

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In January 2023, Japan will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Japan plans to organise two signature events during the month. The first signature event is a ministerial-level open debate on “[The promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security: the rule of law among nations](#)”. Japan’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa is expected to chair the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Joan E. Donoghue, and Professor Dapo Akande of the University of Oxford are expected to brief.

The second signature event is an open debate on “[Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: Investment in people to enhance resilience against complex challenges](#)”. Japan plans to invite a high-level UN official, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and representatives of international/regional organisations or civil society organisations to brief.

African issues on the programme of work in January are:

- [Mali](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA);
- [Sudan](#), the semi-annual briefing of ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan on the ICC’s Darfur-related activities; and
- [West Africa and the Sahel](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office on West Africa

and the Sahel (UNOWAS), as well as renewal of the mandate of UNOWAS.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meetings on political/humanitarian developments and on the chemical weapons file, as well as the renewal of the Syria cross-border aid mechanism;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting on developments; and
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)”, the quarterly open debate.

In terms of issues in the Americas, the Council is expected to hold briefings and consultations on [Haiti](#) and [Colombia](#).

Consultations are anticipated on the [UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia \(UNRCCA\)](#), the one Asian issue expected to be on the programme in January.

[Cyprus](#) is expected to be on the programme of work in January. A meeting is planned with troop-contributing countries of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and consultations are scheduled on the mission’s work. In late January, the Council will renew the mandate of UNFICYP.

One or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) can be anticipated in January as well.

Other issues could be raised in January depending on developments.

2 January 2023

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council in 2022

2022 was a turbulent year for the Security Council, its functioning tested by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February. The value of the UN Charter became a central theme in many members' interventions, and the Council referred a situation to the General Assembly for the first time in forty years. These events, in turn, heightened attention to questions of reform, including the relationship between the Council and other UN organs. Within the Council, the invasion exacerbated the trust deficit among members, making it harder to find common ground on many issues. While this dynamic did not paralyse the Council, it complicated the prospects for new initiatives and made strong outcomes harder to achieve.

The regular work of renewing peace operations and sanctions mandates was generally not interrupted, but negotiations were rarely smooth, and adoptions often not unanimous. While a number of situations long on the Council's agenda deteriorated, such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Haiti, and Myanmar, the Council was able to take constructive action on these files, and on Syria, among others.

### Ukraine Dominates the Council's Work

The Council held 273 public meetings in 2022, of which 46 were connected to the conflict in Ukraine. In the course of the year, members sought meetings on different aspects of the conflict, including its humanitarian impact, the use of chemical weapons, the Black Sea grain initiative, and the safety of nuclear power plants. On some of these topics, two Council meetings became the norm, as different members promoted competing perspectives. Partly as a result, the Council had spent some 592 hours in formal and informal meetings to the end of November 2022—over a hundred hours more than in 2021. This is also attributable to the Council's full return to regular meeting formats, following two years of working methods adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members cut back on their use of the Arria-formula format, with 21 such meetings after 32 in 2021.

Russia vetoed two draft resolutions on Ukraine in 2022, one in February condemning its invasion and a second in September declaring the illegality of its "so-called referenda" in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. The February veto was particularly significant as it produced a Council "Uniting for Peace" resolution on 27 February for the first time in 40 years. (Such a resolution—which is considered procedural in nature and therefore cannot be blocked by a veto—refers a situation to the General Assembly when the Council's permanent members are deadlocked.) This resolution set up an Emergency Special Session on Ukraine in the General Assembly.

A further development related to the February veto was the General Assembly's adoption of a resolution (A/RES/76/262), under which it will meet within ten days whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. It did so thrice in 2022, pursuant to a Chinese and Russian veto on the DPRK in May, a Russian veto on the Syria draft resolution in July, and a Russian veto on the Ukraine draft resolution in September.

The Council produced two formal outcomes on the situation in Ukraine: a presidential statement supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the war, and a procedural resolution referring the situation to the General Assembly. Several

attempted outcomes failed: the initial substantive resolution on the Ukraine conflict in February was vetoed; two other resolutions were not adopted due to insufficient votes; and proposed outcomes on the humanitarian situation and the Black Sea grain deal did not advance.

### Council Dynamics and Outcomes

Notwithstanding its increased time spent in meetings in 2022, the Council agreed on fewer outcomes. It adopted 54 resolutions, three fewer than in 2021. Of the resolutions adopted, 20 or 38% were not unanimous—whereas in 2021, 16% of resolutions were non-unanimous. The difficulty in obtaining agreement also appears to have contributed to the low number of presidential statements, which fell from 24 in 2021 to just seven in 2022—seemingly the lowest number of presidential statements adopted since the Council started using this format. There were 67 press statements, seven more than in 2021.

Obtaining agreement on resolutions was often difficult, and even after significant compromises, members abstained for a variety of reasons. Resolutions on sanctions continued to be particularly problematic, with several members abstaining on the renewal of sanctions in the Central African Republic (CAR), DRC, Libya, Somalia, and South Sudan. So too was the case on the renewal of the residual mechanism of the international criminal tribunals.

Several peace operations mandates were contentious. For the first time, the mandate of the UN mission in Mali, MINUSMA, was not renewed unanimously. Russia and China abstained, citing as a concern, among other things, the prominence of human rights issues in the mandate. Other non-unanimous mandate renewals included the missions in the CAR, Libya, Somalia, and Western Sahara.

The low number of presidential statements testifies to the difficulty of consensual decision-making in 2022. The seven presidential statements covered the relationship with the League of Arab States, the international residual mechanism for criminal tribunals, Ukraine, the DRC, peacekeeping, capacity-building support to African countries, and counter-terrorism. The Council has often used presidential statements to respond to a changed situation on its agenda, but in 2022 the only such example was the presidential statement on the DRC, highlighting the return of the M23 group in the east of the country. Reaching agreement on language referring to climate and security, as well as to human rights, has proven more problematic. Draft presidential statements following the UNOWAS and UNOCA briefings, and a debate on AU-UN relations, failed to be adopted due to objections from some members to language on climate and security.

### Vetoes in 2022

The year saw four vetoes, compared to one in 2021. Russia vetoed draft resolutions condemning its invasion of Ukraine and its "so-called referenda" there. It also vetoed a draft resolution renewing the Syria cross-border aid mechanism proposed by Ireland and Norway, the penholders on this issue, in July. Finally, China and Russia vetoed a draft resolution on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

The vetoes on the DPRK resolution were noteworthy, as the Council has generally been able to agree on DPRK disarmament issues. The draft resolution would have updated and strengthened the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime, following a high number of ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK by the end of May. As

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council in 2022

for the Syria cross-border mechanism, following the veto, Russia put forward an alternative text, which failed to attract enough votes. Ultimately, following these fraught negotiations, the mechanism was renewed with the adoption of resolution 2642, which received 12 affirmative votes and three abstentions (France, the UK and the US). This resolution set up a regular informal interactive dialogue “with the participation of donors, interested regional parties and representatives of the international humanitarian agencies operating in Syria”. One of the first orders of business for the Council in 2023 will be to extend the cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months, as it is set to expire on 10 January.

### Silver linings in 2022

Notwithstanding the difficult dynamics among members, the Council was able to play a constructive role on several issues and achieve some notable successes throughout the year. In March, the Council renewed the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), outlining several important priorities for the mission, including in relation to its good offices, human rights monitoring and reporting, gender equality, and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all levels of decision-making. In July, as noted, the Council reauthorised the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism in Syria, through which aid reaches some 3.1 million people. For the first time in five years, the Council established a new sanctions regime in October, which imposed a targeted assets freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo measures in Haiti.

In December, the Council adopted its first-ever resolution on Myanmar, demanding an end to violence and the release of all political prisoners, as well as a resolution establishing a standing humanitarian exemption (referred to as a “humanitarian carveout”) to the asset freeze measures imposed by UN sanctions regimes.

Council members have also remained united in their support for the mediation efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, who in April 2022, brokered a truce that led to the longest period of calm in Yemen during the seven-year war and in supporting Colombia’s efforts to foster peace and reconciliation.

### Elected Member Initiative

Elected members showed initiative and energy, pushing the Council to do more in a year where it felt like maintaining the status quo was

a struggle. They were cohesive in the face of P5 divisions, particularly on the Syria humanitarian file, Afghanistan and Ukraine. In a major shift, the P3 (France, the UK and the US) seemed willing to share the pen with elected members on more issues than ever. This led to Mexico acting as co-pen with the US on Haiti, with the UK on Colombia, and with France on Ukraine humanitarian issues. Albania took on the co-pen for Ukraine political issues with the US. Elected members also continued to be penholders on Syria humanitarian issues (Ireland and Norway), Afghanistan (Norway), and UNOWAS (Ireland and Ghana). Norway and Ghana were the co-drafters of a resolution on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea that took about eight months to be adopted. Ireland, the penholder on Tigray, worked closely with the A3 on Ethiopia. Mexico and Norway led on the presidential statement on the Secretary-General’s efforts on Ukraine. The A3 continued to present as a strong sub-group, highly influential on African issues, and worked together to ensure that issues in their region not be neglected as a result of the focus on Ukraine.

In 2021 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. 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, a noteworthy exercise in continuity.

As the five new members – Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland – take their seats on 1 January 2023, they join a Council that has experienced one of its most divisive years in two decades. Until a peaceful settlement is possible, the war in Ukraine is likely to dominate the Council’s agenda. Meanwhile, several situations on the Council’s agenda show signs of needing greater attention, in some cases raising questions about the responsiveness of peacekeeping in its current forms. Some departing members took steps to better position the Council to play a preventive role, but this is likely to remain challenging in 2023. Finding ways for the Council to step up to its primary responsibility, the maintenance of international peace and security, will remain its top challenge in 2023.

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## Status Update since our December Forecast

### Iraq

On 5 December, the Council held a briefing on the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) (S/PV.9206). Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher briefed. Iraq participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

### UNDOF (Golan)

On 8 December, Council members received a briefing in closed

consultations on the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report (S/2022/887) on the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and the implementation of resolution 338. The report covered the activities of UNDOF from 21 August to 20 November 2022. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed.

On 22 December, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2671, which renewed the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan for six months (S/PV.9234).

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### UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 8 December 2022, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report (S/2022/896) 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) (S/PV.9213). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) Abdou Abarry briefed the Council for the first time since his appointment on 28 July. President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo also briefed the Council on the latest political and security developments in Central Africa.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 9 December, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including on the work of MONUSCO and the activities of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee (S/PV.9215). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO Bintou Keita briefed on MONUSCO and recent developments in the DRC. Deputy Permanent Representative Lilly-Stella Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) provided an update on the work of the 1533 DRC sanctions committee. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), also briefed at the meeting, explaining the EAC regional initiative to address the situation in the eastern DRC. Rebecca Kabuo, an activist and member of *Lutte pour le Changement* (Fight for Change), shared a civil society perspective on the political, security and human rights situation in the country. DRC's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Christophe Lutundula, as well as representatives of Burundi and Rwanda, participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

On 20 December, the Council adopted resolution 2666, which renewed the mandate of MONUSCO for one year, and resolution 2667, which lifted the notification requirement for the shipment of arms and related materials under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime (S/PV.9226). Both texts were adopted unanimously.

### Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 9 December, Council members discussed the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under "any other business". The meeting was requested by Albania and the US.

### Sanctions Regimes

On 9 December, the Council adopted resolution 2664, which established a "humanitarian carve-out" to the asset freeze measures imposed by UN sanctions regimes (S/PV.9214). (The carve-out is also referred to as a standing humanitarian exception or exemption.) The resolution was co-sponsored by 53 member states. 14 Council members voted in favour and India abstained.

### International Criminal Tribunals

On 12 December, the Council held its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT).

The IRMCT's president, Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, briefed. They met with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to the debate.

### Arria-formula Meeting on Youth, Peace and Security

On 12 December, an Arria-formula meeting was held on youth, peace and security. The meeting, which was organised by Ireland together with Ghana and Ecuador, marked the seventh anniversary of the adoption on 9 December 2015 of resolution 2250, which was the first thematic resolution on youth, peace and security. The briefers were UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Natalia Kanem and youth peacebuilder Nynar Koul.

### Subsidiary Organs

On 12 December, the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies briefed the Council on their experiences (S/PV.9218). The Council heard briefings by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India) on the work of the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, and the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Fergal Mythen (Ireland) on the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Michael Kiboino (Kenya) on the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa; Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) on the 1540 Non-Proliferation Committee and the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Mona Juul (Norway) on 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) on the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

### South Sudan

On 13 December, the Council held an open briefing on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (S/PV.9219). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom briefed on the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/918). The Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Major General (Retired) Charles Tai Gituai, also briefed (via videoconference) from Juba. Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon), the chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, briefed on the work of the committee. Consultations followed the briefing.

