

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 Security Council Elections 2023
- 4 Status Update since our May Forecast
- 5 Climate, Peace and Security
- 7 Sudan
- 9 Ukraine
- 11 Libya
- 12 UNOCA (Central Africa)
- 14 Iraq (UNITAD)
- 15 Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States
- 16 Mali
- 18 International Criminal Tribunals
- 20 Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace
- 21 UNDOF (Golan)
- 22 Yemen
- 24 Central African Republic
- 25 South Sudan
- 27 Afghanistan
- 30 Gulf of Guinea Piracy
- 31 Somalia
- 33 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 35 Syria

Overview

In June, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) holds the presidency of the UN Security Council.

The UAE is expected to convene three signature events during its presidency. The first is a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS). A senior UN official, LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and an Arab youth civil society representative are the anticipated briefers. Khalifa Shaheen Almarar, Minister of State at the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, is expected to chair the meeting.

The second signature event will be an open debate on climate, peace and security under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item. Sultan Al Jaber, the UAE's Special Envoy for Climate Change and President-designate of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28), is expected to chair the meeting.

The third signature event this month is a briefing on "The values of human fraternity in promoting and sustaining peace" under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item. UN Secretary-General António Guterres and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Muhammed Ahmed At-Tayyeb, are expected to brief. A high-level representative of the Holy See is also an anticipated briefer.

The Security Council is scheduled to hold 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, are expected to brief.

In addition to the briefing on cooperation between the UN and the LAS, other Middle East issues on the programme this month are:

- Iraq, briefing on the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD);
- Golan, meeting with troop-contributing countries of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), consultations on UNDOF, and renewal of the mission's mandate;
- Yemen, the monthly briefing and consultations;
- "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", the monthly meeting;

- Syria, the monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments and an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the implementation of resolution 2672 of 9 January, which reauthorised the cross-border mechanism for the delivery of humanitarian aid into Syria.

Several African issues are on the programme in June:

- Libya, renewal of authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo, and briefing and consultations on the work of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)/Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), meeting on developments;
- Mali, meeting with troop-contributing countries of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), meeting on MINUSMA, and renewal of the mission's mandate;
- Sudan, briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and renewal of the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS);
- Somalia, briefing by the chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, meeting on the situation in Somalia, and reauthorisation of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS);
- Central African Republic (CAR), meeting on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA);
- South Sudan, meeting on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS);
- Gulf of Guinea, briefing on maritime security;
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), meeting on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and vote on a resolution renewing the mandate of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts.

1 June 2023

This report is available online at securitycouncilreport.org.

For daily insights by SCR on evolving Security Council actions please subscribe to "What's In Blue" at securitycouncilreport.org or follow @SCRtweets on Twitter.

Overview

Afghanistan is the one Asian issue on the programme this month, with a meeting planned on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

There may be one or more meetings on Ukraine in June, and other issues could also be raised during the month, depending

on developments.

The General Assembly is scheduled to vote to elect five new members to the Security Council on 6 June. Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, and Sierra Leone are running uncontested; Belarus and Slovenia are vying for the Eastern European seat.

Security Council Elections 2023

The 77th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections on 6 June for five non-permanent seats of the Security Council for the 2024-2025 term.

The five seats available for election in 2023, according to the regular distribution among regions, will be as follows:

- two seats for the African Group (currently held by Gabon and Ghana);
- one seat for the Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Asia-Pacific Group) (currently held by the United Arab Emirates);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRU-LAC, currently held by Brazil); and
- one seat for the Eastern European Group (currently held by Albania).

The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) is not

contesting any seats this year, as its two seats, held by Malta and Switzerland through 2024, come up for election every other year.

The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2024 and will serve until 31 December 2025.

The 2023 Candidates

Six member states—Algeria, Belarus, Guyana, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sierra Leone, and Slovenia—are currently running for the five available seats. All six candidates have served on the Council previously: Algeria three times, Guyana and the Republic of Korea twice, and Belarus, Sierra Leone and Slovenia once. Only the Eastern European Group has a contested election this year.

The table below shows the number of seats available by region in the 2023 election, the declared candidate(s), and their prior terms on the Council.

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2023	CANDIDATES AND PRIOR COUNCIL TERMS
Africa	2	Algeria (1968-1969, 1988-1989, 2004-2005) and Sierra Leone (1970-1971)
Asia-Pacific ¹	1	Republic of Korea (1996-1997, 2013-2014)
Latin America and Caribbean	1	Guyana (1975-1976, 1982-1983)
Eastern Europe	1	Belarus (1974-1975, as the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) and Slovenia (1998-1999)

Potential Council Dynamics in 2024

The ongoing tensions among permanent members are expected to persist and are likely to shape Council dynamics in 2024. While several issues—for example, DPRK non-proliferation, Israel/Palestine, Syria, and Myanmar—remain divisive, the war in Ukraine has heightened tensions among members over the past 15 months. Russia continues to justify its invasion, which it refers to as a “special military operation”, while several Council members—including Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UK, and the US—condemn Russia for what they consider to be an act of aggression.

The situation of Ukraine is likely to continue to loom large on the Council’s agenda in 2024. Among the current cohort of candidates, Belarus has a particularly strong interest in and connection to the situation in Ukraine. Belarus shares a border with both Ukraine and Russia. Following the initial outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine in 2014, Belarus hosted a series of negotiations that resulted in the signing of the “Package of Measures for the Implementation of the

Minsk Agreements”, also known as the Minsk II agreement, adopted on 12 February 2015. Since the 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Belarus has also hosted several rounds of negotiations between Ukraine and Russia.

Some Council members have accused Belarus of aiding Russia during its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, when Belarus allowed Russian forces to use its territory as a staging ground. Earlier this year, Belarus announced that Russia would station tactical nuclear weapons on its territory.

Candidates Guyana, ROK, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia were among 141 member states voting in favour of the 2 March 2022 General Assembly resolution titled “Aggression against Ukraine”. Algeria abstained, while Belarus voted against the resolution.

Most candidates have expressed a strong interest in issues on the Council’s agenda within their respective regions. Algeria is expected to dedicate special attention to issues concerning the Sahel, Libya, and the Middle East. A member of both the AU and the LAS,

¹ Arab countries are a sub-group within the Asia-Pacific Group.

Security Council Elections 2023

Algeria could also potentially be active on the situation in Sudan. Algeria is also expected to play a prominent role on the issue of Western Sahara. As discussed above, Belarus, if elected, can be expected to have a particularly strong interest in the war in Ukraine. Slovenia has historically been interested in the Western Balkans, and, if elected, is likely to play an important role on issues such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, in addition to the Ukraine crisis. The ROK has a major stake in non-proliferation issues on the Korean peninsula. Sierra Leone has shown interest in focusing on threats to international peace and security in Western Africa, including in the Gulf of Guinea. As a member of GRULAC, Guyana could play an important role in Council discussions on Haiti and Colombia.

Peacekeeping is a key issue for several of the candidates. Among the current candidates, ROK ranks as the biggest troop contributor to UN peace operations and the largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget. Algeria and Sierra Leone are keen proponents of greater cooperation between the UN and AU on peace and security issues. Sierra Leone has emphasised its valuable experience both as a former host country and as a troop contributor.

African members have been trying to advance the discussion in the Council on the financing of AU-led peace support operations. Ghana, an outgoing member of the Council, has led these efforts, and may present a draft framework resolution in September. If negotiations on this issue are not finalised this year, they can be expected to continue in 2024.

In 2024, disarmament and non-proliferation issues are likely to garner more attention in the Council. ROK and Japan, which is currently serving its 2023–2024 term, both have a particular interest in non-proliferation issues, especially vis-à-vis the situation on the Korean peninsula. Among other candidates, Belarus has identified non-proliferation as one of its priorities.

Sierra Leone and Algeria have identified arms control and small arms and light weapons as priority areas, especially in the context of conflicts in Africa. Both candidates are strong supporters of the AU's Silencing the Guns initiative.

Some of the candidates have emphasised the importance of addressing terrorism and violent extremism. Algeria has expressed an interest in sharing its own experience in combating terrorism. It is also expected to draw the Council's attention to terrorism and violent extremism in its region, in the Sahel in particular. Sierra Leone has likewise underscored the need to tackle terrorism in the Sahel, as well as in the Gulf of Guinea.

Most candidate countries have highlighted the importance of addressing emerging threats to international peace and security. Among such threats, climate change, peace and security ranks high on the priority list for most candidates this year. Although several members of the Council support greater engagement on the issue, China, Russia, and Belarus, a candidate, have reservations about the Council's work on climate, peace and security.

To date, the Council has made limited progress in bringing more attention to cybersecurity threats. In 2024, the Council could take a more active role on this thematic issue, given that several candidates, most notably Slovenia and ROK, have included this on the list of their priorities.

Most candidate countries have underscored the significance of the women, peace, and security agenda during their campaigns. As we move into 2024, the co-chairing of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security will transition: 2023 co-chair UAE will conclude its Council term in December, paving the way for another member to join Switzerland as co-chair.

Candidate countries may also sign on to the WPS commitments—which started with the “presidency trio” of Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico in late 2021—as Algeria, Guyana, ROK, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia have all denoted the WPS agenda as a priority. Among the permanent members, France, the UK, and the US can be expected to remain strong proponents of this issue. Russia will probably continue in its view that the issue of gender equality should not be within the Council's purview. Among current candidates, Belarus would have a similar position to Russia. China is likely to continue to argue that the development gap is the most important barrier to women's empowerment.

