play to help resolve

the political impasse.

The Council could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with key stakeholders, including representatives of the Tripartite Mechanism. The IID is a closed format that, unlike consultations, allows for the participation of non-UN officials and briefers. Another option is to consider a Council visiting mission to Sudan to assess the situation and engage further with the various parties. (The last Council visiting mission to Sudan was in 2011.)

A further issue is the situation in Darfur and the levels of intercommunal violence and insecurity across the country. The humanitarian and economic situations also remain key issues. Some Council members may seek to emphasise the need to conduct timely investigations into casualties among protesters during the demonstrations and the importance of accountability for this violence.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns over the political, security, human rights, and humanitarian situations in Sudan and are supportive of the Trilateral Mechanism. However, dynamics on the issue remain challenging, with members continuing to differ in their positions as to how to characterise the situation in Sudan, as evidenced in negotiations ahead of the adoption of resolution 2636 in June renewing the mandate of UNITAMS. The UK, as penholder, initially proposed a one-year mandate renewal that included new language, including preambular language reflecting the situation on the ground since the military coup. Among other things, the draft text apparently sought to condemn the violence by security forces against protesters.

The UK apparently consulted extensively with Sudan ahead of the mandate renewal. It seems, however, that Sudan conveyed its displeasure at the initial draft to other Council members, seeking a “technical rollover” of the mandate. (The relationship between UNITAMS and Sudan has been strained since the October 2021 coup.)

During the negotiations, China and Russia apparently did not seek to engage on the substance of the initial draft and insisted on the need for a “technical rollover”, as requested by Sudan. The penholder then decided to pursue this course, in part because of the strong position expressed by Sudan and because of the difficult dynamics during the negotiations on the initial draft text. In its explanation of vote, the UK said that it would have preferred a substantive resolution that would have allowed for the updating of UNITAMS’ priorities.

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.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In September, there will be the monthly meetings on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks in Syria. Council members will also hold an informal interactive dialogue (IID) in accordance with resolution 2642 of 12 July, which reauthorised the Syrian cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism and encouraged an IID every two months to regularly review and follow up on the implementation of the resolution, including progress in early-recovery projects.

Key Recent Developments

According to the Secretary-General's 60-day report on the humanitarian situation in Syria, released on 22 August, violence has increased significantly in northern Syria. On 22 July, a Russian airstrike on al-Jadidah, a village in Syria's northwestern Iblid province, killed seven civilians and wounded 12 others, according to the Syrian Civil Defence (also known as the White Helmets). At least three Syrian troops died in Turkish airstrikes on 16 August near the border town of Kobani, in northern Aleppo province. On 19 August, missile attacks on al-Bab town in Aleppo province resulted in 15 civilian deaths. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based human rights monitoring organisation, has accused the Syrian government of the attack.

Conflict has also been reported in other parts of the country. On 14 August, Syrian state media reported that Israeli air strikes targeting Iranian assets outside Damascus and in western Tartous province resulted in the deaths of three Syrian soldiers. On 19 August, clashes between pro-government gangs and local residents in southern Sweida province left 17 people dead.

Abolfazl Alijani, a general in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, was reportedly killed in Syria on 21 August. The details of his death remained unclear at the time of writing.

On 25 August, US forces carried out two airstrikes against militants reportedly linked to Iran in Deir al-Zour province in eastern Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights claims that six or more Syrian and foreign fighters lost their lives in the airstrikes. In a 26 August letter to the Council, the US stated that its strikes were directed "against a facility in eastern Syria used by militia groups affiliated with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps" and that they were carried out following attacks on US forces and facilities in Iraq and Syria by Iran-backed militia. The US added that its strikes were consistent with its "inherent right of self-defense, as reflected in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations".

Humanitarian aid continued to be delivered to Syrians in need both through the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Syrian-Turkish border and across domestic frontlines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control. Cross-border deliveries continue to be the dominant form of assistance. According to the Secretary-General's 22 August report, 1,232 trucks carrying humanitarian aid had passed through Bab al-Hawa into Syria during the previous 60 days. The sixth cross-line delivery over the past year, which consisted of 14 trucks, occurred on 4 August.

Türkiye, which severed diplomatic ties with the Assad government in March 2012, has signalled an apparent desire for a diplomatic

rapprochement with Syria. In comments to reporters on 19 August, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that "diplomacy cannot be cut off between states", when speaking of his country's relationship with Syria. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu also recently spoke of the need for reconciliation between the government and opposition in Syria to bring peace to the country.

In a 16 July statement, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen expressed regret that the ninth round of meetings of the Constitutional Committee, originally planned for 25 to 29 July in Geneva, was "no longer possible". In his statement, Pedersen emphasised "the importance of all the stakeholders in this conflict protecting and firewalling the Syrian political process from their differences elsewhere in the world", and encouraged them "to engage in constructive diplomacy on Syria". It appears that the government delegation was unwilling to participate because of Russia's concerns about the venue of the talks; in this regard, on 16 June, Alexander Lavrentyev, Russia's Presidential Representative for Syria, called for the Constitutional Committee to choose a new venue for the next round of talks because it does not view the Swiss government as an impartial actor. The previous eight rounds of talks of the Constitutional Committee, which was launched in 2019, have all been held on UN premises in Geneva.