### New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism

On 14 December, the Council held an open debate on "New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism", under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.9220). This was one of the signature events of India's presidency. India's Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, chaired the meeting. The briefers were Secretary-General António Guterres and General Assembly President Csaba Kőrösi. Several other member states—including Council member UAE and Armenia, Azerbaijan, Japan, Kuwait, Pakistan, and Poland—participated at the ministerial level.

### Counter-Terrorism

On 15 December, the Council convened a high-level briefing on

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“Global counter-terrorism approach—principles and the way forward” (S/PV.9221). India’s Minister of External Affairs, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, chaired the meeting, which was also a signature event of India’s presidency. The briefers were Under-Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Vladimir Voronkov; Acting Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) Weixiong Chen; and Anjali Vijay Kulthe, a survivor of the November 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai. A presidential statement on counter-terrorism was adopted during the meeting (S/PRST/2022/7).

### Afghanistan

On 16 December, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2665, which renewed the mandate of the Monitoring Team supporting the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions committee for a period of one year (S/PV.9222).

On 20 December, the Council convened for its quarterly briefing on Afghanistan (S/PV.9227). Special Representative and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed. Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj (India) also delivered the annual briefing of the chair of the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee. Representatives of Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan also participated in the open session under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. The meeting was followed by closed consultations.

Council members also issued three press statements regarding terrorist attacks in Afghanistan during December: two regarding terrorist attacks (SC/15125 and SC/15126) and one calling for the rights of women and girls to be upheld (SC/15165).

### Libya

On 16 December, the Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on Libya (S/PV.9223). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdoulaye Bathily briefed on the Secretary-General’s report (S/2022/932).

### Iran

On 19 December, the Council convened for its biannual briefing

on resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s nuclear programme (JCPOA) (S/PV.9225). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on the Secretary-General’s latest report on the implementation of resolution 2231, which was issued on 12 December. The Council’s facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, Ambassador Fergal Mythen (Ireland), reported on the Council’s work in relation to resolution 2231. The deputy head of the EU delegation to the UN, Ambassador Silvio Gonzato, briefed on the work of the JCPOA’s Joint Commission.

### Nagorno-Karabakh

On 20 December, the Council held a meeting on Nagorno-Karabakh (S/PV.9228), following a request for the meeting from Armenia (S/2022/688) that was supported by France. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed. In addition to Council members, Armenia and Azerbaijan participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

### Peacekeeping

On 21 December, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2668, which was proposed by Mexico, on mental health and psychosocial support for UN peace operations personnel (S/PV.9229).

### Myanmar

On 21 December, the Council adopted resolution 2669 on the situation in Myanmar, which demands an immediate end to all forms of violence and urges restraint and de-escalation of tensions (S/PV.9231). The resolution, which was proposed by the UK and is the Council’s first resolution on Myanmar, received 12 affirmative votes and three abstentions (China, India and Russia).

### Somalia

On 21 December, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2670 authorising the extension of the drawdown of 2,000 personnel from the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) until 30 June 2023 (S/PV.9232). (The drawdown was originally expected to be completed by 31 December 2022).

# Syria

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council will hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria and on the use of chemical weapons in the country.

Resolution 2642 of 12 July 2022 renewed the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for six months with a further six-month extension subject to a new resolution. The Council will vote on a draft resolution to extend the mechanism's initial authorisation, prior to its expiry on 10 January 2023. (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.)

## Key Recent Developments

Progress on the political track in Syria remains at a standstill. The Syria Constitutional Committee has not met since June 2022, and in his 29 November 2022 briefing to the Security Council, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen asserted that “there are no serious efforts to resolve the conflict politically”. He has, however, continued his efforts to promote the peace process.

On 6–7 December 2022, Pedersen met with Syrian government officials in Damascus to discuss his “step by step” initiative. Through this initiative, he is asking the Syrian government, the opposition, regional states, and other stakeholders what concessions they might make in exchange for reciprocal actions from others on such matters as abductees, detainees, and missing persons; humanitarian assistance and early recovery projects; conditions for voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees; and the restoration of better socioeconomic conditions.

On 9 December 2022, Pedersen met in Geneva with Badr Jamous, the president of the Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC), which represents the political opposition to the government. In a post on Twitter following the meeting, Pedersen said that they had discussed “steps all parties could take to help build trust and confidence and bring an end to the suffering of all Syrians”.

As the political process in Syria continues to falter, the humanitarian situation in the country is becoming increasingly dire, with more people in humanitarian need than at any time during Syria's civil war, which started in 2011. Some 15.3 million Syrians (over 69 percent of the country's population) will require humanitarian assistance in 2023, according to the Secretary-General's special report on humanitarian needs in Syria, which was requested by the Council in resolution 2642 and released on 9 December 2022. The report noted that in 2022 donors provided \$517.6 million to support early recovery projects in all 14 governorates of Syria. These projects focused on the rebuilding of critical infrastructure, the removal of solid waste, and vocational training, among other areas. The report also described the recent efforts of the UN and other actors to deliver humanitarian aid in Syria, both cross-line (that is, across domestic frontlines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control) and cross-border (through the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Syria-Türkiye border). It concluded, “While an important complement, the cross-line operation remains, at this time, unable to substitute [for] the size or scope of the massive United Nations cross-border operation”.

The spread of cholera in Syria compounds the country's humanitarian challenges. OCHA recently announced that 56,879 suspected cases were reported across the country between 25 August and 3 December 2022, including 98 deaths attributed to the virus.

An informal interactive dialogue (IID, a closed format) was held on 16 December 2022 to review and follow up on the implementation of resolution 2642. Russia requested the meeting, which took place less than one month after the previous IID on Syria on 21 November. This timing contrasted with the meeting cycle set out in resolution 2642, which encouraged Security Council members to convene an IID every two months “with the participation of donors, interested regional parties and representatives of the international humanitarian agencies operating in Syria”.

Tareq Talehma, OCHA's ad-interim Director of Operations and Advocacy, briefed at the IID. In addition to Council members and Syria, Canada, the EU, Germany, Sweden, and Türkiye also participated at the meeting. Talehma emphasised the importance of maintaining the cross-border aid mechanism, saying that it helps to meet the basic needs of Syrians. He added that limited funding has hampered OCHA's ability to respond to the humanitarian situation in Syria.

On 4 December 2022, protesters in Suweida, a Druze-majority city in southern Syria, demonstrated against deteriorating living conditions and called for the downfall of the Assad government. The protesters set fire to a government building and clashed with police. One police officer and one protester reportedly died during the demonstration.

UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed the Council on the Syria chemical weapons track on 5 December 2022. Nakamitsu noted that in November, Syria had submitted a document to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) titled “The General National Document Regarding the Cooperation of the Syrian Arab Republic with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Between 2013 and 2022”. She added that the OPCW would circulate the document once it had been analysed and translated. During her briefing, Nakamitsu also reiterated that gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies remain unresolved in Syria's declaration of its chemical weapons stockpiles to the OPCW.

On 21 December 2022, the Council convened a briefing, followed by consultations, on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed. Pedersen referred to the need to resume and make more substantive meetings of the Constitutional Committee. Both Pedersen and Griffiths advocated the renewal of the cross-border aid mechanism.

## Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council in January 2023 is the decision on the extension of the cross-border aid mechanism, which expires on 10 January. The most likely option would be for the Council to adopt a short resolution extending the mandate for six months.

Another important and ongoing issue remains the impasse in the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2642](#) (12 July 2022) renewed the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for six months, with a further six-month extension subject to a new resolution. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9230](#) (21 December 2022) was a meeting on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. [S/PV.9207](#) (5 December 2022) was a meeting on the chemical weapons track in Syria. [S/PV.9204](#) (29 November 2022) was a meeting on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. [Secretary-General Reports S/2022/956](#) (15 December 2022) was the 60-day report on the implementation of resolution 2642. [S/2022/933](#) (12 December 2022) was a special report on the humanitarian needs in Syria.

# Syria

political process. One option would be for the Council to hold a private meeting with Special Envoy Pedersen and other member states with influence over the parties in Syria to discuss recent developments in his “step-for-step” initiative. (A private meeting is a closed, formal meeting format; unlike closed consultations, non-Council member states are allowed to participate in this format.)

The Council could also consider adopting a presidential statement that expresses support for the Special Envoy’s efforts to reinvigorate the political process.

## Council Dynamics

Syria remains a divisive file. China and Russia are supportive of the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and drawing connections between unilateral coercive measures on Syria and the challenging humanitarian situation in the country. In contrast, the P3 (France,

the UK and the US) and other likeminded members criticise the government for violating international humanitarian law and human rights law, arbitrarily detaining people, and not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue.

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 extraordinary measures that undermine Syria’s sovereignty and should be supplanted as soon as possible by enhanced cross-line assistance.

Since the cross-border aid mechanism was initiated with the adoption of resolution 2165 in 2014, the Syria humanitarian file has always had two to three penholders from among the Council’s elected members. It appears that Brazil and Switzerland will serve as the penholders on the Syria humanitarian file in 2023, thus assuming the role played by Ireland and Norway in 2021-2022.

## Rule of Law

### Expected Council Action

In January, Japan is organising a ministerial-level open debate on the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security: The rule of law among nations”. Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Joan Donoghue, and Oxford University Professor of Public International Law Dapo Akande are expected to brief.

### Background

The Council held its first thematic debate on the rule of law in 2003. It has since held thematic debates on the issue on several occasions, including in 2004, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2020. The last open debate on the promotion of the rule of law as a general issue (without focusing on any particular aspect of the topic) was held on 19 January 2012. In a presidential statement adopted during that debate, the Council recognised that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach that strengthens the coherence among political, security, development, human rights, and rule of law activities.

In the past decade, the Council has also held open debates that focused on specific aspects of the rule of law. On 19 February 2014, the Council convened for an open debate on the role of the rule of law in peacekeeping operations. Two days later, the Council adopted a presidential statement underlining the importance of peacekeeping operations and special political missions supporting the strengthening of rule of law institutions in host countries within the scope of their mandates.

On 21 December 2020, the Council held an open debate on the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law: Strengthening the cooperation between the Security Council and the [ICJ]”. A presidential statement adopted on 21 December 2020 recognised the positive contribution of the ICJ to the rule of law at the international

level, as well as its key role in adjudicating disputes, defusing tensions, and restoring peaceful relations among states.

Open debates have also been convened in recent years under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item that addressed issues related to the rule of law. On 17 May 2018, the Council convened for an open debate on the “Maintenance of international peace and security: Upholding international law within the context of the maintenance of international peace and security”. No product was issued in connection with this meeting.

On 9 January 2020, the Council held an open debate on the topic “Maintenance of international peace and security: Upholding the UN Charter”. A presidential statement was adopted at the meeting, which, among other matters, called on member states to fully comply with the Charter and raise public awareness of its importance in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Several notable developments relating to various aspects of the rule of law have taken place in country-specific files on the Council’s agenda in recent years.

In relation to Ukraine, on 26 February, Ukraine instituted proceedings against Russia before the ICJ, which rendered provisional measures on 16 March, ordering Russia to immediately suspend the military operations it commenced on 24 February in Ukrainian territory, among other matters. On 2 March, ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan announced that he had decided to proceed with an active investigation into the situation in Ukraine after receiving referrals from 39 ICC States Parties. After holding an “urgent debate on the situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression” on 3 and 4 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine (ICIU). The ICIU’s responsibilities include investigating “all alleged violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, and related

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE RULE OF LAW** Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2020/13 (21 December 2020) was a presidential statement on the ICJ and the rule of law at the international level. S/PRST/2020/1 (9 January 2020) was a presidential statement adopted during the ministerial-level debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter”. S/PRST/2014/5 (21 February 2014) underlined the importance of support to strengthening the rule of law institutions of the host country by a number of peacekeeping operations and special political missions within the scope of their mandates. S/PRST/2012/1 (19 January 2012) adopted a statement on justice and the rule of law as “an indispensable element for peaceful coexistence and the prevention of armed conflict.”

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## Rule of Law

crimes in the context of aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation”, as well as preserving information, documentation and evidence of such violations and abuses in view of any future legal proceedings. Ukraine is also advocating for the creation of a special international tribunal to prosecute high-level Russian officials for the crime of aggression. On 14 November, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recommending the creation of a register to document damages “caused by internationally wrongful acts of [Russia] in or against Ukraine”. The register is also intended to promote and coordinate evidence gathering.

On the Syria file, the General Assembly created the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes Under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM) in December 2016. The IIIM is responsible for collecting, preserving, and analysing evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in order to facilitate fair and independent criminal proceedings.