Two members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group—Gabon and Ghana—will leave the Security Council at the end of 2023. Among the current candidates, only Slovenia is a member of the ACT group. The other ACT group members who will continue on the Security Council in 2024 are Ecuador and Switzerland. These members will be keen to push for improved Security Council working methods, including proposals advocated by the ACT group.

With Algeria and Sierra Leone joining Mozambique on the Council, the three African members (A3) are likely to work closely in coordinating their positions and advancing a common African position on regional and thematic items on the Security Council's agenda. In 2022, the A3 (Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya) delivered 63 joint statements on the African region and on thematic agenda items. The A3 are also expected to coordinate their positions on working methods and present joint commitments in this regard.

In 2020–2021, then Council member Saint Vincent and the Grenadines formed a partnership with the A3. These members coordinated their positions on several issues on the Council's agenda and delivered joint statements as a part of the A3 + 1 group. There is a possibility that Guyana, which like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is part of the CARICOM region, might renew this practice if elected.

Elected members continue to seek active roles in the Council, including as penholders, the informal designation for members who take the lead in drafting outcomes and convening negotiations on particular agenda items, a role most often assumed by one of the P3 (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States). Co-penholding by an elected and a P3 member had been nonexistent until 2019 when Germany succeeded in sharing the pen with the UK on Sudan. Recently, more elected members have co-penheld with a permanent member, including, among current members, Albania with the US on Ukraine, Ecuador with the US on Haiti, and Ecuador with France on Ukraine humanitarian issues. Elected members usually hold the pen on the Syria humanitarian file, and some candidate countries may seek this role, which is currently assumed by Brazil and Switzerland. Elected members also hold the pen on Afghanistan.

Status Update since our May Forecast

Protection of Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflict

On 2 May, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflict. The meeting was organised by France and the United Arab Emirates with co-sponsorship by non-Council members Cyprus and Italy. The briefers at the meeting were Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); General Vincenzo Molinese, Commander of the Carabinieri for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Italy); and Omar Al-Taweel, Site Coordinator for the “Revive the Spirit of Mosul” initiative—a UNESCO reconstruction campaign designed to rehabilitate the city’s cultural heritage.

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

On 3 May, the Council held an open debate on “Futureproofing Trust for Sustaining Peace” under its peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda item (S/PV.9315). A concept note stated that the session aimed to take stock, review and strengthen the approaches of the Security Council towards building trust to foster sustainable peace in light of current and emerging threats (S/2023/283). Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis chaired the debate. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk; Cynthia Chigwenya, Youth Ambassador for Peace for Southern Africa; and ‘Funmi Olonisakin, Vice-President and Professor of Security, Leadership & Development, King’s College London, briefed. In a 19 May letter (S/2023/365), Switzerland circulated a summary of the specific proposals made by Member States and speakers at the debate.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

On 4 May, Security Council members held a briefing on the activities of the OSCE (S/PV.9316). North Macedonia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Bujar Osmani, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office (CiO), briefed, outlining the OSCE’s priorities for 2023. Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis chaired the meeting, during which several Council members expressed support for the OSCE’s activities and contributions to regional stability and economic development. Council members also discussed the OSCE’s role in light of the war in Ukraine, with some members calling on the organisation to reassert itself as a credible interlocutor for finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the conflict.

Lebanon

On 8 May, Security Council members received their semi-annual briefing in closed consultations on the latest Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (S/2023/280). (Adopted in 2004, resolution 1559 called for the disarmament of all militias and the extension of government control over all Lebanese territory.) Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 9 May, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.9318) on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), released on 1

May (S/2023/305). The briefers were Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, and Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 10 May, Council members convened for closed consultations on: “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. China, France, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) requested the meeting to discuss the escalation of hostilities between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed. It seems that during the consultations, China proposed issuing press elements, but consensus could not be achieved on the matter.

On 24 May, the Security Council held an open briefing followed by closed consultations on: “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9328). Wennesland and Tania Hary, the Executive Director of the Israeli civil society organisation Gisha, briefed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 10 May (S/PV.9319). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt briefed on the most recent report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), which covers the period from 16 October 2021 to 15 April (S/2023/318). Željka Cvijanović, the Serb member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic Presidency of BiH and the incumbent Chairman of the Presidency, participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. At the outset of the meeting, Russia raised a point of order objecting to Schmidt’s briefing, noting that the Council had not authorised Schmidt’s appointment as High Representative.

Libya

On 11 May, the Security Council received the biannual briefing (S/PV.9320) of the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, on the ICC’s Libya-related activities. Among other developments, Khan announced that the court had issued multiple new arrest warrants related to key lines of inquiry during the reporting period.

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

On 16 May, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.9322), followed by closed consultations, on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee presented the Secretary-General’s latest report on the FC-G5S, dated 9 May (S/2023/328). Executive Secretary of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Eric Tiaré and Aïssatou Diouf, the International Policy and Advocacy Officer of Enda Energie and the Coordinator of the Climate Action Network for West and Central Africa, also briefed.

Myanmar

On 19 May, the UK convened an Arria-formula meeting on the humanitarian situation in Myanmar. OCHA Deputy Director of

Status Update since our May Forecast

Operations Heli Uusikyla and two female civil society representatives briefed.

Protection of Civilians

On 23 May, the Security Council held its annual open debate (S/PV.9327) on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict. Secretary-General António Guterres' 12 May PoC report served as the basis of the discussion (S/2023/345). Switzerland, May's Council President, convened the debate as a ministerial-level signature event. Guterres, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, and President of the Network of Women-led Organisations of the Lake Chad Basin Aïchatou Mounkaïla briefed. President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset chaired the meeting.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 8 May, Council members discussed a draft presidential statement on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) proposed by the US under "any other business". Members were unable to reach agreement on the statement. On 24 May, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl (Switzerland), briefed Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report on the Committee's work.

Peace and Security in Africa

On 25 May, the Security Council held a briefing on peace and security in Africa (S/PV.9329). Switzerland, May's Council President, convened the meeting at the request of the A3 members (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique) to discuss the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/303) on the financing of African Union (AU)-led peace support operations (AUPSOs), which was issued on 1 May. Viola Amherd, the head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, chaired the meeting. Under-Secretary-General for

Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye; and Bitania Tadesse, Programme Director at Amani Africa, a think tank based in Addis Ababa that provides research and analysis on the work of the AU and its Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), briefed the Council.

The Responsibility and Responsiveness of States to Cyberattacks on Critical Infrastructure

On 25 May, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting titled: "The Responsibility and Responsiveness of States to Cyberattacks on Critical Infrastructure". The meeting was co-organised by Albania and the US, with co-sponsorship by Ecuador and non-Council member Estonia. The briefers were High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu, International Policy Director at Stanford University's Cyber Policy Center Marietje Schaake, and Cybersecurity Researcher at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Molihi Makumane.

Adoption of the Annual Report to the General Assembly

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted its annual report to the General Assembly, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2022. Brazil, which drafted the introduction to the report, presented it to Council members. The rest of the report was prepared by the UN Secretariat and approved by the current members of the Council and immediate past members.

Iraq

On 30 May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2682, renewing the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for another year, until 31 May 2024.

Climate, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In June, there will be a ministerial-level open debate on climate, peace and security, which will be one of the signature events of the presidency of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Sultan Al Jaber, the UAE's Special Envoy for Climate Change and President-designate of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 28) is expected to chair the meeting.

Key Recent Developments

The Council's most recent formal meeting on climate, peace and security was the 14 February ministerial-level open debate on sea-level rise and its implications for international peace and security. Malta's minister for foreign and European affairs and trade, Ian Borg, chaired the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres; President of the UN General Assembly Csaba Körösi; and Coral Pasisi, director of climate change of the Pacific Community and

president of Tofia Niue, briefed. Romanian foreign minister Bogdan Aurescu also briefed in his capacity as co-chair of the International Law Commission Study Group on Sea-level Rise.

On 22 March, there was an open Arria-formula meeting on "Protection of Civilians: Achieving a better protection of water-related essential services and infrastructure for the civilian population during armed conflicts", which was organised by Mozambique and Switzerland. (Arria-formula meetings are informal meetings convened at the initiative of one or more members of the Security Council.) The minister of public works, housing and water resources of Mozambique, Carlos Alberto Fortes Mesquita, and the minister of foreign affairs of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, chaired the meeting. The briefers were Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell, ICRC Director-General Robert Mardini, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, and Lebogang Ramafoko, the Executive Director of Oxfam, South Africa.

UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9260 (14 February 2023) was a ministerial-level open debate on sea-level rise and its implications for international peace and security. **Other** A/77/L.58 (1 March 2023) was the Vanuatu-initiated General Assembly resolution titled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change".

Climate, Peace and Security

The Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security—which is currently chaired jointly by Mozambique, Switzerland, and the UAE—has convened twice this year to discuss the climate-related activities of UN missions: on 28 February about the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and on 26 April about the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Deputy Special Representative (Political) for South Sudan and Deputy Head of the mission Guang Cong participated in the meeting on UNMISS, while Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs Claudio Cordone and Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai participated in the meeting on UNAMI.

On 29 March, the General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution titled “Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States in respect of climate change”. The resolution, proposed by Vanuatu, requested the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to render an advisory opinion on the obligations of states under international law “to ensure the protection of the climate system and other parts of the environment from anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases for States and for present and future generations”. It further requested the court to render an advisory opinion on “the legal consequences under these obligations for States where they, by their acts and omissions, have caused significant harm to the climate system and other parts of the environment, with respect to...States, including, in particular, small island developing States...[and] [p]eoples and individuals of the present and future generations affected by the adverse effects of climate change”. UN Secretary-General António Guterres transmitted the General Assembly’s request to the ICJ in a 12 April letter.

