

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In October, Gabon will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Gabon plans to organise two signature events. The first signature event is a debate on “[Peace and security in Africa: strengthening the fight against financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources](#)”. Gabon’s President Ali Bongo Ondimba is expected to chair the meeting. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security Bankole Adeoye, an official from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and a representative of civil society are likely to brief.

The second signature event is a debate on “[Climate and security in Africa](#)”. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Tanguy Gahouma-Bekale, former Chair of the Africa Group of Negotiators on Climate Change; and Patrick Youssef, ICRC Regional Director for Africa, are the anticipated briefers.

In October, the annual open debate on [women, peace and security](#) will take place with a particular focus on “Strengthening women’s resilience in areas plagued by armed groups”. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and two women civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

The Security Council is also scheduled to hold its annual debate on [cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations](#), focusing on the AU. Mousa Adamo is expected to chair the meeting. Guterres and Faki Mahamat are the anticipated briefers. A presidential statement is a possible outcome.

The 16th annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) will be held on 14 October. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa, the home of the AU headquarters. This year, the meeting will be held in New York, and it will be preceded by the ninth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC, which is set to take place on 13 October.

The Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual private meeting with the President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

In addition to the signature events, African issues on the programme of work in October are:

- [Western Sahara](#), consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the mandate renewal of MINURSO;
- [Mali](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA);
- [Great Lakes region](#), the biannual briefing and consultations;
- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the mandate renewal of UNSMIL;
- [Somalia](#), briefing by the Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee and the mandate renewal of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM); and
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

There may also be a meeting during the month on the work of the [UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic \(MINUSCA\)](#).

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Iraq](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI);
- [Yemen](#), monthly briefing and consultations on developments;
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF);
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559;
- [Syria](#), meetings on the political/humanitarian situations and on the chemical weapons track; and
- [Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#), the quarterly open debate.

The Council is expected to meet on two European issues in October. A briefing on the [UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo \(UNMIK\)](#) is anticipated, and one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) are likely during the month.

Overview

Two issues in the Americas will be discussed in October:

- [Haiti](#), a briefing on the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH); and
- [Colombia](#), a briefing and consultations on the UN Verification

Mission in Colombia and renewal of the mission's mandate.

Other issues could be raised in October depending on developments.

In Hindsight: The Long and Winding Road to Security Council Reform

The current war in Ukraine, which has shown the impotence of the UN Security Council when one of its permanent members goes to war in violation of the UN Charter, has brought renewed energy to the debate over reforming the Council. Security Council reform has been an ongoing topic of discussion in the UN General Assembly since the early post-Cold War period, with reform pressures tending to intensify in response to an international crisis that exposes the structural weaknesses of the Security Council.

The new momentum for changing the status quo took off on 27 February, when the Security Council referred the situation in Ukraine to the General Assembly following its own failure to adopt a draft resolution deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This was the Security Council's first use of a "Uniting for Peace" resolution in 40 years. Two months later, through an initiative led by Liechtenstein, the General Assembly decided by consensus (A/RES/76/262, adopted on 26 April) that it would meet whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. It has now convened twice in accordance with this new procedure: following vetoes by China and Russia on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in May, and after a Russian veto on Syria in July.

Security Council Reform: What Does It Mean, What Would It Require?

"Security Council reform" most often refers to expanding the 15-member Council, including both its permanent and elected members, and regulating the use of the veto. These thorny questions have resulted in a variety of reform initiatives during the past several decades; none has succeeded since 1965 when the Security Council was expanded from 11 to 15 members.

On 21 September, US President Joe Biden told the UN General Assembly that the US backed an increase in the number of both permanent and non-permanent members of the Council, saying that the UN needed to "become more inclusive so that it can better respond to the needs of today's world". He specified that this included seats for nations the US has long supported and for countries in Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. He also committed the US to not using the veto except in "rare, extraordinary situations", to ensure that the Council remains credible and effective.

There have long been calls for a more representative Security Council, and there appears to be some agreement among member states that reform would make the Council, if not more effective, at least more representative in a manner enhancing its legitimacy. However, the path to reform is fraught with procedural and political challenges.

Procedurally, expanding the Council will mean amending the UN Charter, which according to its Article 108, requires approval

by two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly followed by ratification by two-thirds of UN members' legislatures, including the legislatures of all five permanent members of the Security Council. Any change in Security Council membership would require revising Articles 23 and 27.

The Security Council's structure has only been changed once in its 77-year history. General Assembly resolution 1991-XVIII (1963) amended the Charter to expand the Council's non-permanent members from six to ten. China (the seat was then held by Taiwan) was the only permanent member voting in favour. France and the USSR voted against, while the US and UK abstained. The expansion took effect in 1965 following the required ratifications.

Intergovernmental Negotiations

The longstanding vehicle for Council reform discussions is the IGN—the intergovernmental negotiations established in 2008 through the General Assembly's Decision 62/557, and which first met on 19 February 2009. It has been renewed annually since then. (The IGN followed an Open-ended Working Group created in 1993 to discuss increasing membership of the Security Council and other issues.) The 2008 decision outlined five main issues for reform: categories of membership to the Council, the question of the veto, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and working methods, and the relationship between the Council and the General Assembly.

In 2022, the co-chairs of the IGN during the 76th session of the General Assembly, Denmark and Qatar, convened five informal meetings covering all five clusters of issues—and, for the first time, convened what they termed "un-formal" conversations as well as oral reflections following the substantive discussions in an attempt to find greater common ground.

Within the IGN process, a number of groups represent different positions on the reform of the Security Council, including the African Group, the Arab Group, Benelux, CARICOM, the Group of 4, the L69 Group, the Nordic Group, and the Uniting for Consensus Group. Notwithstanding broad agreement on the need for Council enlargement among member states, there is no consensus among members on the way ahead. During the 76th session, the Ukraine invasion and veto initiative appear to have energised the IGN on some issues of substance, particularly related to the use of the veto. However, the co-chairs' elements paper on convergences and divergences illustrates that many issues remain to be considered in the session ahead, which began on 13 September 2022.

Absent Council expansion, one proposal that has been considered is to give elected members terms longer than the current two years, and allow consecutive terms, which the Charter currently does not

In Hindsight: The Long and Winding Road to Security Council Reform

permit. But this, too, would require a formal Charter amendment.

Given these obstacles, the path to reform may be neither smooth nor swift. In the interim, there has also been discussion over “reform-ish” procedural actions or working methods that do not require Charter amendments. February’s revival of Uniting for Peace, and the General Assembly decision in April that its own engagement will be triggered by a veto, would both fall into this category.

Non-Amendment Avenues for Reform

Another area of enquiry for the reform-minded, requiring no Charter amendment, is re-examining those of its articles that appear neglected or underused. This could include articles 27(3), 34, 94, and 99. Article 27(3), on obligatory abstention, states that in Council decisions under Chapter VI (Pacific Settlement of Disputes), a party to the dispute shall abstain from voting. A Council member last used it as a reason to refrain from voting in 1960; only one Council member has alluded to this rule in connection with Russia continuing to cast its vote on matters concerning its invasion of Ukraine.

Article 34 of the Charter, found under Chapter VI, empowers the Council to investigate any dispute or any situation “which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute, in order to determine whether the continuance of the dispute or situation is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security”. Under this article, the Council can request the Secretary-General or another body to carry out an investigation or fact-finding mission—or do so itself.

Article 94 allows for any party to refer the matter to the Council when a party to an International Court of Justice (ICJ) case fails to comply with a judgment. In this regard, on 26 February, Ukraine instituted proceedings against Russia before the ICJ, which had rendered provisional measures on 16 March, ordering Russia to

immediately suspend the military operations it commenced on 24 February in Ukrainian territory, among other matters.

Seeking to revive or expand the use of any of these articles in the context of Ukraine faces particular challenges, both politically and procedurally. However, most reformists acknowledge that their efforts are intended to reinforce the UN Charter, not tailored to resolving a Ukraine-type situation.

Article 99 allows the Secretary-General to bring to the Council’s attention any issue which he thinks may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. Few Secretaries-General have invoked Article 99 explicitly, nor need they do so; the article gives them an open door to engage the Council on a broad range of threats.

Beyond the use of Charter articles, some members appear interested in expanding the comparatively limited contact between the Security Council and the General Assembly. The General Assembly’s recent veto initiative is one way for member states as a group to seek to hold the Security Council accountable for its actions. Another is member states’ engagement in discussion with the Security Council over its annual report to the General Assembly.

While the voices for Security Council reform may be growing louder, any agreement in the short term still seems fraught, perhaps no more so than among the permanent members of the Security Council during a time of extremely tense relations. But reform advocates are conscious of parallel initiatives that could serve to strengthen the Council’s resolve, including proposals featured in the Secretary-General’s report on “Our Common Agenda”. This report touches upon member states’ desire for a more representative Security Council through enlargement. The Summit of the Future, envisioned for 2024, may also add political momentum to advancing the matter of representation.

Status Update since our September Forecast

UN Peacekeeping

On 7 September, the Security Council held a briefing on peacekeeping reform (S/PV.9123). Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed the Security Council on resolution 2378 (2017) on peacekeeping reform, as well as the progress and challenges of implementing the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiatives. He highlighted difficulties facing UN peace operations, including attacks on peacekeepers using improvised explosive devices, misinformation and disinformation against peace operations, and violations of Status of Forces Agreements.

Sudan

On 13 September, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) (S/PV.9129). Special Representative and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes briefed on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report (S/2022/667). Ibrahim Mudawi, the President of the Sudan Social Development

Organization, briefed as well. Also on 13 September, the Council received the quarterly briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana), on the committee’s work (S/PV.9128).

Iraq

On 1 September, Council members issued a press statement condemning the violence throughout Iraq on 29 and 30 August (SC/15016). Among other matters, the press statement appealed for calm and restraint and urged all parties to avoid violence, peacefully resolve their political differences, and respect the rule of law, the right of peaceful assembly, and Iraqi institutions.

On 15 September, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2651, which renewed the mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL/Da’esh (UNITAD) for one year, until 17 September 2023.

Status Update since our September Forecast

Armenia/Azerbaijan Border Clashes

On 14 September, Security Council members held a meeting under “any other business” to discuss the clashes that erupted along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border on the night of 12-13 September. A ceasefire was brokered by Russia on the morning of 13 September; however, fighting continued. France requested the meeting, citing a 13 September letter to the Security Council by Armenia that called for an emergency Council meeting on the matter (S/2022/688). Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed. The Council also held an open briefing on the issue on 15 September, during which Jenča again briefed (S/PV.9132).

The situation along the border stabilised after another ceasefire was brokered by Russia on the morning of 15 September. According to media reports, 135 Armenian soldiers and 77 Azerbaijani troops were killed in the fighting, marking the worst outbreak of hostilities between the two countries since 2020.

Protection of Civilians: Conflict and Food Security

On 15 September, the Council held a briefing on armed conflict and food security, under the “Protection of civilians in armed conflict” agenda item (S/PV.9133). Brazil and Ireland, the Council’s focal points on conflict and hunger, requested the meeting following OCHA’s 26 August “white note” that provides an update on food insecurity due to conflict and violence in northern Ethiopia, north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. The Council heard briefings by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, World Food Programme Executive Director David Beasley, and Food and Agricultural Organization Chief Economist Máximo Torero Cullen.

Myanmar

On 16 September, Council members held closed consultations to receive a briefing from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, on her recent visits to Myanmar and Bangladesh. She briefed members on her meeting with General Min Aung Hlaing—the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces (MAF) and the chairman of the State Administration Council (SAC), the de facto authority in Myanmar—on 17 August, as well as her meetings and visit to the Rohingya refugee camp in Cox’s Bazaar during her four-day visit to Bangladesh. In her briefing, Heyzer provided details of her meetings and elaborated on her decision to visit Myanmar despite not being able to meet with all parties. She also highlighted the escalating violence in Rakhine State. Following reports of attacks on 16 September by military helicopters in Myanmar, which apparently left 15 children missing and 11 children and 12 adults dead, Norway circulated a draft press statement on the attack. However, several members were unable to agree to the draft. The UK circulated a draft resolution at the end of September

on various aspects of the situation in Myanmar.

South Sudan

On 16 September, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Mission in South Sudan (S/PV.9134). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom briefed on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report (S/2022/689). A civil society representative, Lilian Riziq, President of the South Sudan Women’s Empowerment Network, also briefed.

Afghanistan

On 3 September, Council members issued a press statement condemning the continued terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, including the 2 September attack against the Guzargh mosque in Herat that killed at least 18 people and injured several more (SC/15018).

On 6 September, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 5 September terrorist attack outside the embassy of the Russian Federation in Kabul. The attack was claimed by Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP), an entity affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), and resulted in the deaths of at least six people, including two employees of the Russian embassy, and injured several more (SC/15021).

On 27 September, the Council convened for an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Afghanistan (S/PV.9137). The briefers were Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan Markus Potzel; Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Ghada Fathi Waly; and Fawzia Koofi, a women’s rights activist and former speaker of the parliament of Afghanistan.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 30 September, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Council was briefed by: Bintou Keita, the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO); the Chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon); and Emery Mudinga, Director of the Angaza Institute based in Bukavu, DRC. Representatives of the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda also participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

Keita briefed the Council on the developments in DRC and the activities of MONUSCO based on the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/709) published on 22 September. Biang explained the work of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee. Mudinga shed light on the effects of illegal exploitation of natural resources in DRC.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council may hold one or more meetings on the situation in Ukraine, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

A shift in battlefield momentum favouring Ukraine and Moscow's political reprisals marked a new phase of the war in Ukraine in the first half of September. Towards the end of the month, Russia formally annexed portions of Ukraine.

After capturing the city of Balakliya in the eastern Kharkiv region on 6 September, the Ukrainian army launched an extensive counter-offensive to retake Russian-held territory in the Kharkiv region. The operation forced Russian troops to retreat into the Luhansk region and establish a new defensive front line along the Oskil River. In a 13 September address, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukrainian forces had recaptured roughly 8,000 square kilometres in the eastern Kharkiv region and the southern Kherson region.

In apparent retaliation for Ukraine's battlefield gains, Russia launched a series of missile attacks targeting critical infrastructure, including energy facilities and water systems. Given the extent of damage to Ukraine's civilian infrastructure and loss of personal property resulting from the war, Zelenskyy announced on 21 September plans to establish an international compensation mechanism to register damages arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It appears that a draft General Assembly resolution recommending the creation of such a mechanism may be tabled by Ukraine in October.

On 21 September, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans to conduct referendums from 23 to 27 September in the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions and to partially mobilise military reserves to support Russia's war effort in Ukraine. Putin's announcements prompted Albania and the US to request a Security Council meeting, held on 27 September, to discuss what they consider a Russian escalation of the conflict. (For more information, see our 26 September *What's in Blue* story.)

On 30 September, Putin signed treaties formally annexing the four regions. Secretary-General António Guterres delivered a strong retort to Moscow during a press briefing the previous day. Noting that Russia's annexation has "no legal value" and that it "flouts the purposes and principles of the UN Charter", Guterres stressed that Moscow's escalation "deserves to be condemned... [and] must not be accepted".

Albania and the US tabled a draft Security Council resolution on 30 September. The draft text condemned Russia's referendums, noting that they had not been authorised by Kyiv, and declared that any actions taken by Russia on the basis of the referendums, including annexation of its occupied regions in Ukraine, have no validity. In this regard, the draft resolution called on all member states to not recognise any change to the status of the regions. The draft resolution failed to be adopted because of a Russian veto. It received ten votes in favour, one against (Russia) and four abstentions (Brazil, China, Gabon, and India). Albania and the US, together with other member states, are expected to present a similar draft resolution at the General Assembly in October.

Hostilities continue to affect the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in the city of Enerhodar. On 6 September, the Security Council held an open briefing on the ZNPP, during which International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi called for the establishment of a nuclear safety and security protection zone. (For more information, see our 6 September *What's in Blue* story.) On 15 September, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution deploring Russia's persistent violent actions against nuclear facilities in Ukraine and calling on Russia immediately to cease all actions against the ZNPP.

Human-Rights Related Developments

On 15 September, mass graves containing hundreds of bodies were found in the north-eastern city of Izium, which was recaptured during Ukraine's recent counteroffensive. Ukrainian authorities exhuming the bodies have found evidence of atrocities, including signs of torture. On 16 September, the UN announced that its Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) would investigate the mass graves for possible signs of atrocities.

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) received an oral update on 23 September from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Ukraine, followed by an interactive dialogue. In his oral update, COI Chair Erik Møse confirmed that the commission "has concluded that war crimes have been committed in Ukraine", citing accounts of sexual violence and indiscriminate killing and torture of civilians by Russian forces. The COI also "processed two incidents of ill-treatment against [Russian] soldiers".