The establishment of the IIIM followed the creation of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry into the Syrian Arab Republic by the Human Rights Council in August 2011. Among other matters, its mandate includes investigating all alleged violations of international human rights law in Syria since March 2011 and, where possible, identifying those responsible with a view to ensuring they are held to account. At the Council level, a May 2014 draft resolution that would have referred the situation in Syria to the ICC was vetoed by China and Russia.

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

In September 2017, the HRC created the Group of Eminent International and Regional Experts on Yemen. The Group was tasked with monitoring and reporting on the human rights situation in Yemen, as well as conducting a comprehensive examination of all alleged violations and abuses of international law committed by all parties to the conflict, among other matters. In October 2021, the HRC voted against extending the mandate of the Group, reportedly after lobbying by Saudi Arabia and coalition allies.

### Key Issues and Options

Key issues that may be raised in the open debate include:

- the role played by the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security under the UN Charter;
- how member states can effectively defend rules and principles related to the maintenance of international peace and security; and
- how the main organs of the UN—including the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Secretariat, and the ICJ—and other international institutions can collaborate more effectively to promote the rule of law.

One option could be for Japan to produce a chair’s summary capturing the main themes of the open debate that can be circulated as an official UN document.

Another future option could be for Council members to hold a closed meeting with members of the International Law Commission to discuss the role international law plays in the maintenance of international peace and security.

### Council Dynamics

Japan views the open debate as an opportunity to reaffirm the meaning and role of the rule of law among nations, as well as the common understanding that the rules to which all member states have agreed must be observed by all.

Council members frequently emphasise the importance of the rule of law, and the debate may provide constructive avenues for the Council to pursue in this regard. On the other hand, the current difficult dynamics in the Council, particularly those caused by the war in Ukraine, may make it difficult for the Council to have a frank and balanced discussion regarding the promotion of the rule of law.

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## Ukraine

### Expected Council Action

In January 2023, 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 region as Russian forces attempt to advance towards the city of Bakhmut in the

Donetsk region. Russian troops who withdrew from the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine in early November 2022 have reportedly reinforced Russian positions along the front lines in the Donetsk region. Heavy fighting has also been reported in the northeastern Kharkiv region, near areas that Ukraine recaptured in September and October 2022.

Russia has been increasing its military presence in Belarus since October 2022, igniting fears of a possible repeat of its incursion

# Ukraine

in late February across the Belarus-Ukraine border. During a 13 December 2022 press briefing, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba acknowledged signs that Russia may be preparing for a large offensive once its military capabilities are restored in January and February 2023. In an interview on 15 December, Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces Valerii Zaluzhnyi noted that this offensive campaign "may start not in [the] Donbas, but in the direction of Kyiv" from Belarus. Some military analysts, however, continue to assess an imminent Russian attack from Belarus as unlikely. On 19 December, Russian President Vladimir Putin held a meeting with his Belarusian counterpart Alexander Lukashenko, during which the issue of Russian-Belarusian military integration was reportedly discussed.

Meanwhile, Russia has continued to launch air and missile assaults targeting civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. Since 10 October 2022, Russia has launched nine large-scale missile campaigns against energy facilities and hydroelectric power stations. The attacks have triggered massive blackouts and a reduction in water supplies throughout the country. Moscow says that its attacks are aimed at weakening Ukraine's military potential, while Kyiv alleges that Russia is employing "terrorist tactics" that violate international humanitarian law. On 6 December, a day after one of Russia's missile barrages, the Security Council convened for an open briefing at the request of France and Mexico. At that meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths urged the international community to enhance its support to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 5 December 2022.)

On 21 December, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy travelled to the US in his first known trip outside Ukraine since the start of the war. During his trip, Zelenskyy held a meeting with US President Joe Biden, in which the leaders reportedly discussed strengthening cooperation, particularly regarding Ukraine's defence capabilities. Zelenskyy also addressed a joint session of the US Congress, emphasising that the US' support "is not charity" but rather "an investment in global security and democracy". On the same day, the US announced an additional \$1.85 billion in military assistance to Ukraine, including the transfer of the Patriot air defence system, which is expected to provide Ukraine with enhanced protection from Russian missile attacks.

Russia continues to criticise Kyiv's Western allies for supplying Ukraine with arms. On 9 December 2022, Russia requested a Security Council briefing under the agenda item "Threats to international peace and security" on the issue of "supplies of lethal weapons to Ukraine and their consequences". At that meeting, Russia accused the US and other NATO allies of waging a proxy war in Ukraine and violating the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), an international treaty that regulates the international trade in conventional arms. The ATT requires state parties to assess the risk of exported weapons being used to violate international humanitarian law. The US and European Council members argued that it is within their rights to offer security assistance to Ukraine, as it exercises its inherent right to self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter.

On 30 November 2022, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen proposed forming a UN-endorsed tribunal to

investigate atrocities in Ukraine. In a press statement on the same day, France's Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs confirmed that it had begun working with European and Ukrainian partners on a proposal to "establish a Special Tribunal on Russia's Crime of Aggression against Ukraine". Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on 2 December 2022 that it was "outraged" by France's statement. On 8 December, Estonia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, and Ukraine organised a panel discussion in the ECOSOC chamber titled "Creating Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine". At that event, panellists explained the rationale for establishing such a tribunal, noting that its intention is to complement the ICC's investigation into war crimes while closing an important accountability gap, given the ICC's inability to take up the crime of aggression where the state concerned is not a party to the Rome Statute.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 2 December 2022, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Ukraine released a statement on its visit to Kyiv. According to the statement, the commission "devoted significant attention to the issue of the destruction of the civilian infrastructure of the country, particularly the destruction of its energy and transportation grids". It also expressed concern about the impact of the situation on children's rights and lives. The commission will present a comprehensive report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) in March 2023, including recommendations on possible accountability mechanisms.

On 15 December 2022, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk presented to the HRC his office's 7 December 2022 report titled "Killing of civilians: summary executions and attacks on individual civilians in Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Sumy regions in the context of the Russian Federation's armed attack against Ukraine". Türk confirmed that "there are strong indications that the summary executions documented in the report may constitute the war crime of wilful killing". He also cautioned that continued Russian airstrikes "could lead to a further serious deterioration in the humanitarian situation and spark more displacement".

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, particularly in light of Russia's continued air assaults on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Periodic briefings from Griffiths could help keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation on the ground. Council members may also wish to urge Russia to provide unimpeded humanitarian access to the UN to all places under Russian control. At a 14 December 2022 press briefing, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric confirmed that the UN had "not been able to do any cross-line convoys of humanitarian aid".

Another key issue for the Council is how to promote the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. On 13 December 2022, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi and Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal announced an agreement allowing the IAEA to establish a permanent presence of experts at all nuclear power plants in Ukraine. IAEA experts have been present at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) since early September 2022. However, shelling around the ZNPP—which Ukraine and Russia blame on each other—has continued to raise concerns about a possible catastrophe. Efforts by Grossi to set up a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the ZNPP are

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ongoing. Following his meeting with Shmyhal, Grossi said that he is “increasingly optimistic that such a zone...will be agreed and implemented in the near future”. Council members may wish to convene a meeting with Grossi. They may choose a private, informal format, such as an informal interactive dialogue, to allow for a frank discussion about implementing the protection zone.

## Council 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, the UK, and the US—condemn Russia for what they consider to be an unprovoked war.

The advent of the five new elected Council members—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland—in 2023 appears unlikely to change the difficult dynamics underlying Security Council inaction on the situation in Ukraine. The direct involvement of a permanent member in the conflict will continue to limit the Council’s options in this regard.

Vote	Ecuador	Japan	Malta	Mozambique	Switzerland
25 February 2022 (Security Council)	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		Co-sponsor
2 March 2022 (General Assembly)	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		Co-sponsor
24 March 2022 (General Assembly)	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		Co-sponsor
7 April 2022 (General Assembly)		Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		
12 October 2022 (General Assembly)	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		Co-sponsor
7 November 2022 (General Assembly)		Co-sponsor	Co-sponsor		Co-sponsor

Vote in favour ■ Abstention ■

As a member of the EU, Malta is expected to adopt a position similar to that of outgoing Council member Ireland. Japan is also expected to be highly critical of Russia. In addition to imposing economic sanctions on Russia, both countries co-sponsored, co-authored and voted in favour of all substantive draft General Assembly resolutions condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. They also co-sponsored the 25 February 2022 Security Council draft resolution condemning Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, which failed to be adopted because of a Russian veto.

Mozambique is likely to take a position similar to that of departing Council member India and refrain from criticising Russia. Mozambique has abstained on all substantive draft resolutions on

Ukraine in the General Assembly. It has chosen not to deliver a statement throughout the ongoing 11th Emergency Special Session (ESS) of the General Assembly. During a meeting with members of the Ghanaian parliament on 25 May 2022, Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi said that “in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, [Mozambique] has refrained from taking a position”, adding that “we abstained [in the General Assembly votes] because we want the parties to talk and find peaceful solutions”.

Ecuador has voted in favour of every resolution condemning Russia in the General Assembly. It co-sponsored both political resolutions, including the 2 March 2022 text condemning Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the 12 October 2022 text condemning Russia for organising “illegal so-called referendums” in the Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions. It also co-sponsored the humanitarian resolution on 24 March 2022 while abstaining on the motion to consider South Africa’s competing draft that was nearly identical to the draft resolution tabled by Russia at the Security Council on 23 March 2022. Ecuador did not, however, co-sponsor the 7 April 2022 resolution suspending Russia from the HRC and the 14 November 2022 draft resolution establishing a compensation mechanism on reparations for Ukraine.

While permanent neutrality is a guiding principle of Swiss foreign policy, requiring it not to participate in a war between states, Switzerland has clarified that neutrality does not preclude it from taking a principled stand against violations of international law. During a 23 March 2022 meeting of the ESS, Switzerland noted that although it is a neutral country, “neutrality does not oblige us to remain silent in the face of violations of international law. On the contrary, it is up to us to commit ourselves to respect of the Charter”.

The five incoming members will replace India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, and Norway. Mexico informally assumed the co-penholder role, together with France, on humanitarian issues in Ukraine following Russia’s invasion. In early March 2022, France and Mexico pursued a draft humanitarian resolution at the Security Council and have since collectively initiated numerous humanitarian briefings on Ukraine. It remains unclear which Council member, if any, will assume Mexico’s co-penholder role in 2023.

Norway was a strong advocate for the Secretary-General’s good offices in the context of the war in Ukraine during its term. Together with Mexico, Norway co-authored the 6 May 2022 presidential statement welcoming the Secretary-General’s efforts in search of a peaceful solution to the war.

# West Africa and the Sahel

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council will hold its biannual briefing on the situation in West Africa and the Sahel. The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the UN Office of West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in January. This is likely to be done through an exchange of letters between the President of the Security Council

and the Secretary-General. UNOWAS’ current mandate expires on 31 January 2023.

## Key Recent Developments

Amid rampant insecurity, Burkina Faso experienced its second coup d’état in nine months on 30 September 2022, when soldiers ousted

UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL Security Council Letter S/2020/85 (31 January 2020) renewed the mandate of UNOWAS from 1 February 2020 to 31 January 2023. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9198 (22 November 2022) was a briefing on Gulf of Guinea piracy. S/PV.9086 (7 July 2022) was a briefing on UNOWAS.

## West Africa and the Sahel

the transition president, Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. On 4 October 2022, a delegation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)—headed by the former president of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, as the ECOWAS mediator to Burkina Faso—met in Ouagadougou with the coup leader, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, who promised to keep the July 2024 timeline for restoring constitutional order, which Damiba had previously agreed with ECOWAS. Council members issued a press statement on 7 October that expressed serious concern about the unconstitutional change of government and their support for regional and continental mediation efforts.

On 14 October 2022, Burkinabe political parties, social and religious groups, and representatives of the security forces adopted a new transition charter. The charter appointed Traoré as transition president, maintained the July 2024 transition timeline, and prohibited transition leaders from running in the forthcoming elections. On 22 October, Traoré named Apollinaire Joachim Kyélem de Tambèla interim prime minister, whose new government soon announced a recruitment drive for 50,000 civilian volunteers to help fight jihadists. On 14 December 2022, Ghana accused Burkina Faso of partnering with the Wagner Group, the Russian private security company. Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo made the claim while in Washington D.C. for the US-Africa Summit, accusing Burkina Faso of “allocating” a gold mine to the Wagner Group as a form of payment.