In February, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the UN Department of Peace Operations held a pilot training course on climate, peace and security for UNMISS. This was the start of a two-year training programme on the issue for UN peace operations and selected members of UN country teams operating in highly climate-exposed regions. The programme is expected to introduce UN field staff to climate, peace and security concepts and explore with participants how they can address climate-related security risks and leverage climate-informed activities for peace.

On 22 March, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, and the UAE announced a “Statement of joint pledges related to climate, peace and security” during their Council tenures. Among the pledges, they committed to requesting the inclusion of climate change and conflict analysis as a cross-cutting theme in UN briefings to the Council; to strive to integrate climate, peace and security language in Council outcomes; and to draw attention to and follow up on recommendations and issues raised in Council meetings on matters related to climate, peace and security.

Women, Peace and Security

Several participants at the 14 February open debate on sea-level rise and its implications for international peace and security referenced the disproportional impact of climate change on women and girls. Malta, which convened the debate as one of the signature events of its February presidency, said that “[w]omen and children, including girls—who are largely responsible for securing household water and energy resources—often face the brunt” of climate-induced adverse events and that “threats and violence against women environmental defenders, especially indigenous women” are on the rise.

Albania called for climate and environmental action as well as disaster risk reduction “to be gender responsive, value and promote all women and girls as agents of change and directly address the specific risks that they face”. Non-Council member Chile said that the Security Council “can respond to the triple nexus of gender inequality, State fragility and climate vulnerability” and that “[i]ts resolutions must acknowledge the overlapping nature of those issues and their specific impact on international peace and security, and set forth mandated tasks to address them”.

PBC-related Developments

Last year, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) held several meetings on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding activities in different regions. The Commission convened a meeting on the Sahel on 22 March 2022, focused on climate-related peace and development challenges; a 31 May meeting on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in the Pacific Islands; and an 11 November meeting on Central Asia that concentrated on the adverse impacts of climate change on women and sustainable peace in Central Asia.

On 28 November 2022, the PBC convened its fourth informal consultative meeting with the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), which aimed to exchange views on the impact of climate change on peacebuilding in Africa and identify critical gaps in existing efforts to mitigate its effects. During this session, PSC and PBC members encouraged the strengthening of responses to climate-change-induced risks in the AU peacebuilding architecture and called for more predictable climate-responsive financing.

More recently, the PBC submitted written advice to the Security Council in a 14 February letter for the Council’s 14 February open debate on “Sea-Level Rise—Implications for International Peace and Security”. The PBC observed that to reduce affected countries’ vulnerabilities, it is critical to invest in peacebuilding programs and scalable, durable solutions based on nationally owned and determined priorities.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues for the Council include:

- developing synergies between the Council and other UN bodies in addressing the negative effects of climate change on international peace and security;
- supporting the efforts of UN peace operations (and other UN actors in the field) to address climate-related threats to peace and security in ways that sustain peace and build resilience; and
- promoting effective collaborations between the UN and regional and local actors in this regard.

One possible option for this month’s open debate would be to invite one or more representatives from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Peacebuilding Commission, or the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to brief on ways in which different parts of the UN system can work to promote climate policies that promote peace and security.

Another possible option after the debate would be for the UAE to compile and disseminate a summary of the statements as an official UN document, highlighting the key points of the meeting.

Over the longer term, Council members could also consider a visiting mission to one or more regions on the Council’s agenda that focuses on the threats posed by climate change to peace and security and generates thinking about how the Council can best address these threats.

Climate, Peace and Security

Council Dynamics

Although Council members are united about the need to combat the adverse effects of climate change, members continue to be divided over whether the Security Council should play a role in this respect and under what circumstances. Most Council members espouse more systematic engagement by the body on climate, peace and security issues. Brazil, China, and Russia, however, have traditionally had concerns about the Council's approach to climate change, which they view as primarily a sustainable development issue rather than a threat to international peace and security. These members consistently express concerns about Council encroachment on other UN entities and processes—most notably the UNFCCC—that are designed to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.

Over the past year, there has been a heightened focus on climate adaptation and resilience—and the importance of supporting such activities through climate finance and peacebuilding—in Council deliberations. While several Council members have emphasised this perspective, it has been especially prevalent in the statements of the African members. Ongoing concerns that climate change is a “risk multiplier” that can exacerbate insecurity have also continued to be a feature of the Council's deliberations.

The UAE, which is convening the open debate, held a ministerial-level Arrria-formula meeting on climate finance as a means to build and sustain peace in conflict, post-conflict and crisis situations during its March 2022 Council presidency. It will also be hosting COP28 in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is due to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) before its expiration on 3 June in accordance with resolution 2636.

Key Recent Developments

Fighting erupted on the morning of 15 April in and around Khartoum between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's military leader and chairperson of the Transitional Sovereign Council, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. Despite several calls for a ceasefire from regional stakeholders and the broader international community, fighting entered its second month in May, causing a deep humanitarian crisis. According to OCHA's 21 May flash update, at least 705 people have been killed and over 5,287 injured because of the ongoing fighting.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNITAMS, dated 16 May, noted that since the outbreak of fighting on 15 April, UNITAMS has focused its good offices efforts on urging the parties to cease hostilities, respect international humanitarian law, and return to political negotiations. The report said that UNITAMS—as part of the Trilateral Mechanism that also includes the AU and IGAD—has continued to engage closely with regional organisations and member states in pursuit of a ceasefire, including through the provision of technical expertise on ceasefire monitoring. It further noted that the fighting has posed severe operational challenges for UNITAMS, and the mission has suspended activities such as capacity-building, development assistance, and field visits. Only a small number of the mission's international personnel remain in Port Sudan to support the good offices efforts of Special Representative and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes.

On 17 May, Council members met to discuss the situation in Sudan under “any other business” at the request of the UK (the penholder on the file). UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi briefed Council members on the influx of refugees into

Sudan's neighbouring countries and presented an overview of their potential impact on regional stability. Among other matters, Grandi highlighted UNHCR's efforts and expressed concern about the situation of refugees.

On 22 May, the Council convened for a briefing on UNITAMS. Perthes, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye and Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Workneh Gebeyehu briefed. In his remarks, Perthes provided an overview of the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the country and described the recent efforts of the UN and other actors to resolve the ongoing crisis. He expressed deep concern about the reports of rampant looting, intimidation, harassment, and disappearances. He added that fighting between the warring parties has sharpened intercommunal tensions across various parts of the country, including El Geneina, South Kordofan, and the Blue Nile. Among other things, he said that the mission remained committed toward achieving a stable ceasefire with a monitoring mechanism, preventing the ethnicisation of the conflict, protection of civilians and provision of humanitarian relief and preparation for a renewed inclusive political process.

On 6 May, Saudi-US facilitated talks between representatives of the warring parties began in Jeddah. The two sides signed a “Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan” on 11 May. Among other things, the parties agreed to allow safe passage for civilians to leave areas of active hostilities, take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimise civilian harm, allow principal humanitarian operations to resume and protect humanitarian personnel and assets, adopt simple and expedited procedures for all logistical and administrative arrangements necessary for humanitarian relief operations, and commit to scheduling subsequent expanded discussions to achieve a permanent cessation of hostilities.

On 20 May, the SAF and RSF signed “Short-Term Ceasefire and Humanitarian Arrangements” as part of the US-Saudi facilitated talks in Jeddah. The agreement stipulated a seven-day ceasefire, starting 22 May, to allow for the delivery of emergency humanitarian

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2636 (3 June 2022) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for one year. **Secretary-General's Report S/2023/355** (16 May 2023) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9326** (22 May 2023) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS.

Sudan

assistance and restoration of essential services. Among other matters, the parties further agreed to guarantee civilians' freedom of movement throughout the country and to protect civilians from violence, harassment, recruitment, or other abuse; refrain from targeting civilian infrastructure or population centres and acquiring, fortifying defences, resupplying, or distributing arms or military supplies, including from foreign sources; and ensure that all forces under their command and control observe the agreement in full.

The 20 May agreement established a monitoring and coordination committee, which comprises three representatives from each of the two facilitating countries and three representatives from each of the warring parties, to monitor the ceasefire compliance and adherence with the agreement. Among its tasks, the committee is mandated to help coordinate relevant humanitarian actors, including OCHA and the ICRC, in making arrangements for immediate, full, and unhindered humanitarian access and delivery of assistance and repair of essential civilian infrastructure and services.

On 29 May, the Sudanese warring parties agreed to extend the 20 May ceasefire agreement for five days. In a joint statement released following the agreement, the facilitators noted that the SAF and RSF affirmed their intention to use this extended period to implement the provisions of the 20 May agreement that were not fully implemented, including the delivery of humanitarian assistance, facilitation of the repair of essential services, and the evacuation of armed actors from hospitals. The statement added that the warring parties agreed to discuss a long-term ceasefire that could encompass provisions for the withdrawal of forces from urban areas, removal of impediments to the free movement of civilians and humanitarian assistance and allowing public servants to resume their regular duties.

On 7 March, the *New York Times* reported that the SAF withdrew from the US-Saudi facilitated talks, citing the RSF's failure to implement any of the provisions of the ceasefire agreement. On the other hand, the RSF released a statement on the same day, noting that it was unconditionally backing the US-Saudi initiative.