On 28 July, Council members discussed the political and humanitarian situations in Syria in consultations. During the meeting, Special Envoy Pedersen told members that he was working with the parties to break the impasse over the next steps regarding the Constitutional Committee. He reportedly expressed concern about the government's lack of political will to engage in the Committee's work.

On 29 August, Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed the Council on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria, respectively. Pedersen noted that the political process in Syria remains stalled, while there are "troubling signs of military escalation" in the country. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya expressed alarm at the increased violence in northern Syria, described the negative humanitarian effects of the economic crisis in the country, and called for increased humanitarian funding from the international community.

Members met in consultations on 30 August to discuss the Syria chemical weapons file.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 22 September with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria to consider its most recent report (A/HRC/51/45), not yet available at the time of writing.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how it can support the Special Envoy's efforts to promote positive momentum on the political track in Syria, especially in light of the cancellation of the ninth round of talks of the Constitutional Committee.

The humanitarian crisis in the country also remains an ongoing issue of concern for Council members. The country continues to contend with a dire economic situation, rising food and fuel prices,

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2642](#) (12 July 2022) reauthorised the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism in Syria for six months until 10 January 2023 and required a separate resolution to extend the mandate for an additional six months until 10 July 2023. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/635](#) (22 August 2022) was a 60-day report on the humanitarian situation in Syria. [Security Council Meeting S/PV.9117](#) (29 August 2022) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. [Other S/2022/647](#) (26 August 2022) was a US letter to the Council stating that it had carried out airstrikes against Iran-backed militia in Syria and asserting its right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter.

Syria

food insecurity, and water shortages.

One option for the Council is to adopt a statement that supports the Special Envoy's efforts to reinvigorate the political track and calls for continued support for early recovery projects in Syria regarding water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and electricity.

During the IID in September, members could invite a UN and/or civil society representative to provide input on early recovery needs throughout Syria (that is, in government and opposition-held areas) and the types of projects that would be most beneficial to the welfare of Syrians in this regard.

Council Dynamics

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

Ireland and Norway are the penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria.

Iraq

In September, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). UNITAD's current mandate expires on 17 September.

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNITAD was established by resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 for an initial period of two years. Since September 2019, UNITAD's mandate has been renewed for one-year periods every September, most recently by resolution 2597 of 17 September 2021. According to resolution 2379, further extensions of UNITAD's mandate may be requested by Iraq "or any other government that has requested [UNITAD] to collect evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide, committed by [the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or ISIL] in its territory".

UNITAD's terms of reference were approved by the Council in February 2018, and it formally began its work on 20 August 2018. Pursuant to its terms of reference, UNITAD is responsible for supporting Iraq's domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable "by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide committed by [ISIL] in Iraq, to the highest possible standards, to ensure the broadest possible use before national courts, and complementing investigations being carried out by the Iraqi authorities or investigations carried out by authorities in third countries at their request".

UNITAD's Special Adviser, Christian Ritscher, who was appointed on 7 September 2021, is responsible for developing its investigative strategy and promoting accountability globally for atrocity crimes committed by ISIL.

Resolution 2379 emphasises that UNITAD should be "impartial, independent, and credible" and act consistently with its terms of reference, the UN Charter, UN best practice, and relevant international law, including international human rights law. UNITAD's investigative priorities include the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL; attacks committed by ISIL against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar district in August 2014; crimes

committed by ISIL in Mosul between 2014 and 2016; the mass killing of unarmed Iraqi air force cadets from Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014; and crimes committed against the Christian, Kaka'i, Shabak, Shia Turkmen, and Sunni communities. Specialised thematic units are also investigating sexual and gender-based crimes, crimes against children, and the financing of ISIL.

Because UNITAD is implementing its mandate in accordance with "UN best practice", it does not share evidence for criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed. At present, the atrocity crimes that UNITAD is mandated to investigate have not been directly incorporated into Iraq's legal system. As a result, former or current ISIL members who have engaged in conduct that may amount to an atrocity crime are likely to be charged with terrorism offences. Under Iraqi law, the death penalty can be imposed for these offences, which has prevented UNITAD from sharing evidence it has collected with Iraqi authorities. Draft legislation incorporating atrocity crimes into Iraq's legal system, which is partly designed to rectify this issue, was introduced into the Iraqi parliament in October 2020. The legislation has not yet been adopted.