On 4 October, the HRC will hold an interactive dialogue at which interim High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al Nasheef is expected to make an oral presentation of the findings of the periodic report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the situation of human rights in Ukraine.

The Security Council remains actively engaged on the human rights situation in Ukraine. On 7 September, the Council held an open briefing on reports of the forced displacement of Ukrainian civilians and the use of "filtration" operations by Russian and Russian-affiliated forces. On 22 September, the Council held its first high-level briefing on Ukraine, which focused on the fight against impunity. (For more information, see our 7 September and 21 September *What's in Blue* stories.)

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. Council members may wish to narrow the focus of Council products in order to minimise room for disagreement. The only product on Ukraine adopted by the Council since the start of the war—a presidential statement expressing support for the Secretary-General's efforts in search of a peaceful solution to the war—consists of four paragraphs.

Russia's heightened rhetoric concerning the use of nuclear weapons is another important issue for the Council. Council members may wish to seek a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General of

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9124](#) (6 September 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia, which focused on the situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. [S/PV.9126](#) (7 September 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Albania and the US, which focused on forced displacements, deportations and "filtration" camps in Ukraine. [S/PV.9127](#) (8 September 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia, which focused on the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. [S/PV.9135](#) (22 September 2022) was a ministerial-level briefing on Ukraine titled "The Fight Against Impunity in Ukraine". [S/PV.9138](#) (27 September 2022) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Albania and the US, which focused on Russia's referendums held in its occupied territories in Ukraine from 23 to 27 September. [Other Documents S/2022/720](#) (30 September 2022) was a draft resolution titled "Illegal So-Called Referenda in Ukraine", which failed to be adopted due to a Russian veto.

Ukraine

Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu to discuss this issue and recommit to the non-use of nuclear weapons.

A related issue is the need to promote the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Periodic briefings from Grossi could help to keep the Council informed of ongoing risks and efforts to mitigate the potential for an accident. Council members could encourage the Secretary-General to use his good offices to encourage talks between the parties on this issue, with the goal of demilitarising the area around the ZNPP and other nuclear facilities.

Another important issue for the Council is how to support the renewal of the 22 July Black Sea Grain Initiative, which is set to expire on 19 November. The initiative was signed by Russia as part of a package that included a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the UN's scope of engagement to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food products and fertilisers to global markets. Russia has criticised the MoU's implementation and has threatened not to renew the grain initiative when it expires. In this regard, Council members may wish to convene a private or closed Arria-formula meeting to allow for a frank exchange of ideas between Council members and key actors in the banking, insurance and transportation sectors.

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.

Divisions between the US and the European members, on the one hand, and other members, on the other hand, have become more pronounced in recent months. The US and European members have argued that supporting Ukraine is about protecting the rules-based international order wherein no member state can redraw the borders of another by force. These members have consistently called for supporting Ukraine while politically and economically isolating Russia.

Other Council members, however, have increasingly cautioned

that doing so risks limiting the prospects of a negotiated settlement between the parties. These members—including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—contend that the Council's priority should be to establish conditions for the parties to engage in diplomatic negotiations. In this regard, they frequently call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and return to dialogue, without explicitly condemning Russia. Of these members, China and India have been the most reluctant to criticise Russia in the Council, although outside the Council, President Xi Jinping of China and President Narendra Modi of India have signalled concerns about the conflict.

Several of these members have also signalled discontent with the Council's inability to encourage diplomatic engagement. The US and European members have argued that decisions concerning the terms of negotiations should be made exclusively by the parties. These members also emphasise that any immediate cessation of hostilities must be conditioned on the immediate and complete Russian military withdrawal from Ukrainian territory. Absent this condition, they argue, a cessation of hostilities would freeze the battleground on terms favourable to Russia, which has forcefully occupied nearly 15 percent of Ukraine's territory. At the 22 September briefing, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that a peaceful settlement should be on “just terms”, without imposing on Ukraine “a settlement that cuts against the UN Charter or rewards Russia for violating it”.

Russia has accused the US and European Council members of fighting a proxy war in Ukraine with the ultimate aim of weakening Russia. It argues that by pumping weapons into Ukraine, these members are party to the conflict. On 8 September, at Russia's request, the Council held an open briefing on the issue of Western weapons supplies to Ukraine. More recently, following the 26 September incident that caused physical damage to the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea, Russia insinuated that the US was involved in the apparent act of sabotage, which the US categorically denied. At Russia's request, the Council held an open briefing on 30 September to discuss this incident, during which Russia stressed that “if involvement of certain states in those terrorist attacks is proven, this will mean deliberate escalation of the conflict”.

Climate and Security

Expected Council Action

Gabon is planning to hold a debate on “Climate and security in Africa” under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item as one of the signature events of its Council presidency. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; Tanguy Gahouma-Bekale, former Chair of the Africa Group of Negotiators on Climate Change; and Patrick Youssef, ICRC Regional Director for Africa, are the anticipated briefers.

No formal outcome is anticipated.

Key Recent Developments

On 13 December 2021, the Security Council voted on a draft

resolution on the security implications of climate change. The draft, which was initiated by Ireland and Niger and co-sponsored by 113 member states, had the support of 12 Council members. However, it was vetoed by Russia. India also voted against the draft, while China abstained.

China, India and Russia had expressed strong reservations about the draft from the outset of the negotiations. After the co-penholder placed it under silence procedure on 29 November 2021, they broke the silence and disseminated nearly identical letters to Council members that objected to the draft resolution, arguing that there is “no clear scientific background for equating climate change with security concerns”.

Had it been adopted, it would have been the first standalone

UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE AND SECURITY Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2022/6 (31 August 2022) was the presidential statement initiated by China on peace and security in Africa. **Other S/2021/990** (13 December 2021) was the draft resolution on climate change and security that was vetoed by Russia.

Climate and Security

Council resolution on this issue. The draft emphasised the need for “a comprehensive, whole of UN approach to address climate change and its effects”. It requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Council within two years a report “on the security implications of the adverse effects of climate change in relevant country or region-specific contexts on the Council’s agenda as well as recommendations on how climate-related security risks can be addressed”. It also encouraged relevant UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions to deploy dedicated capacity on climate security.

In lieu of the draft resolution, Russia circulated a draft presidential statement on 9 December 2021 on the security threats in the Sahel region, including climate change, as an alternative to the resolution. Several Council members were unwilling to engage on the draft, which never gained traction.

Since the veto in 2021, the Council’s focus on climate change and security at the thematic level has markedly decreased. This month’s debate will be the first formal meeting on the issue in 2022. Climate change has been discussed, however, in the informal Arria-formula format this year. On 9 March, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) convened a ministerial-level Arria-formula meeting on climate finance (that is, the local, national or transnational financing of initiatives aimed at addressing climate change and its effects) as a means to build and sustain peace in conflict, post-conflict and crisis situations. The UAE’s special envoy for climate change and minister of industry and advanced technology, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, chaired the meeting.

At the country-specific level, the Council has continued to incorporate climate change language in resolutions authorising or renewing peace operations in 2022. This has been the case with respect to peace operations in Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Mali, South Sudan, and Somalia.

Climate change was also referenced in a 31 August presidential statement initiated by China that recognised the need to enhance capacity-building support to African countries. In that statement, the Council called for the international community and the UN to support Africa in its efforts to mitigate and adapt to the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation.

Incorporating climate change references in other outcomes has been difficult. In this regard, Council members tried to adopt presidential statements this year on the work of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), which failed because of disagreements over whether to include language on climate change and security. India, in particular, resisted such references in both cases.

There has been notable activity in the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Climate and Security this year. Established in 2020, this entity is designed to help Council members develop a more systematic approach to climate-related security risks. The current co-chairs of the IEG are Kenya and Norway. On 4 February, the IEG convened a briefing on evidence and research from different regions on the linkages between climate change and security. IEG meetings were also held on 5 May and 2 June to discuss climate-related security challenges in Iraq and Mali, respectively. UN Deputy Special Representative for Iraq Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano briefed at the 5 May meeting, while Alain Noudéhou, the UN Deputy Special

Representative for Mali, briefed at the 2 June meeting. The IEG meetings have been held virtually this year, which has facilitated briefings by UN staff in the field.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council is whether and how to integrate climate change and security concerns more systematically in its work. Another key issue is how to strengthen synergies among the UN system, regional and sub-regional organisations, national governments, and grass-roots actors in managing and mitigating climate change-related security risks.

A possible option for the Council is to invite a civil society representative to the debate to brief on the adverse effects of climate change from a regional perspective. Gabon could also consider producing a summary of the debate that captures its main themes and circulating it as a UN document.

Over the longer term, Council members could consider a visiting mission to various sub-regions of Africa that focuses on the threats posed by climate change to peace and security and generates thinking about how the Council can best address these threats.

Council Dynamics

Although all current members of the Council recognise that climate change poses an existential threat to human civilisation, strong divisions persist over whether the Council is an appropriate forum to address climate change. Eleven members—Albania, France, Gabon, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, the UAE, the UK, and the US—support a more systematic integration of climate-related security risks into the Council’s work, with varying degrees of commitment. Several of these members tend to emphasise that factors such as drought, water scarcity, food insecurity, and desertification that are caused or exacerbated by climate change, increase the risk of violent conflict, in addition to having devastating effects on human security.

Gabon, which is organising this month’s debate, is a strong proponent of Council engagement on climate change and security. From 29 August to 2 September, it hosted “Africa Climate Week 2022” in Libreville, which included the participation of over 2,300 stakeholders and focused on the following issues: resilience to climate risks, transition to a low-emission economy, and partnership to address climate-related challenges.

Brazil, India and Russia are sceptical about Council engagement on this issue, especially at the thematic level. They believe that climate change is fundamentally a sustainable development issue that is more appropriately addressed by other parts of the UN system, including the General Assembly and ECOSOC. Although China has had reservations about the Council’s role on this issue, it incorporated climate change language in the 31 August presidential statement it initiated, working closely with the African members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya) on the text.

Several developing countries in the Security Council, including those that support a role for this organ on climate and security matters, underscore the need for developed countries to contribute more to climate financing for the developing world.

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on recent developments in Iraq and on the Secretary-General's latest reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. Both reports were provided to Council members in late September.

Key Recent Developments

The political deadlock gripping Iraq following the 10 October 2021 parliamentary election has deteriorated markedly in recent months. On 13 June, Muqtada al-Sadr, a Shiite cleric who controlled the largest bloc in Iraq's 329-member parliament after the election results were finalised, directed the 73 members of parliament loyal to him to resign. The move followed seven months of failed negotiations to form a new government. These negotiations saw a sharp divide emerge between al-Sadr's movement, which sought to form an alliance with Sunni and Kurdish political parties, and the Shiite Coordination Framework (SCF), a loose coalition of Shiite political parties, including several parties with close ties to Iran.

The departed Sadrist members of parliament were subsequently replaced by the candidates who received the second-highest number of votes in the election, many of whom were members of the SCF, and the SCF moved quickly to nominate Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani as its candidate for prime minister. Al-Sudani is widely seen as a close ally of al-Sadr's long-time rival and former prime minister of Iraq, Nouri al-Maliki.

On 27 July, supporters of al-Sadr stormed Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone and broke into the Iraqi parliament and other government buildings to protest al-Sudani's nomination. Similar protests began on 30 July, when demonstrators loyal to al-Sadr again streamed into the Green Zone, staging a sit-in and occupying parliament to prevent its members from convening a scheduled vote on al-Sudani's candidacy. The sit-in, which later moved outside parliament but remained in its vicinity, ran for nearly a month after al-Sadr urged his supporters to continue their occupation until his demands were met: these included calls for parliament to be dissolved and a fresh round of elections held. Security forces used tear gas and noise bombs to try to disperse the demonstrators, resulting in injuries to more than 100 protesters and 25 members of the security forces. Supporters of al-Sadr staged mass prayer gatherings in other regions of Iraq and the Green Zone during the sit-in while counter-protests were organised by the SCF.

In response to al-Sadr's demand for new elections, the SCF said in a 4 August statement that it supported any constitutional path to solving Iraq's political crises, "including holding early elections". The SCF reportedly indicated, however, that it wanted a government to be formed under al-Sudani first and for that government to make preparations for another round of polls.

While the sit-in continued, Hennis-Plasschaert held discussions with several key figures regarding the crisis, including al-Sadr and Hadi al-Amiri, leader of the Fatah Alliance, a member of the SCF with close ties to Iran. She also took part in a 17 August national dialogue convened by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi to find

a solution to the gridlock; participants included President Barham Salih, speaker of parliament Mohammed al-Halbousi, and other political leaders. The dialogue was boycotted by al-Sadr, who had called on the Iraqi judiciary to unilaterally dissolve parliament a week earlier.

On 29 August, al-Sadr announced his "final withdrawal" from politics and the closure of all political institutions linked to his movement. The announcement prompted al-Sadr's supporters to storm the Republican Palace in the Green Zone and led to serious clashes between Sadrists, Iraqi security forces, and groups aligned with the SCF and Iran. More than 30 people were killed and a further 700 injured during the ensuing violence, which is widely considered the biggest crisis the country has faced since Iraq recaptured the last major strongholds of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in 2017. The unrest subsided after al-Sadr ordered his followers to end their protests on 30 August.

In a 1 September press statement, Council members condemned the violence and appealed for calm and restraint. Among other matters, the statement also urged all parties to peacefully resolve their political differences; respect the rule of law, the right of peaceful assembly, and Iraqi institutions; and avoid violence.

On 5 September, al-Kadhimi, Salih and al-Halbousi convened a meeting with representatives of various political parties with the aim of resolving Iraq's political crisis. In a statement after the meeting, al-Kadhimi's office said that attendees at the meeting had "agreed to form a technical committee comprising the various political forces... to bridge differences with the aim of reaching early elections". Two days later, on 7 September, the Federal Supreme Court rejected a lawsuit filed by the Sadrist movement in mid-August seeking the dissolution of parliament, ruling that it lacks the power to do so.

On 28 September, supporters of al-Sadr clashed with Iraqi security forces as they attempted to storm the Green Zone, while parliament was convening to vote on speaker of parliament al-Halbousi's decision to resign, which al-Halbousi had announced two days earlier (under Iraq's constitution, parliament must decide whether to accept or reject the speaker's resignation). Iraqi state media reported that several rockets also landed in the Green Zone during the unrest. Despite the violence, Iraq's parliament voted to reject al-Halbousi's resignation and also appointed Ali Mosen Madalawi, a member of parliament aligned with the SCF, as his deputy. The following day, more rockets struck the Green Zone. At the time of writing, no casualties were reported, and no one had claimed responsibility for the attack.

Tensions between Iraq and Türkiye have risen in recent months. On 20 July, artillery shells struck a tourist resort in the Zakho district of the Duhok governorate in Iraqi Kurdistan, killing at least nine people and wounding at least 23 more. Iraq blamed Türkiye for the attack and has commenced an investigation into the circumstances surrounding it, while Türkiye has attributed responsibility to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which it considers a terrorist organisation. On 26 July, the Council convened for an open briefing and closed consultations to discuss the attack (For more information, see our 26 July *What's in Blue* story).

On 24 September, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), a military unit that operates independently from the rest

Iraq

of Iran's armed forces under the direct control of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, launched artillery and drone attacks against the bases of a Kurdish militant group in northern Iraq. According to media reports, the IRGC's attack was a response to the group's support for the protests that have recently swept Iran, which were sparked by the death in police custody of Iranian-Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini. During the ensuing five days, the IRGC continued to attack the positions of Kurdish groups in northern Iraq. At the time of writing, nine people had been killed and at least 32 others injured in the attacks. On 28 September, the US announced that it had shot down a drone used in the bombardment, saying that the drone had threatened US forces.

The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) reportedly denounced the strikes, describing them as "repetitive violations of the sovereignty of the Kurdistan region", while Iraq's foreign ministry said that the IRGC's actions "cast a shadow over the region and will only contribute to more tension". In a 28 September statement, the Secretary-General called for immediate de-escalation and urged respect for Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. At press time, Council members were negotiating a press statement concerning the attacks.

According to media reports, Iraq's state-owned oil marketer threatened buyers of crude oil from Iraqi Kurdistan with legal action in a letter dated 23 August. The letter is expected to exacerbate existing tensions between the KRG and the federal government and follows a 15 February ruling by the Federal Supreme Court, which found that a 2007 KRG law regulating the oil industry in Iraqi Kurdistan was unconstitutional. The judgment also directed the KRG to hand control of its oil supplies to the federal government and declared the KRG's oil contracts with third parties null and void.