Guinea’s authorities continued negotiations with ECOWAS mediator Thomas Yayi Boni, the former president of Benin, on a transition timeline to restore constitutional order following its September 2021 coup d’état. On 21 October, the sides announced a two-year transition, beginning 1 January 2023. The agreement was reached amid opposition protests over the pace of the transition and ECOWAS’ threat to impose additional sanctions if authorities did not commit to a shorter transition period than the three-year timeline that they announced in May 2022. At the 62nd Ordinary Session of the Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in Abuja on 4 December 2022, West African leaders welcomed the new 24-month transition timetable while insisting that its implementation “must start immediately, and not at a later date”.

Mali and Chad are also undertaking political transitions to restore elected governments. On 14 October 2022, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, who was appointed UNOWAS head in March 2021, was named foreign minister in Chad’s new transitional government. Subsequently, Annadif resigned as head of UNOWAS; his successor had not yet been appointed at the time of writing. In Mali, three troop-contributing countries to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)—Côte d’Ivoire, Germany and the UK—announced in November that they would leave the peacekeeping operation amid Malian authorities’ repeated interference with the work of MINUSMA. (For more, see the Mali brief in this month’s *Forecast*.)

On 7 November 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron announced the end of France’s regional counter-terrorism force in the Sahel, Operation Barkhane, which was established in 2014. The announcement followed rising anti-French sentiment over the past year in the region, often directed at Barkhane. Despite the conclusion of the operation, Macron stressed that France would maintain

its forces, which number around 3,000 troops, in Sahelian countries.

Sahel-based terrorist groups have increasingly conducted attacks in northern parts of coastal West African countries. On 21 and 22 November 2022, Ghana hosted an International Conference of the Accra Initiative, which Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo established in 2017 to prevent the spillover of terrorism from the Sahel and address transnational organised crime by enhancing security cooperation. The conference also convened representatives of Niger (a current Accra Initiative member), Nigeria, the UK, the UN, and the EU. In a 22 November communiqué, heads of states and government of Accra Initiative countries committed to mobilise resources to make the Multinational Joint Task Force of the Accra Initiative (MNJTF/AI) operational within a month.

During its 4 December summit, the ECOWAS Authority called for its Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff to urgently study and propose options to make the ECOWAS Standby Force operational as soon as possible, including a special operation to combat terrorism. It also announced that West African countries would establish a “regional force, whose mandate will include the restoration of constitutional order where [it is] threatened in the subregion”. On 21 December, The Gambia announced that it had foiled a coup d’état plot, which ECOWAS strongly condemned.

### Key Issues and Options

The expanding terrorism threat and the evolving security landscape in West Africa and the Sahel is a key issue. The coups d’état in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali over the past two and half years, and ECOWAS’ efforts, with UN support, to restore constitutional order in these countries are another key issue. In addition to military responses—which also include the struggling Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S)—is the recurring issue of how to address the region’s structural conflict drivers of weak governance, under-development and climate change. Such efforts are guided by, for example, the UN’s Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), which UNOWAS is mandated to support, the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Priority Investment Programme, and the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilisation strategy.

A future issue for the Council will be how to respond to the strategic assessment of the Sahel being conducted by the Independent High-Level Panel on Security and Development led by former Nigerian President Issoufou on behalf of the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, and the G5 Sahel. (The G5 Sahel comprises Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger; Mali withdrew from the group in May 2022). It seems that the panel, which was formally launched in September 2022, now plans to share preliminary findings during the AU summit in February 2023, as the timeline to complete the assessment has been extended until mid-2023. Besides taking stock of the situation and efforts to address the security crisis, the panel may make recommendations on issues such as how to secure sustainable and predictable financing for African-led peace support operations.

The Security Council may adopt a presidential statement—usually proposed by the UNOWAS penholders following these biannual meetings—that addresses recent developments and reiterates calls for a comprehensive approach to tackle the security, peacebuilding and development challenges of the region. The presidential

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## West Africa and the Sahel

statement may look forward to the findings of the High-Level Panel and encourage it to make actionable recommendations.

In renewing the UNOWAS mandate, the Council could retain its four main objectives, which are to monitor political developments and conduct good offices; enhance regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats in West Africa and the Sahel; support, through political advocacy and convening, implementation of the UNISS; and promote good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights, and the integration of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

### Council Dynamics

Council discussion on West Africa and the Sahel became more polarised during the past year. This was largely linked to the deployment of the Wagner Group to Mali in December 2021, which the US and European countries strongly criticised. Ghana is a member of ECOWAS and the Accra Initiative. In addition to its concerns about the expanding terrorism threat, Ghana has championed renewed Council engagement on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea because of the rise in piracy incidents in the region in recent years and the risk of links between terrorist and pirate groups.

It seems that many Council members have high expectations regarding the ability of the High-Level Panel to help guide the Council's future decisions in support of peace and security in the region. The panel's work featured prominently during Council meetings on Mali in October 2022, as well as in meetings on terrorism in Africa and the FC-G5S in November 2022. Potential panel findings on how to provide African-led peace operations with predictable and sustainable financing could resurrect previous Council discussion on this issue, which in the past divided members.

Regarding UNOWAS, Council members have long valued the mission's good offices role. Since 2017, the Council's West African member has served as co-penholder on UNOWAS with one of the elected European members. Ghana and Ireland were co-penholders in 2022. During the year, the Council failed to agree on the customary presidential statement adopted following UNOWAS briefings because of India's opposition to climate security language. In an attempt to broker an agreement on the statement following the Council's July 2022 briefing on UNOWAS, Ghana reportedly engaged India directly at capital level in Delhi but was unsuccessful in reaching an agreement. At the time of writing, Switzerland was expected to replace Ireland as co-penholder with Ghana.

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## Colombia

### Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. The Council is also likely to vote on a draft resolution expanding the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to verify the implementation of the chapter on comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

The verification mission's mandate expires on 31 October 2023.

### Key Recent Developments

In the last quarter of 2022, the administration of Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego continued to advance its policy of "total peace", which entails furthering the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement alongside the promotion of dialogue with non-signatory armed groups. As part of efforts to tackle the violence in conflict-affected regions, the Colombian government has been establishing "unified command posts for life"—inter-institutional mechanisms to coordinate preventive responses that involve state entities, local authorities, and civil society. A 25 November 2022 statement by Colombia's Ministry of Interior noted that 197 such command posts had been installed across the country. The statement also announced the establishment of the first "Unified Command Post for the Life of Women", which is dedicated to the prevention of violence against women, in the city of Quibdó in the Chocó department, which has long experienced high levels of violence.

On 13 December 2022, Petro convened a meeting of the National Commission on Security Guarantees, which is charged under the 2016 peace agreement with developing a public policy for dismantling criminal organisations and their support networks. This was the second meeting of the commission since the president assumed office in August 2022, the first having taken place on 2 October 2022. On the same day in October, Petro presided over a meeting of the Commission for the Follow-up, Promotion and Verification of the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CSIVI), the main forum for dialogue between the parties on the implementation of the peace agreement. Since then, the CSIVI has been convoked at least four times, with the latest meeting taking place on 22 December 2022. These two mechanisms, which play an important role in advancing various aspects of the 2016 agreement, were convened infrequently during the administration of former president Iván Duque.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP)—the judicial component of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition established by the 2016 agreement—has made important progress in the last quarter of 2022. It issued its first "concluding resolutions", which determine whether individuals implicated in crimes committed during the conflict have acknowledged their responsibility and provided the complete truth about their role. Pursuant to the 2016 agreement, those who acknowledged their crimes will carry out sentences that will be imposed by the SJP, which can include up to eight years of confinement to one municipality to carry out work that counts as reparations for victims. Those who refuse to acknowledge their responsibility are subject to the Colombian penal

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2655 (27 October 2022) extended the verification mission's mandate for another year. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/1004** (27 December 2022) was the most recent 90-day report on Colombia. **Security Council Letter S/2022/940** (9 December 2022) transmitted the Secretary-General's recommendations regarding a possible expansion of the verification mission's mandate. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9151** (12 October 2022) was the Security Council's latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

# Colombia

code and could face up to 20 years of imprisonment.

The SJP issued two separate sets of concluding resolutions in case 03 (on murders and forced disappearances misrepresented as combat casualties by state agents), regarding 11 implicated individuals and 12 other defendants, on 21 October 2022 and on 9 December 2022, respectively. On 24 November 2022, the SJP issued its first concluding resolutions in case 01 (on hostage-taking and other concurrent crimes committed by the former FARC-EP), regarding seven former members of the former FARC-EP secretariat. All the above-mentioned individuals were deemed eligible to carry out the sentences to be imposed by the SJP. The SJP has six months after the issuance of each set of concluding resolutions to issue corresponding sentences, which the accused can then appeal.

The Petro administration has also advanced negotiations with the armed group Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) as part of its “total peace” policy. Between 22 November and 12 December 2022, representatives of the government and the ELN held their first round of peace talks in Caracas, Venezuela. Although this round did not yield a ceasefire agreement, the sides pledged in a communiqué issued on the last day to implement a “partial agreement for emergency care”, which will begin in January 2023 in certain areas of the western Valle del Cauca and Chocó departments. Mexico, which agreed to serve as a guarantor country, will host the next round of talks, scheduled to take place in January 2023.

The government has also contacted armed groups that, unlike the ELN, do not have a political agenda, in order to discuss possible agreements through which these illegal actors cease violence in exchange for legal benefits. In October 2022, the Colombian Catholic church brokered a truce between the Shotas and the Espartanos—two rival gangs in the Pacific port city of Buenaventura in the Valle del Cauca department—after both gangs indicated their desire to take part in the “total peace” policy. As at 7 December 2022, the city had reported more than 90 days without violent incidents. Before the truce, fighting between the two gangs reportedly led to the deaths of at least 250 people in Buenaventura in the past year and a half alone.

On 19 December 2022, the ELN announced that it will observe a unilateral ceasefire from 24 December 2022 to 2 January 2023. In a 24 December 2022 tweet, Petro said that other groups—including dissident groups of the FARC-EP and armed groups in Buenaventura—have also initiated a unilateral ceasefire until 2 January 2023. In another tweet on the same day, the president said: “[t]he armed organizations that have effectively demonstrated their willingness to de-escalate violent acts should go on to select their spokespersons for the start of peace negotiations”.

The Security Council most recently renewed the verification mission’s mandate for a period of one year through the unanimous adoption of resolution 2655 on 27 October 2022. Ahead of the mandate renewal negotiations, Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán asked the Council in a 17 October 2022 letter to expand the mission’s mandate to include monitoring the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement’s chapter on comprehensive rural reform and the accord’s ethnic chapter. In resolution 2655, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit within 45 days recommendations on the potential expansion of the mission’s mandate and expressed its intention to consider these recommendations

swiftly. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 27 October 2022.)

The Secretary-General submitted his recommendations in a 9 December 2022 letter, in which he recommended that the Council authorise the expansion of the verification mission’s mandate. He emphasised that the 2016 agreement’s comprehensive rural reform and ethnic chapters are “critical to consolidating peace by addressing deep-rooted patterns of inequality and exclusion of rural regions and ethnic peoples”. The letter says that “verification capacities may require modest reinforcement” for the mission to perform the additional tasks, while noting that this would not require any change to the currently authorised strength of unarmed international observers, which totals 120.

## Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council is to consider the verification mission’s mandate expansion. It may choose to implement the recommendations outlined in the Secretary-General’s 9 December 2022 letter. Council members might wish to interact with local actors, such as representatives of the former FARC-EP, civil society organisations, and the Special High-Level Instance for Ethnic Groups (IEANPE)—which was created by the 2016 agreement to monitor the implementation of provisions related to the ethnic chapter—to hear their views about the possible expansion of the mission’s mandate.

In the past two years, Council members have initiated fresh opportunities for diplomats to interact with former FARC-EP members and Colombian civil society representatives. Former elected members Ireland, Mexico and Norway, which all ended their Council terms in 2022, have done so by organising virtual informal meetings for Council experts in New York and by facilitating periodic meetings at their embassies in Bogotá to discuss the findings of the Secretary-General’s quarterly Colombia reports. Council members may wish to continue holding such informal meetings to hear a broad array of voices address various aspects of the implementation of the agreement.

Several countries—including the UK, the US, and former members Ireland and Mexico—have been joining meetings of the CSIVI in Bogotá as observers. Other Council members, including the five incoming elected members (Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland), that have embassies in Colombia can request to join these meetings as observers to gain a more in-depth understanding of outstanding issues regarding the accord’s implementation.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, visited Colombia from 5 to 7 December 2022. The Council may consider inviting Gamba to brief on her findings from the visit. This can also serve as a platform for discussion on the opportunities presented by the “total peace” policy for decreasing and preventing violations against children.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the peace process in Colombia and for the verification mission’s work. However, negotiations on resolution 2574 of 11 May 2021, which expanded the verification mission’s mandate to verify compliance with the sentences handed down by the SJP, took longer than initially expected, due to concerns raised by China about possible budgetary implications.