During his 8 June briefing to the Council, Ritscher described several of UNITAD's latest achievements and outlined progress in its different areas of investigation. He noted that an initial case brief regarding the financing of ISIL articulates how Bayt al-Mal, ISIL's central treasury, provided vital financial support to ISIL, including by managing payments to units that allegedly committed international crimes. UNITAD also conducted field missions which, together with its engagement with affected communities and cooperation with Iraqi authorities, enabled it to collect and preserve evidence pertaining to the manufacturing and use of chemical and biological weapons.

Ritscher further informed the Council that UNITAD's investigations have helped to produce dedicated case files and identify those most responsible for crimes against the Yazidi community and the personnel of Tikrit Air Academy. Regarding the status of atrocity crimes in Iraq's legal system, Ritscher noted that there are ongoing discussions in Iraq about adopting the "necessary legal framework

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNITAD Security Council Resolution S/RES/2597 (17 September 2021) extended UNITAD's mandate until 17 September 2022. [Security Council Letter S/2022/434](#) (26 May 2022) transmitted the eighth report of the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD.

Iraq

to deal with ISIL crimes as core international crimes before the Iraqi courts” and indicated that UNITAD is ready to provide technical advice to Iraqi authorities. Ritscher also highlighted the importance of the November 2021 landmark conviction of ISIL member Taha al-Jumaily for atrocity crimes in Germany.

On 15 June, UNITAD, Finland and Iraq hosted an event at UN headquarters in New York titled “The Pattern of Mass Killing: ISIL Crimes Against Tikrit Air Academy Personnel”. Speakers at the event included Ambassador Miia Rainne (Finland); Ambassador Mohammed Hussein Bahr al-Uloom (Iraq); Ritscher; Yasser Al Khozaa’i, Investigative Judge at the Rusafa Court in Baghdad; and Sarhang Hamasaed, the Director of Middle East Programs at the United States Institute of Peace. During the event, UNITAD presented a video that synthesised the testimonial, documentary, digital, and forensic evidence that it has collected regarding the crimes committed by ISIL in Tikrit.

Key Issues and Options

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

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of UNITAD and often commend it for different aspects of its work. Differences exist, however, regarding the interpretation of UNITAD’s mandate. Certain members, particularly those that have abolished capital punishment in their own legal systems, remain concerned about the possibility that evidence collected by UNITAD might be used in criminal proceedings in which the death penalty could be imposed and emphasise the need for Iraq to incorporate international crimes into its legal framework. Some of these members take the view that UNITAD’s mandate prevents it from sharing evidence with Iraqi authorities while there is still a possibility that this evidence would be used in cases that could result in the death penalty.

Others argue, however, that Iraq bears primary responsibility for determining how to prosecute those who have committed crimes on its territory and encourage UNITAD to share evidence with Iraqi authorities as soon as possible. These members tend to suggest that Iraq is intended to be the main recipient of evidence collected by UNITAD and often emphasise the importance of respecting Iraq’s sovereignty when it comes to pursuing accountability for international crimes.

The UK is the penholder on UNITAD.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on South Sudan, which members expect to receive by 9 September.

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

Key Recent Developments

Overall implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) has been slow and selective. On 4 August, all signatories to the R-ARCSS agreed to a roadmap extending the transitional period by 24 months to enable the implementation of its key outstanding tasks. (The transitional period agreed to in the R-ARCSS was set to end in February 2023.) The extension was opposed by some non-signatory and civil society groups. On 9 August, the members of the Troika on South Sudan (Norway, the UK and the US) issued a joint statement with the EU that acknowledged the announcement of the roadmap but regretted that the process of finalising the roadmap had been “insufficiently inclusive”, including the limited time to review and comment provided to civil society groups. The statement urged the government to consult further before completing the process of ratifying the extension as set out in article 8.4 of the R-ARCSS. (Article 8.4 sets out a three-stage procedure for amendment, namely approval by two-thirds of the Council of Ministers,

consent by two-thirds of the members of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), and ratification by the Transitional National Legislature.) UNMISS welcomed the roadmap in a 10 August statement.

The RJMEC, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS, listed outstanding tasks in its most recent quarterly report, covering 1 April to 30 June, and noted that very little progress had been made in implementing the R-ARCSS, particularly in relation to completing the graduation and deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces, despite agreement in April on the command structure. There had been very slow progress on implementing elections-related tasks, the report said, including in passing relevant legislation. The report attributes these delays to a range of factors, such as insufficient political will; a trust deficit among signatories; military defections; threats posed by holdout groups; the cumulative effects of prolonged subnational conflicts; capacity gaps; lack of sufficient funding, including from international partners; and the dire humanitarian situation.

Sub-national and intercommunal conflict continues. The latest report of the UNMISS Human Rights Division, covering April to June and released on 3 August, recorded 922 civilian casualties, marking a 15 percent decrease in victims compared with the same period in 2021. However, there was a 218 percent increase in conflict-related sexual violence, including rape and gang rape. Sixty percent of civilian casualties were attributed to community-based

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 Report S/2022/468** (9 June 2022) was the 90-day report on South Sudan. **Security Council Letter S/2022/508** (22 June 2022) was on the appointment of the Panel of Experts. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9067** (20 June 2022) was a briefing on South Sudan.