ISIL also continues to pose a threat in Iraq. On 3 August, five

Iraqi soldiers were killed and another three injured when ISIL fighters attacked a military checkpoint in the eastern province of Diyala. On 21 September, the KRG and the US signed a renewed memorandum of understanding regarding US support for Peshmerga operations against ISIL.

Key Issues and Options

Council members are following developments in Iraq closely, particularly in light of the violent clashes that erupted in Baghdad at the end of August. A key issue for the Council is reinforcing the importance of maintaining stability and security in the country. Depending on how the situation evolves, Council members could issue a further product that reiterates the need to resolve political disputes peacefully through dialogue and within the applicable legal framework.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI and their desire to see positive developments in the Iraqi political process and Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations. It appears that negotiations concerning the 1 September press statement were uncontroversial, with the initial draft circulated by the penholder passing silence without any Council members providing comments.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, as demonstrated by Iran and Türkiye's recent attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan and the influence of countries in the region on domestic politics. The Iraqi government routinely declares that it does not wish to become a theatre for Iran-US tensions, and Türkiye's military operations in northern Iraq remain ongoing.

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

Peace and Security in Africa: Financing of Armed Groups and Terrorists Through Illicit Trafficking of Natural Resources

Expected Council Action

In October, Gabon is organising a high-level debate on strengthening the fight against the financing of armed groups and terrorists through the illicit trafficking of natural resources. The debate will be one of the signature events of Gabon's presidency. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security Bankole Adeoye, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Ghada Fathi Waly, and a representative of civil society are likely to brief. Gabonese Minister of Foreign Affairs Michael Moussa Adamo is expected to chair the meeting.

Key Recent Developments

Illicit trafficking of natural resources by armed groups and terrorists has received growing attention from the Security Council in recent years. For example, resolution 2195, which addressed the role of

transnational crime in supporting terrorism, expressed concern that terrorists benefit from the "illicit trade in natural resources including gold and other precious metals and stones, minerals, wildlife, charcoal and oil". In a similar vein, resolution 2462 on combatting the financing of terrorism noted with grave concern that terrorist groups raise funds through the "exploitation of natural resources".

The issue was referred to in greater detail in resolution 2482 on the nexus between terrorism and international organised crime, which encouraged states to continue their efforts to end the illicit trade in natural resources "as part of broader efforts to ensure that illicit trade in natural resources is not benefitting sanctioned entities, terrorist groups, armed groups, or criminal networks". Resolution 2482 also called on member states to consider the ratification and implementation of relevant global instruments and their participation in national, regional and global initiatives that aim to build

SELECTED RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2482 (19 July 2019) was on the nexus between terrorism and international organised crime. S/RES/2462 (28 March 2019) was on combatting the financing of terrorism. S/RES/2195 (19 December 2014) addressed the role of transnational organised crime in supporting terrorism. **General Assembly Document A/69/L.80** (15 July 2015) was a resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife.

Peace and Security in Africa

capacity to prevent the illicit trafficking of natural resources.

The Council has also considered the misuse of natural resources while discussing conflict prevention and the relationship between security and development, including during the February 2011 debate on the interdependence between security and development (S/PV.6479), the June 2013 debate on conflict and natural resources (S/PV.6982), the January 2015 debate on inclusive development (S/PV.7361), and the 2018 briefing on the role of natural resources as a root cause of conflict (S/PV.8372).

Illicit trafficking of natural resources by armed groups is an important issue in several files on the Council's agenda. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), individuals and entities can be designated under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime for "supporting individuals or entities, including armed groups or criminal networks, involved in destabilising activities in the DRC through the illicit exploitation or trade of natural resources, including gold or wildlife as well as wildlife products". In its most recent midterm report, the 1533 DRC Panel of Experts analysed the gold and coal mining activities of Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale and its allies, noting that the armed groups have sold gold to informal dealers in Kalemie through smugglers and taxed "varying quantities of coal from artisanal miners' weekly production".

Illicit trade in natural resources was also referred to in the presidential statement on the Great Lakes region that was adopted by the Council during Kenya's presidency in October 2021 (S/PRST/2021/19). Among other matters, the presidential statement recognised the "linkage between the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources and the illegal acquisition and trafficking of small arms and light weapons in fuelling and exacerbating conflict in the Great Lakes region". The presidential statement also recognised that "insecurity resulting from ... the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources negatively impact[s] conflict prevention, post-conflict peacebuilding, the consolidation of peace in countries in the Great Lakes region emerging from conflict and their post-conflict development, including education, health and economic opportunity".

Individuals and entities can be designated under the Central African Republic (CAR) 2127 sanctions regime for "providing support for armed groups or criminal networks through the illicit exploitation or trade of natural resources, including diamonds, gold, wildlife as well as wildlife products in or from the CAR". The Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee has also documented instances of armed groups profiting from natural resource trafficking. Its latest midterm report, for example, found that the Patriotic Rally for the Renewal of the Central African Republic (RPRC) derived significant revenues from various forms of trafficking, including by selling diamonds (S/2022/527).

In Mali, the Panel of Experts assisting the 2374 Sanctions Committee has focused on the mining of artisanal gold due, in part, to its connection to revenue generation "for compliant and terrorist armed groups". In its final report for 2021 (S/2021/714), the Panel found that artisanal gold mining drives terrorist financing and the expansion of the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), an armed group active in northern Mali.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is determining how to counter the financing of armed groups and terrorists through illicit trafficking in natural resources. One option for the Council is to consider whether there is a need to update the listing criteria for sanctions regimes in which illicit trafficking of natural resources is an issue. The Council could, for example, choose to add a listing criterion that applies to those who provide support to armed groups through illicit trade in natural resources to relevant sanctions regimes that do not currently have such a criterion, such as the 2374 Mali sanctions regime. The Council could also consider whether existing listing criteria relating to illicit trafficking of natural resources are fit for purpose and functioning as intended.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of efforts to combat the illicit trade in natural resources. There are disagreements, however, regarding the use of sanctions to address the issue. These disagreements have existed among Council members for some time. During the 19 June 2013 open debate on conflict prevention and natural resources, for example, China and Russia both emphasised the importance of respecting state sovereignty and expressed scepticism regarding natural resource sanctions. Russia also blocked a proposed presidential statement arising from this meeting, apparently arguing that the topic falls outside the Council's mandate.

More recently, China and Russia placed a hold on a US proposal to designate Belgian businessman Alain Goetz and companies affiliated with him under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime for their alleged involvement in illegal gold exports from the DRC. At the Council's 27 April briefing on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and Great Lakes region, China argued that "the relevant sanctions measures of the Security Council must not be misused, let alone become a tool for suppressing other political and commercial players".

Gabon has a longstanding record of protecting its natural resources, which may help to explain its motivation for this meeting. It is one of the most forested countries in the world, with more than 88 percent of its surface area covered by rainforests, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP). These rainforests are home to a rich variety of wildlife and Gabonese authorities have implemented a range of initiatives that are intended to protect its endangered fauna. Gabon has, for example, established 13 national parks since 2000 and also created an anti-poaching unit to patrol its rainforests in 2020.

Gabon has also focused on illicit trade in wildlife in other UN fora. In July 2015, Gabon and Germany co-sponsored a General Assembly resolution on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife. Among other matters, the resolution urged member states to take decisive steps at the national level to prevent, combat, and eradicate illegal trade in wildlife, and also called on member states to review and amend their national legislation with a view to ensuring that offences connected to illegal trade in wildlife are treated as predicate offences for domestic money laundering.

UN-AU Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold the annual debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the AU. The Gabonese foreign minister, Michael Moussa-Adamo, is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and Chairperson of the AU Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat are the anticipated briefers. A presidential statement is a possible outcome.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 28 October 2021, the Council held its annual debate on UN-AU cooperation via videoconference (VTC). Uhuru Kenyatta, the president of Kenya at the time, chaired the meeting. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and AU High Representative for Financing of the Union and the Peace Fund Donald Kaberuka briefed the Council. The Security Council adopted a presidential statement proposed by Kenya that stressed the need to further develop the UN-AU partnership into a systematic, operational and strategic partnership rooted in shared values and a strong commitment to multilateralism.

During its October Council presidency, Gabon intends to highlight the UN-AU cooperation on peace and security in Africa by focusing the annual debate on the Secretary-General's report on "Strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU)". The latest report, published on 25 August, provided updates on the implementation of the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. It covered the activities carried out by UNOAU and the UN system since the previous report on 30 August 2021. It also discussed efforts to implement Security Council resolution 2320 of 18 November 2016 on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017 on peacekeeping reform, and resolution 2457 of 27 February 2019 on silencing the guns in Africa.

Preparations are also underway to hold the 16th annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) on 14 October. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa, the home of the AU headquarters; the meeting will be held in New York in 2022. The Security Council proposed several agenda items for the meeting, including the situations in West Africa and the Sahel and in the Great Lakes region, as well as the use of sanctions in conflict situations in Africa.

This meeting is expected to be preceded by the ninth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC, which is set to take place on 13 October. The aim of the joint seminar is to exchange views on how to enhance cooperation between the two Councils, including by strengthening UN and AU peace support operations and peacebuilding efforts in Africa. In this regard, issues related to working methods and how the two Councils can work together towards a common agenda in Africa will be discussed.

The long-standing issue of securing adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations will also be raised. In recent months, momentum has been building on this issue which was a key theme of the Arria-formula meeting convened by Ghana in July on "Collective security through equitable burden sharing: Strengthening regional arrangements for the maintenance of international peace and security", and the open debate organised by China on "Peace and security in Africa: Capacity-building for sustaining peace" during its Council presidency in August. In this connection, UN Security Council members expect to receive updates on the implementation of the AU peace fund during the joint seminar.

The agenda items UN Security Council members proposed for the joint consultative meeting and the joint seminar have broad support, and the AUPSC is expected to accept them. The annual consultative meeting between the two Councils has been held via VTC for the last two years because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but this year it will be held in person. In preparation for the meeting, the AU Committee of Experts is expected to hold consultations with its Security Council counterparts in New York from 10 to 12 October and to negotiate the draft outcome document of the 16th joint annual consultative meeting.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members will be how to enhance cooperation and partnership between the Security Council and the AUPSC across the whole peace continuum, ranging from conflict prevention and peacekeeping to peacebuilding and sustaining peace. In light of some of the conflict situations in Africa, an important issue that has been raised by some Council members is the need for the Security Council to step up when the efforts by the AU and its regional mechanisms appear not to have made the desired progress.

Another major issue is how to address the request for sustainable financing of AU-led peace support operations from UN assessed contributions. Council members will await the Secretary-General's report, which, in accordance with their 31 August presidential statement, will address this issue and is to be submitted by 30 April 2023.

The utility of sanctions has also become a critical issue. The three African members (A3)—Gabon, Ghana and Kenya—have been pushing strongly for the lifting of arms embargoes imposed by the Security Council on some African countries. They have done so based on the decisions of the AU and some of its regional mechanisms. This has affected recent negotiations on extending sanctions regimes and the mandate renewal of panels of experts assisting sanctions committees. In recent months, the A3 abstained on votes extending the sanctions regimes on the Central African Republic (July) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (June), while two members, Gabon and Kenya, abstained on a resolution renewing sanctions on South Sudan (May).

A possible option for Council members would be to adopt a presidential statement reaffirming the Council's commitment to further strengthening the cooperation and partnership with the AUPSC in promoting peace and security in Africa.

UN DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND THE AU Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2320 (18 November 2016) was on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations in the maintenance of international peace and security. S/RES/2378 (20 September 2017) was on UN peacekeeping reform. S/RES/2457 (27 February 2019) was on silencing the guns in Africa. Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2022/6 (31 August 2022) was on peace and security in Africa. Secretary-General's Report S/2022/643 (25 August 2022) was on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UNOAU. Security Council Letter S/2021/941 (10 November 2021) transmitted the transcript of the VTC debate on "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations: African Union".

UN-AU Cooperation

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the cooperation and partnership between the UN and the AU in the area of peace and security. The role of the A3 has been vital in this regard. In recent years, the A3 have enhanced their position in the Council through joint statements and coordinated positions advanced in negotiations on various Council products, particularly as they relate to Africa. However, the issue of sanctions has been divisive, with the A3 pushing for the lifting of arms embargoes on some African countries.

The A3 have revived the discussion in the Council on the financing of AU-led peace support operations from UN assessed contributions. The majority of Council members and the wider UN membership have been supportive of this proposal for several years. However, during the Trump administration, the US threatened to veto a draft resolution on the financing issue that was proposed by the A3 in December 2018, and it was never put to a vote. South Africa tried to facilitate progress on this matter in 2019, but the AUPSC called on the African members in the UN Security Council to suspend their efforts until the AU had a common position on outstanding issues. Accordingly, a draft common position paper was discussed by the AUPSC committee of experts. There could be an interest in

finalising the document for adoption by the AU policy organs in February 2023, in light of the 31 August Council presidential statement.

That statement, among other things, requested 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 on moving forward that reflect good practices and lessons-learned with the view to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible resources”.

It seems the Biden administration is keen to strengthen US relations with Africa, as reflected by the Africa strategy that it announced in August. 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. In November, during its Security Council presidency, Ghana is likely to organise a signature event to facilitate a discussion of this issue. As the chair of the AUPSC for the month of September, Ghana convened a meeting in Addis Ababa on the implementation of the AU peace fund.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council expects to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), due by 14 October, as requested in resolution 2630. Consultations will follow the briefing.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission’s support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) expire on 15 November.

Background and Key Recent Developments

For more than ten years, the governments of Sudan and South Sudan have made no significant progress in resolving the final status of Abyei, the disputed area along the Sudan-South Sudan border. In the recent past, Sudan and South Sudan have been more focused on their internal situations following the 25 October 2021 military coup in Sudan and political challenges in South Sudan. On 22 September, local media sources reported that Sudan and South Sudan had resumed direct talks over the final status of Abyei.

The overall security situation in Abyei has been relatively calm in recent months, but significant humanitarian needs persist as well as intercommunal tensions, the presence of armed elements, displacement, and economic challenges. On 14 September, local media sources reported that thousands of Abyei residents demonstrated peacefully demanding autonomy from both Sudan and South Sudan, and that community leaders handed over a petition with their demands to UNISFA. On 26 September, UNISFA released a statement expressing alarm over renewed clashes between the Twik and

Ngok Dinka communities in Agok, near Abyei town.

UNISFA continues to face challenges in implementing its mandate, including the need to appoint a civilian deputy head of mission (as requested by the Council in May 2019). Last year, tensions in the region affected the mission, with public calls by Sudan for the replacement of all Ethiopian UN troops. Since the mission’s establishment in 2011 until earlier this year, Ethiopia had been its sole troop-contributing country. The Secretary-General’s most recent report, covering 16 October 2021 to 15 April, noted that the Ethiopian contingent departed Abyei on 10 April and was in the process of being replaced by troops from Ghana, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

The Council renewed UNISFA’s mandate until 15 November with the unanimous adoption of resolution 2630 on 12 May. The resolution did not make any changes to the force’s mandate or structure. (For more information, see our 11 May *What’s in Blue* story.)

The Council was last briefed on Abyei on 21 April by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh. Lacroix reported that, since October 2021, intercommunal violence had resulted in the deaths of 29 people and that the humanitarian situation had deteriorated. There had been no progress on the deployment of the three formed police units mandated by the Council, he said.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council leading up to UNISFA’s renewal in November is what modifications to make, if any, to the mandate and force structure. A likely option is for Council members to consider

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2630 (12 May 2022) renewed the mandate of UNISFA until 15 November 2022. Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/316 (14 April 2022) was on the situation in Abyei. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9031 (12 May 2022) was the meeting to adopt resolution 2630. S/PV.9020 (21 April 2022) was a briefing on UNISFA and Sudan/South Sudan.

Sudan/South Sudan

the findings and recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of UNISFA's mandate, due by 14 October.

The report is expected to provide updates on several long-standing issues, in particular:

- progress on the deployment of police;
- the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission;
- usage of the Athony airstrip, which is crucial for medical evacuations; and
- the issuance of visas to support implementation of the mandate.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree on the important roles that UNISFA and the JBVMM play in support of achieving peace, security and stability in Abyei and the broader region. Many members are critical of the lack of progress by Sudan and South Sudan in resolving the final status of Abyei.

It seems that negotiations on resolution 2630 were generally smooth, given that Council members apparently agreed that there was no need to update UNISFA's mandate and configuration. The penholder, the US, apparently sought a straightforward renewal

without making substantial changes to allow UNISFA to adjust to its reconfiguration, following the replacement of Ethiopian troops. Discussions during the negotiations centred on such issues as human rights reporting; humanitarian access; quick-impact projects for UNISFA; and language on women, peace and security. (For more information, see our 11 May *What's in Blue* story.)