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## Colombia

(For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 10 May 2021.) It remains to be seen whether a similar dynamic will affect the upcoming negotiations on the expansion of the mission's mandate, considering that it may require a "modest reinforcement" to the mission, as the Secretary-General has noted.

Council Members are apparently encouraged by Petro's expression of political will and by the steps that his government has taken to promote peace. In their messages at Council meetings and in their press statements on Colombia, members may wish to emphasise the continued importance of the comprehensive implementation of the

2016 agreement, as national and international attention is increasingly focused on the new outreach efforts to non-signatory groups.

The advent of the five new elected Council members in 2023 may affect Council dynamics on Colombia. It remains to be seen if Ecuador, Mexico's successor in the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) seat, or Brazil—where a new administration will come to power in January 2023—will play an active role on the file as Mexico did during its term, when it shared the pen on several Council products on Colombia with the UK.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In January 2023, 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.

The authorisation of the Yemen asset freeze and travel ban sanctions and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts expire on 28 February and 28 March 2023, respectively. The mandate of UNMHA expires on 14 July 2023.

### Key Recent Developments

Grundberg's efforts to mediate a renewal of the truce agreement between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group have continued but so far without a deal. Despite the agreement's expiry on 2 October 2022, the parties have not resumed major military operations, and elements of the agreement—the re-opening of Sana'a airport to civilian flights and fuel imports through Hodeidah port—have continued.

On 6 December 2022, an UNMHA armoured vehicle carrying General Beary struck a land mine during a field visit in the Al Hali district of Hodeidah. No one in the vehicle or in the accompanying convoy was hurt. The convoy included the Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), Ilene Cohn, who was on a week-long visit to Hodeidah, which is one of the Yemeni governorates most affected by mines and explosive remnants of war.

On 13 December 2022, Council members held closed consultations on Yemen, hearing briefings from Grundberg, OCHA's Acting Director of Operations and Advocacy Tareq Talahma and General Beary, who apparently informed members that the UN had determined that the 6 December land mine incident was an accident. Other issues reportedly discussed were difficulties that the UN is having in receiving visas from the Houthis to send mine action experts to Hodeidah and the government's hesitancy to approve the delivery of equipment needed to remove mines. The Houthis' increased enforcement of "mahram", which makes it necessary for close male

relatives to accompany female Yemeni aid workers, was also raised.

On 1 December 2022, US naval forces intercepted a fishing trawler carrying more than 50 tons of ammunition rounds, fuses and propellants for rockets in the Gulf of Oman along a maritime route from Iran to Yemen, according to a US announcement. This was the second announced US interdiction within a month of arms suspected of being smuggled from Iran to the Houthis. On 8 November, the US reported that its navy had seized 70 tons of ammonium perchlorate—which is commonly used to make rocket and missile fuel as well as explosives—and 100 tons of urea fertilisers that can also be used as explosives, aboard a ship bound from Iran to Yemen.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to support efforts to restore the truce and establish a formal ceasefire and political process. When the parties failed to renew the truce at the start of October 2022, Grundberg had been seeking a six-month extension that would expand the elements of the truce agreement to include the payment of civil servant salaries, among other things, but the Houthi position that their security forces also be included in the salary payments prevented an agreement. Reported talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia to end the war is a related initiative parallel to Grundberg's efforts.

Houthi drone attacks in October and November 2022 against oil terminals and ports in Hadhramaut and Shabwah governorates intended to deprive the government of revenue from oil exports have become another related issue of concern. In addition to the risk of military escalation, concerns include the harm that the attacks have had on the economy, the prospect of the government's own retaliatory economic measures, and by extension, the negative impact on the humanitarian situation.

Council members are likely to monitor Grundberg's ongoing mediation activities. Members may reiterate calls for restraint and for the parties, especially the Houthis, to show flexibility to restore the truce. If an expanded 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

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2643 (13 July 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 14 July 2023. S/RES/2624 (28 February 2022) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year and added the Houthis as an entity to the Yemen sanctions list, subject to the measures of the targeted arms embargo in resolution 2216. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9199 (22 November 2022) was a briefing on Yemen by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and OCHA Director for Operations and Advocacy Reena Ghelani. 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" on the expiration of Yemen's truce and reiterated that the parties should find a way forward to reinstate the truce.

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# Yemen

agreement into a ceasefire agreement that leads to an inclusive political process under UN auspices aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The humanitarian situation continues to be a key issue. Beyond meeting the requirements to respond to Yemen's enormous humanitarian need—over 66 percent of the population requires assistance—challenges entail bureaucratic impediments and movement restrictions. Land mines and explosive remnants of war have become an increasing issue of concern since the truce and post-truce period, emerging as the leading cause of civilian casualties in recent months. Members might encourage more donor support for relief efforts in Yemen, including for mine action activities.

Members are also likely to continue monitoring progress towards starting the salvage operation for the FSO Safer oil tanker, which is moored off Hodeidah port; in September 2022, 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 in their

5 October 2022 press statement, they criticised the Houthis' "maximalist demands", which prevented the renewal and expansion of the truce agreement in October 2022. 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.

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# Cyprus

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, Security Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart is expected to brief. The Council is expected to renew UNFICYP's mandate ahead of its 31 January 2023 expiry.

## Key Recent Developments

Over the past six months, there has been no meaningful progress on the political front and no direct formal engagement between the Cypriot leaders in the context of unification talks, which have been stalled since the collapse of negotiations at Crans-Montana in July 2017. Efforts to reinvigorate the political process have failed to establish an agreement between the two delegations to proceed with formal negotiations.

From 17 to 18 November 2022, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and America Miroslav Jenča visited the island and held separate meetings with the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders. At the meeting with Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades on 17 November, Jenča reiterated the Secretary-General's commitment "to stay engaged in the process searching for common ground and finding understanding to move forward the issue of settlement". Anastasiades remains firmly committed to a settlement based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation (BBF) with political equality, as stipulated in previous Security Council resolutions, while Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar insists on a two-state solution based on sovereign equality.

On 16 September 2022, the US announced that it would lift an arms embargo on the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus, starting in

2023. The defence trade restrictions have been in place since 1987. The press statement, issued by US Department of State Spokesperson Ned Price, contends that the Republic of Cyprus "has met the necessary conditions under relevant legislation" to allow for the arms embargo's removal, noting the Greek Cypriots' cooperation on financial regulatory oversight and its commitment to "deny Russian military vessels access to ports for refueling and servicing". Ankara strongly condemned the move and pledged to provide the Turkish Cypriots with greater military support. In a 17 September statement, the foreign ministry of Türkiye suggested that the US decision would "negatively affect efforts to resettle the Cyprus issue" and "lead to an arms race on the island".

Turkish Cypriot authorities reportedly submitted a Status of Forces Agreement proposal to the UN in September 2022, requesting that UNFICYP enter into a formal agreement with the Turkish Cypriots in order to continue its presence and operations in northern Cyprus. The UN's presence on the island is currently enabled through an agreement between the UN and the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus. On 6 October, Turkish Cypriot Foreign Minister Tahsin Ertuğruloğlu threatened to evict UNFICYP from northern Cyprus, asserting that "either they sign a military agreement with the [Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus] or they leave".

Tensions between the Republic of Cyprus and Türkiye resurfaced over the long-standing issue of hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus. On 9 August 2022, Türkiye dispatched its fifth ship to explore for oil off the coast of Cyprus. The Republic of Cyprus has claimed that Türkiye's activities within its exclusive economic zone constitute a breach of international law. Türkiye argues that its

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## Cyprus

exploration activities are in the area of its continental shelf and are therefore legitimate. Türkiye has also maintained that it will protect the rights of Turkish Cypriots and that they are entitled to receive benefits from the hydrocarbon resources. The announcement by Turkish authorities prompted the European Council on 8 November to extend its sanctions framework, authorised in 2019, in response to Türkiye's "unauthorized drilling activities". The EU has repeatedly condemned Türkiye's exploration and drilling activities, calling them illegitimate.

### Key Issues and Options

Since the collapse of the 2017 unification talks, the key issue for the Security Council has been the lack of meaningful progress on the political front and the diminishing prospects for reaching a political settlement of the Cyprus problem. Given the current deadlock, the Council may wish to urge the parties to reach an agreement regarding the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a UN envoy on Cyprus to succeed Jane Holl Lute, who resigned in September 2021. While the Council may reiterate its firm commitment to a peaceful settlement based on a framework of BBF with political equality, it could also reassure the parties that the envoy will not be constrained in their search for common ground for the resumption of talks.

Another issue for the Security Council is how to ensure that both sides reduce existing barriers to intercommunal contact to improve the public atmosphere for negotiating a peaceful settlement. In this regard, the Council may call on the leaders to develop a joint communication strategy and urge that the action plan ensures women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace talks. They may also

encourage robust engagement with women and youth organisations, led by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, to broaden the inclusivity of the peace talks and advance reconciliation and peace-building objectives.

Another key issue for the Council is establishing a direct military contact mechanism between the parties, facilitated by UNFICYP. In renewing UNFICYP's mandate in January 2023, the Council may decide to encourage the parties to approach negotiations on the basis of "engagement without recognition" and undertake significant confidence-building measures, which could help facilitate the resumption of negotiations.

### Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda. Council members with a vested interest in Cyprus include France, Russia and the UK. In addition to being a guarantor power, the UK also serves as the penholder on this issue.

While the Council is united in its support for the political process, members diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the unification talks. Some members have previously supported a comprehensive strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. Russia remains adamant that there be no external interference or attempts to enforce solutions and schedules to influence the peace talks.

The Council is unlikely to initiate drastic changes to the mission's mandate and size. Council members will encourage the Secretary-General to continue working with the parties to find common ground for formal negotiations to commence.

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## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

### Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland is expected to brief.

### Key Recent Developments

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party won the majority of votes during Israel's 1 November 2022 elections. After protracted negotiations with coalition partners, on 21 December 2022, Netanyahu notified Israel's President Isaac Herzog that he had successfully formed a new government. Some of the expected ministerial appointees, as well as some of the deals that Netanyahu agreed with far-right coalition partners to form a governing coalition, have generated concern among international and domestic observers.

One such agreement was reportedly reached between Netanyahu and his coalition partner Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, on potential future measures that would support settlers and settlement activities in the West Bank, including changing a law that currently prohibits settlers from living in the

Homesh outpost, which was evacuated in 2005. At the 19 December 2022 Security Council meeting on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", several members commented on this development. Ghana called on Israel not to undertake these measures, while France expressed concern at announcements promising the legalisation of Israeli outposts and called on the incoming government not to implement these decisions. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) said that, in light of reports indicating plans to legalise outposts, it reaffirmed its rejection of any steps aimed at annexing Palestinian land and attempts to legalise annexation.

The increasingly violent situation in the West Bank and its possible further deterioration continues to be a source of concern. In his briefing to the Council at the 19 December 2022 meeting, Wennesland said that "[c]lashes, protests, attacks, Israeli security operations, including in Area A, and settler-related violence have continued". He said that over 150 Palestinians and more than 20 Israelis had been killed in the West Bank and Israel in 2022. The latest Secretary-General's report on resolution 2334 of 23 December 2016, which was issued on 14 December 2022 and covers the period from 21 September to 7 December 2022, says that 2022 has been

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UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. Secretary-General's report S/2022/945 (14 December 2022) was the latest Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2334.

# The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since the UN started recording fatalities in 2005. According to the report, in about 58 percent of the cases, Palestinian fatalities occurred during Israeli military operations or search and arrest operations, often “involving armed exchanges with Palestinians”. The report also says that 2022 has been the deadliest year since 2015 for Israeli civilians killed in attacks in Israel and in the West Bank.

The Secretary-General’s report further notes that settlement activities, as well as seizures and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, have continued during the reporting period. In the report, the Secretary-General expressed concern about the demolition of a school and “the stated intention of Israeli authorities to demolish additional structures” in Masafer Yatta, a cluster of Palestinian villages in the West Bank which Israel designated in the 1980s as a firing zone for the Israel Defence Forces.

On 11 November 2022, the UN General Assembly’s Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) adopted a resolution which decides to request the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to render an advisory opinion on “the legal consequences arising from the ongoing violation by Israel of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, from its prolonged occupation, settlement and annexation of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures”. The resolution also asks the ICJ how these policies and practices affect the legal status of the occupation and what legal consequences they produce for states and the UN.