South Sudan

militias and self-defence groups, while conventional parties to the conflict were responsible for 38 percent of civilian casualties. However, government and opposition forces have increasingly relied on proxy armed elements to engage in hostilities, the report says.

The humanitarian situation remains extremely difficult, with 8.9 million people in need and 7.7 million people estimated to face crisis or higher levels of food insecurity, according to OCHA. On 9 August, a humanitarian vehicle was attacked in Eastern Equatoria State, resulting in the death of the fifth humanitarian worker since the beginning of the year. According to OCHA, heavy fighting was reported from 14 to 15 August between armed factions in Tonga town and neighbouring areas in Panyikang County, Upper Nile State. The escalation in tensions and conflict in Tonga resulted in thousands of people being displaced across several areas between Malakal and Tonga, a 22 August OCHA flash update said. It also led to a reported split within the ranks of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) Kit-Gwang faction.

Council members were last briefed on South Sudan on 20 June by Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on South Sudan. Haysom told the Council that "in the months ahead, what is needed is national leadership, resources and a visible commitment by South Sudan's leaders to fulfilling their responsibilities under the peace agreement and to taking the necessary steps for the country to exit the transitional period". OCHA's Acting Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division, Ghada Eltahir Mudawi, and Lorna Merckajje, a South Sudanese human rights defender, also briefed. Closed consultations followed the briefing. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 17 June.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan conducted its tenth visit to the country from 2 to 5 August to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the commission's 21 March report on conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan, among other things (A/HRC/49/CRP.4). The report detailed the widespread and systematic character of sexual violence, drawing on several years of interviews with survivors, witnesses and their families, conducted in South Sudan and also in refugee camps. During their visit, the experts met with government officials; representatives of civil society, UNMISS and the UN; and members of the diplomatic community. They also participated in a day-long dialogue hosted by civil society organisations.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 August, the Panel of Experts presented its work plan to the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee. (The panel was appointed by the Secretary-General on 22 June, following the adoption of resolution 2633 on 26 May, which extended the sanctions regime and the panel's mandate for one year.)

Key Issues and Options

An ongoing concern for the Council is the significant political challenges in South Sudan related to the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to demonstrate progress towards implementing the outstanding elements of the R-ARCSS, in accordance with the deadlines set out in the roadmap. Another issue for several Council members is the need for the government to engage with civil society and other interested parties in relation to the roadmap and its implementation. The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement urging the parties to implement the roadmap in an inclusive and timely manner.

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

Most Council members share concerns about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, ongoing sub-national and intercommunal violence, high levels of sexual violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises. Members such as Norway, the UK and the US, along with EU members, have had reservations about extending the transitional period for finalising the roadmap, wanting to see the government immediately demonstrate significant progress towards implementing the R-ARCSS in line with the deadlines set out in the roadmap, as expressed in the joint statement of 9 August.

Differences of view on issues such as how to depict the situation on the ground in South Sudan, the extent to which the Council can and should apply pressure on the parties to fully implement the R-ARCSS, the utility of sanctions, and the effects of climate change continue to colour Council dynamics.

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

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. An official from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and a representative of civil society are expected to brief.

The mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) expires on 17 March 2023.

Key Recent Developments

Just over a year after the Taliban seized power, Afghanistan continues to face a series of overlapping crises. The humanitarian situation in the country is particularly dire. According to the latest World Food Programme (WFP) Afghanistan Situation Report, which was issued on 15 August, Afghanistan is currently experiencing the highest prevalence of insufficient food consumption in the world, with 92 percent of Afghan households struggling to meet their food needs. During a 15 August press briefing, Deputy Special Representative

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2626 (17 March 2022) extended the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2023

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of the Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan Ramiz Alakbarov described the situation as a “pure catastrophe” and noted that only 40 percent of the \$4.4 billion required for the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for Afghanistan has been received.

Afghanistan’s economic difficulties are one of the main drivers of its humanitarian crisis. Although official GDP statistics are not being produced, the World Bank estimates that Afghanistan’s economic output has shrunk by 20 to 30 percent since August 2021. Afghanistan is also experiencing widespread illiquidity and a shortage of banknotes, as well as significant inflation. As described in the World Bank’s Afghanistan Economic Monitor for August, prices for basic household goods saw 43.4 percent year-on-year inflation during July, while cash withdrawals from banks remain regulated for firms and individuals.

The links between Afghanistan’s economic and humanitarian emergencies were outlined by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths during his 23 June briefing to the Council. He noted that the economy “continues to be the primary driver of humanitarian need across Afghanistan” and described the formal banking system as an impediment to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the country, “due to excessive de-risking, which affects payment channels and causes breakdowns in supply chains”. Griffiths also said that the Taliban has been interfering with the delivery of humanitarian aid, including by seeking to play a role in the selection of beneficiaries and channelling assistance to people on their own priority lists.