In a statement following the adoption of resolution 2630, Russia referred to its proposal during the negotiations to add language on quick-impact projects and expressed regret that the penholder did not include this in the resolution. It seems that Moscow had also raised this issue during Council members' latest closed consultations on UNISFA, which took place on 21 April. Other members apparently felt that such an issue should be discussed in the General Assembly's Fifth Committee and should not be addressed in a Security Council resolution. Russia apparently broke silence because its suggested language on quick-impact projects was not included in the first amended draft. However, this language was ultimately not incorporated in the draft text in blue.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission, dated 27 September.

The Council is also expected to renew the verification mission's mandate ahead of its 31 October expiry.

Key Recent Developments

Since assuming office on 7 August, the administration of Gustavo Petro, Colombia's first leftist president, has been taking steps to advance its new approach to various issues, including the pursuit of peace in the country. Petro has promoted his vision of a "total peace", vowing to further the implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), while seeking to expand dialogue with armed groups that still operate in the country.

The new administration has begun implementing new policies regarding aspects of the 2016 peace agreement, including those relating to security guarantees. Petro has promised to tackle the persistent violence in conflict-affected regions in the country, including by increasing state presence in these locations. To that end, the government took steps to promote an emergency protection plan for human rights defenders and former combatants, which was presented to Petro by civil society organisations and members of Colombia's congress in August. The plan, developed with support from the UN,

proposes the establishment of "command posts"—inter-institutional mechanisms to coordinate preventive responses with the participation of state entities, local authorities and civil society, and accompanied by international actors—prioritising 65 municipalities in 14 conflict-affected departments. To date, the government has installed 14 "command posts" in ten departments, including the Chocó and Nariño departments, which have long experienced heightened levels of violence.

The Secretary-General's report, which covers the period 28 June to 26 September, describes developments during the last month of the Iván Duque administration and the first two months of the Petro administration. As such, it is still too early to determine the effects of the new security policies. During this period, 15 former FARC-EP combatants were killed, bringing to 342 the number of ex-combatants killed since the signing of the peace agreement. Eleven former combatants were killed in July alone, making it the deadliest month for ex-combatants since 2019. In addition, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 39 large-scale killings (12 verified, 26 under verification and one inconclusive). OHCHR received allegations of 45 homicides against human rights defenders, of which eight are verified, 27 are under verification and ten are inconclusive.

The new administration has also pledged progress on the gender and ethnic chapters of the 2016 agreement, which have been slow. Among other things, Petro announced the creation of a Ministry of Equality, under the leadership of Vice-President Francia Márquez, to address issues related to gender, ethnic communities, youth, and children. He also appointed Clemencia Carabali—a defender of women's, ethnic and territorial rights who briefed the Security

Colombia

Council on 14 July 2020 as a civil society representative—as Presidential Counsellor for Women’s Equality. The president has also appointed several Afro-Colombian and indigenous men and women to key positions, including Colombia’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Leonor Zalabata.

The Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repitition—which is comprised of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing—continued to advance its work in the past several months. In an important development, the SJP opened three new cases in response to victims’ requests: one on war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the former FARC-EP; another on war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the public security forces and other state agents in association with paramilitary groups; and a third on crimes against ethnic communities and their territories allegedly perpetrated by former FARC-EP members, public security forces, state agents and third parties. The SJP announced that it will open another case addressing crimes related to gender-based and sexual violence—a move long advocated by victims’ and women’s organisations.

National and international interlocutors have welcomed the early steps taken by the government, while emphasising the importance of maintaining the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement at the forefront of its pursuit of peace. In a 14 September tweet, Rodrigo Londoño, president of the “Comunes” party, which is comprised of former members of the FARC-EP, welcomed some of the steps taken by Petro, while urging the government to take further measures to invigorate the implementation of the agreement, including by convening the National Commission on Security Guarantees and the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIV).

As part of the promotion of the “total peace” policy, the government has taken steps to advance negotiations with the armed group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). The group has expressed its willingness to engage in this regard, continuing the peace process that began with former President Juan Manuel Santos in Quito, Ecuador, in 2017. The process concluded without agreement in August 2018, when former President Duque assumed office. In August, representatives of the Petro administration held a preliminary meeting in Cuba with ELN representatives, which was also attended by Ruiz Massieu, representatives of Colombia’s Catholic church and Norway. Following the meeting, the government undertook several legal and political steps necessary for the resumption of talks, including suspending arrest warrants and extradition orders against members of the ELN delegation. At the time of writing, it was unclear when the formal negotiations with the ELN would commence.

The Petro administration has also contacted other armed groups operating in the country to discuss the possibility of reaching justice agreements through which illegal actors cease violence in exchange for legal benefits. On 28 September, the Petro administration announced that at least ten armed groups—including the Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) and some dissident groups of the former FARC-EP—have agreed to participate in unilateral ceasefires. The government has called on these armed groups to demonstrate their will for peace through concrete

actions and noted that ceasefires will create an environment conducive to dialogue.

In another notable development, Colombia and Venezuela in August re-established diplomatic relations, which were severed in 2019. On 28 September, the two countries re-opened their shared border, marking the end of a seven-year border closure to cars and freight, and resumed air travel between Colombia and Venezuela. Petro views cooperation with Venezuela as a key aspect in the promotion of dialogue with the ELN, which finances its activities through drug trafficking, extortion and human smuggling in the border area between Colombia and Venezuela. Analysts estimate that the growing cooperation between the two countries might prompt Venezuela to curtail the ELN’s activities, pressuring the group to cooperate in the negotiations. Venezuela has accepted Colombia’s request to participate as a guarantor country in the negotiations with the ELN.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 August, a group of UN human rights experts released a joint statement highlighting the extreme risks faced by human rights defenders, including death threats, who challenge corporate activity. On 31 August, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances welcomed the 30 August declaration by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “recognising the competence of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances to examine individual complaints and interstate communications”. The declaration will allow the Committee to receive and consider communications from individuals or state parties in relation to violations of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in October is to renew the verification mission’s mandate. The Council could choose to adopt a straightforward renewal of the mandate, without altering its tasks. Members may also consider if recent developments require any alteration to the mission’s mandate, including with regard to the dialogue with the ELN. As a result of the Quito process, the Colombian government and the ELN observed a bilateral ceasefire from 1 October 2017 to 9 January 2018. The Security Council temporarily expanded the Verification Mission’s mandate to monitor compliance with the ceasefire through resolution 2381 of 6 October 2017. The Council may consider a similar expansion should future negotiations with the ELN produce an agreement on a ceasefire.

Colombia stands at an inflection point where the shift in government could create both opportunities and challenges to the implementation of the 2016 agreement. An issue for the Council is to determine how it can play a constructive role in helping Colombians overcome challenges and to promote the comprehensive implementation of the agreement.

Members are apparently encouraged by the new government’s expression of political will to pursue peace. They could consider issuing a press statement encouraging the incoming administration to fulfil its stated commitments regarding the implementation of the peace agreement.

Another option for the Council is to consider a visiting mission to Colombia, where it can interact with local actors, including civil society, to hear their views about ways to overcome potential challenges to the peace agreement. Previous Council visiting missions to

Colombia

Colombia, which took place in May 2017 and July 2019, signalled the Council's political support for the implementation of the agreement.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support of the peace process in Colombia. However, members' attitudes towards the governing administration in the country have at times affected Council

dynamics on the file. It is still early to determine how the new administration in Colombia may influence this dynamic.

Russia, which criticised the Duque administration for its unwillingness to conduct dialogue with the ELN and renew ties with Venezuela, might demonstrate a more favourable approach to the Petro administration, which has taken crucial steps on both issues.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths are the anticipated briefers. General Michael Beary, head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), is expected to brief during the consultations.

Key Recent Developments

The ongoing truce in Yemen is set to expire on 2 October, following its second renewal in August. Grundberg is seeking an "expanded truce" agreement that opens roads around Taiz, as envisioned in the initial truce agreement; maintains the regular flow of fuel imports through Hodeidah; increases international flight destinations from Sana'a airport; and establishes a mechanism to pay civil servant salaries. His push for an expanded truce also seeks a longer six-month extension, instead of its customary two-month renewal periods, to provide more space to negotiate a formal ceasefire, and to hold talks on broader economic, security and political issues.

The truce saw its most serious fighting on 28 August when the Houthi rebel group attacked the al-Dhabab district west of Taiz city, in an attempt to seize the lone government-controlled road into the city, which the Houthis have surrounded for years. The Yemeni government said ten of its soldiers were killed and seven wounded in the hours-long fighting. Grundberg strongly condemned the attack. The fighting occurred as representatives of the parties to the Military Coordination Committee (MCC), which manages military aspects of the truce, were in Amman to hold their fourth meeting. Because of the attack, the meeting did not take place, and MCC members only met bilaterally with the envoy's military adviser.

Talks to open roads into and out of Taiz city have been deadlocked. The Houthis have blocked access to main roads since 2015, leaving the mountainous, narrow and unpaved Haigat Al-Abd as the only major access road to the city from Aden. On 29 August, 15 human rights organizations, including Humans Rights Watch and Amnesty International, issued a statement calling for the Houthis to immediately open roads, highlighting the humanitarian suffering created by the road closures and isolation of Taiz.

In other provocative actions, the Houthis have recently held a series of military parades. A 1 September parade in Hodeidah included drones, mines and land-based anti-ship missiles. It prompted an UNMHA statement that called the parade a violation of the

December 2018 Hodeidah Agreement and urged Houthi leadership "to fully respect their obligations under the Agreement, particularly as it pertains to keeping the City free of military manifestations". On 15 September and 21 September, the Houthi staged massive military parades in Sana'a to commemorate the eighth anniversary of their take-over of Sana'a in September 2014.

Meanwhile in the south, the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC), which is a member of the anti-Houthi coalition, announced that 27 soldiers had been killed on 28 August in an attack by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The attack followed an STC military operation into Abyan, launched on 23 August, against the orders of the chairman of Yemen's eight-member Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), Rashad al-Alimi. The operation came just after fighting had subsided in neighbouring Shawba governorate between anti-Houthi forces and further demonstrated the fragility of the PLC, which was formed in April to create a more united front consisting of the various Yemeni groups nominally opposed to the Houthis.

Council members held their regular monthly meeting on Yemen in closed consultations with Grundberg, OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Reena Ghelani, and General Beary on 8 September. Prior to the meeting, Grundberg completed a series of regional meetings on his expanded truce proposal in Riyadh, Tehran and Muscat. In a 12 September press statement, Council members called on both parties to urgently intensify, and be flexible in, the negotiations to agree on an expanded truce that could be translated into a durable ceasefire. The statement condemned all attacks that threatened the truce, including the recent Houthi attacks on Taiz, and condemned the military parade in Hodeidah. Members also expressed concern regarding recent instability in the southern part of Yemen.

On 15 September, the Council held a briefing on widespread food insecurity due to conflict and violence in northern Ethiopia, northeast Nigeria, South Sudan, and Yemen. An OCHA white note on the four country situations, dated 26 August, prompted the meeting. According to the white note, 19 million people in Yemen are estimated to be suffering from acute food insecurity. Of this total, 538,000 children are severely malnourished and 161,000 people face "catastroph[ic]" food insecurity, a reference to famine-like conditions. Yemen's depreciating currency, the rise in global fuel and food prices, and the severe humanitarian funding gap continue to drive Yemen's humanitarian crisis, despite reduced hostilities.

On 17 September, the Netherlands announced a pledge of 7.5

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2643 (13 July 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 14 July 2023. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15025** (12 September 2022) called on both parties to urgently intensify, and be flexible in, the negotiations under UN auspices to agree on an expanded truce.

Yemen

million euros for the UN-facilitated plan to prevent a major oil spill from the decrepit FSO Safer oil tanker moored off Hoideidah governorate. The announcement by the Netherlands—which made an initial pledge in May, also of 7.5 million euros—provides the UN with the \$75 million required to begin the emergency phase of the operation to transfer the oil from the FSO Safer to a temporary vessel.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal and expansion of the truce is a critical issue. Recent developments represent a precarious moment for the truce. The Houthis have refused to make concessions regarding Taiz, and there are reports that they have increased their demands for securing an extension or expansion of the truce agreement. Emerging issues are the fighting and divisions among different groups that make up the PLC.

Council members are likely to monitor Grundberg's efforts to obtain an extension of the truce. In the event of agreement on an expanded truce, members could consider adopting a presidential statement to endorse the deal, while encouraging the parties to maintain and translate the truce into a ceasefire agreement.

Rising global food and energy prices as a result of the war in Ukraine have contributed to increasing humanitarian needs in Yemen despite the reduction in fighting since the truce. Members could encourage donors to contribute to the UN's 2022 Yemen humanitarian response plan and support Yemen's economy, to the salvage operations involving the FSO Safer, and to the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). UNVIM, which has

operated since 2016, has played an important role during the truce in facilitating commercial shipments into Hodeidah, but it may face funding shortfalls starting in October that could force it to suspend operations.

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 an eventual negotiated settlement to end the war. The United Arab Emirates (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—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 its bilateral relations with the UAE. The US Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, has engaged in regional diplomacy to support UN efforts to extend the truce and raise funds for the FSO Safer salvage operation. While Saudi Arabia exercises leverage on the Yemeni government, Oman often plays an important role as an interlocutor with the Houthis. Ahead of the truce's renewal on 2 August, 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, which met on 9 September with the Yemen Panel of Experts on its mid-term update.

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which expires on 31 October. Ahead of the mandate renewal, Council members are also expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's annual report on the situation concerning Western Sahara. The Special Representative for Western Sahara and head of MINURSO, Alexander Ivanko, and the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, are the anticipated briefers.

Key Recent Developments

De Mistura recently completed his second regional tour since his appointment as the Personal Envoy in November 2021, which followed a nearly two-and-a-half-year vacancy in the UN post. In announcing the tour, the UN said that de Mistura would seek to deepen his consultations with all parties concerned on “the perspectives to constructively advance the political process on Western Sahara”, and that he would “remain guided by the clear precedents set by his predecessors”. The most recent initiative—round-table talks, which De Mistura's predecessor Horst Köhler launched and which had been deemed promising before his resignation in

2019—involved Morocco; the Polisario Front, the independence movement for Western Sahara; Algeria; and Mauritania.

On 5 July, de Mistura met in Rabat with Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita. He had planned to visit Laayoune in Western Sahara, which is administered by Morocco, but cancelled this part of his visit without explanation. De Mistura returned to the region in September to engage other stakeholders. On 2 September, he travelled to Tindouf in Algeria, visiting the Tindouf refugee camps and meeting with Polisario Front Secretary-General Brahim Ghali. He next travelled to Algiers on 5 September to meet with the Algerian authorities and then to Nouakchott for meetings with the Mauritanian authorities on 10 September.

De Mistura has faced complex regional dynamics since starting his role. Algeria suspended diplomatic ties with Morocco in August 2021. In March, Spain shifted its long-standing position of “active neutrality” on Western Sahara by saying it supported Morocco's autonomy plan for the territory, which Spain governed until 1975. (Morocco's autonomy plan, which it submitted to the UN in 2007, calls for integrating the territory into Morocco, with the Sahrawi people managing their internal affairs while being represented externally by Morocco.) The policy shift eased tensions between

Western Sahara

the two countries that had existed since the spring of 2021 when Madrid allowed Ghali to receive medical treatment for COVID-19 in Spain, and Morocco appeared to loosen border controls that led over 10,000 migrants to enter the Spanish North African enclave of Ceuta. On 24 June, approximately a month after Spain re-opened its land borders with Morocco, at least 23 migrants were killed attempting to cross from Morocco into the Spanish North African city of Melilla; videos showed Moroccan security forces using excessive force against the migrants. Council members discussed the incident, at Kenya's request, under "any other business" in closed consultations on 29 June. On 6 August, Algeria announced it was suspending its cooperation treaty with Spain, in force since 2002, because of Spain's recognition of Morocco's autonomy plan.

On 21 August, Morocco's King Mohammed VI called on his country's partners to "clarify" their position over Western Sahara "in an unequivocal manner". King Mohammed VI added, "I would like to send a clear message to the world: the Sahara issue is the prism through which Morocco views its international environment." On 26 August, Morocco recalled its ambassador to Tunisia after the country invited Ghali to the 8th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD-8), held on 27 and 28 August in Tunis. On 27 August, Tunisia recalled its ambassador to Rabat.