On 12 December 2022, the General Assembly extended the mandate of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) until 30 June 2026 (A/RES/77/123). In a separate resolution adopted on the same day (A/RES/77/122), the General Assembly decided to consider a gradual increase in the allocation from the UN regular budget to UNRWA that would support expenses for the Agency’s operational costs related to executive and administrative management functions. The resolution also invites the Secretary-General to submit proposals at the 78th session of the General Assembly on the possibility of covering some of UNRWA’s operational costs through the UN regular budget. (UNRWA—which has long been suffering from chronic underfunding while facing increasing demands—is currently funded through voluntary contributions, except for a small fraction that covers international staff salaries, which is financed through the UN regular budget.)

## Human Rights-Related Developments

In a joint press release on 2 December 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, said that Israel’s decision to deport French-Palestinian human rights defender and lawyer Salah Hammouri to France against his will may constitute a war crime under the Fourth Geneva Convention. “These measures set an extremely dangerous precedent for all Palestinians in Jerusalem”, the experts said.

Hammouri was deported to France on 18 December 2022. In a press release issued the following day, the Office of the High Commissioner for

Human Rights (OHCHR) condemned Israel’s deportation of Hammouri to France and expressed deep concern at “the chilling message this sends to those working on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory”. According to the press release, Israel “revoked Hammouri’s residency in occupied East Jerusalem on the basis of ‘breach of allegiance to the State of Israel’”. The press release stressed that the deportation of protected persons from occupied territory is prohibited in international humanitarian law, which also “explicitly forbids compelling such persons to swear allegiance to the occupying power”.

## Key Issues and Options

At the 28 November 2022 meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Wennesland warned the Council that “[t]he principles that underpin the Oslo Accords are slipping away”, adding that “[p]olitical leadership is required to reset a trajectory towards a two-State solution”. Finding ways to support the resumption of political negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis to move towards a resolution of the conflict and achieve a two-state solution remains the fundamental issue for the Council. Nevertheless, concrete steps towards this objective remain absent.

Members remain concerned about the deterioration of the security situation and violence against civilians in the West Bank and Israel. Other ongoing issues include deterring developments that undermine the viability of the two-state solution and a peaceful resolution of the conflict, such as the expansion of Israeli settlements, forced evictions and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, and the alteration of the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem. Council members—including the US—are likely to closely monitor the policies and actions of Israel’s incoming far-right coalition government on these key issues.

In a 16 December statement, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, said that from 12 to 15 December 2022, Gamba visited Israel and the State of Palestine, holding meetings in Gaza, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Tel Aviv. The visit followed up on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General’s 2022 annual report on children and armed conflict, which requested Palestinian armed groups and Israel to engage with Gamba to end and prevent grave violations against children and to adopt clear and time-bound commitments in this regard. Members may wish to invite Gamba to brief the Council about her findings from the visit.

Members who pledged to make Women, Peace and Security (WPS) a top priority by endorsing the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS may consider focusing on WPS the meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” during their presidency and stress their interest in integrating a gender analysis in UN reporting on this file.

## Council Dynamics

Council members regularly express support for the two-state solution and call for avoiding measures that undermine its future viability. At the same time, no concrete steps have been taken to restart the peace process.

The US appears to be of the view that the current circumstances are not ripe for the restart of peace negotiations and has instead emphasised the importance of measures to improve the everyday

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## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

lives of Palestinians and Israelis while preserving the viability of a two-state solution. Russia has accused the US of blocking the Council's adoption of any substantive decision on the Middle East peace process and the efforts of the Middle East Quartet—which consists of the EU, Russia, the UN, and the US.

Regarding the request for an ICJ advisory opinion, several Council members abstained in the Fourth Committee vote in November 2022, including France and the UK. The US voted against the resolution, while Brazil, China, Gabon, Russia, and the UAE voted in favour, together with Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico, who finished

their Council terms at the end of 2022. Of the new Council members, Malta and Mozambique supported the resolution, while Ecuador, Japan and Switzerland abstained. At the 28 November 2022 Council meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, the US said that the request for an ICJ advisory opinion was part of “[t]he lopsided focus on Israel” at the UN, while Ireland welcomed the resolution and stressed the importance of supporting “Palestinian efforts in seeking legal responses to the occupation”.

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## Mali

### Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Council will hold a briefing and consultations on Mali. Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) El-Ghassim Wane is expected to brief. In addition to the Secretary-General's quarterly report on Mali, Council members expect to receive his internal review of MINUSMA by 13 January. The mandate of MINUSMA expires on 30 June 2023.

### Key Recent Developments

In November 2022, important troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to MINUSMA announced that they would end their participation in the peacekeeping operation. On 11 November, Côte d'Ivoire informed the UN that it would gradually withdraw its contingent, which numbers about 900 soldiers and police, by August 2023. Its decision comes as Mali's transitional authorities continue to detain 46 Ivorian soldiers, whom they have held since July 2022. On 14 November, the UK announced that its 260-member contingent would be withdrawn “earlier than planned”. The UK said it made the decision based on the transitional authorities' decision to partner with the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, and the Malian government's interference with MINUSMA's work. On 22 November, Germany also announced that it planned to leave MINUSMA by mid-2024.

The overall security situation in Mali remains dire. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) has continued the offensive it began in March 2022 in the Gao and Ménaka regions, fighting against Tuareg armed groups and local Al-Qaida affiliated groups. The offensive has displaced tens of thousands of people. During several days of heavy fighting in early December, dozens of civilians were killed and hundreds displaced in Ansongo, Gao region, according to news reports that cited community leaders. Speaking of the situation in Gao and Ménaka at the Council's 18 October 2022 briefing on Mali, Wane said, “We have to acknowledge that the needs on the ground far outweigh MINUSMA's abilities with its current resources”, adding that the situation “underscores the need for greater coordination between MINUSMA and the Malian forces”.

On 17 October 2022, an explosive device killed three Chadian peacekeepers near Tessalit in the Kidal region; a fourth peacekeeper succumbed to his injuries the next day. An attack on a MINUSMA police patrol on 16 December in Timbuktu killed two Nigerian peacekeepers, including one woman, and injured four others. In other incidents, six peacekeepers were injured when their vehicles hit explosive devices in Douentza in the Mopti region on 7 November 2022, and three peacekeepers were injured, one seriously, when a MINUSMA convoy hit a mine near the same area on 21 November 2022. On 20 November, suspected Islamist militants abducted a German priest in Bamako, the first kidnapping of a Westerner in the capital during the decade-long crisis in Mali.

During his 18 October briefing, Wane highlighted “significant progress” in preparations for elections following the July 2022 agreement between Malian authorities and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to complete Mali's political transition by 29 March 2024. He cited the establishment of a new, single electoral body and the recent appointment of its 15 members, who are tasked with making the body's national, regional and local structures operational. Wane noted that a draft constitution was presented to transitional President Assimi Goïta on 12 October 2022. The next step is for Mali's Council of Ministers to adopt the draft constitution in the lead-up to a constitutional referendum in March 2023. The steering committee to monitor political and electoral reforms—composed of Malian stakeholders, ECOWAS, the AU and MINUSMA—was also meeting regularly, according to Wane.

In a 9 December 2022 communiqué, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), an alliance of northern armed groups, “denounce[d]” the state of implementation of Mali's 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, following a meeting of its executive bureau in Kidal. The CMA said, “It is regrettable to admit after seven years” that “the peace agreement undoubtedly suffers from the obvious lack” of commitment to its implementation by the Malian government, by Algeria—which chairs the international mediation team overseeing the peace process—and by the international community. In a 10 December letter addressed to Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra of Algeria, the CMA requested an emergency

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI** Security Council Resolution on Mali S/RES/2640 (29 June 2022) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2023. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9200** (23 November 2022) was a briefing by Ambassador de la Fuente Ramirez (Mexico) as chair of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee. **S/PV.9154** (18 October 2022) was a Council briefing on Mali. **S/PV.9082** (29 June 2022) contained the explanation of votes after the adoption of resolution 2640. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15065** (17 October 2022) condemned an attack on MINUSMA near Tessalit, during which three Chadian peacekeepers were killed.

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# Mali

meeting to conduct “a decisive examination of the viability of the agreement”.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 November 2022, MINUSMA issued its quarterly note on trends in and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Mali for the period 1 July to 30 September. According to the report, terrorist groups were responsible for 163, or 43 percent, of violations and abuses during the third quarter of 2022. Malian defence and security forces and “foreign” military personnel – an apparent reference to the Wagner Group – committed 162 documented violations and abuses, which represented a 33 percent increase from the previous quarter. Elaborating on such abuses, the report said that during military operations “conducted exclusively by foreign military personnel”, MINUSMA documented serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including summary executions, rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence against women, disappearances, forced arrests, and arbitrary detentions.

## Key Issues and Options

The security situation, progress in the political transition, and the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement remain key issues. MINUSMA’s ability to protect civilians, the human rights situation, and the overall humanitarian situation are also recurring key issues. Relations between Mali and MINUSMA over the past year—including restrictions placed by Malian authorities on UN ground patrols and flights—is another critical issue and raises serious questions about the viability of the mission’s future. Decisions by TCCs to leave the mission come as MINUSMA has struggled to acquire enabling capacities as part of its December 2019 adaptation plan to make the operation more mobile and as it faces new demands following the departure of French counter-terrorism forces from Mali, which was completed in August 2022.

The UN’s internal review of MINUSMA, which is being conducted pursuant to resolution 2640 of 29 June 2022, which last renewed the mission’s mandate, is an important upcoming report in the context of these issues. The review is expected to include analysis of the political and security challenges affecting MINUSMA’s ability to implement its mandate, an assessment of cooperation with the host country authorities and movement restrictions, recommendations about the necessary conditions for MINUSMA to continue operating, and options for MINUSMA’s future configuration, force levels, and uniformed personnel ceiling.

Options for the mission’s future include reinforcing MINUSMA, given the capacity gaps created by the departure of France’s

counter-terrorism forces. This would however appear to require a recommitment by Malian authorities to cooperate with the UN. Alternatively, other options could be a consolidation or possible drawdown and exit of MINUSMA. The review is likely to inform future Council decisions on Mali and its submission in January 2023 will allow Council members to begin considering potential changes to the mission well in advance of MINUSMA’s mandate renewal in June.

## Council Dynamics

China and Russia have been supportive of the positions and views of Mali’s transitional authorities, often pitting them against the US and European members on several issues, including over reported human rights abuses by Mali’s security forces and restrictions on MINUSMA’s activities. US and European members are critical of Mali’s decision to partner with the Wagner Group. The three African members (A3), which will be represented by Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique in 2023, play an important role in Council negotiations on Mali. Despite the tensions between ECOWAS and the transitional authorities over delays in restoring constitutional order, the A3 are often cautious about criticising Mali, particularly over human rights, which they believe could prove counter-productive to MINUSMA’s cooperation with the government.

Members are concerned about the potential vacuum in Mali and in the region that MINUSMA’s departure could create. Still, the P3 (France, the UK and the US) and other European members have highlighted that the internal review should consider all options for the mission’s future. At the 18 October briefing, the A3 asserted that MINUSMA’s continued presence is an important stabilising factor in Mali. China said during the session that it would like the review to include proposals for streamlining and optimising the mission’s mandate and for providing a rational arrangement of personnel and resources.

France is the penholder on Mali. In renewing the Mali sanctions regime in August 2022, France served as co-penholder with Mexico, whose permanent representative, Ambassador Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez, chaired the 2374 Sanctions Committee. At the time of writing, Council members had still not announced which member would assume the sanctions committee chairmanship from Mexico, whose two-year term as an elected member will end on 31 December 2022.

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# Haiti

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Helen La Lime on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on BINUH.

BINUH’s mandate expires on 15 July 2023.

## Key Recent Developments

Haiti remains plagued by instability, with political deadlock, gang violence and natural disasters exacerbating humanitarian needs and complicating efforts to alleviate the dire situation. Against this backdrop, on 7 October 2022, the Haitian government appealed for the immediate deployment of an “international specialised force”

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2653 (21 October 2022) established the sanctions regime on Haiti. S/RES/2645 (15 July 2022) renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for one year, until 15 July 2023. **Secretary-General’s Reports** S/2022/761 (13 October 2022) was the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on Haiti. S/2022/747 (8 October 2022) outlined options for enhanced security support to Haiti.

## Haiti

to temporarily reinforce the efforts of the Haitian National Police (HNP) to combat gangs. On 8 October, the Secretary-General submitted to the Security Council a special report outlining options to enhance security support for Haiti, requested by resolution 2645 of 15 July 2022, which most recently renewed BINUH's mandate. It recommended that "[o]ne or several Member States, acting bilaterally at the invitation of and in cooperation with the Government of Haiti, could deploy, as a matter of urgency, a rapid action force" to support the HNP. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 17 October 2022.)