The perilous state of Afghanistan’s economy has led some experts to call for the release of approximately \$9 billion in frozen assets belonging to Afghanistan’s central bank, \$7 billion of which are currently held in the US. In a 10 August letter, 71 economists and development experts, including Nobel economics prize winner Joseph Stiglitz, said they were “deeply concerned by the compounding economic and humanitarian catastrophes unfolding in Afghanistan” and urged the US to return these funds to Afghanistan’s central bank. US and Taliban officials have reportedly held meetings to discuss possible mechanisms for releasing the funds in recent months.

Although recent media reports indicate these talks will continue, they appear to have been complicated by the 31 July killing of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, who was discovered living in a Kabul safehouse reportedly controlled by a member of the Taliban. In a statement to the Wall Street Journal, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Thomas West said, “we do not see recapitalisation of the Afghan central bank as a near-term option...the Taliban’s sheltering of al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri reinforces deep concerns we have regarding diversion of funds to terrorist groups”.

Concerns regarding the spread of terrorism in Afghanistan have also increased following a spate of terrorist attacks throughout the country this month, including a 17 August attack on a mosque in Kabul that resulted in at least 54 casualties. Several of these attacks were claimed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K), the Afghan affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh). On 18 August, UNAMA deplored the 17 August attack and noted that it was “the latest in a disturbing series of bombings which have killed [and] injured more than 250 people

in recent weeks”. The tweet also called on the Taliban “to take concrete steps to prevent all forms of terrorism in Afghanistan”.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated markedly since the Taliban came to power. UNAMA’s latest report on human rights in the country, which was published on 20 July, notes that UNAMA has “documented persistent allegations of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and ill-treatment carried out by the de facto authorities” and further says that “women and girls in particular have been subjected to severe restrictions on their human rights, resulting in their exclusion from most aspects of everyday and public life”.

Despite its worsening record on human rights, the Taliban administration has continued to push for international recognition. In a 2 July statement, participants in a three-day gathering of more than 4,000 male Taliban supporters, most of whom were religious scholars, asked “regional and international countries, especially Islamic countries...to recognise the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan...release all sanctions, unfreeze funds and support development in Afghanistan”. Taliban Supreme Leader Haibatullah Akhundzada delivered a statement at the conference that appeared to signal the Taliban’s unwillingness to respond to international pressure, reportedly saying, “we are now an independent country. [Foreigners] should not give us their orders, it is our system and we have our own decisions”.

From 26 to 27 July, Taliban officials attended a conference in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with delegates from more than 20 countries and representatives of international organisations, including the EU, the UN, and the US. According to media reports, Taliban officials advocated for foreign investment and greater support from the international community at the conference, while some western attendees, including US Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights Rina Amiri, called on the Taliban to uphold the rights of women and foster an inclusive political process. Other participants in the conference reportedly appeared to push for normalisation of relations with the Taliban.

On 29 August, the Council convened for an open briefing on Afghanistan. Russia requested the meeting, citing the need to discuss the “humanitarian and economic situation and other consequences of the US and NATO military intervention” in the country. The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths; Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Markus Potzel; and Lucy Morgan Edwards, an independent researcher and author who focuses on Afghanistan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 8 July, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution without a vote that reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by all women, girls and children in Afghanistan, including the right to freedom of movement, the right to education, and the right to health. The resolution also urged the Taliban to end practices that have restricted women’s rights and requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to organise an enhanced interactive dialogue with the participation of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan during the HRC’s next session.

In a joint statement on 12 August, a group of human rights experts warned of an “immensely bleak” future for Afghans unless the international community acts to reverse the deteriorating human rights situation, particularly for women and girls, and called for dramatically stepped-up efforts to urge de

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facto authorities to adhere to basic human rights principles.

On 12 September, during its 51st session, the HRC is expected to hold an interactive dialogue with the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, and consider his most recent report (A/HRC/51/6). On the same day, the HRC will also hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, with the participation of Bennett; other relevant human rights mechanisms; UN bodies and agencies, including UNAMA; and non-governmental organisations, including Afghan women's rights organisations.

Women, Peace, and Security

On 15 August, UN Women issued a Gender Alert saying that one year on from the Taliban take-over in Afghanistan, women "are systematically excluded from public and political life, and restricted in their access to education, humanitarian assistance, employment, justice and health services". The Gender Alert, which was developed using secondary data and insights from UN Women visits across Afghan provinces in 2022, says that presently there are no indicators that women's fundamental rights and freedoms will be restored and that, instead, the past year's trend suggests that oppressive and discriminatory measures will persist. Among other recommendations, the Gender Alert calls for supporting Afghan women representatives to negotiate directly with the Taliban, for advocating for the restoration of the full spectrum of women's rights, and for including Afghan women as equal partners to inform programming, advocacy and policy priorities.

