

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

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

India plans to organise two signature events during the month. The first signature event is an open debate on “[New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism](#)” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahman-yam Jaishankar is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi are expected to brief.

The second signature event is a briefing titled “[Global Approach to Counter-terrorism—Challenges and Way Forward](#)” under the “Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts” agenda item. Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar is expected to chair this meeting also. Under-Secretary-General and head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov and Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Weixiong Chen are expected to brief.

In December, the Council is expected to hold its semi-annual debate on the [International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals \(IRMCT\)](#).

The outgoing chairs of the [Security Council's subsidiary bodies](#) are also expected to brief the Council on their experiences of facilitating the work of those bodies.

African issues on the programme of work in December are:

- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the briefing by the chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee;
- [Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee;
- [Central Africa region](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation

of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA); and

- [The Democratic Republic of the Congo \(DRC\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and briefing by the chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee. The Council is also expected to renew MONUSCO's mandate.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meetings on political/humanitarian developments and on the chemical weapons file;
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the mandate renewal of UNDOF;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting on developments;
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)”, the monthly meeting; and
- [Iraq](#), a briefing on the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD).

In terms of European issues, the Council is likely to hold one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#).

The only Asian issue planned in December is [Afghanistan](#). The Council will hold its quarterly briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and will renew the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. It is also likely to review the implementation of resolution 2615 of 22 December 2021, which established a humanitarian exception to the 1988 sanctions regime.

Regarding [non-proliferation](#), the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme.

Other issues could be raised in December depending on developments.

1 December 2022

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Women, Peace and Security: One Year of Shared Commitments

Just over a year ago, Ireland, Kenya and Mexico formed a “Presidency Trio for Women, Peace and Security” (WPS), pledging to make WPS “a top priority” of their respective presidencies in September, October and November 2021.¹ During the press conference on the Council’s programme of work for September 2021, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland) described the initiative as “a golden thread” that would run through the Irish, Kenyan and Mexican presidencies.²

Between December 2021 and September 2022, eight more countries—Albania, Brazil, France, Gabon, Niger, Norway, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the UK—signed on to a 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS, which built on the presidency trio initiative and committed these members, too, to making WPS a “top priority” during their presidencies.³ These shared commitments—including ensuring a strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers in Council meetings and requesting the inclusion of a gender analysis in UN briefings to the Council—were also endorsed by Ireland, Kenya and Mexico. One year on from the launch of the WPS presidencies initiative is a good time to reflect on its successes, challenges, and possible future options.

Security Council Report’s upcoming research report *Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative* analyses this elected member-led initiative, situating it against the backdrop of difficult Council dynamics on WPS.⁴ Focusing on the period from September 2021 to September 2022, our report will consider aspects such as Council meetings, products, and women civil society briefers, including measures supporting their safe participation. Creative, cross-regional, and informal, the WPS presidencies initiative brought heightened visibility to the agenda at the Council, moving the focus away from understanding progress on the agenda through new WPS Council products in favour of creating momentum around implementation.

Maintaining Commitments

The WPS presidencies initiative is the first time that a range of specific commitments on WPS has been undertaken across multiple Council presidencies. This initiative translated into a high number of women civil society representatives briefing the Council. Between September 2021 and September 2022, participating members hosted 78 women civil society briefers, which includes Ireland setting a record of 16 women civil society briefers during its September 2021 presidency. (Albania, with 13 in June, and Norway, with 11 in January, also added significantly to this number.) By comparison, the Council invited 41 women civil society briefers for the whole of 2019,⁵ a number which dropped to 28 during the COVID pandemic in 2020.⁶

The WPS presidencies initiative included commitments regarding formal meetings, and with five meetings on WPS since January, 2022 has seen the highest number of Council meetings on WPS since the inception of the agenda in 2000. Among these was the first formal Council meeting on reprisals against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and civil society representatives, which was held at ministerial level in January. Between September 2021 and September 2022, members strengthened WPS language in several Council products and highlighted WPS issues through dedicated press stakeouts. Some members took the initiative of communicating with UN briefers beforehand, emphasising the importance of including a gender analysis in their briefings.

Convening more meetings with a focus on WPS-related issues and adding more women civil society briefers, while conferring heightened visibility, does not automatically translate into better implementation of the WPS agenda, as civil society groups monitoring this issue are particularly aware.⁷ The initiative was created “to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda and to help close the persistent gap between rhetoric and reality that has hampered the realisation of its full potential”.⁸

During some months, however, the golden thread of WPS was barely discernible among other priorities and the Council’s regular reporting and mandate cycles. Indeed, even though most of the commitments stem directly from actions that all UN member states are already supposed to carry out in accordance with Security Council resolutions, implementation of the shared commitments has been uneven among participating members.

Members taking part in the WPS presidencies initiative committed to “[d]rawing attention to, and following up on, the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers”.⁹ While members have echoed some of the civil society briefers’ concerns and recommendations during Council meetings and in some Council outcomes, it appears that most of the members that have signed on to the Statement of Shared Commitments have yet to develop systematic processes to follow up on briefers’ recommendations and concerns. Our report also suggests that only some members participating in the WPS presidencies initiative adopted a systematic approach to requesting a gender analysis from UN briefers. Members participating in the initiative committed to including “substantive gender perspectives” in signature events that were not directly focused on WPS, and have worked towards following up through including language on women and gender in the concept notes for several of their non-WPS-focused signature events. But the extent to which gender perspectives were integrated varied considerably, at times taking the form of cursory references to, for instance, “women” or “gender”.

Several of the members behind the initial momentum of the initiative will leave the Council in December, including trio members Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico, as well as Norway. While it is unclear how the WPS presidency initiative will evolve in 2023, incoming members Ecuador, Malta and Switzerland have already endorsed

1. Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).

2. Letter dated 3 February 2022 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Kenya and Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2022/91).

3. Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

4. For more information on Council dynamics on WPS, see Security Council Report’s In Hindsight titled “Women, Peace and Security – Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges” in our December 2021 Monthly Forecast and our brief on Women, Peace and Security in our October 2022 Monthly Forecast.

5. Data from NGO Working Group on WPS “Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2019”.

6. Report of the Secretary-General on WPS (S/2021/827), see also Kaavya Asoka, Support

Civil Society at the UN Security Council (1 July 2020).

7. NGO Working Group on WPS, “2022 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security” 3 October 2022.

8. Statement of Shared Commitments (31 August 2021).

9. Statement of Shared Commitments (1 December 2021).

Women, Peace and Security: One Year of Shared Commitments

the Statement of Shared Commitments.

Recommendations

The report provides some recommendations for current and future participating members to take this initiative forward.

Council members could enhance cross-presidency planning to promote robust and continuous engagement on WPS across the Council's work. This could include strategically planning activities such as Council meetings and stakeouts to maximise their impact, focusing on situations that have not received adequate Council attention, capitalising on the expertise and recommendations shared during the WPS Informal Experts Group (IEG) meetings, and coordinating positions on key WPS objectives in, for instance, negotiations on UN peace operations' mandate renewals.

Members should continue to invite diverse women civil society representatives to brief the Council regularly—and then also follow up on their information and recommendations. Members may also wish to develop ways to monitor the impact of their commitment to follow up on civil society briefers' recommendations.

It is essential that Council members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briever, including carrying out risk assessment, developing protection

plans and responding to any reprisals. Members should condemn all attacks against civil society briefers and ensure that the UN has sufficient capacity to work on reprisals.

Planning well in advance of the start of a Council presidency may help members in fulfilling their commitment to “[e]nsuring [a] strong representation of diverse women civil society briefers” and in evaluating risks and developing appropriate risk-mitigation strategies; this would include working with civil society organisations and the UN system, as well as coordinating with like-minded Council members.

All members may want to consider asking UN briefers to provide substantive updates to the Council on issues relevant to the WPS agenda. This can be done bilaterally, but also during open meetings, particularly where the presentation of gender elements is insufficient or absent altogether.

Members should also continue to highlight clear and specific messages at their WPS press stakeouts.

Maintaining the momentum and implementation of the shared commitments will be crucial for the legacy of this initiative. Always, the main objective should remain the holistic and substantive implementation of the agenda and its impact on the ground.

Status Update since our November Forecast

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

On 2 November, the Council received a briefing from Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. (S/PV.9178). He said that Ukraine has become UNHCR's main focus and that the war has “driven the fastest and largest displacement witnessed in a decade”. He emphasised the need for political solutions, the importance of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and the need for Security Council members to overcome divisions and disagreements. However, UNHCR is also responding to 103 million displaced people in 37 situations around the world and has a severe funding gap which is forcing them to cut aid for refugees. He also addressed the connection between climate change and displacement.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 2 November, the Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (S/PV.9179) and unanimously adopted resolution 2658, renewing the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) until 2 November 2023. The debate was marked by sharp divisions regarding the legitimacy of Christian Schmidt's appointment as the High Representative for BiH. Some members expressed regret that a lack of consensus had prevented Schmidt from briefing the Council.

UN Peacekeeping

On 3 November, the Council held a ministerial-level open debate on the theme “Integrating Effective Resilience-Building in Peace Operations for Sustainable Peace”. (S/PV.9181). This was one of

the signature events of Ghana's presidency. Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey chaired the meeting. The briefers were Secretary-General António Guterres, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martha Ama Akyaa Pobe, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs and Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye, Chair of The Elders Mary Robinson, and Security Council Report Executive Director Karin Landgren.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 4 November, the Council convened for an open briefing on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). (S/PV.9183). Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US requested the meeting after the DPRK conducted missile tests on 2 and 3 November. Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

On 21 November, the Council convened for another open briefing on the DPRK. (S/PV.9197). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. Albania, France, Ireland, Norway, the UK, and the US requested the meeting after the DPRK tested an intercontinental ballistic missile on 18 November. Japan and the ROK participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. During the meeting, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (United States) announced that the US planned to pursue a presidential statement on the DPRK.

Status Update since our November Forecast

On 28 November, Chair of the 1718 Committee Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) briefed Council members on the 90-day report regarding the committee's work in closed consultations.

UN Policing

On 1 November, the Council held its annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations with a particular focus on how to strengthen the contribution of UN Police (UNPOL) to realising the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative, a set of priorities being implemented in 2021-2023 to accelerate peacekeeping reform. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) police commissioner, Christine Fossen; the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) police commissioner, Mody Berethe; and Emma Birikorang, deputy director at the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) briefed the Council. The annual meeting took place during the 17th UN Police Week, which was held virtually from 14 to 18 November.

Central African Republic

On 14 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2659 renewing the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for another year, until 15 November 2023, with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Gabon and Russia). (S/PV.9190). In their explanations of vote, the three members said that the text did not take into account some of their proposals, nor did it adequately reflect the views and concerns of the host country.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 14 November, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2660, renewing the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 November 2023. (S/PV.9191). The resolution maintained the mission's troop and police ceilings and did not make any changes to its mandate.

Somalia

On 17 November, the Council adopted resolution 2662, renewing for one year the 751 Somalia sanctions regime, including reauthorising maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports, the charcoal exports ban, and the improvised explosive device (IED) components ban; the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces; and the humanitarian exemptions to the regime. The Council also renewed the mandate of the Somalia Panel of Experts until 15 December 2023. (S/PV.9196). The resolution was adopted with 11 votes in favour and four abstentions (China, Gabon, Ghana and Russia). In their explanations of vote, Gabon and Ghana supported Somalia's request for the lifting of the arms embargo. China said that "Somalia is not in a position to ease sanctions", noting the challenges in terms of weapons and ammunitions management. It further said that "the relevant contents of resolution 2662 (2022) do not reflect the reality of the country concerned" and expressed disappointment over "its double standards on the issue of exemptions to the arms embargo". Russia expressed opposition to some of the

provisions in the resolution, including the reference to the dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. It also expressed concern that the resolution kept Al-Shabaab apart from the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime despite its known affiliations with Al-Qaida.

Group of Five for the Sahel

On 16 November, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.9194) on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee briefed, presenting the Secretary-General's biannual report on the FC-G5S, issued on 9 November (S/2022/838). The Council also heard briefings by G5 Sahel Executive Secretary Eric Tiaré, as well as Zakaria Ousman Ramadan, President of the Chadian Center for Strategic Studies and Prospective Research.

Gulf of Guinea Piracy

On 22 November, the Council held a briefing on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea (S/PV.9198). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee presented the Secretary-General's 1 November report on Gulf of Guinea piracy. There were also briefings by Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Ghada Fathi Waly; Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission Florentina Adenike Ukonga; and Maritime Planning Officer of the AU Commission, Commander Nura Abdullahi Yakubu.

Iraq/Iran

On 22 November, Council members discussed a series of Iranian attacks in north-eastern Iraq under "any other business". The meeting was requested by France, the UK and the US. It appears that the US circulated a draft press statement concerning the attacks. Consensus could not be achieved, however, and the press statement was not issued.

Mali

On 23 November, the chair of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico), provided the annual briefing (S/PV.9200) to the Council on the committee's work.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 28 November, the Security Council held a briefing followed by consultations on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.9203). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed.

Lebanon

On 28 November, Council members received a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2022/858). Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed.