Council members last met to discuss the situation in Sudan on 31 May, when Secretary-General António Guterres requested to brief members in closed consultations. (For more information, see our 31 May *What's in Blue* story.)

Sudan's humanitarian needs are significant and have been evolving rapidly. On 17 May, OCHA released a revised 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Sudan in light of the ongoing conflict. According to the plan, the estimated number of people in need has increased from 15.8 million in November 2022 to 24.7 million in May. The plan calls for \$817 million in additional funding, bringing the requirements for 2023 to \$2.56 billion. At the time of writing, the HRP for Sudan was 12.4 percent funded.

Also on 17 May, UNHCR launched the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), which appeals for an estimated \$470.4 million for an initial period from May to October. The RRP projected that the number of refugees, including Sudanese refugees, individuals from third countries, refugee returnees and migrant returnees, will reach approximately 1.1 million during this initial period. The plan outlines a multi-partner, multi-sector response strategy and financial requirements of 140 partner agencies supporting the host governments of the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and

South Sudan to provide protection services and urgent humanitarian assistance to refugees from Sudan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 May, the Human Rights Council (HRC) convened a special session on the human rights impact of the ongoing conflict in Sudan. In his statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk strongly condemned the ongoing violence and noted that both warring parties have violated the principles of international law, especially those concerning distinction, proportionality, and precaution. He said that damage to water, electricity and communications infrastructure has obliterated years of development efforts. Türk added that extensive looting of the offices, businesses and properties of the UN and international non-governmental organisations has also obstructed humanitarian operations. He further noted that "in parts of Darfur, as well as the Blue Nile and Kordofan regions, the violence between military groups has triggered inter-ethnic clashes". Türk urged all member states with influence in the region to encourage, by all possible means, the resolution of this crisis.

During the special session, the HRC adopted a resolution expressing grave concern about the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan and the escalation of violence between the SAF and RSF. The resolution added additional reporting requirements in the mandate of the designated expert of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights – monitoring, documenting, and reporting to the HRC of all allegations of human rights violations and abuses since 25 October 2021, including those arising directly from the current conflict. The resolution was adopted with 18 votes in favour, 15 against, and 14 abstentions. Council members France, the UK, and the US voted in favour, whereas Gabon abstained, and China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) voted against.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is to renew the mandate of UNITAMS and consider what changes to the mission's mandate, if any, are necessary considering the ongoing developments in Sudan.

A likely option for the Council is to renew the mandate of UNITAMS for a period of six months. Council members may wish to include language in the resolution reflecting recent developments, such as:

- expressing concern about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country;
- recognising and welcoming the efforts of regional stakeholders and the international community in bringing an end to the conflict;
- calling on the Sudanese warring parties to immediately cease hostilities and agree to permanent ceasefire arrangements; and
- facilitating full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access for the personnel of UN humanitarian agencies and other humanitarian actors and providers of basic services.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the political, security, human rights, and humanitarian situations in Sudan. Members are supportive of the trilateral cooperation mechanism composed of the AU, UN, and IGAD.

At the 22 May briefing, several Council members expressed support for UNITAMS, including France, Japan, the UK, the US, and the UAE. In its statement, Japan said that the Council must "support the mission as it seeks to revive the political process while also maintaining the other three pillars of its mandate". (The four pillars

Sudan

of the mission are assisting the political transition; supporting peace processes and implementation of future peace agreements; assisting peacebuilding, civilian protection, and rule of law; and supporting the mobilisation of economic and development assistance.) It added that Japan will contribute to the discussions on adapting the mission's strategic objectives and operations to the rapidly changing circumstance.

China emphasised that, in light of the ongoing developments, "UNITAMS will face considerable challenges in its future work" and encouraged the penholder to fully respect the views of Sudan. In its statement, Russia expressed support for a "technical rollover" of the mission's mandate and for assigning credible roles to the national and regional efforts. It added that "once the acute phase has passed, we could revisit the mandate".

At the time of writing, it appears that the negotiations on the UNITAMS renewal may be complicated. Apparently, the Council members have divergent views on how to describe the current situation in Sudan and reflect the views of the host government.

In response to the recent escalation of violence in Sudan, it appears that Council members have diverging views on whether a Security Council product is needed. Apparently, the A3 members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique), with the support of Russia and China, have argued that adopting a Council product could lead to duplicate messaging and create complications at a delicate time. It appears that the A3 members, in opposing the adoption of Council products, have been following Sudan's national position. In a 12 May press statement, Sudan's Permanent Representative of the UN, Al-Harith Idriss al-Harith Mohamed, noted that "we do not prefer an involvement of [the] Security Council in terms of any products". He added that the Council's engagement on the ongoing situation in Sudan may undermine the AU's efforts to positively engage with the situation.

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

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In June, 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 eastern Ukraine, where Russian forces continue to conduct offensive operations near the cities of Avdiivka, Bakhmut, and Kupiansk. On 20 May, Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Russian private security company the Wagner Group, claimed that his forces had fully captured Bakhmut. On 25 May, Ukrainian Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said that Russian troops have replaced Wagner Group units in the vicinity of Bakhmut. She also claimed that Ukrainian forces maintain control over positions on the southwestern periphery of the city.

Meanwhile, Russia has continued to launch air and missile assaults targeting military and civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. On 26 May, a Russian missile strike on an outpatient medical clinic in the city of Dnipro reportedly resulted in over 30 civilian casualties, including two deaths. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack in a 26 May tweet as "another crime against humanity".

The Security Council remains actively engaged on the situation in Ukraine. On 12 May, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting titled "Situation with freedom of religion and belief in Ukraine: persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church". On 15 May, the Council convened for a humanitarian briefing at the request of Ecuador and France, the co-penholders on humanitarian issues in Ukraine. At Russia's request, the Council held a briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item on 18 May, which focused on the issue of Western weapons supplies to Ukraine. The Council also held a briefing on the situation of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) on 30 May, at the request of Ecuador

and France. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 11 May, 14 May, 17 May, and 29 May.)

On 17 May, Türkiye, Russia, and Ukraine agreed to an extension of the UN-brokered Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) for an additional two months. Russia had threatened not to renew the initiative, citing a lack of progress in implementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Russia and the UN to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food and fertilisers to global markets. UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the BSGI's extension at a 17 May press briefing. While acknowledging that "outstanding issues remain", he expressed hope that the parties "will reach a comprehensive agreement to improve, expand and extend the initiative".

Despite the BSGI's extension, Ukraine continues to allege that Russia is deliberately impeding the inspection of vessels at the Joint Coordination Centre, causing a decline in freight turnover and a reduction in the shipment of Ukrainian foodstuffs. On 23 May, Ukraine accused Russia of blocking shipments from the Pivdennyi port, one of the three Ukrainian ports specified in the BSGI agreement. Moscow has countered these claims by asserting that Kyiv has obstructed the shipment of Russian ammonia via a pipeline to the Pivdennyi port, as outlined in the agreement.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching priority for the Council is to promote a solution to the conflict in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and to facilitate dialogue among the parties to that end. Council members may consider requesting the Secretary-General to employ his good offices to promote the resumption of talks between Russia and Ukraine in pursuit of a peace agreement, including by providing support and facilitating coordination among various diplomatic

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.XXXX (30 May 2023) was a briefing on Ukraine requested by Ecuador and France. [S/PV.9325](#) (18 May 2023) was a briefing under the "Threats to International Peace and Security" agenda item requested by Russia. [S/PV.9321](#) (15 May 2023) was a briefing on Ukraine requested by Ecuador and France.

Ukraine

initiatives. While a negotiated settlement may appear distant, establishing diplomatic lines of communication between the parties may contribute to preventing further escalation of the conflict.

A key issue for the Council is how to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Hostilities have resulted in a severe deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the eastern Donbas region of Ukraine. Lack of access to areas held by Russian forces remains a major obstacle preventing essential aid from reaching frontline communities. Moreover, extensive mine contamination, particularly in the Kharkiv and Kherson regions, has exacerbated the challenges of repairing critical infrastructure and resuming farming. Ukraine now faces one of the highest levels of mine contamination worldwide. Council members may consider convening a briefing to examine the humanitarian consequences of mine contamination, with a focus on its impact on civilian populations.

Another key issue for the Council is the effective implementation of the BSGI and the MoU. Council members may wish to convene a meeting with UN Coordinator for the BSGI Abdullah Abdul Samad Dashti and UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan. They may choose a closed, informal format, such as an informal interactive dialogue, to allow for a frank discussion about the challenges of implementing the BSGI and the MoU.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the conflict in Ukraine and the appropriate framework for achieving a peaceful resolution. Ukraine and its allies have advocated for a just peace, conditioned on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine's internationally recognised borders. Other member states have called for an immediate cessation of hostilities without any preconditions, which could freeze the front lines of the conflict, resulting in Russia seizing a significant amount of territory in eastern and southern Ukraine. In a 9 May interview, Guterres said he does not believe that Russia is currently willing to withdraw from the territories it occupies in Ukraine, suggesting that “peace negotiations are not possible at this time...[as] both parties are convinced that they can win” through military means.

Despite the prevailing divisions, several member states, notably three from the BRICS bloc—which comprises Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—have initiated diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting dialogue towards a political settlement to the war in Ukraine. On 10 May, Celso Amorim, chief advisor to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and former Foreign Minister of Brazil, met with Zelenskyy, following his earlier visit to Moscow in April. In a 26 May tweet, Lula confirmed that he held a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, during which he “reiterated Brazil's willingness, along with India, Indonesia and China, to talk to both sides of the conflict in pursuit of peace”.