In another controversy, new Kenyan president William Ruto announced on Twitter on 12 September that Kenya was rescinding its recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which the Polisario Front proclaimed in 1976, and was winding down SADR's presence in Kenya. The announcement represented a major policy change by Kenya and occurred the day after Ghali attended Ruto's inauguration. As widely reported, Ruto wants to subsidise fertilisers for Kenyan farmers and has been discussing a trade deal with Morocco, which is Africa's leading producer of fertilisers and controls the world's largest phosphate reserves used to produce fertilisers that have become much more costly since the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The tweet was subsequently deleted, while another tweet, saying that Kenya supported the UN framework as the exclusive mechanism to find a lasting solution to the dispute, remained on Ruto's account.

On 24 August, the offices of UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme in Algeria warned that Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf were at risk of severe food insecurity and malnutrition after funding gaps had forced the WFP to cut food rations in the Tindouf camps by 75 percent. They attributed the funding shortfall to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in global food and fuel prices, and the effects of the war in Ukraine.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members to consider is how to bring all parties to the negotiating table. Resolution 2602 of 29 October 2021 called on all parties to resume negotiations with a view to "achieving

a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara". At the time of the last Council meeting, de Mistura was still pondering his mediation approach to Western Sahara.

Significant obstacles remain in the peace process. The Polisario Front announced in November 2020 that it would no longer respect the ceasefire agreement it signed with Morocco in 1991. The announcement followed Morocco's deployment of armed forces into a buffer zone after Polisario protesters blocked traffic between the Moroccan-controlled side of Western Sahara and Mauritania at the border town of Guerguerat. Regional dynamics, such as tensions between Algeria and Morocco, further complicate prospects for a reinvigorated peace process.

The current MINURSO mandate noted previous Personal Envoy Köhler's intent to invite Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria, and Mauritania to meet again in the round-table format. For the upcoming mandate renewal, Council members will have the opportunity to map out their expectations for a political process and express support for any strategy or approach that De Mistura is developing. Members could further consider requesting the Secretary-General to issue a report on Western Sahara before the Council convenes on the matter in March. (Currently, the Council meets twice a year on Western Sahara, usually every six months. The Secretary-General traditionally issues one annual report covering Western Sahara in October ahead of the mandate renewal date.)

The human rights situation is another issue of concern. The Secretary-General's reports on Western Sahara often flag reports received by OHCHR about human rights restrictions and violations in Moroccan-controlled areas of Western Sahara, as well as in the Tindouf camps.

Council Dynamics

The US, the penholder on Western Sahara, recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the region in December 2020 during the Trump administration. The Biden administration has not changed this position. The US tends to favour a renewal with little substantive change and advocates for a "mutually beneficial solution" to the situation. This approach has the support of most Council members, with strong calls for the holding of a referendum in the minority. France has traditionally supported the Moroccan autonomy plan, and Gabon and the United Arab Emirates are also supportive of Morocco. Council members Ghana, Kenya and Mexico maintain diplomatic relations with SADR.

Adoptions of MINURSO's mandate renewal have not been unanimous since 2017, with Russia citing the lack of reference to the right to self-determination in recent mandates. Last year, Russia advocated the deletion of the word "realistic"—a term first introduced in MINURSO's mandate in resolution 2414 of 27 April 2018—in reference to finding a political solution, arguing that the term was not based on international law.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will hold its quarterly consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan (UNDOF).

Key Recent Developments

Council members held consultations on UNDOF on 21 June, which featured a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari. Khiari reportedly mentioned the 10 June Israeli airstrikes at Damascus International Airport, noting that attacks on civilian infrastructure violate international law. Media reports have suggested that Israel initiated the attack because of concerns that Iran was using civilian flights to the airport to ship arms to Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based militant group.

The Council unanimously adopted resolution 2639 on 27 June, renewing the UNDOF mandate for six months, until 31 December, as had been recommended by the Secretary-General in his 1 June report on the mission.

On 15 July, Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa of Nepal as UNDOF's new Force Commander and head of mission.

On 19 September, Israeli forces fired on and wounded a Syrian man who was allegedly throwing explosive objects over a fence on Israel's border with Syria in the southern Golan.

The Secretary-General issued his latest UNDOF report on 22 September. The report expressed concern about continued violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement signed by Israel and Syria in 1974. This includes firing by Israel into the separation area and across the ceasefire line, as well as the presence of Syrian troops in the separation area. In light of ongoing violations of the agreement – as well as the difficult security environment in the

southern section of the Bravo side's limitation area (that is, the Syrian side)—the Secretary-General expressed particular concern about the safety and security of UNDOF peacekeepers.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is the ongoing violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement of 1974. The Council could consider pursuing a statement urging parties to adhere to their commitments under the agreement while expressing concern about the risk of escalation resulting from these violations. Such a statement could call on the parties to reengage in negotiations on the Golan, which have not taken place since 2008.

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2639 on 27 June demonstrated that the Council remains unified in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. There was little apparent disagreement in the negotiations, and no member states felt the need to give an explanation of vote following the adoption. Despite deep divisions overall on the Council regarding the Syria file, as well as opposing positions held by co-penholders Russia and the US about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, the two countries have considered UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. The antagonism between Russia and the US over the conflict in Ukraine also does not appear to have affected the negotiations on the mandate in June.

Council members India and Ireland have a particular interest in UNDOF, as both contribute a significant number of peacekeepers to the mission. As at 20 August, the mission comprised 1,117 troops, including 198 from India and 130 from Ireland.

Mali

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will hold its quarterly briefing on Mali, followed by consultations. Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) El-Ghassim Wane is expected to brief. The mandate of MINUSMA expires on 30 June 2023.

Key Recent Developments

Relations have grown increasingly strained between MINUSMA and Mali's transitional authorities this year. When the Council adopted resolution 2640 on 30 June, renewing MINUSMA's mandate, Mali's UN ambassador said that Mali opposed MINUSMA's freedom of movement in executing its human rights mandate. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix then visited Mali from 24 to 28 July for discussion with the authorities on the mandate and a planned strategic review of the mission. LaCroix's visit took place after Mali had suspended all MINUSMA troop rotations on 14 July after arresting 49 soldiers from Côte d'Ivoire at Bamako on

10 July. Authorities said that the Ivorians arrived in Mali without permission; the incident also led to Mali's expulsion of MINUSMA's spokesperson Olivier Salgado on 20 July.

On 15 August, MINUSMA resumed troop rotations as discussions continued between Mali and the UN to update procedures for conducting and informing authorities about deployments of mission personnel. Togo has mediated between Mali and Côte d'Ivoire over releasing the detained Ivorian soldiers, who deployed to Mali to provide security for German national support personnel assisting Germany's contingents in MINUSMA. On 3 September, Mali released three women Ivorian soldiers in what it described as a "humanitarian gesture". Transitional president Assimi Goïta appeared to suggest that Côte d'Ivoire turn over Malian politicians living in political asylum in Côte d'Ivoire in exchange for releasing the other Ivorian soldiers in a 9 September speech. On 22 September, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) discussed the situation of the detained soldiers during an extraordinary summit in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly high-level

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2639 (27 June 2022) renewed the mandate of UNDOF for six months. S/RES/350 (31 May 1974) established UNDOF. Secretary-General's Report S/2022/711 (22 September 2022) was the Secretary-General's quarterly UNDOF report. S/2022/447 (1 June 2022) was the Secretary-General's quarterly UNDOF report.

Mali

week. ECOWAS denounced the detentions as “blackmail” by Malian authorities. It called for the soldiers’ unconditional release and announced that it would dispatch a high-level mission of the heads of states of Ghana, Senegal and Togo for this purpose. Mali’s interim Prime Minister Abdoulaye Maïga strongly criticised the leaders of Côte d’Ivoire and Niger, as well as the French government two days later during his General Assembly speech on 24 September. The UN Secretariat called for the urgent release of the Ivorian soldiers in a 26 September statement.

On 7 August, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) killed 42 Malian soldiers in Tessit, Gao region, according to Malian authorities, who added that 22 soldiers were wounded and 37 ISGS militants were killed in the fighting. It was the deadliest attack against the military since 2019. Since March, the northern regions of Menaka and Gao have been the scene of fighting between ISGS, the Al-Qaida-affiliated Group for the Support of Muslims (JNIM), and other armed groups, according to some estimates causing around 1,000 civilian deaths and displacing tens of thousands more. On 6 September, ISGS militants seized the town of Talataye, killing at least 30 civilians. On 18 September, Mali’s security forces and suspected mercenaries of the Russian private security company, the Wagner Group, reportedly killed 35 civilians, mostly ethnic Fulani, in the village of Gouni in the central Mopti region. Meanwhile, beginning in mid-July, JNIM-affiliated forces conducted several attacks near Bamako, including on the military garrison town of Kati, from which successful coups d’état were staged in 2012 and 2020. The attacks demonstrated the expanding reach of terrorist groups in the south and the growing threat to Mali’s capital.

On 15 August, France announced the withdrawal of its last remaining forces from Operation Barkhane in Mali. In February, France said it would end the regional counter-terrorism operation in Mali because of escalating tensions with Mali’s transitional authorities. Mali’s Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop called for an emergency meeting of the Council in a 15 August letter to the Security Council presidency, accusing France of multiple violations of its airspace and providing intelligence and arms to terrorist groups.

During talks from 1 to 5 August between authorities and armed groups that had signed the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, the sides agreed to integrate 26,000 ex-combatants into the defence forces and other state institutions. A high-level meeting of the Agreement Monitoring Committee (CSA) was held on 2 September; it was the first meeting of the CSA, which is meant to meet monthly, since October 2021.

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. The Council established the sanctions regime in 2017 to increase pressure on the parties to the 2015 peace agreement to implement the accord.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 15 August statement, the independent expert on the human rights situation in Mali, Alioune Tine, expressed grave concern over the deterioration of the security and human rights situation following a 10-day visit to the country. The statement noted “dramatic increases” in human rights

violations, with MINUSMA documenting 1,304 violations and abuses from 1 January to 30 June, a 47.17 percent increase from the previous six-month period. While violent extremist groups continue to be the main alleged perpetrators, in some cases, there were credible reports of violations committed by Malian defence and security forces, along with foreign military personnel described as Russian military officials.

On 31 August, MINUSMA issued its quarterly human rights report, covering the period 1 April to 30 June. It documented 467 violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, a decrease of 42 percent compared to the previous quarter. The report found that JNIM, ISGS and similar groups were responsible for 64 percent of human rights abuses. Malian defence and security forces also committed serious violations, including executions, torture and arbitrary arrests. The report noted a significant decrease in violations attributable to Malian forces, however, from 320 during the first quarter of 2022 to 122 in the second quarter.

Key Issues and Options

Strained relations between MINUSMA and transitional authorities is a key issue, calling into question MINUSMA’s ability to carry out its mandate. The UN is conducting a strategic review of MINUSMA, pursuant to resolution 2640, which is to be submitted by 13 January 2023. The review should include analysis of the political and security challenges affecting the mission’s ability to implement its mandate, an assessment of cooperation with the host country authorities and movement restrictions, recommendations about the necessary conditions for MINUSMA to continue operating, and options for MINUSMA’s future configuration, force levels, and uniformed personnel ceiling.

The deteriorating security situation remains a critical issue. This includes the expanding threat posed by terrorist groups, who increasingly appear to threaten Bamako and southern Mali. Related to this are issues regarding the protection of civilians in the face of continuing terrorist attacks and intercommunal violence, as well as reported human rights violations and abuses by security forces during counter-terrorism operations. The forthcoming strategic review of MINUSMA is expected to inform Council decisions on MINUSMA.

Mali’s political transition to restore constitutional order is an ongoing key issue. The new timetable for completing the transition is set for 26 March 2024. Likewise, making progress in the long-stalled 2015 peace agreement between the government and northern armed groups remains a key issue. The Council could invite ECOWAS, which has led efforts to promote Mali’s transition, to brief. As recommended by the Mali Panel of Experts, members could also encourage ECOWAS to pay equal attention to the implementation of the peace agreement in its engagement with Mali. The 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee may continue outreach activities to improve sanctions compliance by Mali and regional states.

Council Dynamics

Council discussion on Mali has become increasingly polarised this year. In the vote on MINUSMA’s mandate renewal, China and Russia abstained, marking the first time the mandate was adopted without consensus. China and Russia have been supportive of transitional authorities’ positions and views, pitting them against the US and European members on several issues, including reported

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2649 (30 August 2022) renewed the Mali sanctions regime for an additional year. S/RES/2640 (29 June 2022) extended the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2023. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9082 (29 June 2022) contained the explanation of votes at the adoption of resolution 2640 renewing MINUSMA’s mandate. Security Council Press Statement SC/14958 (5 July 2022) condemned an attack earlier that day in which two MINUSMA peacekeepers from Egypt were killed and five were wounded.

Mali

human rights abuses by Mali's security forces and restrictions on MINUSMA's activities. US and European members are also critical of Mali's decision to partner with the Wagner Group, which contributed to the decision by France and other Western countries to end their counter-terrorism operations in Mali. The three African members (A3)—Gabon, Ghana and Kenya— play an important role in Council negotiations on Mali. Despite tensions between ECOWAS and the transitional authorities over delays

in restoring constitutional order, the A3 are cautious about criticising Mali, particularly over human rights, which they believe could prove counter-productive to MINUSMA's efforts to induce cooperation.

France is the penholder on Mali. Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) chairs the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee. France and Mexico served as co-penholders on resolution 2649 renewing the sanctions regime.

Kosovo

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold its second briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo. Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Ziakeh will brief on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest report. Serbia is expected to participate under rule 37 and Kosovo under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Key Recent Developments

While the EU-facilitated talks remain at an impasse, relations between Belgrade and Pristina have been generally stable since the Council's last briefing on 20 April. On 21 June, Kosovar and Serbian officials agreed on a roadmap to implement energy agreements made in 2013 and 2015. The roughly 50,000 Kosovo Serbs living in the northern part of Kosovo have never paid for electricity, causing Kosovo's electricity provider (KOSTT) to declare financial hardship in recent years. The roadmap stipulates that after Pristina issues a licence allowing Drustvo Elektrosever—a subsidiary energy company of the Serbian state-run Elektroprivreda—to operate in Kosovo, Drustvo Elektrosever will assume distribution services in the four northern Serb-majority municipalities of Kosovo. While the roadmap did not provide a specific implementation timeline, its adoption was welcomed by EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Miroslav Lajčák, who described the agreement as “a major step forward”.

Despite this achievement, tensions on the Kosovo-Serbia border escalated in July over the long-standing dispute over license plates. From 2011 to 2021, Kosovo and Serbia had an arrangement under which Kosovo admitted vehicles displaying either KS (Kosovo) license plates, which are acceptable to Serbia, or RKS (Republic of Kosovo) plates, which are not. After the agreement expired on 15 September 2021, Pristina began enforcing a new policy requiring all vehicles in Kosovo to display the RKS license plate, leading hundreds of Kosovo Serbs to protest at the border. After two days of EU-facilitated negotiations in Brussels, the sides reached a provisional agreement on 30 September 2021 under which special stickers would replace national symbols on vehicle license plates.

On 29 June, however, Pristina officials announced that they would move forward with implementing the license plate policy they had postponed in September 2021, and that from 30 September,

vehicles with Serbian licence plates would be required to bear RKS plates. They also decided that, as of 1 August, all Serbians entering Kosovo would be issued a temporary Kosovo identification card, valid for 90 days, in place of Serbian-issued identification documents. On 31 July, over tensions between Kosovo police and Kosovo Serbs near the Jarinje and Bernjak border crossings and following consultations with EU and US officials, Pristina again postponed the policy's implementation, now until 31 October. Prime Minister Albin Kurti of Kosovo and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić met twice in August, under the auspices of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and Lajčák, to discuss the license plate dispute and Pristina's identification card policy.

On 27 August, the two leaders reached an agreement allowing all citizens to travel freely between Kosovo and Serbia using either Belgrade- or Pristina-issued identification cards. Three days later, Belgrade issued a “general disclaimer”, saying that “enabling the use of identity cards by Pristina...cannot be interpreted as recognition of unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo”. While a settlement was reached on the issue of identification cards, the leaders were unable to break the license plate impasse.

Kosovo and Serbian authorities have since taken steps to ease tensions along the border. On 5 September, Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić visited Kosovo for the first time since assuming office in 2017. During her visit, she expressed willingness to “compromise in the interest of peace and stability”. On the same day, Kosovo ministers visited areas in southern Serbia where ethnic Albanians make up the majority of the population. Nonetheless, anticipating a potential escalation of friction along the Kosovo-Serbia border leading up to the 31 October license plate deadline, on 21 September NATO reportedly called up for training reserve soldiers assigned to Kosovo Force (KFOR), numbering the size of a battalion, which can include up to 1,000 soldiers. KFOR is currently composed of approximately 3,700 troops.