Status Update since our November Forecast

Climate, Peace and Security

On 29 November, an open Arria-formula meeting was convened on “Climate, Peace and Security: Opportunities for the UN Peace and Security Architecture”. Kenya and Norway (the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security) co-convened the meeting with Council members Albania, France, Gabon, Ghana, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), together with Germany and Nauru (the co-chairs of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security) and incoming Council members Malta, Mozambique and

Switzerland. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča was the keynote speaker. Three panel discussants also delivered statements: Mely Caballero-Anthony, Professor of International Relations and President’s Chair of International Relations and Security Studies at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (virtual participation); Hafsa Maalim, Associate Senior Researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); and Michael Keating, Executive Director of the European Institute of Peace (EIP) (virtual participation).

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths are expected to brief. The Council will also be briefed by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India) in her capacity as chair of the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. Closed consultations are scheduled to follow the open briefing.

Additionally, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. The Council will also review the implementation of paragraph 1 of resolution 2615 of 22 December 2021, which established a humanitarian exception to the 1988 sanction regime.

UNAMA’s mandate expires on 17 March 2023.

Key Recent Developments

Over 15 months after the Taliban seized power, Afghanistan continues to face a series of interlocking crises. According to OCHA, an estimated 24.4 million Afghans—approximately 60 percent of Afghanistan’s population—required humanitarian assistance in 2022. In a briefing delivered during a 17 November Arria-formula meeting titled “Preventing Economic Collapse and Exploring Prospects for Recovery and Development in Afghanistan”, which was organised by Russia, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan Ramiz Alakbarov said that the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan is projected to rise to 28.3 million in 2023, a 16 percent increase. Alakbarov also noted that humanitarian needs in Afghanistan are likely to remain among the highest in the world. Despite the scale of the crisis, the 2022 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan remains underfunded. At the time of writing, 54.5 percent of the required \$4.44 billion has been received.

Reports of Taliban interference with efforts to provide humanitarian aid have continued to emerge. OCHA’s humanitarian access snapshot report for September 2022 says that humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan “are concerned with the [Taliban’s] operational guideline that aims to effectively regulate and monitor aid organisations, and thus, [shrinking] the humanitarian space through attempts to influence bureaucracy selection, program design

and staff recruitment, and adding bureaucratic hurdles to the project implementations”. The report also notes that humanitarian organisations’ work with Afghanistan’s female population has been affected by the restrictions imposed on female aid workers by the Taliban.

The economic paralysis plaguing Afghanistan has been a major driver of the humanitarian crisis in the country. A 5 October UNDP report titled “One Year in Review: Afghanistan Since August 2021” indicates that the Taliban’s seizure of power precipitated a sharp contraction in Afghanistan’s licit economy, leading to a loss of \$5 billion of Afghanistan’s \$20 billion GDP in 12 months. The report also says that the existing freeze on \$9 billion in foreign assets belonging to Afghanistan’s central bank and international sanctions have caused a severe liquidity crisis in the country, and notes that the price of a food basket has increased by almost 35 percent on average, which is likely to deepen hunger, food insecurity and poverty. According to the report, nearly 20 million Afghans are classified as experiencing high or critical levels of food insecurity, almost twice the average in the preceding three years.

On 21 November, the board of trustees of the Swiss-based trust fund established to disburse \$3.5 billion of the Afghan central bank’s frozen assets to the Afghan people met for the first time in Geneva. Among other matters, the board reportedly considered various proposals for transferring the assets to Afghanistan. Shah Mohammad Mehrabi, an Afghan-American economist who is one of the fund’s four trustees, told reporters that “for any purpose other than bringing price stability and reducing volatility in the exchange rate, the board will consult the Taliban. Likewise, the Taliban can propose to us if they would like to use the funds elsewhere”.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated further since the Council’s last quarterly briefing on UNAMA, particularly for women and girls. On 10 November, a spokesperson from the Taliban’s Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced that women and girls are no longer allowed to use gyms and parks because gender segregation rules were not being followed and women were not observing a Taliban edict requiring them to wear a hijab. The Taliban also arrested several women’s rights activists, including Zarifa Yaqoobi, Farhat Popalzi and Humaira Yusuf, in early November.

In a 13 November tweet, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said that the Taliban’s supreme leader Haibatullah Akhundzada

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2626 (17 March 2022) extended UNAMA’s mandate until 17 March 2023. S/RES/2615 (22 December 2021) addressed the provision of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan

had ordered judges to “carefully examine the files of thieves, kidnapers and seditionists” and “implement hadad and qisas” in “those files in which all the Sharia conditions of hadad and qisas have been fulfilled”. According to Islamic legal scholars, implementing hadad and qisas can involve public executions, floggings and amputation of limbs. Taliban supreme court officials subsequently reported on 21 November that 19 people, including nine women, had been publicly lashed in north-eastern Afghanistan on 11 November.

On 10 November, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which expressed deep concern about the volatility in Afghanistan since the Taliban’s takeover and the human rights abuses in the country. Among other matters, the resolution called on the Taliban to reverse its policies that restrict the human rights of women and girls. Among Council members, China and Russia abstained, while Gabon and Kenya did not vote on the resolution.

Terrorist attacks continue to occur throughout Afghanistan. On 30 September, a suicide bomb attack on a Kabul education centre in a predominantly Hazara neighbourhood killed at least 53 people and wounded more than 110 others. On the same day, Council members issued a press statement that condemned the attack in the strongest terms and reaffirmed the right to education for all Afghans and its contribution to the achievement of international peace and security.

Illicit drug trafficking and the production of opium remain major concerns. In its first report on the illicit opium economy since August 2021, which was published in November, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found that opium cultivation increased by 32 percent over the previous year. The report also noted that the 2022 opium harvest was the most profitable for Afghan farmers since 2016.

On 16 November, Russia hosted the fourth meeting of the “Moscow Format”, which was attended by officials from China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. According to media reports, a joint statement issued following the meeting stressed the need to provide humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan and emphasised the importance of forming a truly inclusive government. The joint statement also reportedly expressed support for the fundamental rights of all ethnic groups and requested that Afghanistan fulfil its commitments to eradicate terrorism and drug trafficking, among other matters.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 September, during its 51st session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, and considered his report (A/HRC/51/6), followed by an enhanced interactive dialogue on the human rights situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. In his briefing, Bennett underscored that Afghans are “trapped in a human rights crisis” that the world seems “powerless to address”.

On 7 October, the HRC voted on resolution 51/20, which extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur for another year. The resolution added new tasks to the mandate, including considering the situation from a child’s rights perspective and documenting and preserving information relating to human rights violations and abuses. Resolution 51/20 also requests the Special Rapporteur to present a report to the HRC at its 52nd session, an oral update at its 54th session, and a report to the General Assembly at its 78th session. China voted against the resolution, which passed with 29 votes in favour, three against, and 15 abstentions.

Key Issues and Options

The humanitarian and economic crises in Afghanistan are major issues for the Council. An informal meeting with humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan and economic experts could allow Council members to learn more about the challenges facing those working to deliver aid in the country and the relationship between Afghanistan’s economic difficulties and the humanitarian emergency. The discussion could focus on exploring whether the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime is playing a significant role in these crises and could also consider the impact of the humanitarian exception formulated in resolution 2615.

Paragraph 1 of resolution 2615 decided that “humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs in Afghanistan” are not a violation of the asset freeze in the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime, and that the “processing and payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources, and the provision of goods and services necessary to ensure the timely delivery of such assistance or to support such activities” are permitted. In the resolution, the Council decided to review the implementation of this paragraph after one year. Determining how to conduct this review is an issue for the Council.

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

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

Council Dynamics

While Council members are united in their desire to see a prosperous, peaceful Afghanistan free from terrorism and drug trafficking and ruled by an inclusive government, they are divided over how best to achieve this goal. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and other likeminded states, take the view that the Taliban must adhere to international standards if it wants to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community. China and Russia, on the other hand, have both argued that the international community should provide assistance to Afghanistan without linking that assistance to other issues, such as the rights of women and girls.

China and Russia have also called for Afghanistan’s frozen assets to be returned to the country, while some of the likeminded members have contended that these assets cannot be transferred to Afghanistan until a properly functioning central bank with adequate financial controls has been established. These members often express concerns that the frozen funds could be used for terrorist purposes.

China and Russia also seek to blame the US and NATO for the problems facing Afghanistan, while the US and others contend that the Taliban bears the primary responsibility for the issues plaguing the country.

Counter-Terrorism

Expected Council Action

In December, India is organising a high-level briefing on “Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts: global approach to counter-terrorism—challenges and way forward”. The briefing is one of the signature events of India’s presidency. Under-Secretary-General and head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov and Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Weixiong Chen are expected to brief. It appears that India may pursue a presidential statement in connection with the meeting.

Background and Recent Developments

India has prepared a concept note ahead of the meeting, which says that the threat of terrorism is grave and universal and that terrorism in one part of the world seriously impacts peace and security in other parts of the globe. The concept note argues that the threat of terrorism is transnational, as terrorist actors collaborate while remaining in different jurisdictions to organise attacks anywhere in the world and, as such, it can only be defeated through collective efforts by all UN member states. It also contends that terrorism in all its forms must be condemned and that there can be no justification for such acts, regardless of their motivation, location, timing and by whom they were committed.

Prior to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York, the Council rarely issued products on terrorism. Since then, however, the Council has adopted more than 40 resolutions on counter-terrorism. Several of these resolutions are listed in the concept note, including:

- resolution 2178 of 24 September 2014, which addressed the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters;
- resolution 2462 of 28 March 2019 on countering the financing of terrorism; and
- resolution 2482 of 19 July 2019 regarding the linkages between terrorism and organised crime.

The nature of the terrorist threat has changed considerably since the Council began adopting counter-terrorism resolutions regularly. The 28th report of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaeda Monitoring Team, which was published on 21 July 2021, noted that “the most striking development of the period under review was the emergence of Africa as the region most affected by terrorism”.

This trend has continued since the Monitoring Team’s 28th report was published. The Secretary-General’s 15th biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by ISIL/Da’esh, which was issued on 26 July, says that the situation on the continent has deteriorated further and that two of the three “most dynamic” ISIL networks are based in Africa. The report also says that member states remain “acutely concerned” about the rising incidence of terrorist violence in Africa and describes several examples of violence perpetrated by African organisations with links to ISIL. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, the Allied Democratic Forces, a group that has pledged allegiance to ISIL, killed more than 383 civilians between December 2021 and February. According to the 2022 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), a report prepared by the think

tank Institute of Economics and Peace, close to half of the terrorist-related deaths recorded in 2021 occurred in Africa.

The Monitoring Team’s latest report—its 30th, published on 15 July—notes that the “threat from ISIL and Al-Qaeda remains relatively low in non-conflict zones, but is much higher in areas directly affected by conflict or neighbouring it”. In the Monitoring Team’s view, “one or more” of these conflicts, if not resolved, “will incubate an external operational capability for ISIL, Al-Qaeda, or a related terrorist group”, and the areas of most concern in this regard are “Africa, Central and South Asia, and the Levant”. The Monitoring Team also argues that foreign terrorist fighters are a “major potential threat multiplier”, and urges the international community to do more to address the issue.

The impact of the Taliban’s seizure of power in Afghanistan is another area of concern for the Monitoring Team. Its latest report says that Al-Qaeda “enjoys greater freedom in Afghanistan” under Taliban rule and notes that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant – Khorasan (ISIL-K) has increased its presence in northern and eastern Afghanistan. ISIL-K has carried out several attacks in Afghanistan this year, including a number that have targeted the Hazara community.

Terrorist groups’ use of new and emerging technologies, including the internet and weaponry, has continued to evolve. According to the Monitoring Team’s latest report, several member states have highlighted the use of social media and other online technologies in efforts to finance terrorism and disseminate terrorist propaganda. The report also notes that terrorist groups are increasingly using the dark web to acquire new technologies. On 29 October, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) adopted the “Delhi declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes” during its special meeting in India. Among other matters, the declaration expressed concern about terrorists’ use of information and communications technologies as well as unmanned aerial systems, and conveyed an intention to develop a “set of non-binding guiding principles ... with a view to assisting member states to counter the threat posed by the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes”.

In light of the changing nature of the terrorist threat, December’s briefing will provide an opportunity for Council members to “build on the recent deliberations of the meeting of the CTC” in India and “further share their views on the current state of affairs”, according to the concept note. It also says that the meeting hopes to allow the Council to “arrive at key principles of the global community’s collective fight against terrorism going forward”.

The concept note proposes several guiding questions, including:

- What are the tendencies that the global collective needs to be wary of in the fight against terrorism?
- Has the lack of a common international legal framework weakened our fight against terrorism?
- How do we safeguard the sanctity of the sanctions regime against terrorists and terror entities and make them effective in combating terrorism?
- What should be the key principle of a global counter-terrorism architecture that serves the interests of all member states?

UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/576 (26 July 2022) was the 15th report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL/Da’esh to international peace and security. Sanctions Committee Document S/2022/547 (15 July 2022) was the 30th report of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da’esh and Al-Qaeda Analytical Support and Sanctions Regime

Counter-Terrorism

The briefing will be the third signature event on counter-terrorism-related issues in the last three months. In October, Gabon hosted a high-level debate on “financing of armed groups and terrorists through illicit trafficking of natural resources” under the agenda item “Peace and security in Africa”. In November, Ghana convened a high-level debate on “Counter-terrorism in Africa—an imperative for peace, security, and development”.