In May, China's Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs Li Hui embarked on a European tour, holding meetings with senior government officials in Kyiv, Warsaw, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, and

concluding with meetings in Moscow on 26 May. In Kyiv, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba reportedly conveyed to Li that Kyiv would not “accept any proposals that would involve the loss of its territories or the freezing of the conflict”. According to media reports, during his discussions with European government officials, Li encouraged them to adopt an independent stance from that of Washington and to exert pressure on Ukraine to accept an immediate ceasefire to prevent further escalation of the conflict. Western officials have raised concerns about China's ability to act as an impartial mediator in negotiations because of its close alignment with Moscow. European diplomats reportedly sought to convey a unified front by urging China to refrain from providing military assistance to Russia, and to continue pressuring Russia against using nuclear weapons.

Zelenskyy also embarked on an extensive world tour in May—including visits to Italy, Germany, France, and the UK—to promote his vision of peace in Ukraine based on his ten-point peace formula, and to secure military aid from Kyiv's allies. On 18 May, Zelenskyy addressed the League of Arab States summit in Saudi Arabia as part of a broader effort to solidify global support for Ukraine, before travelling to Japan for the Group of Seven (G7) summit on 19 May. After the summit, the G7 members issued a statement reaffirming their commitment to enforcing sanctions against Russia and extending support to Ukraine. The statement emphasised that “the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops and military equipment... must be included in any call for peace”. In a separate communiqué issued on 20 May, the G7 leaders urged China to “press Russia to stop its military aggression” and withdraw its troops from Ukraine.

South Africa recently announced its own peace initiative aimed at facilitating an end to the war in Ukraine. On 16 May, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed that his country will launch a peace mission comprised of six African countries—Egypt, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and Zambia—to seek a negotiated settlement to the war. Both Putin and Zelenskyy have expressed their willingness to receive the African delegation in Moscow and Kyiv, respectively. Ramaphosa discussed his initiative with Guterres in a telephone call on 16 May, during which the Secretary-General reiterated that any peace initiative should conform with the principles of the UN Charter and abide by relevant General Assembly resolutions. Ramaphosa's announcement came shortly after US Ambassador to South Africa Reuben Brigety accused South Africa of supplying weapons to Russia in December 2022, contradicting its proclaimed neutrality in the war. Brigety alleged that ammunition and weapons were loaded onto a Russian cargo ship, the *Lady R.*, in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 2022. South African officials denied the allegations and summoned Brigety to the Foreign Ministry on 12 May. On 11 May, Ramaphosa announced that he would establish an independent inquiry into the incident. A 28 May press release from Ramaphosa's office stated that the investigation was mandated “because of the seriousness of the allegations, the extent of public interest and the impact of this matter on South Africa's international relations”.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution renewing for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. The current authorisation expires on 3 June.

The Council will also hold its regular 60-day briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative for Libya and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdoulaye Bathily is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council first adopted the measures in support of the full implementation of the arms embargo on Libya in resolution 2292 of 14 June 2016. The interception of vessels bound to or from Libya was intended to curb the flow of arms to the country and to support the two-way arms embargo imposed on the country in resolution 1970 of 26 February 2011. The UK, the penholder in 2016 for resolution 2292, said in its explanation of vote that adopting those measures was a sign of support for the then-Government of National Accord (GNA)—which was replaced by the Government of National Unity (GNU) in February 2021 following the UN-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF)—to facilitate its extension of state authority across the country. The UK also acknowledged that the arms embargo had not fully stopped the flow of weapons into the country, saying that resolution 2292 detailed concrete steps to curb the flow of arms.

The authorisation for maritime inspections was last renewed by resolution 2635 of 3 June 2022, which requested the Secretary-General to submit reports on the implementation of the measures within six months and 11 months of the resolution's adoption. The first report, issued on 6 December 2022, attested to the arms embargo's continued validity. Amid ongoing efforts by both national actors and the UN to foster agreement on a constitutional basis for holding the postponed elections, the report said that “[t]he role of the embargo in helping to maintain conditions conducive to political progress remained critical”. The report also referenced the final report of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts, covering the period from 8 March 2021 to 25 April 2022, which identified a much lower number of sanctions violations than in 2019 and 2020 but also drew attention to new tactics that were being used to circumvent the arms embargo. The Secretary-General's second report, issued on 2 May, largely echoed the first report's findings and reaffirmed that the embargo “continues to play an essential role in helping to maintain conditions conducive to progress in the Libyan political process”.

The EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med IRINI has remained the only regional organisation to inspect vessels under the authorisation. The operation reported that between 16 April 2022 and 14 April 2023, it conducted 2,692 hailings (making contact with other vessels), 203 friendly approaches (consensual visits to vessels that can be carried out without flag state approval and without the use of enforcement measures), and three vessel inspections. It attempted,

but did not carry out, four additional inspections because of an explicit refusal of consent by the flag state of the respective vessels. (The authorisation requires good-faith efforts to first obtain the consent of the vessel's flag state prior to any inspections and calls upon all flag states to cooperate with such inspections.) According to the Secretary-General's reports, two of the three vessel inspections carried out by the operation involved the seizure of cargo (described as “specific types of vehicles”) that was determined by the operation to be prohibited under the arms embargo. According to the EU, a final decision on the disposal of those vehicles is pending. The 1970 sanctions committee has not expressed a position on those vehicles in relation to the arms embargo.

It has become a regular practice for Council members to have an informal interactive dialogue (IID) ahead of the authorisation's renewal to discuss its implementation. This year's IID took place on 17 May at the request of France and Malta, the current co-penholders for the renewal of the measures. Cosmin Dobran, the director of the Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate of the European External Action Service, participated in the meeting and briefed Council members on the recent activities of Operation IRINI.

Regarding the broader political process in Libya, both the UN and national actors have concentrated recent efforts on facilitating agreement on a new roadmap for national elections to unify the country's divided government. Following the indefinite postponement of elections scheduled for December 2021, the House of Representatives (HoR)—the Libyan legislature based in Tobruk—elected former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha as prime minister in February 2022, contesting the leadership of Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, prime minister of the GNU. On 16 May, the HoR voted to suspend Bashagha as prime minister and replace him with finance minister Osama Hamad. The protracted stalemate between the GNU and HoR, as well as the internal divisions within the two bodies, contribute to Libya's political, economic, and security instability.

In his 18 April briefing to the Council, Bathily said that he had “launched [the] implementation” of the UN-facilitated Libyan High-Level Panel for Elections (HLPE), which is intended to gather a wide range of national stakeholders to agree on a political, security, and legal framework for holding elections in 2023. Parallel to this initiative, the rival Libyan legislatures have engaged in a separate effort to establish a constitutional basis for elections. The two bodies recently adopted the 13th constitutional amendment to the 2011 Constitutional Declaration—specifying the roles of the president, prime minister, and parliament—and subsequently established a “joint 6+6 committee” responsible for drafting electoral laws, comprised of six representatives from each legislature.

On 24 May, during a week-long meeting in Bouznika, Morocco, the 6+6 committee announced that it had reached agreement on holding simultaneous presidential and parliamentary elections, and that progress had been made on a number of outstanding issues related to the distribution of parliamentary seats, the inclusion of political parties, the representation of women, procedures for appealing electoral results, and the use of media for campaign purposes. The committee also called for the formation of a unified provisional government to “pave the way” for elections by the end of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2656 (28 October 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2023. S/RES/2635 (3 June 2022) renewed for one year the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya. S/RES/1970 (26 February 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (assets freeze and travel ban), and established a sanctions committee. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2023/2 (16 March 2023) expressed encouragement about the launch of the High-Level Panel for Elections in Libya. Secretary-General's Report S/2023/248 (5 April 2023) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9306 (18 April 2023) was a briefing on UNSMIL.

Libya

year—an initiative that has reportedly been the topic of ongoing back-channel communications between representatives of Dbeibah and General Khalifa Haftar, who leads the self-styled Libyan National Army aligned with the HoR. The UN and some Council members have previously expressed skepticism at the establishment of another interim government, however, concerned that it may distract from what they view as the primary task of holding elections.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in June is to renew authorisation for maritime inspections off the coast of Libya. Since the adoption of resolution 2292 in 2016, the Council has annually renewed the authorisation through straightforward rollovers. The Council is expected to adopt a similar extension this year.

Another issue for the Council is to support political momentum towards holding national elections in 2023. The progress recently reported by the 6+6 committee is a potentially positive development in this regard, although its significance depends on implementation, and independent analysts have argued that some Libyan political actors have incentives to maintain the status quo. At the June briefing, Council members are likely to reiterate their expectation that all parties display the political will to meet their stated commitments through concrete action, noting that both the UN and the legislatures have set June as the deadline to finalise electoral legislation to hold elections by the end of the year.

Council Dynamics

Until 2022, the Council had unanimously renewed the maritime

inspection authorisation every year. During last year's negotiations, Russia expressed reservations regarding the viability of the authorisation, noting that Operation IRINI—which is currently the only multilateral instrument to implement the authorisation—had failed to uncover significant arms supply channels and that several vessels had refused its requests for inspection. Russia therefore requested a six-month authorisation instead of the usual 12-month period. As a compromise, the penholder included language requesting the Secretary-General to submit an interim six-month report on implementation of the measures—in addition to the regular 11-month report—but retained the 12-month authorisation. Russia cast an abstention on the subsequent vote on the resolution, marking the first time the authorisation was not adopted unanimously. It is possible similar dynamics will affect this year's negotiations.