Key Issues and Options

The humanitarian and economic crises in Afghanistan are important issues for the Council. An informal, closed meeting with humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan and economic experts could enable Council members to learn more about the challenges facing those working to deliver aid in the country and the interaction between Afghanistan's economic difficulties and the humanitarian emergency. This discussion could focus on exploring whether the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime is playing a significant role in these crises, and could also consider the impact of the humanitarian exception formulated in resolution 2615 of 22 December 2021. The implementation of the exception is due to be reviewed by the Council in December.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls, is another major issue for the Council. Council members could hold an informal meeting with representatives of UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and civil society to discuss what the Council can do to exert pressure on the Taliban regarding its practices and policies that restrict human rights.

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.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members appear to be divided regarding Afghanistan. Some members, such as France, the US, and other like-minded states, take the view that the Taliban must adhere to international standards if it wants to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community. Russia, on the other hand, argues that the international community should provide development assistance to the Taliban administration without conditions. During the 23 June briefing, for example, Russia urged "Western donors" to return Afghanistan's "resources and to begin to provide comprehensive assistance to normalise the socioeconomic and humanitarian situations without reservations or preconditions". In a similar vein, China said that "comprehensive measures should be taken to support sound development in Afghanistan". China and Russia also seek to blame the US and NATO for the problems facing Afghanistan, while the US and others contend that the Taliban bears the primary responsibility for the issues plaguing the country.

Some of these differences have played out in recent negotiations concerning the standing exemption to the travel ban in the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime, which allows certain members of the Taliban to travel abroad to attend peace and stability discussions. During the negotiations, it appears that some members sought to limit the scope of the exemption as a means of holding the Taliban accountable for their actions, particularly the measures they have implemented that restrict the rights of women and girls. These proposals were opposed by other members, who argued that the travel ban exemption should not be linked to other issues and used to punish the Taliban. Council members were unable to resolve these differences before the previous travel ban exemption expired on 19 August and, as a result, the exemption is not currently in place. At the time of writing, negotiations concerning this issue are ongoing.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In September, Council members are expected to hold consultations on the situation in Libya. The Council is also expected to renew the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect and seize vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya. That authorisation expires on 29 September in accordance with resolution 2598.

The mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) expires on 31 October 2022.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on Libya, which covers developments since the previous report issued on 20 May, noted that the "political crisis" is ongoing and that the leadership stand-off has become "further entrenched" between incumbent Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, elected in February 2021 to

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2647 (28 July 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October. S/RES/2598 (29 September 2021) renewed for one year the measures to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking off the coast of Libya. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/632** (19 August 2022) covered developments in Libya since the previous report issued on 20 May. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9120** (30 August 2022) was a briefing on UNSMIL and by the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

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head the interim Government of National Unity (GNU), and former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha, who was elected interim prime minister by the House of Representatives (the Libyan legislature based in Tobruk) on 10 February. The report also noted that the High Council of State—the executive institution and constitutional authority established by the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement that is mandated to propose policies and recommendations on various political issues—did not convene as a result of divisions between members supporting either Dbeibah or Bashagha.

“The protracted political stalemate continued to negatively affect the security environment in Libya”, said the report, which refers to the volatile security situation in Tripoli and western Libya, the increased number of clashes among and between armed groups, and the demonstrations held across the country on 1 July. On 23 August, UNSMIL issued a statement expressing concern over “the ongoing mobilization of forces and threats to resort to force to resolve legitimacy claims in Libya”.

On 27 August, fighting broke out in Tripoli between forces loyal to Dbeibah and those supporting Bashagha, as the latter reportedly attempted to enter the capital. The situation returned to relative calm the following day, after Bashagha abandoned his attempt. (A similar failed attempt by Bashagha to move his parallel government to Tripoli in May also led to violent clashes in the city). According to media reports, 32 people were killed and 159 were injured in the incident, making it the worst outbreak of violence in Tripoli in the past two years. In a 27 August tweet, UNSMIL expressed concern over the armed clashes, including “indiscriminate medium and heavy shelling in civilian-populated neighborhoods”, which reportedly caused damage to civilian facilities such as hospitals. On the same day, Secretary-General António Guterres also expressed concern about the fighting and urged the Libyan parties to “engage in a genuine dialogue to address the ongoing political impasse and not to use force to resolve their differences”.

The Secretary-General’s report also covered developments in the implementation of the intra-Libyan dialogue tracks. On the political track, it noted that the UN “continued to focus on enabling the holding of credible, transparent, and inclusive elections as soon as possible based on an agreed constitutional framework”. It referred to a UN-facilitated high-level meeting held in Geneva from 28 to 30 June, during which Speaker of the House of Representatives Aguila Saleh and President of the High Council of State Khaled Al-Mishri discussed a roadmap for holding national elections. While observing that “an agreement on a constitutional framework for the holding of elections is within reach”, it noted that there had been no agreement on the eligibility requirements for candidates in the first transitional presidential elections.