Key Issues and Options

Managing the evolving nature of the terrorist threat is a key issue for the Council. Given that the threat has changed markedly since the Council began actively addressing terrorism in 2001, the Council could consider asking the Secretary-General to undertake a review of the UN’s counter-terrorism architecture. Such a review could consider whether the current framework is fit for purpose and well-suited to addressing the current threat, as well as the impact of the Council’s counter-terrorism measures on the ground.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of efforts to combat terrorism. Some differences exist, however, regarding how to manage the response to the terrorist threat. Some Council members favour an approach that is founded on human rights, addressing the root causes of terrorism, and the involvement of civil society, while other members focus more closely on security and law enforcement.

Some members have criticised the UN’s response to terrorism for focusing too narrowly on some groups. During the August briefing

on the threat posed by ISIL, for example, India said: “it is puzzling to us that the Secretary-General’s report chose not to take note of the several proscribed groups in [South Asia], especially those that have repeatedly been targeting India”.

During its time on the Council, Kenya has repeatedly referred to the activities of Al-Shabaab and the dangers posed by the group. At the February briefing on the threat posed by ISIL, Kenya announced that it will again formally request that Al-Shabaab be listed under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaeda sanctions regime, a proposal that it first raised in 2019 prior to its current tenure on the Council. Kenya’s 2019 proposal was rejected by six Council members, who argued that listing Al-Shabaab under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaeda sanctions regime could nullify the humanitarian exception in the 751 Somalia sanctions regime. At the time of writing, Kenya has not yet re-tabled its proposal for listing Al-Shabaab. In its explanation of vote on resolution 2662 of 17 November, which renewed the 751 Somalia sanctions regime, Russia expressed concern over the “ambivalent approach to Al-Shabaab” and questioned why the group is being kept at a distance from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da’esh Sanctions Committee, “despite its uncontested affiliations with those groups”.

The US is the penholder on counter-terrorism. Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India) chairs the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). Ambassador Trine Heimerback (Norway) chairs the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da’esh and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee. The 1540 Non-Proliferation Committee is chaired by Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico).

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Hostilities remain concentrated in Ukraine’s eastern and southern regions. In the east, Russian forces continue to launch ground attacks near the cities of Bakhmut and Siversk in the Donetsk region. Ukrainian forces have however reportedly managed to repel Russian advances. Heavy fighting has also been reported in the northeastern Kharkiv region, near areas that Ukraine recaptured in September and October. Cold weather appears to have diminished military activity on the front lines.

In the south, following months of Ukrainian attacks targeting Russian supply lines on the west bank of the Dnipro River, Moscow announced on 9 November the withdrawal of its troops from the western Kherson region, including the city of Kherson. Kherson city, which had been occupied by Russian forces since 2 March, was the sole regional capital seized since the start of the war.

Meanwhile, Russia has continued to launch air and missile assaults targeting civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. Since early

October, Russia has fired hundreds of missiles at energy facilities and hydroelectric power stations. The attacks, which have reportedly damaged about half of Ukraine’s power grid, have triggered massive blackouts, telephone and internet outages, and a reduction in water supplies throughout the country. On 23 November, Russia launched one of its biggest waves of missile attacks, firing at targets across Ukraine, including its capital, Kyiv. According to media reports, the attacks mainly targeted energy infrastructure, but several residential buildings were also hit, resulting in at least 30 casualties, including four deaths.

On 15 November, a missile landed in Przewodów, a Polish village located approximately 24 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, killing two civilians. Russia denied launching missiles near the Ukrainian-Polish border, and on 16 November, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters that “preliminary analysis suggests that the incident was likely caused by a Ukrainian air defense missile fired to defend Ukrainian territory against Russian cruise missile attacks”. However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has denied that his country was behind the Poland missile strike and has asked that Ukraine be a part of a joint investigation into the attack being led by Poland and the US.

On 16 November, the Security Council convened for an open

Ukraine

briefing on the situation in Ukraine. Albania and the US—the political co-penholders on Ukraine—requested the meeting with the aim of providing a comprehensive update on the political and humanitarian aspects of the war. At that meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo stressed that attacks targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure are prohibited under international humanitarian law and said that the “impact of such attacks [on civilians] can only worsen during the coming winter months”. DiCarlo also warned that the incident near the Ukrainian-Polish border “was a frightening reminder of the absolute need to prevent any further escalation”, adding that as long as the war continues, “the risks of potentially catastrophic spillover remain all too real”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 15 November.)

The Council held another briefing on Ukraine on 23 November, following the attacks that had taken place earlier that day, at the request of Albania and the US. At that meeting, DiCarlo stressed that the UN “strongly condemns these attacks and demands that [Russia] immediately cease these actions”. Zelenskyy, who participated in the meeting via videoconference, described the Russian attacks as a crime against humanity, and several Council members condemned Russia’s strategy of systematically targeting Ukrainian critical infrastructure. Russia denied allegations that the intent of its attacks is to harm civilians.

On 17 November, the parties to the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI)—Türkiye, Russia, Ukraine, and the UN—agreed on the extension of the initiative under the same provisions for an additional four-month period. Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the initiative’s extension and noted in a statement on the same day that “the UN is also fully committed to removing the remaining obstacles to exporting food and fertilizers from the Russian Federation”. Russia signed the initiative in July as part of a package deal that included a memorandum of understanding on the UN’s scope of engagement to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food products and fertilisers to global markets. At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a potential presidential statement to welcome the BSGI’s extension.

Speaking to reporters on 17 November, UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan noted that while Russian food and fertiliser remain exempt from Western sanctions, different interpretations of EU regulations by the bloc’s countries have complicated the exports of Russian fertiliser. As a result, more than 300,000 tons of Russian fertiliser have reportedly been stranded in different European ports since the start of the war. On 18 November, a negotiated solution to break this deadlock was reportedly reached, which would see a World Food Programme (WFP) chartered ship transport Russian fertiliser from the Netherlands to Malawi.

On 14 November, the General Assembly resumed its 11th Emergency Special Session (ESS). During the ESS, it adopted a draft resolution which recognises the need for an international mechanism of reparation for damages, loss or injury arising from Russia’s “internationally wrongful acts” in or against Ukraine and recommends the creation of an international register of damages. The resolution received 94 votes in favour, 13 against and 74 abstentions. Two Council members voted against the resolution (China and Russia),

four members abstained—Brazil, Gabon, India, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—and the remaining nine members voted in favour.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 15 November statement, the head of the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), Matilda Bogner, drew attention to the ill-treatment of prisoners of war by both parties. The HRMMU documented the death of at least one Ukrainian prisoner of war in Russian captivity since April 2022 and is working to corroborate the reported deaths of eight other Ukrainian soldiers. The statement noted that while Ukraine has provided the HRMMU with “confidential access to prisoners of war in places of internment”, Russia has not. At the 16 November Security Council briefing, DiCarlo called on the parties to ensure the humane treatment of prisoners of war in line with their obligations under international law, in particular the Third Geneva Convention. She also called on Russia to grant the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the ICRC unimpeded access to detainees.

On 16 November, the Third Committee of the General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/C.3/77/L35) on the human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Supported by a recorded vote of 78 in favour and 14 against, with 79 abstentions, the General Assembly condemned the ongoing temporary occupation of Crimea by Russia and its unprovoked aggression against Ukraine.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to ensure the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure in Ukraine. While Russia argues that its attacks are not intended to harm civilians but rather to weaken Ukraine’s military potential, the UN has emphasised that even attacks against military objectives that carry excessive harm to civilians in relation to the anticipated military advantages are prohibited under international humanitarian law. Council members may wish to convene a meeting focused on resolution 2573 of 27 April 2021, which highlights the humanitarian effects of the destruction of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

Another key issue for the Security Council is the need to promote the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. Shelling around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP)—which Ukraine and Russia blame on each other—has continued to raise concerns about a possible catastrophe. On 17 November, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors adopted its third resolution on the situation in Ukraine. The text, which was tabled by Canada and Finland, called on Russia to “abandon its baseless claims of ownership of the ZNPP, to immediately withdraw its military and other personnel from the plant, and to cease all actions against, and at, the plant and any other nuclear facility in Ukraine”. Periodic briefings from IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi could help keep the Council informed of ongoing risks and efforts to mitigate them.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the situation in Ukraine. Russia continues to justify 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—condemn Russia for what they consider an unprovoked war.

Divisions have become more pronounced in recent months between groups of Council members that appeared united in condemning Russia in the days following its intervention in Ukraine. The

Ukraine

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 isolating Russia politically and economically.

Other Council members, however, have increasingly cautioned that such measures risk limiting the prospects of a negotiated settlement of the war in Ukraine. These members—including Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and the 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.

Divisions have also deepened between African members of the Council. While all three members voted in favour of the 25 February draft resolution tabled by Albania and the US condemning Russia for invading Ukraine, only Ghana has since continued to explicitly call on Russia to withdraw its troops from Ukraine. Kenya has increasingly shown reluctance to single out Russia, doing so on fewer occasions. It has also spoken against Western sanctions at Council briefings on Ukraine. Gabon, which has not explicitly condemned

Russia in its statements, was the only African member to abstain on the 30 September resolution drafted by Albania and the US, which condemned Russia's referendums held in late September.

Following its most recent summit in Bali, which took place on 15 and 16 November, the G20—which includes Council members Brazil, China, France, India, Mexico, Russia, the UK, and the US, and incoming member Japan—noted in a declaration that while “most G20 members condemned the war...there were other views and different assessments of the situation and sanctions”.

Analysts have argued that winter may slow the intensity of hostilities. This has renewed hopes for the resumption of negotiations, with US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mark Milley suggesting on 9 November that “if there's a slowdown in the tactical fighting, that may become a window...for a political solution”. The Biden administration subsequently specified on 10 November that the US is not pressuring Ukraine to resume peace talks. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that “it is ultimately up to Ukraine to make determinations about its diplomatic course”. At the Halifax International Security Forum on 18 November, Zelenskyy said that “Russia is now looking for a short truce, a respite to regain strength”, adding that while “someone may call this the war's end...such a respite will only worsen the situation”.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council will hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria, as well as on the use of chemical weapons in the country.

Resolution 2642 of 12 July renewed the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for six months, with a further six-month extension subject to a new resolution. Although the mechanism's initial authorisation is set to expire on 10 January 2023, it is possible that an effort will be made to authorise the extension before the end of the year. (Through this mechanism, humanitarian assistance is delivered to Syria from Türkiye via the Bab al-Hawa crossing, without requiring the consent of the Syrian government.) In considering the authorisation, Council members will review the Secretary-General's special report on humanitarian needs in Syria, which was mandated by resolution 2642 and is due no later than 10 December.

Key Recent Developments

The outbreak of cholera continues to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation in Syria. According to OCHA, from 25 August to 5 November, 35,569 suspected cases of cholera were reported, including 92 fatalities that have been attributed to the disease.

On 15 November, two children were found dead in al-Hol refugee camp in north-east Syria. The camp, which is administered by Kurdish forces, is home to more than 50,000 people, many of whom are associated with apprehended or deceased Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) fighters. Insecurity continues to be

a major challenge at the camp. On 15 November, Deputy Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General Farhan Haq said: “[w]e've been drawing attention to the poor conditions at the al-Hol camp for some time now, and this is another extremely sad reminder of how bad the conditions are.” A 21 November Human Rights Watch report said that 38,000 foreign nationals, mostly children, remain in al-Hol and Roj (another refugee camp in north-east Syria) under “horrific conditions”.

On 13 November, a bomb attack in Istanbul killed six Turkish citizens and injured dozens. Türkiye has blamed the Syrian faction of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which Türkiye considers a terrorist organisation, for carrying out the attack—an allegation that the PKK has denied.

Türkiye carried out airstrikes on Kurdish bases in northern Syria and northern Iraq on 20 November, claiming to have targeted sites such as ammunition depots, tunnels, and shelters. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in the UK, claimed that at least 31 people died in northern Syria from these strikes—including 18 members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (a predominantly Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government), 12 Syrian troops, and one journalist. On 21 November, Türkiye reported that two of its citizens were killed as a result of a cross-border mortar attack carried out by Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, following an earlier Turkish air raid on the fighters.

Early recovery projects—which are designed to increase access to basic services such as clean water, electricity, nutrition, health care, and

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolutions 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. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syria crisis. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9204 (29 November 2022) was a meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria. S/PV.9184 (7 November 2022) was a meeting on the chemical weapons track in Syria.

Syria

education—continue to be implemented in Syria. According to OCHA, as at mid-November, such projects had been implemented in Syria's 14 governorates, supported by \$517 million dollars of donor assistance.

On 21 November, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID), in accordance with resolution 2642, which encouraged Security Council members to convene an IID every two months to review and follow up on the resolution's implementation, including with regard to early recovery projects. The meeting featured a briefing by Tareq Talahma, OCHA's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa. Two other UN officials—Muhannad Ibrahim Ahmed Hadi, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis; and El-Mostafa Benlamlah, the Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for Syria—were also on hand to respond to questions. In addition to Council members and Syria, interested regional parties (Iran and Türkiye) and donors (Canada, Germany, Sweden, and the EU) also participated in the meeting. Among the questions raised was that of the distribution of humanitarian aid. The UN officials reportedly emphasised that humanitarian aid is delivered throughout Syria based on the needs of the population.