More broadly, Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led inclusive process to lead to elections that will restore political, security, and economic stability. However, there are differences of view about the best way forward. Most Western members argue for the urgency of national elections, while some others contend that the appointment of a new interim government should take priority. Moreover, Council members have different preferences for advancing elections. Several members—including France, the UK, the US, and the A3 countries (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique)—have expressed strong support for the HLPE to facilitate agreement on electoral legislation, while China and Russia have been more reserved in their judgment about the panel, instead deferring to the Libyan legislatures to find agreement.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Special Representative and head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry is expected to brief.

The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

The Council last received a briefing on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of UNOCA on 8 December 2022. Abarry updated Council members on a range of issues, including crucial electoral processes in several countries in the region in 2022 and 2023, the challenges that climate change poses to the region, the fight against terrorist groups in the Lake Chad basin, and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Gilberto da Piedade Veríssimo also briefed the Council, highlighting some country situations such as the transition in Chad, the situation in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and the attack on military barracks in São Tomé and Príncipe following parliamentary elections in September 2022.

Since the last reporting period, Abarry has visited several countries in the region, including Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe. He also took part in the ECCAS heads of state and government summit that took place in Kinshasa, DRC, on 25 February. During the summit, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi handed over the rotating ECCAS chairmanship to Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba. Rwanda, a member of ECCAS, reportedly complained that it was excluded from participating in the summit hosted by the DRC.

The challenging political situation in Chad was one of the issues discussed during the summit. In September 2022, the Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue (DNIS) in Chad, which brought together civilian and military opposition groups and civil society representatives, recommended an extension of the transition period for a further 24 months until October 2024. Major political players and rebel groups such as except for some major political opposition

UNOCA (Central Africa)

and rebel groups such as the Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde du Tchad (FACT) did not take part in the DNIS and its recommendations triggered violent protests in the country in October 2022. As a result, ECCAS decided to dispatch to the country an international fact-finding mission, including the UN, the AU, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

At their earlier extraordinary summit on 25 October 2022, the ECCAS heads of state and government appointed Tshisekedi to be the facilitator of the Chadian political transition process. On 2 May, Tshisekedi met with Succès Masra, the leader of a Chadian opposition known as the Transformers in Kinshasa, to discuss the political transition in Chad.

In November 2022, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) also requested the AU Commission to dispatch the AU Panel of the Wise to Chad to assess the situation on the ground and consult with all relevant stakeholders. The panel briefed the AUPSC on 11 May about its mission to Chad. According to the communiqué adopted following the briefing, the AUPSC reiterated its position that members of the Chadian transitional government should not take part in the elections at the end of the transition period. It also underscored the need for the Chadian transitional authorities to respect human rights and ensure accountability for all perpetrators of human rights violations.

In Cameroon, the security situation remains a concern in the Anglophone northwest and southwest regions. In a 20 January statement following several months of secret talks reportedly held in Toronto and other towns in Québec, Canadian Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly welcomed the agreement by the Cameroonian government and parties from the Anglophone northwest and southwest regions—including the Ambazonia Governing Council, the Ambazonia Defence Force, the African People's Liberation Movement, the Southern Cameroons Defence Force, the Interim Government, and the Ambazonia Coalition Team—to find a negotiated solution to the long-standing conflict. The statement also indicated Canada's readiness to facilitate this process. However, Cameroonian government spokesperson René Emmanuel Sadi said that "Yaoundé has never entrusted any country with the role of facilitator or mediator", as quoted by the media.

In the Lake Chad basin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), composed of forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, has intensified its military operations against terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State-West Africa Province (ISWAP). The MNJTF conducted a major operation, codenamed Scorpion, from 25 April to 2 May, which targeted terrorist enclaves in parts of Cameroon. In May, the MNJTF reported that it had conducted fighting patrols in various sectors in Chad and Niger aimed at disrupting terrorist infrastructure and logistics.

Regarding maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, Ghana hosted an extraordinary summit on 25 April of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GCC), which was established in 2001 to provide a platform for consultation and cooperation among the countries of

the Gulf of Guinea on issues of peace, security, and development. The meeting reportedly discussed the fight against maritime-related crimes in the GGC region. On 19 May, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) also held a meeting on "Strengthening Peacebuilding and the Implementation of the Regional Maritime Security Framework in the Gulf of Guinea". The meeting was convened in observance of the tenth anniversary of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, which was adopted on 25 June 2013 at the regional summit of countries in the Gulf of Guinea held in Cameroon to prevent and punish acts of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activities in the west and central Africa.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situation in several parts of Central Africa continues to be a key concern for the Council. Council members are likely to remain interested in following up on developments related to the political transition in Chad and particularly the outcome of the international fact-finding mission regarding the October 2022 violence. They may also be keen to understand the regional implications of the fighting in Sudan and its likely impact on the situation in Chad and CAR.

The other major issue relates to the elections that are taking place in countries in the region in 2023. Of particular interest to Council members could be the presidential and legislative elections in the DRC and Gabon and local elections in the CAR.

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

An option for Council members is to try to conclude the negotiations on the draft presidential statement on UNOCA that has been lingering for more than a year.

Council Dynamics

Council members support a holistic regional approach to addressing the peace and security challenges in Central Africa, based on cooperation between UNOCA and the various regional mechanisms. Recently, there has been an attempt to revive the discussions on the draft presidential statement on UNOCA that was unsuccessfully negotiated last year; however, Council members have not yet been able to build the necessary consensus on the draft text. Differences remain regarding the language on climate, peace and security.

In this month's UNOCA meeting, some Council members might be interested to learn more about behind-the-scenes efforts to find a negotiated solution to the situation in Cameroon. Switzerland, which was involved in past mediation efforts on this issue, will participate in the upcoming briefing and consultation on UNOCA for the first time as an elected member.

Some members have continued to raise concerns about the destabilising role of the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, and its reported involvement in human rights abuses in the region, particularly in CAR.

Gabon and the UK are the co-penholders on UNOCA.

Iraq (UNITAD)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is scheduled to receive a briefing from Christian Ritscher, the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD).

UNITAD's mandate expires on 17 September.

Key Recent Developments

The Council established UNITAD through resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 for an initial period of two years. It has since renewed the mechanism annually, most recently with resolution 2651 of 15 September 2022. The team is mandated to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) accountable for crimes it committed in the country “by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”. The collected evidence is intended to support investigations carried out by Iraqi authorities or by authorities in third countries at their request.

On 7 September 2021, Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Christian Ritscher of Germany as the second Special Adviser and head of UNITAD, succeeding Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the UK, who now serves as ICC Prosecutor. The Special Adviser has previously published nine biannual reports on the team's activities. Ritscher will present the tenth report, circulated to the Council on 22 May, at the June briefing.

In the report, Ritscher describes progress in several investigative tracks, including the finalisation of preliminary case assessment reports on crimes committed by ISIL against the Sunni population in Al-Anbar; crimes against Iraq's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community; and on the destruction of cultural heritage. These case assessment reports add to the six assessments finalised during previous reporting periods, namely: crimes committed by ISIL against Christians in Iraq; crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar from August 2014; the mass killing of military cadets and personnel from Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014; crimes committed by ISIL in and around Badush prison near Mosul in June 2014; the al-Rawi financier network and the facilitation of ISIL financing; and the development and use of chemical and biological weapons by ISIL in Iraq. The latest report also notes that the team expects to finalise its case assessment report on ISIL's leadership and hierarchical structure in Mosul and Tal Afar in the next reporting period.

At present, the international crimes that UNITAD is mandated to investigate have not been directly incorporated into Iraq's legal system. As a result, offenders who have engaged in conduct that contravenes international criminal law are usually charged with terrorism offences. Under Iraqi law, the death penalty can be imposed for these offences and, in accordance with UN best practices, this has prevented UNITAD from sharing evidence regarding potential violations of international criminal law with Iraq's government—the primary intended recipient. In 2021, a draft law that would incorporate international crimes into Iraq's domestic legal system was proposed in the Iraqi parliament, but the legislation has not advanced since then. In his latest report, Ritscher says UNITAD is “confident in the future adoption of a domestic legal framework” to prosecute

ISIL members for international crimes in Iraq and describes support to this process as one of the team's “key priorities” in the next reporting period. On 6 March, UNITAD and Iraqi authorities announced the establishment of a joint working group to study the issue further.

Meanwhile, UNITAD has pursued several initiatives that are designed to facilitate information-sharing with Iraq in specific areas. For example, the most recent report notes that UNITAD has continued to use “pre-existing arrangements” that allow it to share information concerning the financing of ISIL with Iraqi judges. Additionally, the previous report, published on 8 November 2022, said that UNITAD was negotiating a memorandum of understanding with Iraqi authorities that would “enable UNITAD to share its information to support UN sanctions application packages”. The latest report does not provide an update on this initiative, however.

The previous report said that the team was entering “a new phase of operational work” as it shifts from investigation to case-building, with a view towards promoting “evidence-based trials and large-scale accountability for ISIL”. In keeping with this priority, the latest report says UNITAD has developed case files in relation to 31 persons of interest in its investigation into crimes committed against the Yazidi community and has started to support case-building on individual perpetrators in collaboration with Iraqi authorities. The team has also started to build criminal case files against ISIL perpetrators who escaped from Iraq and are residing in third states.