Key Issues and Options

The Council's main priority is to maintain stability in Kosovo. A key issue for the Council in this regard is how to prevent escalation of tensions along the Kosovo-Serbia border arising from the enforcement of Pristina's license plate policy. Council members could consider pursuing a presidential statement urging both

Kosovo

parties to re-engage in diplomatic efforts to advance the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and to renounce the threat or use of force against one another.

The delay in implementing existing agreements within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue, including the establishment of an association of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, also remains a key issue for the Council. Members may wish to convene an informal interactive dialogue (IID) or a private meeting to discuss this issue with representatives from Kosovo and Serbia and the participation of Borrell and Lajčák.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting the EU-facilitated dialogue to establish conditions for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Members also share the expectation that both sides will engage without preconditions and in good faith, implement existing agreements, and refrain from actions and rhetoric that may increase tensions.

Nevertheless, deep divisions among permanent members have continued to characterise the Council's approach to the issue. Among the five permanent Council members, France, the UK and the US

recognise Kosovo's independence and tend to be supportive of its government; China and Russia do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia's position and its claim to territorial integrity. Five elected members (Albania, Gabon, Ireland, Norway, and the United Arab Emirates) recognise Kosovo's independence, while five (Brazil, Ghana, India, Kenya, and Mexico) do not.

The issue of modifying UNMIK's mandate and its possible draw-down is another point of contention among Council members. The US has been the most vocal proponent of ending UNMIK's mandate as well as reducing the frequency of briefings, citing the level of stability in Kosovo. Similarly, the UK has called for a review of UNMIK's mandate, arguing that conditions on the ground have completely changed since UNMIK was established 22 years ago. At the Council's last briefing on 20 April, Albania also questioned UNMIK's *raison d'être*, noting that its "competencies and responsibilities have been gradually transferred to the Kosovo authorities".

UNMIK's mandate, established in 1999, is unique among the missions routinely addressed by the Council in that it is open-ended. Any attempt to change the mandate and draw down the mission would require a new resolution, which Russia would most likely strongly oppose.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), which is set to expire on 31 October. The Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee Fergal Mythen (Ireland) is also expected to brief the Council.

The 751 Somalia sanctions regime expires on 15 November, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee expires on 15 December.

Key Recent Developments

On 7 September, the Council received a briefing from Special Representative for Somalia and head of UNSOM James Swan, who explained the priorities laid out by the new government following the conclusion of the protracted Somali electoral process in May and expressed the UN's commitment to support these priorities. He also noted that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released \$350 million to Somalia in June and that other donors have also resumed budgetary support to the country. As part of his visit to Washington, DC in September, President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud reportedly met with the managing director of the IMF and the president of the World Bank Group to mobilise support from the international financial institutions for his government's reform efforts as well as the humanitarian response to the drought in Somalia.

Swan recognised the encouraging steps taken by Mahmoud to improve relations between the federal government and the federal member states. On 11-12 September, Mahmoud reportedly convened the National Consultative Council with the participation of

federal member state leaders to discuss efforts aimed at addressing the security and humanitarian situations in the country and enhancing cooperation between the federal government and federal member states on the implementation of national priorities. However, there have also been some setbacks recently, such as the decision by federal member states to suspend cooperation with the federal ministry of finance in relation to disputes over allocation of financial resources. This move apparently followed the World Bank's release in July of a \$100 million grant to Somalia in support of the reform efforts. The federal member states have also raised issues regarding the delay in the disbursement of a \$9.6 million donation by the United Arab Emirates to assist relief efforts. Furthermore, in a 15 September press release, Puntland State opposed the implementation of the Somalia Petroleum Act 2020, which it said had been approved by the parliament without consultation with the federal member states.

The persistent threat posed by the armed group Al-Shabaab continues to be a major preoccupation for Somalia and the international community. In his 7 September Council briefing, Swan noted the importance the new government places on the fight against Al-Shabaab. According to an 11 September government press release, Somali security forces have retaken control of several towns and villages in Galmudug, Hirshabelle and South West States from Al-Shabaab, with the support of the local population. On 20 September, Somali security forces reportedly captured a strategic village in Hiiraan, Hirshabelle State, which is said to have been under Al-Shabaab control for the last 13 years. During his visit to Washington, Mahmoud met with senior US government officials, including

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2632](#) (26 May 2022) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 October 2022. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/392](#) (7 September 2022) was on the situation in Somalia, covering developments from 1 February to 6 May 2022. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9125](#) (7 September 2022) was a briefing on the situation in Somalia.

Somalia

the secretaries of state and defence, to garner support for these latest counter-terrorism operations by Somali security forces. In a 21 September press release, the US Africa Command said it had conducted airstrikes against Al-Shabaab on 18 September near Buulobarde, in the Hiiraan region, upon the request of the Somali federal government.

Resolution 2628 of 31 March requested the UN to submit a proposal for benchmarks and indicators by the end of September to measure the effectiveness of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan and National Security Architecture. This proposal is to be prepared in consultation with the Somali government, the AU, the EU and other donors. Swan reported to the Security Council that work on the benchmarks and indicators is advancing. He expressed concern, however, over funding constraints for ATMIS salary stipends and for the Somali Security Forces Trust Fund. He appealed for urgent contributions from donors to address this challenge.

Pursuant to resolution 2632 of 26 May, which requested the Secretary-General to undertake a strategic review of UNSOM, a team under the leadership of Ian Martin, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), visited Somalia and Ethiopia between 1 and 9 August to conduct consultations with the Somali federal government, regional states, UN agencies, the AU, ATMIS, women and youth civil society representatives, and international partners. The team's report was also expected by the end of September and is likely to inform UNSOM's mandate renewal process in October.

Somalia is facing its worst drought in four decades. The drought has affected 7.8 million people—nearly half of the Somali population—and led to the displacement of more than one million. In his 7 September briefing to the Council, Swan described the efforts by humanitarian actors to provide assistance to 5.3 million Somalis despite challenges to humanitarian access. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths visited the country for five days in early September to assess the situation on the ground and meet with federal and regional authorities, affected communities, and partners. In his 15 September Council briefing on conflict and food insecurity, Griffiths said that “if we want Somalia to survive the famines that will come, late this year and into next year, we need attention from the climate community—from Member States who have pledged money, all of which has not reached its destination”.

Sanctions-Related Development

The Panel of Experts assisting the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee is expected to submit its final report by 15 October. Pursuant to resolution

2607 of 15 November 2021, the Secretary-General has already submitted a technical assessment of Somalia's weapons and ammunition management capability. The assessment is likely to inform the upcoming negotiation on the extension of the 751 Somalia sanctions regime in November.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 51st session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 5 October on the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan (A/HRC/51/65). The report, covering 1 July 2021 to 30 June, provided an update on progress achieved to date by Somali authorities on seven key benchmarks, including protection of civilians, rule of law, freedom of expression and assembly, and women's and children's rights. “Unfortunately, delayed elections left no room for progress on these issues”, the report concluded.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in October 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 by the end of September. A possible option is for Council members to extend UNSOM's mandate for one year and request the mission to align its support to the government's priorities.

Furthermore, Council members could be keen to look at the benchmarks and indicators for the effectiveness of ATMIS and the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan and National Security Architecture. The penholder, the UK, could consider convening an informal meeting of Council members to discuss the outcome of the strategic review and the benchmark exercise ahead of negotiations on UNSOM's mandate renewal.

Council Dynamics

Council members support the government's priorities and look forward to the upcoming UNSOM mandate renewal in October. They also recognise the many challenges facing the country, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab, and support ongoing efforts to fight this group. However, some members believe that a security approach will not be sufficient, and underscore the need to make progress in governance, justice and economic reforms. Other Council members emphasise the need for progress in implementing the Somali Transition Plan, including national force generation, and look forward to clear and realistic benchmarks and indicators requested by resolution 2628. African members and China have raised the funding challenge facing ATMIS and called for adequate, sustainable and predictable financing for the mission.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In October, Security Council members will receive their semi-annual briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559. Adopted in 2004, the resolution

called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all militias, and the extension of government control over the whole Lebanese territory. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is expected to brief

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2650 (31 August 2022) renewed the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2023. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over the whole territory of Lebanon.

Lebanon

The Secretary-General's report is due on 12 October.

Key Recent Developments

Over four months since the 15 May legislative elections, Lebanon remains without a government, as caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Lebanese President Michel Aoun have so far failed to reach an agreement on the composition of the cabinet.

On 29 September, Lebanon's Parliament convened for the first session to elect the country's next president. However, no candidate garnered the necessary number of votes. Although Aoun's presidential term is set to expire on 31 October, he recently said that he might not step down should a government not be appointed before the end of his term. (The Lebanese president is elected by the Parliament and, according to Lebanon's power-sharing arrangement, must be a Maronite Christian, while the prime minister is a Sunni Muslim and the parliamentary speaker a Shi'a Muslim.)

US Senior Advisor for Global Energy Security Amos Hochstein is mediating indirect talks between Israel and Lebanon on the demarcation of the maritime border between the two states. In June, the arrival at the Karish natural gas field in the eastern Mediterranean of a floating production, storage and offloading vessel to extract gas for Israel sparked renewed tensions between Lebanon and Israel. During his latest visit to Lebanon, Hochstein said on 9 September that the negotiations had made "very good progress" but more work was needed to finalise an agreement.

On 31 August, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2650, which extended the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for another year. (For more information, see our 30 August *What's in Blue* story.) The resolution extended UNIFIL's support to the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) through the supply of non-lethal, material and logistical support for six months. Resolution 2650 condemned the maintenance of arms outside state control by "armed groups". It also added new language on UNIFIL's freedom of movement, saying that, according to the 1995 Agreement on the Status of the UN Interim Forces in Lebanon (SOFA), "UNIFIL is authorized to conduct its operation independently" and demanding that the parties cease restrictions on UNIFIL's movement including by allowing "announced and unannounced patrols".

Some of this language was seemingly not well received by some Lebanese actors. Following the adoption of resolution 2650, the Lebanese Foreign Affairs Ministry said that the resolution included "wording that does not conform to the framework agreement Lebanon has signed with the UN". An official from the Shi'a group Hezbollah declared that the resolution turned UNIFIL's "forces into occupation forces".

In a 12 September statement, the UNIFIL Spokesperson's office said that recently "a great deal of misinformation and disinformation about UNIFIL's mandate" had been circulating in the media and that "UNIFIL has always had the mandate to undertake patrols in its area of operations" with or without the LAF. This response followed through on another element introduced by resolution 2650, requesting UNIFIL to address "disinformation and misinformation" against the mission.

The Lebanese population continues to face the consequences of a severe socioeconomic crisis. After months of deliberations, the

Lebanese Parliament adopted the 2022 state budget on 26 September. The 2022 budget adoption is one of the conditions for Lebanon to unlock a deal with the International Monetary Fund worth around \$3 billion.

According to a recent UNICEF survey, 70 percent of households in Lebanon rely on credit or borrow money to buy food, and 23 percent of children went to bed hungry in the three months before the survey. UNICEF's study shows that children are aware of the crisis' impact on their lives and many feel that emigration "is their only hope for a better future".

Several incidents, many of them leading to fatalities, have occurred in recent weeks involving boats departing from Lebanon reportedly carrying Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian migrants. On 6 September, a four-year-old child died in transit to a hospital after the boat she was in with about 60 other passengers was stranded for days at sea between Greece and Malta. Six people died on 12 September when their boat sank off the coast of Türkiye. Over 100 people died after their boat sank near Syria's coast on 22 September. The three boats were reportedly heading to Italy. Cypriot authorities rescued over 400 people in two separate vessels stranded at sea between 19 and 20 September.

4 August marked two years since the Beirut port explosion. Several damaged silos that were left standing eventually collapsed between July and August because of fires generated by the summer temperatures and the fermentation of grain that had been left on site since the explosion. The national inquiry into the responsibilities for the blast has been blocked several times and is currently suspended. On 3 August, six UN Human Rights Council (HRC) independent experts and a group of Lebanese and international NGOs issued separate statements calling for the HRC to establish an international investigation into the explosion.

Women, Peace and Security

According to a 6 July summary letter on the June visit to Lebanon by members of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security (IEG), the UN in Lebanon supports several projects aimed at training women in mediation skills and conflict prevention and resolution. The women who participated in some of these projects reported several positive results, including that the programme helped them to build "networks across communities, thereby diminishing the fear of attacks, preventing violence, fostering dialogue and tolerance". However, participants also faced "resistance from within families", including a participant who "reported facing death threats for being active in her community and for calling for the disarmament of children".

Key Issues and Options

The instability that could ensue from a delayed presidential election and a possible power vacuum is a potential issue for the Council. A prolonged presidential crisis—like the two-year impasse that preceded the election of Aoun on 31 October 2016—is likely to add another aggravating factor to Lebanon's longstanding socioeconomic crisis.

If the process of appointing Aoun's successor stalls, then the Council may consider issuing a statement encouraging the swift election of a president to avert further political instability. (Resolution 2650 contains new language based on a 7 July press statement calling on Lebanese leaders to "ensure adherence to the constitutional calendar so that the presidential election takes place on time".

Lebanon

On 21 September, France, Saudi Arabia and the US issued a joint statement stressing the importance of a timely presidential election.)

The substantial amount of weaponry held by Hezbollah and other non-state actors in Lebanon is an ongoing issue for the Council. The latest Secretary-General's report on resolution 1559 said that "incidents between Lebanon and Israel are a reminder of the risks posed by the maintenance of weapons outside State authority, the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon, and regular violations by Israel of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Council members will continue to monitor developments related to the US-mediated talks between Israel and Lebanon on the maritime border demarcation. On 17 September, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said that his party "is giving a real chance" to the negotiations but also that gas extraction by Israel in the Karish field before a deal with Lebanon is agreed would be a red line, adding that Hezbollah's "missiles are locked on Karish". On 19 September, Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid said that extraction of gas from Karish "is not related to the negotiations" and that production would start as soon as possible.

Council Dynamics

There is consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. Council members also broadly agree on the need for the Lebanese government to carry out reforms to overcome the socioeconomic crisis and on the importance of a timely presidential election. Although more contentious than in 2021, the negotiations on resolution 2650 showed that consensus still exists among Council members on UNIFIL's core mandate or, at least, that members are willing to find compromises to retain this consensus even where their views do not precisely align.

Marked differences among members remain regarding Hezbollah. Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon. In contrast, the UK—which unsuccessfully requested that Hezbollah be directly mentioned in resolution 2650—and the US see Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation and a source of instability. During the negotiations on resolution 2650, the United Arab Emirates broke silence to demand the inclusion of stronger language condemning the possession of weapons by "armed groups" outside of the state's control, a request that was accommodated by the penholder, France.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), which will be entitled "Strengthening women's resilience in areas plagued by armed groups". UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and two women civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

An outcome is not expected.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's annual report on WPS—expected ahead of the open debate—will provide an update on the implementation of the agenda over the past year. The focus of this year's report is expected to be on women's rights and, specifically, on "turning the unconditional defence of women's rights into one of the most visible and identifiable markers" of the UN's work on peace and security. This was one of the "five goals for the decade" set out in the Secretary-General's 2020 annual report on WPS. In particular, the 2021 WPS annual report said that this year's report "must include recommendations for better protection for women human rights defenders [WHRDs] and against all political violence in public life, and lessons learned from recent developments, including in Afghanistan and the evacuation or attempted evacuation of women at risk".

The Council formally discussed reprisals against WHRDs for the first time in January at the open debate on "Protecting participation: addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes", convened by Norway. (This was preceded by the February 2020 Arria-formula meeting on reprisals against WHRDs and women peacebuilders who engage with the Council and its subsidiary bodies.) Then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Michelle Bachelet, NGO Working Group on WPS Executive Director Kaavya Asoka, and Women and Children Legal Research Foundation Executive Director Zarqa Yaftali briefed.

The briefers described patterns of attacks aimed at silencing women leaders and WHRDs across the globe, including women cooperating with the UN. Bachelet stressed that more needs to be done to provide safe spaces for WHRDs to "interact with the Council and its subsidiary bodies, without fear of retribution".

Asoka said that approximately one-third of the women supported by the NGO Working Group on WPS who have briefed the Council since 2018 faced intimidation or reprisals; in about 67 percent of those cases, state actors were the perpetrators. She described how civil society received grossly insufficient political and material support in responding to cases of reprisals and highlighted ways in which member states and the UN could better work to counter reprisals, such as the UN having sufficient capacity to do so and establishing clear protocols on how it should respond to individual cases.

Yaftali, who focused on the situation of women in Afghanistan, said that in her October 2020 briefing to the Council, she had demanded that the international community protect "hard-won gains" in women's participation, but "[t]he world did not listen".