On 7 November, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed the Council on the Syria chemical weapons file. Nakamitsu reiterated that gaps, inconsistencies, and discrepancies remain unresolved in Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons program and that, as a result, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) cannot consider Syria's obligations accurate and complete under the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

A briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria was held on 29 November, featuring briefings by Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths. Pedersen referred to increased mutual strikes in recent months in northern Syria between the SDF, on the one hand, and Türkiye, while noting reports of strikes inside Türkiye territory. With respect to these incidents, he observed that the Secretary-General had called for "all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid escalation". He also expressed concern that the Syria Constitutional Committee had not met in six months and that, if and when it does reconvene, it is "important that there is some forward movement on the substance". Griffiths lamented that the gap between needs and funds to address the humanitarian situation continues to grow. He spoke about the adverse humanitarian effects of cholera and high food prices on the Syrian people.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues for the Council are how to reinvigorate the political process in Syria and how to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country most effectively.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement that:

- expresses strong support for the efforts of the Special Envoy to reinvigorate the political process;
- condemns attacks on civilians and underscores the need for the parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and human rights law;
- encourages donors to enhance their support for the Syria humanitarian response plan, including early recovery efforts; and

- encourages efforts by foreign governments to repatriate their nationals in camps for internally displaced persons in north-east Syria.

In light of the dire situation of children in Syria, including those who reside in refugee camps such as al-Hol, Council members may consider inviting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict or a high-level UNICEF representative to brief the Council at its next meeting on the humanitarian track in Syria. They can ask the briefer to provide recommendations for concrete steps that the Council can take to support efforts to alleviate the plight of Syrian children.

An additional option would be a Council visiting mission to the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Syria-Türkiye border ahead of the expiry of the cross-border aid mechanism. On such a visit, Council members could meet with the UN and other officials responsible for implementing and overseeing the cross-border aid delivery mechanism, to get a better understanding of its inner workings and its role in addressing the country's humanitarian crisis.

Council Dynamics

Strong divisions in the Council persist regarding 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 other like-minded members criticise the government for violating international humanitarian law and human rights law, arbitrarily detaining people, and not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue.

Council members appear to be focused on the upcoming negotiations on a resolution to reauthorize the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism, given that a new resolution will be required by 10 January 2023. Informal discussions among several members on this issue had already begun at the time of writing. Most members emphasise that the cross-border aid mechanism is essential to saving lives in Syria, and strongly support its continuation. Other members, such as China and Russia, tend to argue that cross-border deliveries are an extraordinary measure that undermines Syria's sovereignty and should be supplanted as soon as possible by enhanced cross-line assistance (that is, across domestic frontlines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control).

There are also contrasting views on the chemical weapons track in Syria. Several members have expressed support for the OPCW's work, maintaining that it is credible and essential, and have criticised Syria for not adhering to its obligations under the CWC. Russia, on the other hand, claims that the OPCW's work is biased and politicised. Other members tend to be less critical of the OPCW and the Syrian authorities, emphasising the need for both sides to enhance their cooperation with one another.

There are also differences of view on the frequency of the monthly meetings on the chemical weapons file. Some members believe that the frequency should be reduced, given that there is rarely new information to report; Brazil, China, Gabon, Russia, and the United Arab Emirates expressed this perspective at the 7 November Council

Syria

meeting on the chemical weapons file. Other members—such as Albania, Ireland, the UK, and the US—believe that meetings on this issue every month are appropriate, as they provide an opportunity to highlight Syria’s lack of compliance with the CWC. It seems that during Council members’ consultations on November’s programme of work, Russia criticised the insistence of some Council members to

hold monthly meetings on the Syria chemical weapons track, arguing that it is not an urgent issue. Russia apparently called on the Council to focus on other issues that it believes require constant attention, such as the situation in Libya, and requested a meeting on that matter, which was held on 15 November.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will hold a briefing followed by consultations on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), which members were expected to receive by 30 November. The chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana), is also expected to provide the quarterly briefing to the Security Council on the committee’s work.

The mandate of UNITAMS expires on 3 June 2023.

Key Recent Developments

This December marks four years since the start of demonstrations across Sudan, prompted by rising costs of living and deteriorating economic conditions, which sparked the revolution that led to the ousting of former President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. It has been over two years since the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) in October 2020 and more than a year since the military coup d’état in October 2021. In an October UNITAMS newsletter, Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes said that “a year after the military takeover, Sudan remains in turmoil, with a declining economy, a deteriorating security situation and frequent flareups of violence at the community level, and consistent popular protests”. He expressed hope that following recent progress towards a political solution, “an end might finally be in sight.”

The Trilateral Mechanism, founded to coordinate the efforts of UNITAMS, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in support of a Sudanese-led process to end the political crisis and restore a civilian-led transitional government, continues to hold meetings with stakeholders. In a 10 November joint op-ed, “Sudan: A Glimmer of Hope”, envoys of the Trilateral Mechanism noted that they had received input from the military leadership on the draft constitutional document, prepared with guidance from the Sudanese Bar Association’s Steering Committee, which “reflect basic understandings” between the military and the Forces of Freedom and Change. They added that now that the military has accepted the draft, there is “a workable document upon which further consensus can be built”, adding that military and civilian groups have requested the Mechanism to begin “facilitating a new political process based on this draft”. They also emphasised that “time is of the essence to not only to [sic] establish this newly civilian-led government but also to sustain the momentum needed to complete the transitional tasks to move to electoral legitimacy”.

Insecurity, including intercommunal clashes, armed conflict and criminality, persists across several areas. Since the resurgence of violence in July, the International Organization for Migration estimates that over 21,000 people have been displaced from West Kordofan and close to 100,000 people from and within Blue Nile. In October, intercommunal violence in parts of Blue Nile and West Kordofan resulted in the deaths of at least 258 people, with 385 people injured and more than 55,000 people displaced, according to OCHA’s 10 November situation report.

Humanitarian needs are at record levels since the military coup, with an estimated 15.8 million people—about a third of the population—projected to need humanitarian assistance next year, according to OCHA’s Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2023. The number of food-insecure people increased by about two million compared to last year, and there are 3.7 million internally displaced people and 926,000 refugees in Sudan, the overview indicated.

In his 13 September briefing to the Council on UNITAMS, Perthes stressed that the situation in the country is likely to worsen unless a political solution is reached, including a credible civilian-led government. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 12 September.) On 27 October, Council members held a meeting on Sudan under “any other business”, to discuss the violence in West Kordofan and Blue Nile, with a briefing by Perthes.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk conducted his first official visit to Sudan from 13–16 November. During his visit, he met with high-level officials, including Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan’s military leader and Chairperson of the Transitional Sovereign Council, as well as civil society representatives and victims of human rights violations. In a statement on 16 November, the High Commissioner emphasised that “human rights have to be at the core of the transition”. He also underscored the excessive use of force against protesters, saying that since the military takeover, at least 119 people have been killed and more than 8,050 injured. Furthermore, he expressed grave concern at the reports of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, as well as men and boys, noting that his Office verified 19 incidents of sexual and gender-based violence committed by the police in the context of the protests. In relation to Darfur, he said that since the start of this year, his Office has documented 11 large-scale deadly clashes resulting in the deaths of at least 1,091 people, and underscored the need for accountability and justice.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is monitoring the political situation in Sudan. The Council could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue (IID)

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2636](#) (3 June 2022) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/667](#) (2 September 2022) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9129](#) (13 September 2022) was a briefing on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on UNITAMS.

Sudan

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

A further issue is the level of intercommunal violence and insecurity across the country, including increased violence in parts of Blue Nile and West Kordofan. The deteriorating humanitarian and economic situations also remain key issues. An option would be to seek regular briefings from OCHA on the situation.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns over the political, security, human rights, and humanitarian situations in Sudan and

are supportive of the Trilateral Mechanism. At the briefing on 13 September, many members emphasised the urgency of advancing a political solution because of, among other things, the deteriorating economic situation, increasing humanitarian needs, and the continued insecurity involving intercommunal clashes, armed conflict and criminality. Albania, Brazil, France, Ireland, Mexico, the UK, the US, and the A3 members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) expressed concern over the violence in Blue Nile and West Darfur. Several members, such as Albania, France, Mexico, the UK, and the US, condemned the use of force by security forces against protesters and called for accountability.

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

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 20 October, fighting resumed between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the M23 Movement, an armed group that operated in North Kivu province previously and became active again this year. The recent fighting, which started in the Rutshuru territory of North Kivu, has exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region. The M23 has gained control of more territories, and, according to a FARDC spokesperson, by 14 November the fighting had reached closer to Goma, the regional capital. The FARDC has launched a major land and air offensive to forestall the advance of M23 forces, and Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi has called for mass mobilisation.

The escalating security situation has also aggravated the already tense relationship between the DRC and Rwanda. The Congolese government, which continues to accuse Rwanda of supporting the M23, expelled the Rwandan ambassador to Kinshasa on 29 October. Rwanda expressed regret over the decision and has continued to deny the DRC's accusations.

Following the Council's 26 October meeting on the Great Lakes region, Council members issued a press statement on 28 October reiterating their concern about the resurgence of the M23 Movement and the increasing military activities of other armed groups in eastern DRC. They called on all armed groups to immediately cease all forms of violence and disarm unconditionally. In a 30 October statement, Secretary-General António Guterres also expressed deep

concern over the fighting, which has resulted in civilian casualties, massive displacement, and the injury of four MONUSCO peacekeepers. He also spoke to regional leaders to express the UN's support for their ongoing mediation efforts.

The current chair of the East African Community (EAC), Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye, convened a high-level consultative meeting of the EAC heads of state on 7 November in the margins of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. The EAC has been implementing a two-track approach, known as the Nairobi process, to addressing the situation in eastern DRC: to facilitate political dialogue between the Congolese government and armed groups and to deploy a regional force to deal with those who refuse to join the dialogue process. According to a communiqué issued at the end of the Sharm El-Sheikh meeting, the participants assessed the situation in eastern DRC and called for a cessation of hostilities to pave the way for holding a third round of political dialogue between the Congolese government and armed groups in Nairobi, which started on 28 November. (Two rounds of dialogue took place in April and May under the auspices of the EAC.) They also reviewed progress regarding the deployment of the EAC regional force in eastern DRC and took note of the establishment of its headquarters in Goma. According to the communiqué, participants also noted that Burundian, Kenyan and Ugandan forces had deployed on the ground and called on South Sudan to expedite the deployment of its forces.

The chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Angolan President João Lourenço, visited Rwanda and the DRC on 11 and 12 November, respectively, as part of his regional mediation efforts as mandated by the AU Chairperson, known as the Luanda process. Lourenço met separately with the two countries' presidents to seek ways to ease the tensions. Earlier, the foreign ministers of Angola, the DRC and Rwanda met in Luanda to follow up on the implementation of the Luanda Roadmap,

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolution S/RES/2612 (20 December 2021) renewed MONUSCO's mandate for one year until 20 December 2022. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9142** (30 September 2022) was a briefing on the situation in the DRC. **Security Council Press Statements SC/15087** (28 October 2022) was on the situation in the Great Lakes region. **SC/ 15115** (22 November 2022) was on the situation in the DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

agreed by Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame on 6 July with the facilitation of Lourenço, to normalise their bilateral ties.

The EAC Facilitator of the Peace Process in the eastern DRC, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, travelled to Kinshasa on 13 and 14 November for high-level consultations with Tshisekedi, and visited Goma on 15 November. Media reports quoted him as having urged “the Congolese to lay down arms and nurture a sense of patriotism” in an interview with Radio Okapi, a radio network created by MONUSCO.

On 21 November, Council members held closed consultations to discuss the M23 Movement’s advances, at the request of France (the penholder on the DRC), the UK and the US, during which Keita briefed. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 20 November.) Following this meeting, Council members issued a press statement on 22 November strongly condemning the resumption of attacks by the M23 and reiterating their support for ongoing regional efforts to deescalate the situation and resolve it through dialogue.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon), visited the DRC and the Great Lakes region from 7 to 18 November to consult with government officials and other relevant stakeholders on the effective implementation of the measures imposed within the framework of the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. Biang is expected to brief the Security Council in December about the work of the committee and on the findings of the recent visit to the DRC and the region.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 51st session in October, the Human Rights Council (HRC) considered the final report of the International Team of Experts on the DRC (A/HRC/51/60) and the annual report from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation and the activities of the UN Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO) in the DRC (A/HRC/51/61). The report noted that the human rights situation in the DRC remains an active concern, although the number of human rights violations and abuses as well as violations of international humanitarian law documented by UNJHRO has decreased.