On the economic track, the report said that UNSMIL continued to support efforts for the reform and reunification of the Central Bank of Libya, and that an international consulting firm continued to provide technical assistance for implementing the recommendations of a UN-facilitated international audit in this connection. On the security track, it noted that UNSMIL continued to support the 5+5 Joint Military Commission in the implementation of the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and the action plan for the withdrawal of mercenaries, foreign fighters and foreign forces.

Deteriorating living conditions across the country remain a concern. In this regard, the Secretary-General’s report emphasised that “the lack of access to adequate food, healthcare, water and sanitation, and education must not remain a driver of tension and conflict that prolongs and further entrenches the political deadlock”. Following the controversial 12 July appointment by Dbeibah of Farhat Bengdara, the former Libyan Central Bank governor, as the chairman of the National Oil Corporation (NOC), oil production resumed incrementally in July and by 17 August had risen to 1.2 million barrels a day from 860,000 on 5 July. “The resumption of oil production has provided much needed relief to a population which has experienced intermittent power cuts of long duration, an increase in prices of basic food items and goods, and inadequate basic services”, the report said.

Regarding the situation of migrants and refugees, the Secretary-General’s report said that the International Organization for Migration reported 667,400 migrants in Libya as at 30 June, an increase of 17,600 migrants compared to the previous reporting period from 17 January to 20 May. The number of people attempting to cross the Mediterranean remained high during the reporting period from 20 May to 19 August, with 12,063 individuals intercepted and returned to Libya by the Libyan Coast Guard as of 17 July. “Migrants and refugees continued to endure widespread human rights violations and faced serious humanitarian and protection concerns in Libya”, according to the report.

The Council was last briefed on UNSMIL on 30 August, by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 29 August.)

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 30 August, the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India), briefed the Council on the committee’s activities.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue remains the precarious security situation linked to Libya’s uncertain electoral path. A related concern for the Council will be how to foster common political ground between the two rival governments so that they can agree on a constitutional framework to pave the way for Libya’s long-delayed elections. Council members could consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with Libyan civil society representatives to help generate ideas for promoting dialogue between the rival political factions in Libya and supporting an inclusive political process leading to elections.

Another issue for the Council remains the vacancy in the mission’s top leadership at a vulnerable time for the country. UN Special Advisor on Libya Stephanie Turco Williams left the post at the end of July. At the time of writing, a Special Representative had still not been appointed even though two candidates had apparently been presented to Council members in recent weeks. (The position of Special Representative is expected to replace the role of Special Envoy, as decided in resolution 2629. Former Special Envoy Jan Kubiš resigned in November 2021.)

Another key issue is the expiration of the authorisation under resolution 2598 to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking

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off the coast of Libya. Council members will be informed by the Secretary-General's annual report on migrant smuggling, which was due on 29 August and not yet available at the time of writing. An option is to invite a briefer from the EU to address Council members, ahead of the expiration, on recent activities of the EU military operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED operation IRINI). Through operation IRINI, the EU is the only regional organisation implementing the authorisation given by the Council to inspect vessels suspected of migrant smuggling and human trafficking. In the past, such briefings have taken place in an informal setting during Council negotiations or in an informal interactive dialogue, which is a closed format that, unlike consultations, allows for the participation of non-UN Secretariat officials and briefers.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics on Libya remain difficult, resulting in challenging

negotiations on the UNSMIL mandate renewal resolutions since September 2021. Members have reiterated the urgent need for a Libyan-led inclusive political process and the holding of elections. Several members are also concerned about the precarious security situation. The A3 (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya), with the support of China, have called for the position of Special Representative to be filled with a candidate from Africa as soon as possible. Russia has made clear that it will not consider supporting a longer mandate renewal until a Special Representative has been appointed.

Resolution 2598 was unanimously adopted in September 2021, and the negotiations appear to have gone smoothly. Estonia and France were the co-penholders on the resolution and aimed to have a straightforward renewal of the authorisation without making substantive changes. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 28 September 2021.)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In September, 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 the anticipated briefer.

Key Recent Developments

On 29 June, the Security Council received updates on the situation in the DRC and the activities of MONUSCO. Keita briefed on the security situation in eastern DRC, which is deteriorating due to the increased military activities of the M23 Movement and other armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). She highlighted the challenges facing MONUSCO in protecting civilians and ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers given the increasing threats posed by the M23 as “a conventional army rather than an armed group”. In this regard, she noted the group’s “access to increasingly sophisticated firepower and equipment, including long-range mortar and machine-gun capabilities, as well as precision anti-aircraft weapons”.

On 6 July, the Chairperson of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Angolan President João Lourenço, hosted Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Luanda for talks to ease tensions between the two countries following the resurgence of the M23 Movement. The two countries agreed on a roadmap that includes the immediate withdrawal of the M23 from occupied positions based on the decisions of the Nairobi process. (This process is led by East African Community (EAC) heads of state who are addressing the peace and security challenges in eastern DRC 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 a political dialogue). They also vowed to defeat the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC, and its splinter groups. Furthermore, DRC and Rwanda agreed on the need to fight hate speech and create conditions for the return of refugees. Based on the Luanda roadmap adopted on 7 July, the two countries held their joint permanent commission in Luanda on 20-21 July with a view to mending their bilateral ties.