The June briefing will take place in the context of continued military pressure against ISIL in its core area of Iraq and Syria, which has degraded the group's capabilities in the region. According to the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), dated 11 May, the number of attacks attributed to ISIL in Iraq during the first quarter of 2023 (92 attacks, compared with 188 attacks during the first quarter of 2022) is the lowest quarterly figure since Iraq declared victory over ISIL in December 2017, which highlights an overall decline in attacks attributed to the group in recent years.

On 30 April, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that ISIL leader Abu al-Husayn al-Qurayshi had been killed in a Turkish military operation in northwestern Syria—the third ISIL leader to be killed in less than 18 months.

Key Issues and Options

UNITAD's work is an important aspect of international efforts to promote accountability for ISIL's crimes in Iraq, which in turn contributes to the country's security and political stability. At the June briefing, Council members are expected to welcome progress in the team's investigative tracks and commend its continued shift from structural investigations to case-building to support the prosecution of individual perpetrators.

Some members may emphasise the work of the team's specialised thematic units. According to Ritscher's latest report, UNITAD has continued to investigate gender-based violence and crimes against children committed by ISIL against a wide range of communities, including Yazidis, Shi'a Turkmen, Christians, Kaka'i, Shabak, and Sunni. Notably, the team has invested additional resources in gathering evidence on individual ISIL perpetrators who are being

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2651 (15 September 2022) extended UNITAD's mandate for one year. **S/RES/2631** (26 May 2022) extended UNAMI's mandate for one year. **Secretary-General's Report S/2023/340** (11 May 2023) was the Secretary-General's 120-day report on UNAMI, which covered developments from February to April 2023. **Security Council Letter S/2022/836** (7 November 2022) was from the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD addressed to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the ninth biannual report on UNITAD's activities.

Iraq (UNITAD)

investigated or prosecuted for the sexual enslavement of Yazidi women and girls and the use of Yazidi boys as child soldiers. Some members may highlight these investigative tracks as priorities and encourage further progress.

UNITAD's inability to share its collected evidence with Iraqi authorities remains a critical obstacle to mandate implementation. In this regard, Council members may call for swifter progress on the issue and encourage revitalised dialogue between UNITAD and Iraqi authorities following the formation of a new Iraqi government in October 2022, which ended the country's year-long political gridlock.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Both the Council and the Iraqi government are generally supportive of UNITAD. Since the team's establishment, its annual mandate renewals have been requested by Iraq and unanimously adopted by Council members.

The issue of evidence-sharing, however, remains contentious.

Members who oppose the death penalty are still concerned about the possibility that evidence shared by the team with the Iraqi authorities might be used in criminal proceedings in which the death penalty could be imposed. Other members are of the opinion that the use of the death penalty is Iraq's sovereign right, a point Iraq has also emphasised. While the Council has typically extended the team's mandate through straightforward renewals, during negotiations in 2022, the latter group—supported by Iraq—was successful in calling for a new preambular paragraph underscoring “the importance of sharing evidence collected by [UNITAD] with the relevant Iraqi authorities, in a timely manner, for eventual use in fair and independent criminal proceedings”. To placate opposing members, however, the penholder also included language specifying that this must be done “consistent with applicable international law and the Investigative Team's Terms of Reference”. Council members are likely to reiterate these positions at the June briefing.

The UK is the penholder on UNITAD.

Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States

Expected Council Action

In June, there will be a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS). A senior UN official, the LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and an Arab youth civil society representative are the anticipated briefers. Khalifa Shaheen, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is expected to chair the meeting.

Key Recent Developments

During the first presidency of its 2022–2023 Council term, the UAE organised a briefing on 17 March 2022 regarding the cooperation between the UN and the LAS. Shaheen chaired the meeting, and Guterres, Gheit, and Razan Farhan Alaqil, a youth civil society representative, briefed. Guterres expressed concern about the adverse economic and political effects of the war in Ukraine, noting that increased food and fuel prices could lead to political instability. Without explicitly mentioning Ukraine, Gheit said that he hoped that “this significant conflict situation” would not distract the Council from other conflicts and crises across the globe, including in the Arab world. He also spoke favourably about the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*, saying that it could provide a pathway for improved international cooperation “provided that there is genuine political will and that we...focus on our common interests in the future”. Alaqil emphasised the importance of including young people in the UN's work on conflict prevention and resolution, conflict management, and peacebuilding.

As an outcome of the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement that welcomed the close cooperation between the UN and the LAS and reiterated the Council's intention to consider further steps to enhance UN-LAS coordination in areas such as conflict

prevention, preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace. The statement also reaffirmed the important role that young people play in maintaining international peace and security, including in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The Council of Ministers of the Interior of the LAS adopted an Arab counter-terrorism strategy on 2 March 2022 in Tunis. Designed to align with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, it maps out conflict resolution, educational and development measures that can be pursued to combat the spread of terrorism. The UN's Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) met with the newly designated Director of the LAS Counter-Terrorism Department to exchange views on areas of cooperation.

On 7 May, the LAS met at the ministerial level in Cairo. Thirteen of the LAS's 22 member states were represented at the meeting and voted unanimously to readmit Syria to the LAS following nearly 12 years of exile. Syria was suspended from the League in November 2011, soon after civil war erupted in the country.

On 19 May, the LAS convened its 32nd summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. At its conclusion, the participants issued the “Jeddah Declaration”. Among other things, the declaration:

- reaffirmed the centrality of the Palestinian issue as one of the key factors of stability in the region and stressed the importance of intensifying efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just settlement;
- expressed deep concern at the ramifications of the crisis in Sudan for the security, safety and stability of LAS countries and people;
- welcomed the decision of the Arab League Council to resume the participation of Syria in LAS meetings;
- advocated for the UN and regional efforts seeking a comprehensive political solution to the crisis in Yemen; and

UN DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2022/1](#) (23 March 2022) was on cooperation between the UN and the LAS. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9001](#) (23 March 2022) was the briefing on cooperation between the UN and the LAS. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/331](#) (10 May 2023) was a report on cooperation between the UN and the LAS.

Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States

- called for an end to foreign interference in the domestic affairs of Arab countries.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue is how the UN and the LAS can work together more effectively to promote international peace and security.

In this regard, key issues for the Council include exploring ways to:

- develop joint and coherent approaches to conflict prevention and mediation that leverage the comparative advantages of the UN and the LAS;
- strengthen coordination between the LAS and the UN in countering terrorism and violent extremism;
- enhance cooperation between the UN and the LAS in including women and youth in efforts to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts; and
- promote international coordination in addressing humanitarian crises in the Middle East related to conflict.

In the future, the Council could consider adopting a product encouraging regular trilateral coordination meetings among the UN, the AU, and the LAS. The statement could also request the Secretary-General to report annually on ways to strengthen relations and cooperation between the UN Security Council and the LAS Council and on the activities of the UN Liaison Office to the League of Arab States (UNLOLAS) in Cairo, which was established in June 2019. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report on the UN-LAS relationship, the UNLOLAS regularly coordinates meetings between UN and LAS officials that promote "information exchanges and consultation, as well as follow-up mechanisms, strengthening

cooperation and partnership between the UN and the LAS".

Council Dynamics

Council members recognise the importance of strengthening relations between the UN and the LAS, especially given the rise in conflicts in the Arab world since 2011. In this regard, the Council's March 2022 presidential statement welcoming the "strong cooperation" between the UN and the LAS reiterated its intention to promote closer coordination between the two organisations in areas such as early warning, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace. In this month's briefing, members are likely to discuss how the two organisations can work together to address the situations in Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, among other crises. There may also be a focus on collaboration between the UN and the LAS in promoting the rights of women and children and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change in the region.

While there is widespread concern in the Council about the peace and security challenges in the region, members hold contrasting views about how to approach these challenges. This is illustrated by the frequent vetoes cast over the years by the US and Russia on Israel-Palestine and Syria, respectively, which have complicated the ability of the UN and the LAS to work together. In recent months, while some Council members (for example, Russia and the UAE) have supported efforts to normalise relations with Syria, others, including the UK and the US, have remained sceptical.

China has played a growing political role in the Middle East, as reflected by its mediation efforts with Saudi Arabia and Iran earlier this year, which led to the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Mali

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in Mali remains dire despite Malian forces' intensified counter-terrorism operations and the country's increased security cooperation with Russia. Meanwhile, MINUSMA faces difficult relations with host country authorities, contributing to the withdrawal or announced departure by troop-contributing countries (TCCs) amounting to over 20 percent of the peacekeeping operation's forces since last year.

In the Ménaka and Gao regions near the borders with Niger and Burkina Faso, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) has continued a military offensive in which it has occupied large swathes

of territory during the past year, creating a major displacement crisis. On 10 April, ISGS took over the town of Tidermène in the Ménaka region, which, according to news reports, has left Ménaka city isolated and surrounded.

On 22 April, militants launched a complex attack, including suicide car bombings, that targeted a military base reportedly used by the Russian private security company the Wagner Group and the airport in the central Malian town of Sévaré. According to reports, at least ten civilians and three soldiers were killed and over 60 civilians were injured, and at least 20 buildings were damaged, including a petrol station. Al-Qaida-affiliated Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) claimed responsibility. A mob injured two MINUSMA staff the next day amid a disinformation campaign accusing MINUSMA of responsibility.