Since September 2021, Council members have explicitly focused a meeting on Somalia (September 2021) and one on Yemen (January) on WPS. Moreover, members discussed the situation of women and girls regularly in meetings on Afghanistan, and two of the many recent meetings on Ukraine (in April and June) focused on aspects of the WPS agenda. In addition to the annual open debate on WPS in October 2021, the annual meeting on conflict-related sexual violence in April and the open debate on protecting participation in

UN DOCUMENTS ON WPS Security Council Resolution S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on WPS. Secretary-General's Report S/2021/827 (27 September 2021) was the Secretary-General's annual report on WPS.

Women, Peace and Security

January, the Council held two open debates under the WPS agenda item: on public-private partnerships in March and on the role of regional organisations in contexts of violent takeovers in June. The November 2021 annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations also had a WPS focus. Some months saw a high number of women civil society representatives briefing the Council, with Ireland setting a new record of 16 women civil society briefers during its September 2021 presidency, followed by Albania in June (13) and Norway in January (11). Often after overcoming opposition, members strengthened WPS language in several Council products, including on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan in March and on the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (Yemen) in July.

The high number of meetings with a focus on WPS issues and of women civil society briefers is in no small part attributable to the WPS Security Council presidencies initiative. Ireland, Kenya and Mexico started the initiative as a Presidency Trio for WPS in September, October and November 2021, respectively. At various times between December 2021 and September, Albania, Brazil, France, Gabon, Niger, Norway, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the UK signed up to a 1 December 2021 statement of shared commitments on WPS, which built on the presidency trio initiative. This statement was also endorsed by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. Security Council Report's upcoming research report *Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative* will analyse this initiative, highlighting best practices, challenges and ways forward.

Since October 2021, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS has met seven times. In recent months, the IEG held meetings on Sudan (23 May), "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (24 June), and the Central African Republic (26 August). The 24 June meeting marked the first time the IEG discussed the situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The IEG is expected to meet on Iraq in October and to hold its third meeting with women's protection advisers from several UN missions in November.

From 28 to 30 June, IEG members Brazil, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the UAE, and the UK undertook a visiting mission to Lebanon. While field visits focused on WPS were envisaged in the 2016 IEG guidelines, this was the first such visit by members of the IEG. Among other objectives listed in the summary report on the visiting mission, the visit aimed at familiarising members "with the tangible implications on the ground of language on [WPS] in mandates".

Key Issues and Options

The principal issue for the Security Council remains the full implementation of its WPS resolutions. Within the Council, this could include enhancing cross-presidency planning on WPS to promote robust and continuous Council engagement on WPS across the Council's work. Members could use the information from IEG meetings to address specific points during Council meetings and negotiations and to develop ways of following up more systematically on the implementation of the recommendations put forward by UNWomen contained in the IEG co-chair's letters. At the end of the year, the current IEG co-chairs, Ireland and Mexico, will conclude their term on the Council. Ireland and Mexico might be interested in sharing best practices from their term with the incoming IEG co-chairs.

Members might be interested in convening a closed Arria-formula meeting with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mary Lawlor, the representatives of relevant UN entities, and NGO coalitions to discuss ways to reinforce the prevention and response to reprisals against human rights defenders, including WHRDs. The organisers may want to include a focus on the interaction between long-term and short-term strategies to prevent reprisals and circulate a summary of the proceedings after the meeting.

Members may continue to invite diverse women civil society representatives to brief the Council. The 1 December 2021 statement of shared WPS commitments contains a commitment to follow up on recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers. Members participating in the initiative may want to develop ways to monitor the impact of their commitment to follow up on the concerns expressed by civil society briefers.

Council Dynamics

The prevalent perception among Council members supportive of the WPS agenda—and several civil society actors—is that the fundamental dynamics on WPS remain largely unchanged and have likely been complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. These actors emphasise the importance of implementing the existing normative framework on WPS rather than pursuing further Council outcomes, in order to avoid language that is redundant or less robust than the existing content of WPS resolutions. Accordingly, it seems that while the possibility of an outcome ahead of the WPS open debates in October, June and October 2021 was informally considered by Gabon, Albania and Kenya, respectively, in each case the decision was taken not to go forward. Against these complicated dynamics, the WPS presidencies initiative conferred heightened visibility to the agenda at the Council and allowed an exceptional number of women civil society representatives to brief the Council during some of the participating presidencies.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL). The Council is also expected to vote on a resolution renewing the mission's

mandate, which expires on 31 October, in accordance with resolution 2647.

Key Recent Developments

The ongoing political crisis in Libya is the result of the leadership

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2647 (28 July 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October. **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.9103** (28 July 2022) was the adoption of resolution 2647.

Libya

stand-off between incumbent Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohamed Dbeibah, elected in February 2021 to 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 protracted political stalemate continues to generate security threats, including fighting in Tripoli at the end of August between forces loyal to Dbeibah and those supporting Bashagha, as the latter reportedly attempted to enter the capital. Deteriorating living conditions across the country remain a concern.

On the political track, the UN is focusing on “enabling the holding of credible, transparent, and inclusive elections as soon as possible based on an agreed constitutional framework”, according to the Secretary-General’s report dated 19 August. On the economic track, the report said that UNSMIL is supporting efforts for the reform and reunification of the Central Bank of Libya. On the security track, it noted that the mission is supporting the 5+5 Joint Military Commission—which consists of five representatives each from the former Government of National Accord and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces—in implementing the October 2020 ceasefire agreement and the action plan for the withdrawal of mercenaries, foreign fighters and foreign forces.

On 2 September, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of Abdoulaye Bathily of Senegal as his Special Representative for Libya and head of UNSMIL. (The position of Special Representative replaced the role of Special Envoy, as decided in resolution 2629. Former Special Envoy Jan Kubiš resigned in November 2021.) Bathily officially assumed his duties on 25 September. At the time of writing, he was expected to arrive in Libya in early October.

Between September 2021 and April, the Council adopted four short-term extensions of UNSMIL’s mandate because of disagreements among Council members concerning the length of the mandate, the restructuring of the mission, and language regarding the appointment of UNSMIL’s leadership. Most recently, the Council adopted resolution 2647 on 28 July, renewing the mandate of UNSMIL for three months until 31 October. The resolution maintained UNSMIL’s core mandated tasks as well as the 30-day reporting cycle. It included language on the need to agree on a pathway to hold elections as soon as possible and called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative promptly. It was adopted by a vote of 12 in favour and three abstentions by Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (the A3) because of their position that the mandate should have been renewed for longer than three months. (For more information, see our 28 July *What’s in Blue* story.)

On 29 September, the Council adopted a resolution renewing for one year the authorisation under resolution 2598 to combat migrant smuggling and human trafficking off the coast of Libya. That same day, Council members held consultations on Libya with a briefing by Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council to consider is what modifications to make, if any, to the mandate of UNSMIL ahead of its expiration on 31 October. A related issue is the length of the mandate, which

has been contentious in the recent past. Russia made clear that it would only support a shortened mandate duration until a Special Representative had been appointed. Since a Special Representative has been appointed, an option would be to adopt a resolution extending the mandate for a 12-month duration. When renewing the mission’s mandate, Council members might consider increasing UNSMIL’s advisory capacity with additional experts on constitutional and electoral matters. Another option would be to increase the mission’s capacity in relation to economic issues and human rights.

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 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.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics on Libya have been 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. Many members are also concerned about the precarious security situation.

Council members welcome the appointment of Bathily following a protracted and contentious process. The A3, with the support of China, had publicly called for the position of Special Representative to be filled by an African candidate. Prior to Bathily’s appointment, at least one other name was apparently put to the Council, but the candidate was not supported by all 15 members. This held up the appointment process, although there is no requirement for Council approval in such cases. In a 3 September statement welcoming Bathily’s appointment, US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken encouraged him “to prioritize efforts to ensure transparency and accountability in Libya’s state institutions as well as the work of the UN ceasefire monitoring mission as it assists the Libyan 5+5 Joint Military Commission in overseeing the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces, fighters, and mercenaries”.

Negotiations ahead of the adoption of resolution 2647 on 28 July were once again arduous. As was the case in April, the initial draft circulated by the UK called for a mandate renewal of one year. It also reverted to requesting the Secretary-General to report to the Council every 60 days, rather than the monthly briefings outlined in resolution 2629 adopted in April. Most Council members—including the US, the European Council members and the A3—strongly favoured a substantive one-year mandate renewal or, failing this, at least a six-month renewal. Following opposition from Russia, the first revised draft circulated by the UK included a shortened mandate of six months while retaining the 60-day reporting cycle. However, this apparently was not acceptable to Russia. As a result, resolution 2647 ultimately renewed the mandate for three months with a 30-day reporting cycle.

Most members made statements following the adoption of resolution 2647. The UK said that they “share the frustration of our African

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colleagues at the short three-month mandate” and referred to “Russia’s refusal to join the consensus on our proposals for a longer mandate for UNSMIL”. In its statement, Russia expressed its readiness “to extend the mission’s mandate for a standard period of time and

provide more substantive content to a future resolution” after the Special Representative for Libya and head of UNSMIL was appointed. The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Helen La Lime on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s regular quarterly report on BINUH. The Council also expects to receive a report from the Secretary-General on options to support the Haitian National Police (HNP) in its fight against gang violence, in accordance with resolution 2645 of 15 July, which most recently renewed BINUH’s mandate for one year. Both reports are due by 15 October.

BINUH’s mandate expires on 15 July 2023.

Key Recent Developments

Haiti remains plagued by instability, with political deadlock, gang violence and natural disasters exacerbating humanitarian needs and complicating efforts to alleviate the dire situation. Council members grappled with how best to support Haitian authorities in addressing the country’s multidimensional crisis when they negotiated resolution 2645. During the negotiations, China apparently advocated several far-reaching measures, including the establishment of an arms embargo, the imposition of targeted sanctions and the establishment of a multinational force to support Haiti’s efforts to fight gang violence. Other members felt that more time was needed to discuss such suggestions. In an apparent compromise, the resolution indicates the possibility of the Council considering such measures in the near future.

Resolution 2645 demands an immediate cessation of gang violence and criminal activities and expresses the Council’s readiness to take appropriate measures (such as imposing a travel ban or assets freeze) against those engaged in such activities and in human rights abuses within 90 days of the adoption of the resolution (that is, by 15 October). It requests the Secretary-General to consult with the Haitian government, relevant countries and regional organisations regarding “possible options for enhanced security support” for the HNP to combat gang violence, and to submit a report to the Security Council by 15 October. In addition, resolution 2645 calls on all Haitian stakeholders to urgently reach agreement on a framework for a political process with the aim of organising elections. It requests the Haitian government to provide the Council with an update on progress in this regard by 17 October. (For more information, see our 15 July *What’s in Blue* story.)

On 7 July, as Council members were negotiating BINUH’s mandate renewal, violence erupted in the Cité Soleil commune in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area, with gangs clashing over territorial control. La Lime briefed Council members about these developments

in closed consultations on 13 July, at the request of China. The violence continued throughout July and August, severely affecting the area’s residents. Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric reported on 19 August that hundreds of people had been killed in the clashes and many others had been trapped in the area of fighting without access to medical care, food and water. According to OCHA estimates, nearly 280,000 people were affected by the violence.

It seems that the HNP has since been able to regain access to Cité Soleil and that the violence has dissipated. The threat posed by gangs remains a major concern, however, with gang-related violence surging in particular locations from time to time; prior to the recent outbreak, clashes between gangs had also erupted in the Cité Soleil commune in late April, as well as in the communes of Croix-des-Bouquets and Tabarre. UN officials have warned that gangs have been systematically perpetrating gender-based violence, including as a tool to control certain segments of the population.

On 11 September, the Haitian government announced that it would cease providing subsidies for gasoline, diesel and kerosene—thus doubling their price for consumers. Starting on 12 September, citizens took to the streets in Port-au-Prince and other cities across the country to protest the difficult living conditions. Many protesters voiced grievances about the ongoing political stalemate and the government’s handling of the security and economic crises.

Some demonstrations turned violent, and there have been reports of civilian casualties, but exact numbers had not been confirmed at the time of writing. There have also been reports of looting of businesses and humanitarian warehouses—including the looting and torching of a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in Gonaïves on Haiti’s west coast—as well as attacks on banks and on the homes of pro-government politicians and the wealthy elite. Criminal gangs have exacerbated the situation, including through statements encouraging looting and inciting violence against politicians and international organisations. (For more information, see our 25 September *What’s in Blue* story.)

On 26 September, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, to discuss the recent violent unrest in the country, at the request of China. The Council was briefed by La Lime, WFP Executive Director Valerie Guarnieri and Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Ghada Fathi Waly. At the meeting, Mexico and the US—the co-penholders on Haiti—announced that they were working on a draft resolution “proposing specific measures to enable the Security Council to address the many challenges facing the people of Haiti”. According to media reports, the proposed resolution will seek to establish travel

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolution S/RES/2645 (15 July 2022) renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). **Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/481** (13 June 2022) was the latest 120-day report on Haiti. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9136** (26 September 2022) was a meeting on the situation in Haiti requested by China.

Haiti

and financial sanctions on gang leaders and those who facilitate their activities. At the time of writing, the co-penholders have yet to circulate the draft text.

La Lime provided an update on the political situation during the 26 September meeting, noting that national stakeholders have begun to re-engage with a renewed sense of urgency. She said that in recent weeks, representatives of the government, political groups and civil society organisations have “launched new consultations on ways to forge a wider consensus on a path towards elections”. Haiti’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship Jean Victor Génésus, who represented his country at the meeting, confirmed that negotiations are underway and expressed hope that a political agreement “can be reached soon”. In his 24 September address during the high-level segment of the 77th session of the General Assembly, Génésus said that discussions have begun on the establishment of a body that will oversee the organising of elections, adding that technical support from Haiti’s partners will be appreciated in this process.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 16 July, an Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) spokesperson expressed deep concern over “the worsening of violence in Port-au-Prince and the rise in human rights abuses committed by heavily armed gangs against the local population”. The spokesperson noted that from January to the end of June, 934 killings, 684 injuries and 680 kidnappings were documented in the capital and that between 8 and 12 July, at least 234 more people were killed or injured in gang-related violence in the Cité Soleil commune.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council is to prevent a further escalation of the situation in Haiti, which may have destabilising spillover effects in the region. UN officials and other experts advocate a holistic approach to addressing the situation, which calls for simultaneous efforts to promote a solution to the political deadlock, the security threats and the humanitarian crisis. Experts recommend that the UN system and the Council should also support long-term solutions aimed at addressing the root causes of the violence, including through socioeconomic development.

In the short term, Council members appear to be focused on addressing the security threats, which permeate every aspect of the crisis in the country, including by complicating the holding of elections and hindering the delivery of humanitarian aid. Members are apparently awaiting the reports due in October in line with resolution 2645 before deciding on the best course of action in respect of the three options proposed by China (the multinational force, arms embargo and sanctions regime).

To inform Council deliberations on the draft text proposed by Mexico and the US, members may consider holding informal virtual meetings with Haitian actors to hear their views. A similar informal practice has developed in the Council’s work on Colombia.

Members might also wish to seek advice from the UN Secretariat, including through meetings with the subsidiary organs branch of the Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD) and with individuals who have served on Panels of Experts, on the technical aspects of establishing and overseeing a sanctions regime and an arms embargo. (Nearly eight years have passed since the Council last established a sanctions regime for South Sudan through resolution 2206 in March 2015.)

In light of the rising incidence of violence committed against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence, members may wish to receive more comprehensive data about human rights violations in the country. An option for the Council would be to consider strengthening BINUH’s human rights monitoring capacities, to receive more frequent information that can help to identify negative trends requiring the Council’s attention. Members may also seek additional information on the effects of the insecurity on children by inviting a UNICEF representative to brief the Council in its next Haiti meeting.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about the situation in Haiti. In recent months, there seems to be a convergence of views regarding the urgency of Council action on the matter. This may be partially attributed to a shift in tone from China, which has long contended that UN involvement in Haiti has been ineffective and failed to achieve its goals. In the past, China called for the Council to curtail its engagement on Haiti, advocating the articulation of a drawdown strategy for BINUH, and for the UN to limit its investment of resources in the country. However, it is now calling for more far-reaching UN involvement. China’s current position on Haiti also departs from its position on arms embargoes and targeted sanctions in several other situations on the Council’s agenda. In this regard, China and Russia have often criticised western Council members for their support of sanctions imposed on African states.

At the 26 September meeting, several members—including Albania, Brazil, China, and the UK—welcomed the co-penholders’ initiative to propose a draft resolution on Haiti. Several members, such as Brazil, China and Russia, emphasised the importance of preventing such sanctions from having harmful effects on civilians. The A3 members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) advocated increased cooperation between the AU and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to support efforts to address the situation in Haiti.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold a briefing, possibly followed by consultations, on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. Consultations on the use of chemical weapons in

Syria are also expected to be held this month.