On 1 November, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a statement calling for urgent de-escalation of tensions in the DRC, noting that the resumed fighting between the FARDC and the M23 Movement is “threatening a human rights disaster”. He also expressed concern about a resurgence in hate speech and a rise in misinformation, disinformation and negative rhetoric against MONUSCO.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for Council members in December is to renew MONUSCO’s mandate. This will happen against the backdrop of a deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC and growing anti-MONUSCO sentiment among the local population. Following July’s violent protests against the mission in eastern DRC, the Congolese government requested a review of MONUSCO’s transition plan, which was developed in close consultation with the government and other stakeholders and was endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2612 of 20 December 2021, which most recently renewed MONUSCO’s mandate.

Among other issues, Council members are likely to consider the following:

- how to better prioritise and sequence the mission’s mandate in light of current realities;

- how to support and reinforce the ongoing regional initiatives—the Nairobi and Luanda processes—to find a political solution to the security situation in eastern DRC and ease regional tensions;
- how to support the Demobilisation, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilisation Program (P-DDRCS) for ex-combatants;
- how to ensure better coordination between MONUSCO and the EAC regional force being deployed in eastern DRC;
- how to adapt MONUSCO’s transition plan in light of recent developments and tailor it towards the implementation of core tasks in support of reinforcing the capacities of the host country;
- how to build trust with the host government and host communities through better strategic communications; and
- how MONUSCO can provide support for the 2023 elections through its good office’s mandate.

One possible option for Council members is to convene an informal meeting with the participation of the DRC, MONUSCO, countries of the region, and troop- and police-contributing countries to receive their input on MONUSCO’s work and to facilitate greater convergence of views among Council members ahead of the mandate renewal process.

Council Dynamics

Council members support MONUSCO’s work and the gradual, responsible and conditions-based drawdown of the mission. However, at a 30 September Council meeting on the DRC, the three African members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) supported the Congolese government’s request for a review of MONUSCO’s transition plan. They also argued that the potential benchmarks should focus on strengthening key defence and security institutions to pave the way for the mission’s successful drawdown and exit. China stressed the need to streamline MONUSCO’s mandated tasks to focus on protecting civilians and maintaining security and stability.

India, a major troop-contributing country to MONUSCO that lost two of its peacekeepers during the violent protests against the mission in July, emphasised the issue of accountability for attacks against peacekeepers. Brazil highlighted the challenges that MONUSCO is facing because of the disinformation campaign against it and emphasised the need to enhance the mission’s strategic communications capabilities and its community engagement.

In relation to the deployment of the EAC regional force, the US pointed out that “all countries must notify the Security Council in advance on matters involving defence cooperation, including the deployment of troops and the provision of arms” in line with the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. It also expressed deep concern about the M23 Movement and the support it receives from external actors, specifically mentioning the Rwanda Defence Forces. Furthermore, the US called on member states to freeze the group’s assets and deny any funds or other economic resources to the M23, which remains designated under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

The Council last received a briefing on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of UNOCA on 8 June. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee updated Council members on a range of issues, including crucial electoral processes in several countries in the region in 2022 and 2023, the institutional reform being undertaken by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the challenges climate change poses to the region, the fight against terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin, and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. She also provided information on the latest developments in several regional countries, including Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Chad.

The Secretary-General's semi-annual UNOCA report, which was due by 29 November at the time of writing, is expected to provide updates on the latest political, security and development trends in Central Africa since his last report in May and to elaborate on UNOCA's activities, including those in support of regional peace and security efforts. On 28 July, the Secretary-General appointed Abdou Abarry of Niger as his Special Representative for Central Africa and head of UNOCA. Abarry replaced François Louncény Fall of Guinea, who served in that position for five and a half years. He assumed his duties on 9 September and travelled to Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and São Tomé and Príncipe to meet the leadership of those countries and other relevant stakeholders and discuss matters of peace and security in the Central Africa region. He also visited the headquarters of the ECCAS Commission in Libreville and the Lake Chad Basin Commission in N'Djamena.

On 25 July, the ECCAS heads of state and government held a summit in Kinshasa, during which they assessed the regional peace and security situation. The summit, which took place amid rising tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, called in its final communiqué for cessation of hostilities and the immediate withdrawal from captured territories of the M23 Movement, a Congolese armed group that used to operate in eastern DRC and became active again this year. On 25 October, ECCAS heads of state and government met in an extraordinary session to discuss the situation in Chad and appointed DRC President Félix Tshisekedi as facilitator for the Chadian political transition process.

Transitional Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby had promised in April 2021 to hold an inclusive national dialogue with various Chadian political stakeholders in order to elaborate a new constitution and pave the way for elections. In its May 2021 communiqué on the situation in Chad, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) underscored that the transition period should be completed within

18 months and that no extension would be acceptable to the AU. It also called on members of the Transitional Military Council (TMC)—which assumed power unconstitutionally after the death of former Chadian President Idriss Déby Itno on 20 April 2021—to abide by their commitments not to run in future elections. After several delays, the long-awaited Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue (DNIS) was held from 20 August to 8 October and concluded with recommendations to allow TMC members to run for elections and to extend the transition period for a further 24 months. This triggered violent protests in N'Djamena, during which 50 people were killed.

On 11 November, the AUPSC met to discuss the situation in Chad based on the report of AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, which, among other things, recommended that the AUPSC impose sanctions on the TMC for violating the AUPSC decision of 14 May 2021 and in line with the AU's norms and principles on unconstitutional changes of government. With the AUPSC unable to agree on the matter, the proposal was put to a vote. Only three members (Namibia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) reportedly voted in favour, while one member (South Africa) abstained, and the other 11 members (Burundi, Djibouti, Cameroon, Congo, The Gambia, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Tunisia) voted against.

In Cameroon, the security situation remains a concern in the Anglophone North-West and South-West regions, where there have been clashes between separatist groups and the government. According to OCHA, recent such fighting displaced more than 8,842 people. In recent months, schools and healthcare centres have become targets of attacks, and teachers and students have been kidnapped. Furthermore, armed groups imposed lockdowns for weeks, impeding humanitarian operations in the two regions.

In the Lake Chad basin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), composed of forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, has intensified its military operations against Boko Haram and the Islamic State-West Africa Province (ISWAP). The MNJTF concluded a major operation, codenamed Operation Lake Sanity, in August, which reportedly helped stabilise the situation in the Lake Chad basin and facilitated the return of displaced communities. In October, the MNJTF reported that it had conducted an intelligence-led operation on a suspected supply route used for terrorist activities in the Lake Chad region and arrested 40 terrorist logistics suppliers.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situation in several parts of Central Africa remains a key concern for the Council. Council members are likely to monitor developments related to the political transition in Chad and the elections that are taking place in several countries in the region over the coming two years. At next month's meeting, some members may note the conclusion of electoral processes this year in Angola, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Several members may express concern about the outcome of the DNIS and call for a peaceful, inclusive and consensual transition process in Chad.

The continued threat of terrorism in the Lake Chad basin and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea have also been matters

UNOCA (Central Africa)

of concern. The Secretary-General's 1 November report on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, submitted pursuant to resolution 2634 of 31 May, indicated that piracy incidents have declined but noted that "there has also been a noticeable shift in the geographical location of piracy incidents from West Africa to Central Africa".

Climate change's exacerbating effects on the peace and security challenges in the region remain an important issue. UNOCA's June report on "Sustaining Peace in Central Africa through Addressing the Adverse Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security", prepared in partnership with ECCAS and the UN Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), will likely be of interest to Council members. An option for members interested in the link between climate and security would be to hold an informal meeting with the drafters of the report, to discuss possible ways for the Council to support the implementation of its recommendations.

Council Dynamics

There is broad support by Council members for a holistic regional approach to addressing the peace and security challenges in Central Africa through cooperation between UNOCA and the various regional mechanisms. The issue of climate change continues to be divisive in the context of the discussion on UNOCA. At the 8 June

meeting, several Council members highlighted the challenge of climate change in their interventions, but India reiterated its longstanding position that "no artificial link should be drawn between climate change and security-related issues without any firm scientific basis".

Several of the country situations in the region remain a focus for some Council members. The UK noted that the situation in Cameroon requires urgent attention and called on all parties to allow safe access to schools and humanitarian assistance, while the US underscored that "[a] broader dialogue without preconditions is needed for a peaceful and durable resolution" of the conflict in the country.

Some members have also raised concerns about the destabilising role of the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, and its reported involvement in human rights abuses. Some members have raised this issue when referring to the situation in the CAR, where the Wagner Group has deployed. Russia maintained during the 8 June meeting that the group "has strictly complied with all the restrictions that the Council has imposed regarding the Central African Republic", adding that "the choice of any partner... is the prerogative of the national authorities, including with regard to issues of law enforcement and investigations of violations of international law".

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

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

The term of the prosecutor and the IRMCT's operating period expire on 30 June 2024.

Key Recent Developments

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

Under resolution 1966 of 22 December 2010, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for

subsequent periods of two years thereafter unless the Security Council decided otherwise. On 22 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2637, extending Brammertz's term for another two years until 30 June 2024. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 14 in favour and one abstention (Russia). It contained new elements—including language urging member states to intensify cooperation to enforce sentences handed down by the ICTR, the ICTY and the IRMCT—and welcomed the continuing support already provided by states in this regard. It called on the IRMCT, as part of its completion strategy, to provide options regarding the transfer of its remaining activities in due course. It also noted the prosecutor's confirmation in May of the deaths of two fugitives indicted by the ICTR. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 21 June.)

On 29 June, the Appeals Chamber of the IRMCT delivered its judgement in the case of *Prosecutor v. Marie Rose Fatuma et al.*, formerly *Nzabonimpa et al.* It unanimously dismissed Fatuma's appeal and granted the prosecution's appeal in its entirety. Following this, the judicial workload of the IRMCT currently consists of two cases, one a trial and the other an appeal. In the trial case of *Prosecutor v. Félicien Kabuga*, opening statements were heard at the end of September, and the prosecution commenced the presentation of its evidence on 5 October. In the appeal case of *Prosecutor v. Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović*, judgement is expected by June 2023.

On 24 October, Santana briefed the General Assembly on the tenth annual report of the IRMCT. (Santana, of Uruguay, was

UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2637 (22 June 2022) extended the term of the IRMCT's prosecutor until 30 June 2024. Security Council Letter S/2022/583 (28 July 2022) transmitted the tenth annual report of the IRMCT. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9062 (14 June 2022) was the semi-annual debate on the work of the IRMCT. Other S/2022/148 (23 February 2022) was the report of the OIOS reviewing the methods and work of the IRMCT.

International Criminal Tribunals

appointed by the Secretary-General on 27 June, succeeding Judge Carmel Agius, who had served as IRMCT President since January 2019.) She highlighted that in the coming years, the IRMCT will transition “from a fully operational court to a truly residual institution”, adding that the “necessary downsizing will create challenges”. She also highlighted three priorities for her presidency: “First, to ensure the efficient, effective and fair conclusion of the remaining trial and appeal proceedings. Second, to lead efforts in developing a comprehensive strategy to guide the Mechanism’s continuing transition from an operational court to a truly residual institution. Third, to consolidate the achievements of the ad hoc Tribunals and the Mechanism and to safeguard their invaluable legacy, while further enhancing inter-organ and inter-branch coordination and collaboration”.

On 14 June, the Security Council held its semi-annual debate on the IRMCT, with briefings by then-president Agius and Brammertz. In his briefing, Brammertz referred to his office’s mandate to respond to requests for assistance from domestic investigators and prosecutors. He noted that Rwanda’s prosecutor general is still seeking to prosecute more than 1,000 fugitives indicted for genocide, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, there are more than 3,000 suspected perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide to be investigated and prosecuted.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is for members to continue monitoring the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate. Members may choose to use the closed format of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals to have a frank discussion with Santana

about envisioned steps to promote her priorities for the IRMCT. They might also wish to ask about the possibility of elaborating a timeline for the completion of the Mechanism’s work—an issue raised by several Council members during the 14 June debate.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, except for Russia, which has been consistently critical of the ICTY. Russia has also been critical of the appointment of Brammertz, who was the ICTY prosecutor from 2008 until its closure in 2017, and it abstained on previous resolutions re-appointing him in 2016, 2018, 2020 and this year.

As a result, it seems that the negotiations on resolution 2637, which most recently extended Brammertz’s term, were once again lengthy and difficult. An area of disagreement during the negotiations was how to characterise the conclusions of the 23 February report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reviewing the methods and work of the IRMCT. Russia apparently proposed language noting that the IRMCT failed to implement all OIOS recommendations and suggested language calling on the OIOS to generate new recommendations on the evaluation of the IRMCT’s methods and work pertaining to its closure, especially with a focus on staff reduction. Russia also apparently sought the inclusion of language expressing concern that the IRMCT had failed to demonstrate any visible reduction in its staff or budget. Most members did not support such language, however, and it was not added to the resolution.

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

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

Expected Council Action

As is customary in December, the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies are expected to provide a briefing on their experiences. The representatives of the five members completing their two-year terms on the Council at the end of 2022 and their respective chairmanships are:

- Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India)—the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, and the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee;
- Ambassador Fergal Mythen (Ireland)—the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee and Facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231 concerning Iran;
- Ambassador Martin Kimani (Kenya)—the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa;
- Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico)—the 1540 Non-Proliferation Committee and the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee;
- Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway)—the 1718 Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict; and

- Ambassador Trine Heimerback (Norway)—the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da’esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

Background

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

Key Recent Developments

At this briefing, each chair will be able to review developments within their committee or working group during their two-year term, assess their experience, suggest recommendations for improvements, and provide advice to their respective successors.

Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India) will speak about the three subsidiary bodies India has chaired. Kamboj has chaired these committees since August, following the departure of her predecessor,

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUBSIDIARY BODIES Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8928 (13 December 2021) was a briefing by the outgoing chairs of the Security Council subsidiary bodies. **Other** S/2017/507 (30 August 2017) was the most recent note by the President of the Security Council containing the compendium of the Council’s working methods.

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

Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti. In her briefing on the Libya Sanctions Committee, Kamboj may highlight that this year's final report of the Panel of Experts supporting the committee found that the arms embargo continued to be violated with impunity and that the assets freeze was not uniformly implemented. Kamboj may further recall that on 13 July, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2644, renewing the measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 30 October 2023 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 15 November 2023.

In speaking about the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), Kamboj may highlight the adoption of the "Delhi Declaration", the outcome document of the special meeting of the CTC held in India on 28-29 October. Regarding the Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, Kamboj may discuss how the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021 has affected the committee's work.

As part of his briefing, Ambassador Fergal Mythen (Ireland) will cover the work of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee. He has chaired the committee since August, following the departure of his predecessor Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason. He may note that resolution 2662 of 17 November, which renewed the Somalia sanctions regime for another year, renamed the committee as the "Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab". In relation to Ireland's role as the facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, Mythen could choose to highlight elements of the work conducted by Ireland while negotiations to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) have been ongoing.

Ambassador Martin Kimani (Kenya) may highlight the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa in facilitating the annual consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. He may also mention the meeting convened by the working group in April on "addressing national conflict situations featuring terrorist groups and illegal armed groups with a transnational character".

As the chair of the Mali 2373 Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) may speak about the committee's efforts to improve the implementation of the sanctions regime by Mali and the region. He could highlight Mali's appointment of a focal point to communicate with the sanctions committee. At the time of writing, the committee was planning to hold its first meeting with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to promote the sanctions regime's implementation, which de la Fuente Ramírez may mention. In addition, he may take the opportunity to underscore the need for Mali and the region to cooperate with the Panel of Experts that supports the committee's work.

Regarding the 1540 Committee, Ambassador de la Fuente Ramírez is likely to highlight the committee's comprehensive review of resolution 1540 that it has conducted over the last two years. At the time of this writing, Council members were still negotiating the mandate renewal of the 1540 Committee.

Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) may observe that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has adopted four sets of conclusions (on South Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, and Colombia) since Norway assumed the chairmanship of the working group in January

2021. Conclusions on eight other country situations were being negotiated at the time of writing. Juul may also recall that in 2021, Norway and former Council member Niger co-authored resolution 2601 on the protection of education in conflict. The resolution—which was adopted unanimously and co-sponsored by 99 member states—is the first Council product focusing on the link between education and peace and security in a holistic manner. On the 1718 Committee, Juul may refer to the Panel of Experts' latest midterm report, including its description of continued violations of the sanctions imposed by the Council.

In updating members on the work of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee, Heimerback is expected to describe the activities undertaken by the committee in light of the evolving threat posed by ISIL, Al-Qaeda and their affiliates.

Council Dynamics

After the annual Security Council elections were moved forward from October to June in 2016, there have been significant changes in how chairs are appointed to the Council's subsidiary bodies. In July 2016, Council members agreed on a presidential note concerning the preparation of newly elected members during the transitional period between the election and the beginning of their term, including the selection and preparation of chairs of subsidiary bodies. The note established a more consultative process for the chairs' appointment, co-led by a permanent member and by the chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG), and stipulated that the appointments should be completed by 1 October. That deadline has so far not been met.

At the time of writing, the chairs of the subsidiary bodies for 2023 had not been decided. The incoming members began discussing the vacant positions after the elections in June and quickly agreed on a list of preferences for the subsidiary body vacancies. They showed flexibility when there was pushback from the permanent members to the initial list, producing a revised list that took into consideration the views of the permanent members. However, it seems that the process has stalled because permanent members are opposed to a footnote that indicates that one of the incoming members would chair a working group in 2024, when the current chair leaves. Similar footnotes first appeared two years ago. In 2021, there were two footnotes, one on India taking on the CTC chair during its second year on the Council, and the other on Mexico assuming the position of vice-chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict during its second year. There was also a footnote to the 2022 presidential note, stating that the UAE would chair the CTC "until the end of 2023 after India leaves the chair" (that is, for the calendar year 2023). These agreements have resulted in one-year terms and have effectively taken positions off the table for the next batch of incoming members.

Elected members chair all sanctions committees and other formal and informal subsidiary bodies of the Council. While many elected members find the chairing of subsidiary bodies rewarding, there has, from time to time, been a suggestion to have permanent members share the responsibility of chairing subsidiary bodies.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Yemen's truce, which had been in place since April and was extended twice, expired on 2 October despite intensive efforts to renew and expand the truce agreement. Ahead of its expiration, Grundberg had proposed a six-month extension of the truce. The UN envoy's proposal also entailed the payment of civil servants' salaries and pensions, the opening of specific roads in Taiz and other governorates, additional flight destinations from Sana'a airport, unhindered entry of fuel ships into Hodeidah port, a commitment to release detainees urgently, and the strengthening of de-escalation mechanisms through the Military Coordination Committee (MCC). The Houthi rebel group's position that their security forces be included in the salary payments of civil servants, however, prevented an agreement with the Yemeni government.

Despite some fighting along the front lines, major hostilities have not resumed since the truce's expiration. Grundberg has continued talks with the parties to re-establish the truce agreement. He visited Riyadh from 17 to 18 October, meeting officials from the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia, as well as diplomats representing the permanent members of the UN Security Council, the P5 (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US). On 30 October, Grundberg concluded a visit to Muscat, where he met with senior Omani officials and Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam to discuss options to renew the truce. On 7 November, he concluded a second visit to Riyadh, meeting with Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Yemen, Mohamed Al Jabir, and P5 diplomats. Grundberg did not announce any breakthroughs following these visits.

Meanwhile, a Houthi delegation visited Abha, Saudi Arabia, and a Saudi delegation went to Sana'a on 12 October. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which supports the Yemeni government, said in a statement that the delegations visited prisoners of war as a confidence-building measure geared at extending the truce. The exchange coincided with reports during October and November of intensified direct talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia, as well as Houthi-Saudi talks facilitated by Oman regarding a comprehensive agreement to end the war.

On 21 October, a Houthi drone attack targeted an oil tanker off the Al-Dubba oil terminal in Hadramawt governorate. The Houthis claimed that the attack was a "warning strike" to prevent pro-government forces from using the terminal for oil exports. The Greek shipowners said that there were "two drone-driven explosions in close proximity" to the vessel as it tried to load at the port but that the vessel had not sustained damage. At a 23 October emergency meeting, Yemen's National Defence Council—which is headed by the President of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), Rashad al-Alimi—designated the Houthis as a terrorist organisation.

Grundberg condemned the attack in a 22 October statement, calling it "a deeply worrying military escalation". In a press statement on 26 October, Security Council members strongly condemned the "Houthi terrorist drone attacks" against the oil terminal.

According to the Yemeni government, the Houthis conducted similar drone attacks targeting the Rudum oil terminal on 18 and 19 October. The drone attacks targeting government oil terminals continued in November. On 9 November, a Houthi drone attack targeted the southern Qena port in Shabwah governorate, followed by an attack on 21 October against the Al-Dubba terminal. A joint statement by the ambassadors of France, the UK and the US to Yemen on the Qena port attack called on the Houthis to cease the attacks, saying that "economic warfare will only exacerbate the conflict and humanitarian crisis" in Yemen.

On 22 November, the Council held its monthly briefing on Yemen, receiving an update from Grundberg on his mediation efforts. OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Reena Ghelani described, among other issues, the increasingly constrained humanitarian operating environment. Movement restrictions imposed by Houthi authorities on women humanitarian workers over recent months have contributed to this reduction in relief agencies' ability to deliver assistance.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 26 September, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee added two members of the Houthis to its Sanctions List. The Committee designated Houthi Commander of Yemen's Naval and Coastal Defense Forces Mansur Al-Sa'adi for having "masterminded lethal attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea". It also added former Deputy Head of the Houthi National Security Bureau (NSB) Motlaq Amer Al-Marrani, who oversaw detainees of the NSB who were subjected to torture and other mistreatment, as well as for his role in planning the detention of humanitarian workers and diverting humanitarian aid. On 4 October, the Committee designated a third member, Ahmad al-Hamzi, commander of the Houthi Air Force and Air Defense Forces and its unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) programme.

On 29 November, the 2140 Committee held joint consultations with the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee (formerly called the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee) to discuss arms smuggling in the region.

Human Rights-Related Developments

A 4 November statement delivered by the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, Jeremy Laurence, described the High Commissioner as gravely concerned about the safety and security of civilians following the expiry of the UN-mediated truce in Yemen. It noted that in late October, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had verified three incidents of sniper shootings attributed to the Houthis, in which a boy, a woman, and two men were injured, and three shelling incidents in government-controlled territory that killed two men and wounded four boys, two of whom required leg amputations.

Key Issues and Options

The risk of a resumption of major hostilities is a critical concern. A key issue for the Council is how to support efforts to restore the truce and establish a political process. Council members are likely to monitor Grundberg's ongoing mediation activities. Members may call on the parties, especially the Houthis, to show the flexibility to restore the truce and encourage the coordination of other peace initiatives with the Special Envoy's mediation activities. If an expanded

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9199](#) (22 November 2022) was a briefing on Yemen. [Security Council Letter S/2022/791](#) (21 October 2022) was a Yemeni government letter on Houthi attacks against oil infrastructure. [Security Council Press Statements SC/15080](#) (26 October 2022) condemned the Houthi terrorist drone attacks on 21 October that struck the Al-Dubba oil terminal. [SC/15054](#) (5 October 2022) expressed deep disappointment about the expiration of Yemen's truce.

Yemen

truce agreement is brokered, the Council could adopt a presidential statement to endorse the deal. It may also encourage the parties to maintain and translate a new truce agreement into a ceasefire agreement that leads to an inclusive political process under UN auspices aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

In addition to bureaucratic impediments and movement restrictions, rising global food and energy prices because of the war in Ukraine have complicated efforts this year to address humanitarian needs in Yemen. Members might encourage more donor support for relief efforts in Yemen, both for the rest of 2022 and for upcoming requirements next year.

Members are also likely to closely monitor progress towards starting the salvage operation for the FSO Safer oil tanker, which is moored off Hodeidah port; in September, the UN-facilitated plan to remove the oil from the decrepit ship finally received the donor commitments required to conduct the first phase of the operation.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members want the parties to restore the truce and have

criticised the Houthis' "maximalist demands", which prevented the renewal and expansion of the truce agreement in October. 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. Despite broader geopolitical tensions, the P5 ambassadors to Yemen have maintained their coordination in support of Grundberg's efforts, while the US Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, has also engaged in regional diplomacy to back UN mediation to re-establish the truce. Saudi Arabia exercises leverage on the Yemeni government, and Oman often plays an important role as an interlocutor with the Houthis.

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

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will be briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, which members expect to receive by 8 December. Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon), chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to brief on the work of the Committee. Consultations will follow the briefing.

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

Key Recent Developments

On 4 August, all signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) agreed to a roadmap extending the transitional period by 24 months to enable the implementation of its key outstanding tasks. (The transitional period agreed to in the R-ARCSS was set to end in February 2023.) Key aspects of the roadmap relate to the unification of forces and their redeployment, drafting the permanent constitution, and the electoral process. While there has been some recent progress in the South Sudanese peace process, much remains to be done to fully implement the R-ARCSS and to ensure that free, fair and credible elections can be held at the end of the transitional period.

Intercommunal and subnational violence persists in many areas of the country, including fighting in recent months in Upper Nile state between rival armed factions resulting in the loss of life, the abduction of women and the displacement of thousands of people. According to a report released on 16 November by UNMISS' Human Rights Division, between July and September, there was a 60 percent decrease in overall violent incidents against civilians (from 351 to 142) and a 23 percent decrease in civilian victims (from 969

to 745) in comparison to the same reporting period in 2021. The report attributes this largely to the decline in civilian casualties in the Greater Equatoria Region.

The humanitarian situation remains dire. On 3 November, the World Food Programme warned that hunger and malnutrition are on the rise in South Sudan, with some communities likely to face starvation if humanitarian assistance is not sustained and climate adaptation measures are not scaled up. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), released on 3 November, indicated that about two-thirds of the country's population—7.76 million people—are likely to face acute food insecurity during the April-July 2023 lean season, and 1.4 million children will be malnourished. According to OCHA's September Humanitarian Access Snapshot, released on 11 October, three aid workers were killed while on duty in September.

Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General Courtney Rattray visited South Sudan from 6 to 9 November. They met with several actors, including government officials, members of civil society, humanitarian and development donors, women's groups, and internally displaced persons. They also travelled to Bor, Jonglei state, where in a 7 November statement Lacroix highlighted that flooding caused by climate change had affected people in the area and made access for peacekeepers and humanitarian actors difficult. In a 9 November statement, Lacroix emphasised that a political solution was necessary to address the challenges facing the country. He also noted the importance of keeping South Sudan "high on the international agenda" in light of the growing humanitarian crisis amid reduced donor funding.