The Security Council has yet to act in response to the Haitian government's 7 October request and the Secretary-General's 8 October report. In her remarks at a 17 October 2022 Council meeting on Haiti, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (US) noted that Mexico and the US were working on a resolution that would "authorize a non-UN international security assistance mission to help improve the security situation". She added that such a mission would be "led by a partner country with the deep, necessary experience required for such an effort to be effective" and would "operate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter". At the time of writing, no member state had indicated its willingness to lead or to participate in such a mission.

In her briefing to the Council at the 17 October Council meeting, La Lime reiterated the Secretary-General's call for Haiti's partners to deploy an international armed force to the country, while emphasising that "[a]ny enhanced security support to the [HNP] should also be accompanied by support to the justice system: both to ensure proper accountability, but also to re-enforce nationally led initiatives, such as the proposed judicial units specialized in adjudicating crimes committed by gangs, as well as financial crimes". The Secretary-General's most recent report on BINUH, dated 13 October 2022, highlighted that detention conditions across the country have deteriorated owing to the "prison system's inadequate budget, food shortages, limited medical supplies and delays in the transfer of prisoners to hospitals". As at 28 September, Haitian prisons held 11,788 inmates, approximately 84 percent of whom awaited trial.

On 21 October 2022, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2653, which established a sanctions regime on Haiti, including targeted assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo measures. Resolution 2653 designated one person under the regime: Jimmy Chérizier (also known as "Barbeque"), who heads an alliance of Haitian gangs known as the "G9 Family and Allies". (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 21 October 2022.) According to a 5 December note by the President of the Security Council, Gabon has been elected as the chair of the sanctions committee established pursuant to resolution 2653.

In addition, Canada and the US have introduced sanctions on individuals fuelling violence in Haiti under their respective national laws. At the time of writing, Canada had imposed sanctions against 13 individuals characterised as members of the economic or political elite for providing illicit financial and operational support to armed gangs, while the US had imposed sanctions on four Haitian nationals, including politicians accused of providing support to drug trafficking activities. On 28 November 2022, the EU for the first time imposed restrictive measures against gang leaders in Haiti; at the time of writing, only Chérizier had been designated under this legislation.

On 4 November 2022, the HNP announced that the blockade imposed by Chérizier since September on the Varreux Terminal, Haiti's main fuel terminal, had been lifted. Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said on 2 December that the blockade's lifting had "led to an improvement in the availability of fuel and other supplies" while adding that "accessing and transport remains a problem for our humanitarian partners".

The already dire humanitarian situation in the country has been further exacerbated by the re-emergence of cholera. Haiti reported on 2 October 2022 its first case of the disease after more than three years without a single reported case. As at 12 December, the UN reported that more than 14,000 suspected cholera cases had been recorded. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 283 deaths from the disease had been recorded as at 6 December.

On 21 December 2022, the Security Council held a meeting on Haiti, at the request of Russia. La Lime, who briefed at the meeting, noted that civil society groups held inclusive consultations in October and November 2022 on a transitional road map and adopted a national consensus document on 6 December 2022, which calls for a final agreement by the end of 2022. She also said that resolution 2653 has received wide support from Haitian nationals. La Lime emphasised that civil society groups and political organisations have been calling for international operational support for the HNP, with clear parameters on the terms of engagement.

Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, who delivered remarks at the meeting, called on member states to urgently consider the request of the Haitian government for an international specialised armed force to stabilise the security situation and alleviate the humanitarian crisis. The civil society representative, journalist Kim Ives, presented a different view than that of the other briefers, and stressed that the territorial integrity of Haiti should be respected. He added that the UN or any other foreign entities should only provide Haiti with disinterested economic support to rebuild its ravaged economy and political institutions. Ambassador Michel Xavier Biang (Gabon) briefed for the first time in his capacity as Chair of the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee. He informed the Council that the committee has approved the appointment of four experts to serve on its Panel of Experts, who specialise in the areas of finance, humanitarian affairs, armed groups and criminal networks, and arms. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 21 December 2022.)

### Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 1 November 2022 press release, the Committee on the Rights of the Child said that it was "deeply concerned about the severe violations of children's rights in Haiti", adding that "the rights of children to life, education, safe water, sanitation, health, and nutrition are under threat". According to the press release, most children had not attended school since the start of the academic year in October. It added that cholera is threatening 1.2 million children in areas where cholera cases have been reported and that almost 100,000 children under five face severe acute malnutrition, according to UNICEF estimates.

Upon the conclusion of a four-day visit to Haiti, UNICEF Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes Manuel Fontaine expressed concerns on 23 November 2022 about rising cholera cases in the country, saying that "in Haiti right now, there is a triple threat to children's lives – malnutrition, cholera and armed violence. And sometimes all three together". He noted that effective and timely delivery of treatment against cholera had been hindered by

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# Haiti

the fact that “the urban-poor areas most affected by the cholera outbreak are under the control of heavily armed gangs”.

## Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council is to prevent a further escalation of the situation in Haiti, which may have destabilising spillover effects in the region. A related issue is addressing the growing humanitarian needs owing to increasing cholera cases and food insecurity. UN officials and other experts advocate a holistic approach to addressing the situation, which calls for simultaneous efforts to promote a solution to the political deadlock, the security threats, and the humanitarian crisis.

To promote a response to the security situation, an option for the Council is to update the 2653 sanctions list to target additional individuals who fuel violence in Haiti, in line with the recommendations of the Panel of Experts of the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee.

It seems that Mexico, whose Council term ends on 31 December 2022, and the US do not want to introduce a draft resolution on a possible non-UN international security assistance mission until there is a commitment from member states to lead or participate in such a mission. Member states apparently hesitate to commit to such a force for several reasons, including concerns about the safety of their deployed personnel and the objections raised to foreign interventions by Haitian actors, including opposition groups. To inform their deliberations on the matter, Council members and other relevant member states may consider holding informal meetings (either virtually or in person) with Haitian actors and civil society organisations to hear their views.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about the situation in Haiti. In recent months, there seems to be a convergence of views regarding the urgency of Council action on the matter, as reflected in the establishment of a sanctions regime on Haiti—the Security Council’s first sanctions regime since it created the Mali regime through resolution 2374 of 5 September 2017.

Members also generally agree that sanctions alone will not solve all of Haiti’s problems and have emphasised the need to promote a Haitian-led political solution. Several members—including Ireland

(which finishes its term at the end of 2022), Russia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—expressed this position in their explanation of vote on resolution 2653. Some members, including China, have been increasingly critical of Haitian political actors because of their reluctance to put aside their differences and advance dialogue.

There appear to be divisions among Council members in their approach to the possibility of the Council authorising a non-UN international security assistance mission to Haiti. Russia, for example, has emphasised the need to listen to the voices of Haitian actors who oppose a foreign intervention in their country. Other members advocate a cautious and thorough analysis of the option.

In the 21 December 2022 Council briefing on Haiti, the A3 members (Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya) encouraged Council members to respond to the insecurity in the country with utmost urgency. Kenya (which finishes its term at the end of 2022) noted that any new intervention backed by the Security Council must avoid past mistakes and should encompass a clear scope of tasks, concept of operations and an exit strategy. It added that the Council should consider including key African and Caribbean contributions in any possible intervention to gain the Haitian people’s confidence. China and the UAE in their statements welcomed the efforts of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to address the crisis in Haiti.

The five incoming Council members—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland—in 2023 may affect Council dynamics on Haiti. Mexico was active on the file during its 2021–2022 term on the Council, serving as co-penholder with the US. It remains to be seen if Ecuador, its successor in the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) seat, or Brazil—where a new administration will come to power in January 2023—will seek a similarly active role on Haiti.

Beyond the Council, Canada has long demonstrated a strong interest in supporting efforts to address insecurity in Haiti and assist Haitian stakeholders to achieve political consensus. Ambassador Bob Rae (Canada) visited Haiti from 7 to 9 December 2022 with the aim of encouraging “greater unity among key stakeholders towards a political path and process for democratic elections”. This was his second visit to Haiti in the past three months and was immediately preceded by a fact-finding mission.

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# Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Security Council will receive the semi-annual briefing of ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan on the ICC’s Darfur-related activities.

## Background and Key Recent Developments

Sudan is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Security Council referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan, to the ICC through the adoption of resolution 1593 on 31 March 2005. (Algeria,

Brazil, China, and the US abstained on the resolution.) The Council invited the ICC Prosecutor to update it every six months on actions taken pursuant to resolution 1593. The investigations regarding Darfur focus on allegations of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur since 1 July 2002.

More than 17 years after the Council’s ICC referral, the first trial opened on 5 April 2022 with the case of *The Prosecutor v. Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman* (“*Ali Kushayb*”), which is ongoing. Four ICC arrest warrants remain outstanding against former

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UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1593 (31 March 2005) referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC. Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/898 (1 December 2022) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9211 (7 December 2022) was a briefing on Sudan. S/PV.9113 (23 August 2022) was the semi-annual briefing on the ICC’s work in Darfur. Security Council Press Statement SC/15132 (8 December 2022) was on the signing of the Sudan Political Framework Agreement on 5 December 2022.

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# Sudan

President Omar Al Bashir, Ahmad Muhammad Harun, Abdel Raheem Muhammad Hussein, and Abdallah Banda Abakaer Nourain. Sudan remains under an obligation to surrender the four remaining suspects in the Darfur situation to the court, pursuant to resolution 1593 and the subsequent orders of ICC judges.

Khan last briefed the Council on 23 August 2022 via video-conference from Khartoum. He noted that it was the first time an ICC Prosecutor had briefed the Council from a situation country. “The simple truth is that the nightmare for thousands of Darfuris has not ended...in large part, because meaningful justice and accountability have not been felt”, he said. Among his suggestions was that Council members consider visiting Sudan “to learn more and hear from some of those survivors” to “reawaken” the Council’s commitment. He also said that Sudan’s cooperation with the court had “taken a step backwards” in recent months and highlighted the need for Sudan to issue multiple entry visas to assist with the opening of an office in Khartoum as soon as possible.

On 5 December 2022, a broad range of civilian political forces and the military signed the Sudan Political Framework Agreement, intended to pave the way for a two-year, civilian-led transition ahead of elections. The agreement, however, did not contain specific deadlines for the transition process and has been opposed by several groups, including reported protests in Khartoum since its signing. Its signing was welcomed by Secretary-General António Guterres and the Friends of Sudan (Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and the EU). In an 8 December 2022 press statement, Council members also welcomed the agreement.

In a briefing on 7 December 2022, Special Representative for Sudan and head of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) Volker Perthes said that the signing of the framework agreement on 5 December marked the first step in a two-phase process. He noted that it is intended “to lay the ground, after a further round of talks on substance, for a final political accord and the formation of a new civilian government”. Describing it as an important breakthrough, he added that “critical contentious issues” still needed to be addressed, including matters related to security sector reform; transitional justice; and implementation of the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 5 December 2022 statement, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk welcomed the signing of the framework agreement earlier that day as “an important first step towards a political agreement and the restoration of a civilian-led government”. He emphasised the importance of the international community’s support for “the next phase of the transition”.

## Key Issues and Options

An underlying key issue for the Council is how to promote justice and accountability for past atrocities committed in Sudan. A related issue for the Council is how to support enhanced cooperation between the ICC prosecutor and the government of Sudan.

In addition to receiving Khan’s briefing, Council members supportive of the ICC’s work could consider holding an informal meeting with the prosecutor to facilitate a dialogue on ways in which his office could strengthen its cooperation with the Sudanese government.

Council members could also hold a joint press stakeout to encourage improved relations between the Sudanese government and the ICC.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council is divided on the work of the ICC. Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, and the UK are states parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC. China, Mozambique, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and the US are not. These distinctions, however, do not necessarily reflect how members view the court’s work on Sudan. For example, the US has long supported the ICC’s efforts with regard to Sudan. Among the wider membership of the UN, African countries have long expressed concerns about what they view as the court’s disproportionate focus on Africa.

At the last semi-annual briefing on 23 August 2022, wide-ranging views were expressed on the ICC’s work in relation to Darfur. Many members welcomed the start of the trial against Ali Kushayb in April 2022 while calling on Sudan to cooperate more with the court, including providing access to key witnesses and allowing the court to establish a greater field presence. Russia was critical of the court’s work, and holds the view that the case against Ali Kushayb did not constitute a breakthrough.

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions.

# Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

## Expected Council Action

In January 2023, the Council is expected to hold an open debate on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, which Japan is organising as one of the signature events of its Council presidency. The session will focus on institution-building and resilience.

## Key Recent Developments

On 8 September 2022, the General Assembly adopted by consensus resolution 76/305 on financing for peacebuilding, the culmination of an intergovernmental process that member states decided to establish in April 2022 and that was co-facilitated by Kenya and Sweden. Resolution 76/305 was the General Assembly's first resolution focused on peacebuilding financing. It recognised that financing for peacebuilding remains a "critical challenge" and affirmed the General Assembly's "commitment to consider all options for adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding, including through voluntary, innovative and assessed funding".