However, these positive developments were overshadowed by the controversy surrounding a leaked report of the Group of Experts (GoE) assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee. According to media reports, the GoE said that it had “solid evidence” regarding Rwanda’s support for the M23 Movement. In response to this, Rwanda argued that the GoE report is “unpublished and unvalidated”, and that none of its allegations had been included in its annual report submitted to the Security Council in June. DRC Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula requested that the confidential report and its annex be made public in an 8 August letter to the President of the Security Council. He further requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to discuss the report.

Meanwhile, MONUSCO has come under pressure from local communities in eastern DRC against the backdrop of a deteriorating security situation in the region. On 25 July, protests against MONUSCO for failing to stabilise the security situation in eastern DRC started in Goma, the capital of North Kivu, and spread to other cities. The protesters attacked the mission’s premises in Goma, leaving several people dead, including three UN peacekeepers. In a 27 July press statement, Council members condemned all attacks against MONUSCO and called on the Congolese authorities to investigate the attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Following the protests, the Congolese government announced its intention to reassess MONUSCO’s transition plan and to seek

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the mission's early exit. (The transition plan was developed in close consultation with the government and other relevant stakeholders and was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2612 of 20 December 2021). The Congolese government also expelled the MONUSCO spokesperson for allegedly making inappropriate statements that contributed to tensions between local communities and the mission. UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited Kinshasa on 28 and 29 July seeking to defuse tensions and rebuild trust between MONUSCO and the Congolese government. He briefed the Council in consultations on 3 August after returning from Kinshasa.

In another incident, MONUSCO peacekeepers opened fire on the DRC-Uganda border on 31 July, killing two people and injuring 15. The Secretary-General, through his spokesperson, expressed outrage over the incident and welcomed the decision of his Special Representative and head of MONUSCO to open an investigation into the matter.

The EAC ordinary summit held on 22 July in Arusha, Tanzania, decided to expeditiously implement its decision to deploy a regional force in eastern DRC as part of the Nairobi process, and appointed outgoing Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta as a facilitator to oversee the implementation of the Nairobi process. According to media reports, Burundi became the first country to deploy its forces in South Kivu, eastern DRC, on 15 August as part of the EAC regional force.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 30 June, the Council adopted resolution 2641, which renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2023 and extended the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2023. The advance notification requirement regarding support for military activities in the DRC, set out by resolution 1807 of 18 March 2008, was contentious during the negotiations. The three African members and China supported the DRC's request for the notification requirement to be lifted. The penholder, France, tried to offer a compromise by removing the notification requirement for supplies of non-lethal military equipment intended solely for humanitarian or protective use and related technical assistance or training and for shipments of arms and related material for the DRC. This compromise was not enough to satisfy those members, however, and the resolution was adopted with ten votes in favour and five abstentions (China, the Russian Federation, Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya).

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue on 4 October on the report of the International Team of Experts on the DRC (A/HRC/51/60) and the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation and the activities of the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC (A/HRC/51/61).

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members is how to address the growing insecurity in eastern DRC and its impact on regional peace and security. Council members may wish to reiterate their support for the Nairobi process and the ICGLR mediation. A possible option is for the French Presidency to invite the representatives of the EAC and ICGLR to brief the Council.

The other major issue is how to address the root causes of insecurity in eastern DRC. Council members may reiterate their calls for non-military measures, including the full and effective implementation of the government's programme on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. How to fight hate speech and disinformation is another critical issue that may continue to draw the attention of Council members because of its impact in polarising communities and fomenting tensions between local communities and MONUSCO.

Furthermore, the Congolese government's request for an early exit of the mission is an impending issue. MONUSCO's mandate will expire in December. Based on its transition plan, the mission is expected to meet several benchmarks and timelines, including the significant reduction of security threats and the restoration of state authority throughout the national territory, before it gradually draws down and exits.

Council Dynamics

Council members support MONUSCO's work and the mission's gradual drawdown. At the same time, they remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC. Council members support the regional approach in addressing the security challenges, but at the June Council meeting, the US underscored the need to notify the Security Council about the deployment of any forces in eastern DRC and coordinate with MONUSCO. At that meeting, several members continued to support non-military solutions and encouraged dialogue within the framework of regional initiatives. India maintained that the mission's transition should be handled in a gradual, responsible and orderly manner in accordance with its exit strategy. China called on MONUSCO to assess the current security situation in cooperation with the Congolese authorities and make progress on its transition plan in an orderly and responsible way.

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

Security Council Report Staff

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Executive Director

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Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 6394

Fax +1 212 759 4038

Web securitycouncilreport.org

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