The most recent report (covering 1 July to 30 September) of

South Sudan

the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS, noted that the extension of the transitional period agreed to in the roadmap “is indicative of the slow progress in the implementation of the R-ARCSS that has plagued the Agreement since its signing in September 2018”. It said that the unification of forces remains “the most critical activity” and called for the immediate graduation and deployment of all the forces. The report added that the government “should avoid falling behind in the implementation of the tasks specifically outlined within the roadmap” and called for the passage of relevant bills, particularly the Permanent Constitution-Making Process Bill.

Council members were last briefed on South Sudan on 16 September by Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom, who discussed the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on South Sudan. Haysom told the Council that “the next few months will be a litmus test for the parties in demonstrating their commitment to the implementation of the road map”. He noted that he had “encouraged the parties to display tangible results by keeping to the strict deadlines of the road map’s calendar” and added that it was “critical that the international community and the Council remain closely seized of the process”. He emphasised the importance of the pending constitution-making process as well as elections preparations. Regarding the mission, he said it had largely accomplished a “double pivot”, in order to focus its efforts towards “greater facilitation of the political process” along with “proactive deployment to violent hotspots”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 14 September.)

Women, Peace and Security

From 17 to 21 October, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten visited South Sudan, where she held meetings with key government stakeholders as well as civil society groups and survivors of sexual violence. In a 21 October radio interview, Patten noted that women in South Sudan have yet to benefit from the dividends of peace and that, in fact, sexual violence has “increased exponentially”, with UNMISS verifying 96 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against 225 persons in 2022. Among the issues raised with government officials, Patten said that she emphasised to the Minister of Defence the need to strengthen witness and victim protection measures following cases of reprisals connected to military court trials. She called for an implementation plan for the 2014 Joint Communiqué of the Republic of South Sudan and the UN on the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. (This was Patten’s second visit to South Sudan; the first was in 2018.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

In October, the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan travelled to Addis Ababa “to urge African countries and other stakeholders to renew their support for implementation of the peace agreement”, according to a 19 October press release. It also notes that under the R-ARCSS, a Hybrid Court for South Sudan, a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) and a reparations process should have been established more than two years ago. The Commission is expected to brief the Human Rights Council at its 52nd session in early 2023.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 18 November, the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to receive a briefing from its Panel of Experts on its interim report. (The report, due by 1 December in accordance with resolution 2633, was not yet publicly available at the time of writing.)

Key Issues and Options

An ongoing concern for the Council is the significant political challenges in South Sudan related to the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to demonstrate progress towards implementing the outstanding elements of the R-ARCSS in accordance with the deadlines set out in the roadmap. Another issue for several Council members is the need for the government to engage with civil society and other interested parties in relation to the roadmap and its implementation. The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement urging the parties to implement the roadmap in an inclusive and timely manner. Another option is to consider a Council visiting mission to South Sudan to assess the situation and engage further with the various parties. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan was in 2019.)

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

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, the ongoing sub-national and inter-communal violence, the high levels of sexual violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises. Members such as Norway, the UK and the US, along with EU members, expressed reservations about extending the transitional period in August and called on the government to demonstrate its commitment to implementing the R-ARCSS in line with the deadlines set out in the roadmap.

At the 16 September briefing, the US said it was “highly disappointed that South Sudan’s leaders extended the transitional period, thereby once again extending their own time and power, despite failing over the past four years to deliver fully on the commitments they made in the [R-ARCSS]”. Conversely, in a joint statement, the A3 members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya) welcomed “the gradual implementation of the [R-ARCSS] that has been witnessed over the past four years, despite the challenges” and commended the signing of the roadmap.

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

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

New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will hold an open debate on “New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism” under the agenda item “Maintenance of international peace and security”. India’s Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi are expected to brief.

No formal outcome is anticipated.

Background and Recent Developments

The Council has discussed the UN Charter and the multilateral system several times in the past few years. The most recent discussion was on 7 May 2021 during China’s Security Council presidency on the topic of “Upholding Multilateralism and the UN-Centred International System”. Previous meetings include an open debate on 9 January 2020 on “Upholding the United Nations Charter”, following which the Council adopted a presidential statement that “reaffirm[ed] its commitment to multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations” and “recognised the critical importance of the Charter to the maintenance of international peace and security and development of international law”.

In October, in light of this year’s renewed interest in Security Council reform and to mark the 20th anniversary of the AU, Gabon facilitated a discussion on how to build a “constructive multipolar world” during the annual debate on the partnership between the AU and the UN Security Council as a way of focusing attention on African views on the matter.

India’s meeting in December aims to build on the momentum that has been generated on reform. In the concept note prepared to help guide the debate, India argues that a representative multilateral structure, which is reflective of contemporary geopolitical realities, is needed to address emerging challenges such as terrorism, radicalism, pandemics, threats from new and emerging technologies, growing asymmetric threats, the disruptive role of non-state actors and intensifying geopolitical competition. It also maintains that intensive efforts are required to reform the global development architecture and to enhance the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems. India notes that such reform is essential for ensuring sustainable development, including strong, sustained, balanced, inclusive, and equitable economic growth for all.

During the high-level week of the 77th session of the General Assembly, India’s external affairs minister highlighted the significance of multipolarity, rebalancing, fair globalisation, and reformed multilateralism, with reforms of the Security Council at its core. Several heads of states and government also affirmed their support for Security Council reform in their national statements. Among the most notable was that of US President Joe Biden, who underlined that “the United States supports increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent representatives of the Council”. He added that the US supports permanent membership for countries in

Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as for nations whose permanent membership the US has long supported. Similarly, French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed Council reform, especially the addition of new permanent members and restricting the use of the veto in cases of mass atrocities.

The main forum for discussion on Security Council reform has been the Intergovernmental Negotiation (IGN) process at the UN General Assembly. On 17 November, the General Assembly convened for the 36th plenary session to discuss the “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council”. In his remarks at the plenary session, Kőrösi noted that the entire multilateral system is under serious strain because of a set of inter-linked challenges.

The Secretary-General’s 10 September 2021 report “Our Common Agenda” took note of the calls for reform of the UN’s principal organs, indicating that “the majority of Member States now acknowledge that the Security Council could be made more representative of the twenty-first century, such as through enlargement, including better representation for Africa, as well as more systematic arrangements for more voices at the table”. General Assembly resolution 75/1, adopted unanimously on 21 September 2020, emphasised that “our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism”.

Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue is how to strengthen multilateralism to meet current challenges and threats to international peace and security.

In this regard, during the debate some members may focus, as suggested in the concept note, on how to inject new life into the reform discussion as well as identify the tools needed to address the challenges of the future. Members may also choose to address how to make the Council more representative of today’s world.

A connected issue is how the Council can cooperate with other bodies on transnational challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cyber security, and transnational organised crime.

While Council reforms that would require revising the UN Charter are largely in the hands of the General Assembly, the Council may wish to consider changes to working methods and the use of certain UN Charter articles that could improve their ability to address issues of peace and security in the current climate.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of Security Council reform and acknowledge that it needs to reflect today’s geopolitical realities. They remain divided, however, on how to achieve the desired reform. Some elected Council members, including the three African members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya), have recently been vocal on the issue of Security Council reform. At the 11 October debate, Gabon’s foreign minister said: “[i]t is intolerable to see Africa in the Council Chamber without hearing its full voice around the table on

UN DOCUMENTS ON MULTILATERALISM Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/1 (9 January 2020) was on the maintenance of international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8699 (9 January 2020) was an open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”. S/2021/456 (7 May 2021) was an open debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding multilateralism and the UN-centred international system”. S/PV.9079 (28 June 2022) was an open debate on the theme “Security Council working methods”. S/PV.9149 (11 October 2022) was a debate on “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”. General Assembly Document Decision 62/557 (15 September 2008) was a decision on intergovernmental negotiations on “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Security Council”. Other Elements Paper (29 April 2022) submitted by the co-chairs of the intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and matters related to the Security Council.

New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism

a permanent basis, despite its legitimate claim to a seat”.

India is another elected member that has persistently called for Security Council reform. It may express strong support for a text-based negotiation in the context of the IGN process to make progress on the issue. Some other Council members, such as China, remain cautious or even sceptical about this, fearing that it may give “more power to some individual power blocs”. At the 17 November meeting of the IGN, China underscored the need to redress the over-representation of developed countries by having small and medium-sized countries from underrepresented regions, such as Africa, serve in the Council.

At the 11 October debate, the US reiterated the support expressed by Biden at the General Assembly debate and underscored the need to forge a consensus around the reform discussion to make

the Security Council “more effective, representative and credible”. At the General Assembly debate on 24 September, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov noted that the Council needed to adapt to today’s reality and that this should be done through a broader representation of African, Asian and Latin American countries. He mentioned India and Brazil “as key international actors and worthy candidates for becoming permanent Council members, subject to enhancing Africa’s standing at the same time”.

The veto issue is a divisive one among members. At the 11 October debate, Mexico emphasised that “reform should not be limited to an increase in the Council’s membership”, drawing attention to the need to reform the Council’s working methods, particularly the use of the veto.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

The mandate of UNSMIL expires on 31 October 2023.

Key Recent Developments

This month will mark one year since the postponement of national elections planned for 24 December 2021 and seven years since the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). The leadership stand-off continues between incumbent Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed 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 contributes to the country’s political, economic and security instability.

The ceasefire continues to hold, although there are reports of ongoing large-scale recruitment on both sides. There has also been some progress on the security track. On 27 October in Sirte, Special Representative for Libya and head of UNSMIL Abdoulaye Bathily convened the first joint meeting in several months of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC)—which consists of five representatives each from the former Government of National Accord and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces. At the meeting, the JMC agreed to establish a sub-committee for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed groups.

On the economic track, the co-chairs of the Economic Working Group (Egypt, the EU, the US, and UNSMIL) held consultations on 9 November and agreed on the urgent need to assist Libyan institutions to coordinate proposals for temporary mechanisms until a government is elected and a national budget is agreed.

The human rights situation remains alarming, and violations against migrants and asylum seekers continue with impunity. As of mid-November, more than 70 inmates at Tripoli’s Mitiga Central

Prison were reportedly on a hunger strike to protest the prolonged arbitrary detention of many inmates; detention conditions; and ill-treatment, including denial of family visits and medical care.

Bathily has continued to meet with various stakeholders since his arrival in Libya in October. He met with the president of Libya’s High Council of State, Khaled Al-Mishri, on 26 October and discussed “ways to address the current political impasse including efforts to establish a sound constitutional framework for holding inclusive national elections”, according to a 27 October post on Twitter. On 31 October, he met with Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS) Ahmed Aboul Gheit on the margins of the LAS Summit in Algiers, during which they discussed ways to enhance cooperation between the UN, the AU and the LAS to find a solution to the political impasse in Libya. Bathily also met with Presidential Council President Mohamed al-Menfi on 9 November to discuss ways to accelerate the organisation of elections.

On 28 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2656, extending UNSMIL’s mandate for one year, following five short-term extensions since September 2021. It also decided to revert to requesting the Secretary-General to report on UNSMIL’s activities every 60 days, instead of every 30 days as decided in resolution 2629 adopted in April. It reiterated a request for the mission to implement the recommendations of the 9 August 2021 Independent Strategic Review of UNSMIL and for the Secretary-General to update the Council on the implementation of the recommendations in his regular reporting to the Council. The need to convene elections is also emphasised in the resolution, which welcomed the support provided by the UN to the Libyan High National Elections Commission. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 27 October.)

On 9 November, the Council received the semi-annual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, on the ICC’s Libya-related activities. Khan briefed the Council from Libya during the first visit of an ICC prosecutor to the country in ten years. He described visiting sites of torture and execution, including the

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2656](#) (28 October 2022) extended UNSMIL’s mandate until 31 October 2023. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9192](#) (15 November 2022) was a briefing on UNSMIL. [S/PV.9187](#) (9 November 2022) was the semi-annual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor. [S/PV.9173](#) (28 October 2022) was the adoption of resolution 2656. [S/PV.9162](#) (24 October 2022) was a briefing on UNSMIL.

Libya

Tarhouna landfill site near Tripoli, where Libyan forensic experts uncovered 250 bodies. He also announced that confidential applications for arrest warrants have been submitted to ICC judges.

Bathily last briefed the Council on 15 November, at the request of Russia. He again emphasised the need to hold elections as soon as possible and urged the Council “to send an unequivocal message to obstructionists that their actions will not remain without consequences”. He informed the Council that “in the next weeks and months, UNSMIL will endeavour to facilitate a conversation between the key institutional players in Libya as a step towards overcoming their differences and moving forward towards the organisation of free and fair elections”. He also underlined the need for “accompanying support, and pressure, from this Council in particular, and the international community at large”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 14 November.)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue remains the precarious political, economic and security situations 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. Another concern remains the alarming human rights situation.

Council Dynamics

Council 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 and human rights situations.