The General Assembly resolution further noted, among other points, that voluntary contributions have not been sufficient to meet increasing demands on the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). It recognised that the provision of assessed contributions for peacebuilding financing would represent a shared commitment by member states and encouraged the General Assembly's Fifth Committee to continue and conclude its consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on investing in prevention and peacebuilding. The report, dated 1 March 2022, requested the Fifth Committee to appropriate \$100 million to the PBF for the 12-month period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

During 2022, there were several notable developments in enhancing the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to the Security Council. The PBC intensified its practice of submitting written advisories to the Council, which it began in 2018 when the chair of the PBC's Central African Republic (CAR) configuration wrote to the Council with recommendations ahead of the mandate renewal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA). Since October 2022, the PBC has submitted written advisories to the Council for meetings on cooperation between the UN and the AU, the situation in the Great Lakes region, a thematic discussion on "Integrating effective resilience-building in peace operations for sustainable peace", the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force, and Gulf of Guinea piracy. It also provided a written advisory for the mandate renewal of MINUSCA. The PBC chair, Ambassador Muhammad Abdul Muhith (Bangladesh), also delivered the PBC's first briefing, or "oral advisory", on Colombia to the Security Council at a 12 October 2022 Council briefing on the country.

In 2022, the PBC began to receive advanced unedited versions of the Secretary-General's reports to the Council on topics considered by the commission. Starting with the preparation of the PBC chair's statement for the Council's briefing in July 2022 on West Africa and the Sahel, the PBC also began organising expert-level meetings to negotiate written and oral advisories as a way to improve the transparency among commission members on how these texts are

negotiated and how members arrive at consensus, which is required for PBC products. Traditionally, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) drafts and circulates the advice, and PBC members submit comments to the PBSO, or break silence on the text, without needing to identify themselves to other members. Since this first expert-level negotiation on West Africa and the Sahel, PBC members have held at least three other expert-level meetings to prepare the PBC's advice on the Great Lakes, Gulf of Guinea piracy, and the MINUSCA mandate.

In November 2022, Burundi informed the PBC of its decision to end the commission's country configuration on Burundi, which was established in 2006 as one of the PBC's first agenda situations. A 30 November 2022 PBC meeting was held to review the engagement of its Burundi configuration, which had been chaired since 2009 by the permanent representative of Switzerland, and explore possible forms of future cooperation between the PBC and Burundi. The configuration, according to a PBC press release, was expected to officially conclude on 31 December 2022.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the open debate is institution-building. Weak state capacities and institutions are often unable to manage sources of division or tension in societies while also making countries less resilient in coping with, for example, economic shocks or disruptions caused by climate change or natural disasters. The inability of states to provide basic services to their citizens can also be a source of grievance and has been exploited by terrorist or other armed groups to gain support among populations by, among other things, providing services that states have failed to deliver.

Strengthening cooperation between the PBC and the Council is another key issue. In addition to an expansion in recent years of the topics on which the PBC advises the Council and the rise in written advisories, the PBC's advice has appeared increasingly more substantive in its identification and elaboration of issues, such as socioeconomic challenges, national reconciliation and inclusivity. One recurring issue remains the timeliness of the PBC's advice. Over the past year, some of its written advisories have been agreed to on the day before or on the same day as the relevant Council meeting, which does not give Council members time to consider the advice as they prepare their statements or positions. Its written advisory for the MINUSCA mandate renewal was dated 9 November 2022, the same day that the Council's draft resolution on MINUSCA was first placed under silence procedure and after Council members had already held two rounds of expert-level negotiations on the mandate.

It seems that no Council product is envisioned for the open debate, though the meeting may build momentum for Japan to advance further Council consideration on the theme of institution-building during its 2023-2024 Council term. Members may welcome progress in the PBC-Council relationship while encouraging the commission to organise its activities around the Council's calendar of work and submit its written advisories well in advance of Council meetings or negotiations.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2558 (20 December 2020) was on the 2020 review of UN peacebuilding, welcoming progress and encouraging continued actions to implement the resolutions on the 2015 review of UN peacebuilding. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/20](#) (18 December 2018) was on the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory role to the Council. [Secretary-General's Reports A/76/732](#) (1 March 2022) was a report to the General Assembly, requesting it to appropriate assessed contributions to the PBF. [A/76/668-S/2002/66](#) (28 January 2022) was a report on financing for peacebuilding. [General Assembly Document A/RES/76/305](#) (8 September 2022) was a General Assembly resolution on financing for peacebuilding. [Peacebuilding Commission Document A/76/678-S/2022/89](#) (3 February 2022) was the annual report of the PBC on its 15th session.

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# Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

## Council Dynamics

Japan has long emphasised the importance of institution-building in conflict-affected countries, stressing how this is essential for delivering socioeconomic services to people and for building their trust in government. During its last Council term (2016-2017), it organised an open debate on institution-building in Africa and sponsored a presidential statement on this subject, which the Council adopted at the open debate in July 2016. Some countries, such as the African Group in the PBC, have at times cautioned against considering institution-building in isolation, as they are wary of potentially separating this topic from other relevant aspects of peacebuilding, such as national ownership and the issue of financing.

The Council's informal coordinator with the PBC plays an

important role in promoting cooperation between the Council and PBC. Outgoing member Kenya served as informal coordinator over the past two years. It routinely surveyed the Council's upcoming monthly programme of work to identify opportunities for PBC engagement with the Council, which appears to have contributed to the increase in written advisories. Additionally, Kenya initiated the practice of expert-level meetings to negotiate these advisories.

At the time of this writing, it had not yet been decided which Council member would serve as the new informal coordinator. In addition to Japan's long-standing interest in the PBC, Brazil is a strong advocate of the PBC and chairs the PBC's Guinea-Bissau configuration. Switzerland also joins the Council in 2023, bringing its experience as chair of the former Burundi configuration.

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## UNRCCA (Central Asia)

### Expected Council Action

In January, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, is expected to brief the Security Council on UNRCCA's work in closed consultations.

### Key Recent Developments

Gherman last briefed Council members in closed consultations on 28 July. Among other matters, she provided an update on UNRCCA's activities pertaining to counter-terrorism, transboundary water management, border demarcation, and the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas. Gherman also discussed the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia, the bout of unrest that broke out in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan in May, the ongoing border dispute between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, and the July protests in the Karakalpakstan region of Uzbekistan.

On 14 September, clashes erupted between Kyrgyz and Tajik forces along the disputed part of the border between the two countries. Kyrgyz and Tajik officials each blamed the other side for the outbreak of violence. According to media reports, the Kyrgyz Border Guard claimed that Tajik troops shot at Kyrgyz guards stationed at the Dostuk outpost in the Kak-Sai area of Kyrgyzstan's southern Batken region. Tajik officials, on the other hand, accused Kyrgyz forces of initiating hostilities by firing mortar shells at Tajik troops. The fighting, which continued for several days and reportedly involved the use of tanks, artillery, and rocket launchers, killed at least 81 people and wounded more than 139 others. According to Kyrgyz authorities, a further 136,000 people were displaced by the violence.

In a 17 September statement, the Secretary-General called on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to "engage in dialogue for a lasting cease-fire" and said that "both sides should take advantage of the existing mechanisms on the ground to defuse tensions". The statement also said that the UN "stands ready to assist in identifying a sustainable solution to the border disputes, if requested by both sides".

On 25 September, the Chairman of the State Committee for

National Security of Kyrgyzstan and the head of the State Committee for National Security of Tajikistan reportedly signed a protocol "on the settlement of the situation on the border". Under the terms of the protocol, each side agreed to remove four border posts and to conduct border patrols using mobile detachments of troops. Three days earlier, on 22 September, Gherman met with Tajikistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan Farrukh Sharifzoda, and discussed the border clashes, among other matters.

The clashes marked the third occasion in the last two years that the border dispute between the two countries has escalated into widespread violence. In April 2021, a disagreement over the use of a shared water distribution facility led to fighting that killed at least 50 people and injured hundreds more. In late January 2022, a dispute over a blocked road erupted into clashes between the two sides. Tajik authorities claimed that two people were killed and a further ten wounded during the fighting, while Kyrgyz officials said that 12 people were wounded and more than 24,000 evacuated from the area. There have also been sporadic border skirmishes between Kyrgyz and Tajik forces during the past two years.

Violent anti-government protests took place in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan in May 2022. In response to the protests, Tajik authorities began an "anti-terror operation" in the region. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, as many as 40 people were killed in the region during this operation. Tajik authorities have reportedly continued to target demonstrators and leaders of the protests since May.

On 3 November, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan signed a series of agreements demarcating several parts of the border between the two countries, including an agreement to jointly manage the Kempir-Abad water reservoir. The agreement regarding management of the reservoir was opposed by several groups in Kyrgyzstan. According to media reports, Kyrgyz authorities carried out raids on 23 October targeting members of the groups who voiced their opposition to the deal. At least 20 activists and politicians were detained during the raids.

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UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA [Security Council Letter S/2007/279](#) (7 May 2007) was from the Secretary-General on the establishment of a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13179](#) (25 January 2018) welcomed further cooperation and coordination between UNRCCA, the Central Asian States, and relevant regional organisations, including those organisations of which the Central Asian States are members.

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## UNRCCA (Central Asia)

In early July 2022, violent protests began in the autonomous Karakalpakstan region of Uzbekistan. The protests were reportedly sparked after Uzbekistan's president, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, proposed a raft of constitutional amendments that would, among other matters, remove Karakalpakstan's right to secede from Uzbekistan. A Karakalpak leader who voiced opposition to the proposed changes was detained on 1 July, leading hundreds of protesters to take to the streets and prompting Uzbek authorities to shut down internet access in the region. The ensuing protests ran for three days and quickly turned violent. According to the Uzbek government, 21 people were killed and a further 243 injured during the protests.

The war in Ukraine has had a ripple effect throughout Central Asia. Prices in many Central Asian countries have increased, while remittance payments from migrant workers in Russia, a key source of income for many families in Central Asia, have declined. Several analysts have suggested that the conflict appears to have weakened Russia's influence in the region.

From 18 to 19 October, UNRCCA and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) organised a high-level conference in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on "international and regional border security and management cooperation to counter terrorism and prevent the movement of terrorists". The conference was conducted under the Dushanbe process, which was launched in May 2018 to discuss challenges preventing violent extremism and countering terrorism, and was hosted in partnership with Tajikistan, the EU and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In her opening remarks, Gherman stressed that UNRCCA brings a preventive diplomacy approach to border security challenges. High-level officials from the region also shared information about the efforts of their countries to strengthen border security, including through repatriation, rehabilitation, and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their family members.

On 29 and 30 November 2022, UNRCCA convened a meeting on water and energy cooperation, bringing together national experts from Central Asian states in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The event was held within the framework of UNRCCA's "Strategy in support of cooperation between the states of Central Asia in the field of water, energy, environment and climate for 2022-2025". Participants exchanged views on water management, climate change adaptation policies, green economy strategies, and ongoing law reform efforts.

On 2 December, the Secretary-General announced that Gherman had been appointed as the next Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).

### Key Issues and Options

One of the main issues for the Council is how to make the best use of UNRCCA's expertise and whether there is anything else the Council could do to support UNRCCA's efforts to facilitate preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation.

The recent unrest and violence in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is an issue for the Council to consider. Members are likely to be interested in learning more from Gherman about the effect that these incidents might have on stability in the region.

The situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia is another issue for the Council. The Council could consider inviting a representative of UNAMA to participate in the consultations and provide information regarding developments in the country that may affect the wider region.

Another option would be for Council members to convene an informal interactive dialogue with representatives of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to discuss their border dispute and possible ways the international community can support their efforts to resolve it.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of UNRCCA and view it as an important tool in promoting cooperation in Central Asia. Until 2015, Council members issued a press statement following the consultations, encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, UNRCCA, and "relevant regional organisations". In September 2015, however, Russia, the penholder on UNRCCA, sought to add specific references in the statement to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), as well as the OSCE and the EU. The P3 (France, the UK and the US) opposed these additions, seeing the CIS, the CSTO and the SCO as vehicles for enhancing Russian influence in the region. As a result, a press statement could not be agreed upon for more than two years.

Kazakhstan was able to overcome these difficulties during its 2017-2018 term as an elected member by proposing compromise language. Press elements were issued in February 2017, and a press statement was agreed upon in January 2018.

Since then, however, Council members have again been unable to reach agreement on a UNRCCA press statement owing to disagreements about referring to regional organisations. The conflict in Ukraine may further complicate consensus over a press statement.

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