Key Recent Developments

With the political process at a standstill, Syria continues to be mired

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. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9130](#) (14 September 2022) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

Syria

in a security, humanitarian and economic crisis. More than a decade of conflict, rising food prices, fuel shortages, water scarcity, and a recent cholera outbreak in the north of the country are among the factors exacerbating the living conditions of ordinary Syrians. OCHA estimates that some 14.6 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance.

On 18 August, artillery fire hit a market in the opposition-held city of Al-Bab in northwest Syria, killing 17 civilians and injuring 35 others. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based human rights monitoring organisation, accused the Syrian government of the attack.

Rising numbers of civilians are also dying from the explosive remnants of conflict. Three children were killed by a landmine on farmland in Homs in the western part of the country on 4 September, and another four children died when ordnance detonated in an abandoned apartment in Idlib in northwest Syria on 5 September. In a 6 September statement, the humanitarian organisation Save the Children said that at least 22 people, including seven children, had reportedly been killed as a result of the explosion of landmines and other ordnance in the previous four months.

On 17 September, Israeli air strikes reportedly hit Damascus International Airport and other areas near the Syrian capital. Syria has reported that five of its soldiers died in the strikes. Media reports have suggested that the motivation for these strikes was to curtail the delivery of weapons through flights to militia supported by Iran, including Hezbollah.

A delivery of humanitarian assistance across conflict lines in Syria took place on 17 September from Aleppo into northwest Syria. According to OCHA, the inter-agency convoy “delivered 453 metric tonnes of food, nutrition, water and sanitation items, health kits, female dignity kits and other supplies to the World Food Programme warehouses” into Idlib governate. This was the seventh delivery of cross-line aid since an inter-agency plan was created for such deliveries following the Council’s adoption of resolution 2585 in July 2021.

On 2 August, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the General Assembly on missing persons in Syria, pursuant to a December 2021 General Assembly resolution. The report underscored the difficulties families face in finding information about the status and whereabouts of relatives who have reportedly been arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared. Among the report’s recommendations were the following:

- the need for the conflict parties to adhere to their obligations under international law and release arbitrarily detained persons;
- the need for member states to increase efforts to support victims, survivors, and the families of the missing, including by establishing a trust fund; and
- the establishment of a new international entity through the General Assembly to “clarify the fate and whereabouts” of missing persons in Syria and provide “adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing, including through the establishment of a trust fund”.

On 14 September, the Security Council held a briefing on the political and security situation in Syria. The briefers were Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Najat Rochdi, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, and Mazen Darwish, the director of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression. Rochdi underscored the importance of a nationwide ceasefire as an underlying objective of the political process in Syria. She expressed concern about ongoing reports of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and kidnapping for ransom in Syria, and advocated the establishment of a new international entity to deal with such matters, as outlined in the Secretary-General’s 2 August report to the General Assembly. Griffiths appealed for more financial support for OCHA’s Syria humanitarian response plan, noting that only about a quarter of the \$4.4 billion plan for 2022 had been funded. Darwish, like Rochdi, expressed support for the creation of an international body to address challenges related to missing persons in Syria. He also favourably referenced veto restraint initiatives, calling on permanent members to disavow the use of the veto to block action to prevent mass atrocities.

On 26 September, Security Council members held an informal interactive dialogue on Syria in accordance with resolution 2642 of 12 July, which renewed the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for six months with a further six-month extension subject to a new resolution. Adopted after difficult negotiations, this resolution encouraged the Security Council to convene an “Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) every two months with participation of donors, interested regional parties and representatives of the international humanitarian agencies operating in Syria”. The purpose of the IIDs is to review and follow up on the resolution’s implementation, including with regard to early recovery projects.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed during the IID. He reportedly underscored the importance of the cross-border aid mechanism, and described progress being made with regard to cross-line aid deliveries and early recovery projects. He also reiterated his concern about the shortage of funds to support the humanitarian response in Syria. Griffiths and other OCHA officials discussed the recruitment and procurement challenges of implementing a six-month mandate, as opposed to a one-year mandate, for the Syria humanitarian aid resolution.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how it can reinvigorate the political track in Syria.

The humanitarian and economic crises in the country are also ongoing issues of concern for Council members.

One option for the Council is to adopt a presidential statement that:

- supports UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pederson’s efforts to reinvigorate the political process; and
- encourages donors to enhance their support for the Syria humanitarian response plan.

An additional option in the future would be a Council visiting mission to the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Syria-Türkiye border. On such a visit, Council members could meet with UN and other

Syria

officials responsible for implementing and overseeing the cross-border aid delivery mechanism to get a better understanding of how it works and its importance in addressing the country's humanitarian crisis.

Council Dynamics

Strong divisions persist 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.

Most Council members are strongly supportive of the cross-border mechanism, arguing that cross-line assistance alone cannot address the scope of humanitarian needs in Syria. China and Russia have been less supportive of the mechanism than other members. They have expressed concern about cross-border aid being diverted by terrorist groups, emphasised that the cross-border aid mechanism constitutes a violation of Syria's sovereignty, and argued that it needs to be phased out and replaced by enhanced cross-line deliveries.

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

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Expected Council Action

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Huang Xia, is expected to provide his biannual briefing to the Council in October on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region.

Key Recent Developments

The most recent briefing on the Secretary-General's biannual report on the PSC framework was held on 27 April. Xia highlighted the security challenges in eastern DRC due to the resumption of military activities by the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23 Movement) and the increasing attacks by other armed groups operating in the region; developments which have undermined the positive trend in the rapprochement among countries of the region. Xia welcomed the regional approach taken by the East African Community (EAC) using 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. He indicated that his office, in cooperation with the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO), has been rendering logistical and technical support to these efforts, which are referred to as the Nairobi process.

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. (DRC accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23, which Rwanda denies). 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. They also vowed to defeat the Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC, and its splinter groups. Furthermore, the 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 bilateral ties.

On 6 July, the representatives of the guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework—the AU, UN, ICGLR, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—met in Nairobi to discuss the latest developments in the region in light of the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC and its implications for regional peace and security. In a joint statement, the representatives supported efforts to de-escalate tensions and promote dialogue through the Nairobi and Angolan mediation processes.

The EAC summit held on 22 July in Arusha, Tanzania, appointed then-Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta as a facilitator to oversee the implementation of the Nairobi process and decided to expeditiously implement its decision to deploy a regional force in eastern DRC as part of the Nairobi process. According to media reports, Burundi became the first country to deploy a battalion in South Kivu, eastern DRC, on 15 August as part of the EAC regional force. On 8 September, the EAC and DRC signed a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) in Kinshasa. The agreement envisages the deployment of the regional force for an initial period of six months.

Aside from the ongoing military efforts to counter the activities of armed groups, countries in the region have been working on non-military measures to address security challenges. On 22 August, the heads of intelligence and security services in Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda met in Kampala to review the overall security situation in the region and define a strategy to engage illegal armed groups. The intelligence officials form part of the Contact and Coordination Group, which was established in May 2021 to facilitate non-military solutions to the security situation in the eastern DRC.

As part of addressing the root causes of conflict, countries of the region have also been focused on countering illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources in eastern DRC and the region. The latest report of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Sanctions Committee, published on 14 June, described how armed groups have continued to traffic in and profit from trade in natural resources in eastern DRC. The guarantors of the PSC Framework underscored the need for countries of the region to redouble efforts in implementing the recommendations of the high-level workshop on natural resources, which was held in Khartoum from 31 August to 2 September 2021, to strengthen the implementation of the ICGLR Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources.

SADC held its 42nd summit in Kinshasa, DRC. Tshisekedi assumed the rotating chairmanship of SADC in addition to chairing the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC Framework. The leaders at the SADC Summit discussed the security situation in eastern DRC and agreed on the need to explore all avenues to support efforts towards improving the security situation.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to comprehensively address the persistent security challenge facing the DRC and the region. In this regard, Council members may express concern over the increasing insecurity in eastern DRC and reiterate their support for regional cooperation initiatives through the Nairobi and the Angolan mediation processes. They may also be keen to learn more about the deployment of the EAC regional force. A possible option for Council members is to invite representatives of the EAC and ICGLR to brief the Council on the Nairobi and Angolan mediation processes.

The other major issue is how to continue supporting the full and

effective implementation of the PSC Framework to promote peace and security in the Great Lakes region. Council members could adopt a statement noting the recent meeting of the guarantors of the PSC framework and encouraging progress on the priority areas identified at the meeting to address the prevailing peace and security challenges and preserve the gains of recent years in enhancing regional cooperation.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict in the Great Lakes region through a comprehensive regional approach. They also appreciate the Special Envoy's efforts in support of regional initiatives and processes. The US, however, emphasises that the deployment of regional forces in eastern DRC should be closely coordinated with MONUSCO and that the Security Council should be notified prior to such deployments.

Council members also support efforts to counter the illegal exploitation of natural resources, but there is disagreement among members on the use of sanctions to address the issue. The US proposed that Belgian businessman Alain Goetz and affiliated companies (in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere) be included in the sanction's designation list for their involvement in illegal gold exports from DRC, but China and Russia placed a hold on that proposal. At the 27 April meeting of the Council, China argued that "the relevant sanctions measures of the Security Council must not be misused, let alone become a tool for suppressing other political and commercial players".

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council expects to hold its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

Israeli caretaker Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas addressed the 77th UN General Assembly (UNGA) high-level segment on 22 and 23 September, respectively.

In line with the position he had expressed during US President Joe Biden's July visit to Israel and the West Bank, Lapid reiterated his support for the two-state solution. He added, however, that this is conditional on the future Palestinian state not becoming "another terror base from which to threaten the well-being and the very existence of Israel" and on Israel having the ability to protect the security of its citizens at all times. He also said that Israel is ready to lift the restrictions on Gaza and build its economy, provided that the firing of rockets and missiles ends, among other conditions.

Abbas said that Israel "has undermined the Oslo Accords" and,

through its policies, is "destroying the two-state solution", adding that "Israel is enacting racist laws consecrating the apartheid regime". Abbas said that, although the US and several European states have called for the two-state solution and recognised Israel, they have not recognised the State of Palestine, and reiterated his request for full UN membership. While Abbas said that Lapid's reference to the two-state solution was a positive development, he stressed that the true test for the credibility of this stance would be for Israel to go back to negotiations immediately and to end all unilateral actions that are undermining the two-state solution.

While in New York, Abbas and Lapid both met with Secretary-General António Guterres and King Abdullah II of Jordan but did not meet each other. Lapid met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which marked the first meeting in 14 years between a prime minister of Israel and the Turkish president. Lapid also met with UK Prime Minister Liz Truss who, according to a Downing Street statement, informed Lapid of "her review of the current location of the British Embassy in Israel". (The embassy is located in Tel Aviv.) The announcement was met with consternation by Palestinian Ambassador to the UK Husam Zomlot, who wrote on Twitter

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including acts of terror; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. **Security Council Letter S/2022/557** (6 July 2022) was the summary of the IEG's 24 June meeting.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

that any move of the embassy “would be a blatant violation of international law”, undermine the two-state solution, and enflame “an already volatile situation”. (In a highly controversial move, former US President Donald Trump moved the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2018.)

The Security Council last held a meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” on 28 September. Wennesland provided an oral report on the implementation of resolution 2334, which was adopted in 2016. Wennesland said that during the reporting period (17 June–20 September), settlement activities continued and called on Israel to immediately cease such activities. The deteriorating security situation in the West Bank was another focus of the meeting. Wennesland said that “the high number of Palestinians killed and injured by Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, remains deeply troubling, particularly reports that some did not appear to pose threats” and stressed that Israeli security forces must use lethal force only when unavoidable. Wennesland also condemned “all acts of terrorism against civilians, including the 14 August attack targeting Jewish worshippers near Jerusalem’s Old City”. He commended Lapid’s reaffirmation of commitment to the two-state solution and acknowledged Abbas’ “continued commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict”.

The Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) met at ministerial level on the sidelines of the UNGA high-level segment on 22 September. The report prepared for the AHLC meeting by the UN Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) identified four strategic elements that, “if implemented, would maintain the viability of the two-State solution” until formal negotiations restart. Among other steps, these elements include addressing the conflict’s drivers, strengthening Palestinian institutions, and creating space for the Palestinian economy to grow. At the same time, the report said that only the end of the occupation and the attainment of two states “will lead to Palestinians achieving their full socio-economic development potential and their legitimate national aspirations”. (The AHLC is a 15-member committee that coordinates development assistance to the Palestinian people at policy level and is chaired by Council member Norway.)

Parliamentary elections in Israel are expected to take place on 1 November after the governing coalition co-headed by Lapid and former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett decided to dissolve the Knesset in June. (For background, see our *July Forecast*.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

In her 12 September global update statement to open the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, acting High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada al-Nashif stressed the “disturbing increase in the number of Palestinians, including children, killed and injured by Israeli forces” in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and the “widespread use of live ammunition in law enforcement operations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem”. Among other issues, Al-Nashif noted the Israel Defense Forces (IDF)’s investigation of the 11 May killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and the injuring of her colleague Ali Sammoudi and called “for a criminal investigation compliant with international law standards”. On 5 September, the IDF investigation concluded that while “there is a high possibility” that Abu Akleh was “accidentally hit” by IDF gunfire, “there is no suspicion of a criminal offense that justifies the opening of a Military Police investigation”. On 20 September, members

of Abu Akleh’s family submitted a complaint to the International Criminal Court containing the results of an investigation into the killing conducted by research agency Forensic Architecture and Palestinian NGO al-Haq, which concluded that “Shireen and her fellow journalists were deliberately and repeatedly targeted, with an aim to kill”.

Women, Peace and Security

On 24 June, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) held its first meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Wennesland briefed. According to the meeting’s summary released in July, several members asked for more gender analysis in UN reports to the Security Council. As the IEG Secretariat, UN Women made several recommendations, including providing flexible funding for women’s rights organisations and ensuring “that funding remains accessible in an increasingly restricted civic space”. UN Women also recommended that the IEG co-chairs (Ireland and Mexico) and other members include WPS references in their statements during Council meetings on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” and request the inclusion of a gender analysis in briefings by UN officials. Another recommendation was to advocate for the prompt “investigation and prosecution of violations against women and girls” by state and non-state actors in the oPt and at checkpoints.

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Security Council remains finding ways to support the resumption of political negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis to move towards a resolution of the conflict and achieve a two-state solution. However, concrete steps towards this objective have been absent. Other ongoing issues include avoiding new escalations of violence (such as in the increasingly volatile West Bank), the expansion of Israeli settlements, and other developments that undermine the viability of a two-state solution.

During the 25 August meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, several members raised concerns regarding the situation of the six Palestinian NGOs that Israel designated as terrorist organisations in 2021. (For more information, see our 7 November 2021 and 24 August *What’s in Blue* stories.) France, Ireland and Norway said that the evidence provided by Israel for the designation was insufficient. Ireland expressed “serious concerns about the misuse of counter-terror legislation to reduce civil-society space” in the oPt. An option would be to convene an Arria-formula meeting on the effects of using counter-terror measures to close civil society space in the oPt and other contexts. Members could invite as a briefer Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

A more substantive and consistent integration of a gender analysis in UN reporting and in the regular monthly discussions on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” is an issue of interest for some Council members. The IEG co-chairs, and other members who pledged to make WPS a top priority by endorsing the 1 December 2021 statement of shared commitments on WPS, may consider reiterating their interest in integrating a gender analysis in UN reporting on this file.

Council Dynamics

Council members regularly express support for a two-state solution. With varying degrees of emphasis, members have also repeatedly called for an end to settlement activities and to demolitions of

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Palestinian civilian structures, and the preservation of the status quo at the holy sites as key steps to preserve the viability of the two-state solution. At the same time, while there is ostensible agreement on the importance of these issues, no concrete steps have been taken to restart the peace process.

While supporting the two-state solution, the US seems to be of the view that the current circumstances are not ripe for the restart of negotiations. At the 25 August meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Russia accused the US of monopolising the peace process, of imposing “economic peace on the Palestinian people”, and of blocking the activities of the Middle East Quartet—which consists of the EU, Russia, the UN, and the US. Russia reiterated a similar message at the 28 September meeting. During the September meeting, China said that the Council should promote the resumption of talks instead of “waiting for the so-called conditions for dialogue to mature”. Seemingly in reference to the likelihood that the US would oppose a Palestinian request for full UN membership at the Council, China further said that “on issues concerning the future and fate of the Palestinian people, no one has the right to veto”.

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