Negotiations on resolution 2656 renewing UNSMIL’s mandate for one year seem to have been relatively smooth compared to previous deliberations on UNSMIL’s mandate, which were difficult. The length of the mandate had been contentious in the recent past. During the negotiations in April and July, most Council members—including the UK, the US, the European Council members, and the three African members (Gabon, Ghana and Kenya)—were strongly in favour of a one-year mandate renewal. However, Russia had made clear at the time that it would only support a shortened mandate duration until a Special Representative was appointed. As a result of Bathily’s appointment in September, it seems that Russia did not oppose the one-year mandate renewal during the negotiations, although it apparently again expressed its preference for retaining a 30-day reporting cycle. During negotiations, several members, such as Albania and Norway, made suggestions for additional language, some of which was retained, including on human rights; children and armed conflict; and women, peace and security.

At the briefing on 15 November, Russia accused the US of “behind-the-scenes agreements with third countries on Libyan oil exports”, including “to squeeze the Russian Federation out of the global oil market”. The US rejected these allegations as “unfounded conspiracy theories” while calling on Libya’s leaders to agree to a mechanism to transparently detail state oil revenues and their allocation.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Iran

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Negotiations concerning the possible revival of the JCPOA, which have been held in Vienna and began in April 2021, have stalled in recent months amid the ongoing protests in Iran and the lead-up to the 8 November midterm elections in the US. The US, which

was originally a party to the JCPOA, withdrew from the agreement in May 2018 at the behest of then-US President Donald Trump, who went on to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran. Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it has subsequently taken several steps that directly contravene its terms, including enriching uranium to levels higher than JCPOA-mandated limits and removing cameras and monitoring equipment required by the agreement. During his election campaign, current US President Joe Biden promised to re-join the JCPOA if Iran returns to strict compliance with its terms.

The US has been present in Vienna but has not directly participated in the talks, with other parties to the JCPOA instead serving as intermediaries with Iran because of its refusal to attend meetings with the US. The most recent major rounds of negotiations took place in August and September and ended shortly before the wave of protests currently sweeping Iran began.

Several issues have arisen during the course of the talks. At different times in the discussion, Iran has refused to decrease its stockpiles of enriched uranium unless US sanctions are removed, while the US has said that it will not do so until Iran reduces its stockpiles. Iran

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) was a resolution that endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/490](#) (23 June 2022) was a report on the implementation of resolution 2231.

Iran

has sought a guarantee that any new agreement will not be reversed by a future US administration and has pushed for the US to remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from its list of designated foreign terrorist organisations. Iran and the US have also disagreed over which sanctions should be lifted if the JCPOA is revived.

While it appeared that progress had been made on many of these issues, during the latest rounds of negotiations, an ongoing International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) investigation into traces of enriched uranium discovered by the IAEA in three undeclared sites in Iran in 2019 emerged as a major sticking point. In a 1 September response to a draft agreement circulated by the EU in early August, which an EU official described as the “final” text for reviving the deal, Iran reportedly insisted that the IAEA probe be closed as a precondition for its return to compliance with the JCPOA.

The US and the European parties to the agreement have strongly objected to Iran’s proposal. On 10 September, France, Germany and the UK issued a joint statement which said that Iran had “reopened separate issues that relate to its legally binding international obligations under the [Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons] (NPT) and its NPT safeguards agreement concluded with the [IAEA]” and that “this latest demand raises serious doubts as to Iran’s intentions and commitment to a successful outcome on the JCPOA”. Similarly, on 12 September, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters that Iran’s response to the proposal put forward by the EU “is clearly a step backward and makes prospects for an agreement in the near-term ... unlikely”.

In late September, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi tweeted that “dialogue has restarted with Iran on clarification of outstanding safeguards issues”. The announcement followed meetings between Grossi and Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran’s nuclear agency, that took place in Vienna on the sidelines of the IAEA General Conference. The talks between the IAEA and Iran did not appear to resolve the outstanding issues and, on 17 November, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution rebuking Iran and directing it to comply with the IAEA’s investigation. China and Russia both voted against the resolution.

In response to the IAEA resolution, Iran announced on 22 November that it had started enriching uranium to 60 percent purity at its Fordow nuclear facility, a level just below that required to produce a nuclear weapon and well above the 3.67 percent limit imposed by the JCPOA. Prior to this announcement, Iran had enriched 62.3 kilograms of uranium to 60 percent purity at its main nuclear facility in Natanz, according to an IAEA report dated 10 November. A 16 November analysis of the IAEA report published by the Institute for Science and International Security—a non-governmental institution led by a former IAEA nuclear inspector—said that Iran “has more than enough 60 percent enriched uranium” to “directly fashion a nuclear explosive”.

These developments have taken place against a backdrop of increasingly violent anti-government protests in Iran. The protests, which were sparked by the 16 September death of Mahsa Amini after falling into a coma while in police custody, have been described by several analysts as the most serious challenge to the Iranian government in years. As at 22 November, at least 342 people, including more than 40 children, had been killed and more than 15,000

arrested during the demonstrations. On 2 November, Albania and the US convened an Arria-formula meeting to discuss the protests. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 1 November.) Both the EU and the US have imposed additional sanctions on Iranian officials in response to the protests.

Iran has also carried out a series of attacks against Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups in north-eastern Iraq since late September. Iran accuses these organisations of fomenting the protests—allegations that some of these groups have denied. On 22 November, Council members discussed the recent Iranian strikes in Iraq under “any other business”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 22 November.) It seems that the US circulated a draft press statement which condemned Iran’s attacks in the strongest terms and reiterated the Council’s support for the stability, sovereignty and security of Iraq. Russia apparently opposed including any reference to Iran in the text. Consensus could not be achieved, and the press statement was not issued. Russia subsequently proposed a presidential statement on the attacks in Iraq. The proposed text has apparently gone through several iterations, none of which referenced Iran. At the time of writing, there was no agreement on the text.

In mid-October, France, Germany, the UK, and the US wrote a series of letters to the Council accusing Iran of transferring unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia and arguing that the transfers constitute violations of resolution 2231. These member states also alleged that Russia has been using Iranian UAVs to carry out attacks in Ukraine. The letters expressed support for an investigation into the allegations by the UN Secretariat. Russia requested a meeting in response to these letters, citing alleged “risks to the integrity of the UN Charter, to the Organisation and the ability of the Security Council to perform its main function posed by the attempts of certain member states to influence the UN Secretariat in the discharge of its responsibilities in violation of article 100 of the UN Charter”. The meeting was held on 26 October. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 26 October.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 15 November, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a statement calling for the immediate release of thousands being held in Iran for their involvement in peaceful demonstrations following the death of Mahsa Amini. The statement emphasised OHCHR’s deep concern regarding the 1,000 indictments issued in Tehran alone. A spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the authorities to immediately release the detainees and drop all charges, underscoring that under international law, countries which have not abolished the death penalty can only impose it for the “most serious crimes”, which are interpreted as “crimes of extreme gravity, involving intentional killing”.

On 16 November, the Third Committee of the General Assembly approved a draft resolution on the human rights situation in Iran. Among Council members, China, India, and Russia voted against approving the draft, while Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) abstained. If adopted by the General Assembly, the resolution will express concern at the alarmingly high frequency of the imposition of the death penalty in Iran and urge Iran to cease the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters.

On 24 November, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held a special session “to address the deteriorating human rights situation” in Iran. The special session was convened following a request from Germany and Iceland with the support of several other member states, including Albania, France, Japan, Malta, Mexico, the UK, and the US. The HRC adopted a resolution which

Iran

established a mechanism to promote accountability in Iran, among other matters. Among Council members, China and Russia voted against the resolution, while Brazil, India, and the UAE abstained. France, Gabon, Mexico, the UK, and the US voted in favour.

Key Issues and Options

The prospects for the revival of the JCPOA appear dim, at least in the near term. Analysts have suggested that the steps undertaken by Iran since the US' withdrawal from the agreement, including its uranium enrichment activities, are likely to make a return to the original terms of the agreement and full compliance with those terms difficult, particularly given the institutional knowledge acquired by Iran's nuclear programme. The Iranian government's violent repression of anti-government protests and apparent support for the Russian war effort in Ukraine have also made reviving the JCPOA politically difficult for the Biden administration.

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

JCPOA was agreed upon.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their desire to see the negotiations in Vienna progress and have expressed support for the possible revival of the JCPOA. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and other likeminded states, remain concerned about Iran's activities that contravene the JCPOA and its lack of cooperation with the IAEA. Some may criticise Iran for raising demands that are beyond the scope of the JCPOA during the Vienna talks and blame Iran for the failure to reach an agreement. The US and European members might refer to the allegations that Iran has supplied UAVs to Russia for use in Ukraine and reiterate support for an investigation into whether the transfers constitute a violation of resolution 2231.

China and Russia are more supportive of Iran. Both states have previously criticised the US for withdrawing from the JCPOA and imposing unilateral sanctions on the Iranian regime. China and Russia may raise objections to the resolution adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors on 17 November.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In December, the Council is expected to extend for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 31 December. Ahead of the mandate renewal, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 1 December, and the most recent developments. A meeting of Council members and UNDOF troop-contributing countries is also expected to take place in December, in line with usual practice.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 22 September, notes that while the ceasefire between Israel and Syria has generally held during the reporting period, covering 21 May to 20 August, violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement have persisted. As such, the report says that the overall security situation in UNDOF's area of operations remains volatile, raising concerns about the safety and security of the military and civilian personnel of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan (OGG), which provides military observers to UNDOF. The report also highlights that UN personnel at various positions observed 26 drones that crossed the ceasefire line from the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) and flew over the area of separation.

The Secretary-General's upcoming report is expected to focus on the continued violations of the disengagement agreement, especially firing from the Israeli side over the ceasefire line, the presence of Syrian forces in the area of separation, and the existence of unauthorised

weapons in the limitation area. Moreover, the report is expected to focus on the volatile situation in the region, especially the southern part of the area of limitation.

During Council members' last quarterly consultations on UNDOF, which took place on 17 October, the issue of the handing over of posts to Syrian authorities was discussed. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, who briefed at the meeting, apparently emphasised that the posts' handover will be carried out in a consultative manner with both parties as well as with Council members.

The region has witnessed several notable developments over the last couple of months. On 15 November, the commander of the US Central Command, General Michael "Erik" Kurilla, conducted his fourth visit in the past seven months to Israel, meeting with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). Kurilla, along with the IDF's head of the Northern Command, Major General Ori Gordin, visited the Alpha line in the Golan and observation posts overlooking the Golan. In a press release, he said that "our strategic partnerships within the region—to include our longstanding, ironclad partnership with the IDF—are critical to regional security and stability. All these trips to the region inform my understanding of the threats and challenges faced by each country and the capabilities available".

On 9 November, Israel carried out airstrikes in eastern Syria near the town of Abu Kamal, hitting a convoy of vehicles allegedly smuggling Iranian weapons. At least ten people, several reportedly from Iran, were killed in the attack. The IDF has previously carried out strikes against targets near Abu Kamal in early 2021, targeting weapons depots and pro-Iranian militias.

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 Reports 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.

UNDOF (Golan)

According to media reports dated 10 November, the Israeli army has started building a paved road in the Golan, in the northern and western parts of the Quneitra region, an area that borders the Alpha line.

On 15 July, Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Major General Nirmal Kumar Thapa as UNDOF's force commander. In an 8 November statement, Thapa outlined the mission's priorities, noting that "[a]dherence to the mission mandate will be our primary concern, i.e. to establish peace and security in the Golan through maintaining the ceasefire agreement and scrupulously observing, and supervising the disengagement of forces".

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in December is the renewal of UNDOF's mandate. A related issue is ensuring that UNDOF personnel are equipped with the necessary resources for the fulfilment of the mission's mandate, along with maintaining the safety and security of the peacekeeping personnel.

At next month's consultations, Council members may inquire about the challenges on the ground in regard to UNDOF's work and on any difficulties the mission faces in carrying out its mandate. They may also be interested in more information from the DPO briefer on progress on UNDOF's return to the Bravo side (Syrian Golan). The military observers of the OGG had to vacate the observation posts in 2014 owing to the deteriorating security situation in Syria.

Another issue for Council members is the ongoing violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Members may consider pursuing a press or presidential statement urging parties to

adhere to their commitments under the agreement while expressing concern about the risk of escalation resulting from these violations and the potential danger they pose to the safety of peacekeepers.

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2639 of 27 June, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, illustrated that the Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. Members also seemingly perceive UNDOF as a positive aspect of the Council's work. There was little disagreement among Council members during the negotiations, which were apparently straightforward. Some Council members believe that the situation has turned into a protracted conflict owing to continued violations of the disengagement agreement by both sides.

Despite deep divisions in the Council regarding the Syria file and opposing positions held by the co-penholders on UNDOF, Russia and the US, about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, the two countries continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. This arrangement has enabled close engagement with the parties on the ground. It seems that the antagonism between Russia and the US over the conflict in Ukraine has not affected their work on UNDOF; the difficult dynamics witnessed in other Council files were not evident during the negotiations on UNDOF's mandate in June.

Council members India and Ireland have a particular interest in UNDOF, as both contribute a significant number of uniformed personnel to the mission. UNDOF currently includes 200 Indian uniformed personnel and 130 Irish uniformed personnel.

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