In other signs of the dire security situation, Mali announced on 20 April that Oumar Traoré, chief of staff to Mali's transitional president Assimi Goïta, had been killed with at least three other people in an ambush near Nara, a town close to the Mauritanian border. On 8 May, six Malian soldiers were killed during a rare attack in western

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2640](#) (29 June 2022) renewed the mandate of MINUSMA until 30 June 2023. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2023/236](#) (30 March 2023) was a Secretary-General's report on Mali. [S/2023/36](#) (16 January 2023) was the internal review of MINUSMA. [Security Council Letter S/2023/161](#) (1 March 2023) was a letter from Mali rejecting France's continued role as penholder on Mali. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9302](#) (12 April 2023) was the quarterly briefing on Mali.

Mali

Mali about 80 miles from Bamako. Two days earlier, on 6 May, an improvised explosive device (IED) struck a MINUSMA convoy near Douentza, wounding seven peacekeepers. According to MINUSMA, this was the sixth IED incident recorded against MINUSMA this year in central Mali.

On 30 May, the UN announced that Egypt would begin “phasing out” its 5651-member combat convoy battalion during June. Since August 2022, the Egyptian contingent had suspended its participation in MINUSMA because of the high number of casualties it had suffered while conducting convoy escorts.

Implementation of Mali’s 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement has been stalled, and tensions have been rising between its signatory parties following the decision of northern armed groups to withdraw from the accord’s monitoring mechanisms in December 2022, citing the government’s lack of commitment to the agreement. Algeria, as leader of the international mediation of the peace process, has sought to revive the accord since its new foreign minister, Ahmed Attaf, took office on 18 March. In a joint statement on 27 April, following a meeting in Bamako between Attaf and transitional President Goïta, Mali and Algeria affirmed their commitment to reviving the accord.

On 5 May, Mali announced that it would hold the delayed constitutional referendum on 18 June. The referendum, initially scheduled for 19 March, was postponed because of insufficient preparations to hold the vote and to allow authorities more time to consult stakeholders who had voiced objections to the draft constitution. These include influential religious leaders, who have criticised the draft constitution’s inclusion of the principle of “secularism”. The Local Transition Monitoring Committee in Mali, made up of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the AU, and MINUSMA, welcomed the new date for the referendum in a press release which noted that this is the first of the various ballots that will lead to the restoration of constitutional order in March 2024, in accordance with Mali’s transition timetable.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 May, OHCHR released a fact-finding report about the reported killing of hundreds of people during a military operation in the central Malian village of Moura from 27 to 31 March 2022. While Malian authorities refused UN staff access to Moura, OHCHR concluded from interviews and other information, such as satellite imagery, that there were “strong indications” that more than 500 people had been killed – the vast majority summarily executed – by Malian troops and foreign military personnel. Mali condemned the report as “based on a fictitious narrative”, noting its own ongoing investigation. Mali further asserted that it was opening an inquiry against the fact-finding mission for espionage because of its use of satellite imagery without authorisation.

On 8 May, Tomoya Obokata, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, and Alioune Tine, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, issued a statement on the persistence of descent-based slavery in Mali, which is widespread in the Kayes region and central and northern regions in the country, including Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. The experts urged the government to adopt legislation to criminalise slavery without any further delay. “Mali is the only country in the Sahel that does not have such legislation”, they said.

Women, Peace and Security

On 28 March, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in Mali. Deputy Special Representative for MINUSMA Daniela Krosiak briefed. Among the issues IEG members

discussed was women’s participation in transitional processes and in the economy, and they asked how MINUSMA was following up on reprisals against women peacebuilders, including Aminata Dicko, who briefed the Security Council in January. (For background, see the brief on Mali in our April Forecast.) IEG members were informed that “another Malian woman from civil society had recently been arrested due to public statements she made on social media”. They were also informed that 2022 saw a 49 percent increase in reported cases of gender-based violence in Mali compared with 2021.

UN Women, as the IEG secretariat, put forward several recommendations ahead of MINUSMA’s mandate renewal. Among them were that Council members consider adding language which urges the Malian transitional authorities “to create a conducive environment for women’s rights and their protection and promotion, that prevents and addresses violence, including gender-based violence, against women peacebuilders, human rights defenders and women’s organizations engaged in the political transition, electoral process and the peace process, including through legal frameworks”. UN Women also proposed requesting MINUSMA to monitor and report on these issues.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 4 May, the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee held informal consultations with representatives of regional states and organisations, including Mali, to discuss the implementation of the Mali sanctions regime.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in June is MINUSMA’s mandate renewal, which will take place amid major challenges to the mission’s ability to carry out its mandate. In addition to having to replace departing TCCs, tensions persist with authorities over MINUSMA’s human rights reporting and access restrictions; the Secretary-General’s 30 March report on Mali cited authorities’ denial of 297 (or 24.1 percent) of MINUSMA’s flight requests, most of which (238) applied to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance unmanned aircraft that are critical for the security of UN peacekeepers. In this context, important issues for the Council include assessing progress in the four conditions or “parameters” that the Secretary-General’s internal review of MINUSMA, dated 16 January, identified as key for the mission to operate. These parameters are:

- advances in Mali’s political transition, in accordance with the electoral timetable;
- progress in the implementation of the 2015 peace agreement;
- MINUSMA’s freedom of movement, including for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets; and
- MINUSMA’s ability to implement its entire mandate, including its human rights provisions.

The internal review presented the Council with three sets of options to reconfigure MINUSMA, which is a central issue for the mandate renewal. These include proposals to increase MINUSMA’s uniformed personnel, currently authorised at 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 police. A second set of options proposes consolidating the mission’s presence to optimise the use of its resources, which the review says can be done by closing or handing over to Malian forces some of MINUSMA’s smaller camps in locations without significant protection of civilians concerns. If the parameters for MINUSMA to operate are not met, the review suggested, as a third option, withdrawing the mission’s uniformed personnel and converting MINUSMA into a special political mission.

Other important issues include TCC caveats and a lack of enabling

Mali

capacities such as air assets, which hinder MINUSMA's ability to carry out its mandate. Misunderstanding and unmet expectations among Malians about MINUSMA, including that it should engage in counter-terrorism operations—which goes beyond the capacity of UN peacekeeping—is a recurring issue, compounded in the past year by intentional disinformation campaigns about the mission.

A potentially complicating issue for this year's mandate renewal is the Malian authorities' "reject[ion]" of France's continued role as penholder, which Mali conveyed in a 1 March letter to Council members.

The Council may renew the mandate of MINUSMA for one year. In doing so, it could highlight within the mandate the four parameters that are key for MINUSMA to operate, signalling to authorities the need for progress in fulfilling these conditions when the Council considers whether to maintain MINUSMA in 2024. Considering the practical difficulties of increasing the troop ceiling, the Council may decide to support some form of option two of the internal review that optimises MINUSMA's resources by consolidating its footprint. Another option is replacing MINUSMA with a special political mission, but this is not expected for this upcoming renewal cycle. If the penholdership issue remains unresolved, members could consider a technical rollover of MINUSMA.

Council Dynamics

Council discussion on Mali has become polarised since reports towards late 2021 about Russia's partnership with Mali's transitional authorities through deployment of the Wagner Group. Last year, China and Russia abstained on the MINUSMA renewal. It was the first time the mandate was adopted without consensus. During the explanation of vote, they cited the "intrusive language" on human rights and excessive emphasis on MINUSMA's human rights mandate.

The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) along with other members, meanwhile, highlight concerns about human rights violations and the need for MINUSMA to carry out its human rights mandate,

including reporting. Most Council members also express serious concerns about the restrictions on MINUSMA and have encouraged Malian authorities to cooperate and respect the status of forces agreement with MINUSMA. The three African members (A3)—Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique—play an important role in Council negotiations on Mali. Last year's A3 configuration was cautious about criticising Mali, particularly over human rights, which they believed could prove counterproductive to MINUSMA's efforts to induce cooperation.

Despite its challenges, it seems that Council members still consider MINUSMA essential because of the security vacuum that its withdrawal could create in Mali and the West Africa region. Practical and political challenges appear to render infeasible an increase in MINUSMA's force level, which transitional authorities had already rejected in 2021.

The positions on MINUSMA of the transitional authorities, whose views Russia and China tend to support, represent another factor in upcoming mandate negotiations. In a six-page letter, attached as an annex to the Secretary-General's report of the internal review, Mali set out its preferences, asserting that MINUSMA should increase support to the Malian armed forces and give "top priority to the security dimension of its mandate". It should also avoid the "politicization" of the human rights issue. Mali's foreign minister and Mali's ambassador to the UN expressed disappointment over the options in the review at Council briefings in January and April, although they stated that they remain open to dialogue with the UN over the mandate. If the penholdership issue remains unresolved, some members could advocate for a technical rollover of MINUSMA.

France has been the penholder on Mali since the onset of Mali's crisis in 2012. Ambassador Pedro Comissário Afonso (Mozambique) chairs the 2374 Sanctions Committee. It is possible that France could serve as a co-penholder with another Council member or members. In renewing the Mali sanctions regime in August 2022, France was co-penholder with Mexico, whose Permanent Representative chaired the 2374 Committee last year.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The IRMCT's president, Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate and to meet with the Informal Working Group on Tribunals prior to that.

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT—with branches in The Hague, the Netherlands, and Arusha, Tanzania—focuses on completing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which closed in December 2017 and December 2015, respectively. Its tasks include hearing the remaining trials and appeals from the ICTY and the ICTR; locating and arresting the three remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR; assisting national jurisdictions with requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia; monitoring cases referred to national courts; enforcement of sentences; protection of witnesses and victims; and the preservation of archives.

The IRMCT was established in 2010 by resolution 1966, which said that "the Mechanism shall continue the jurisdiction, rights and obligations and essential functions of the ICTY and the ICTR", and that it "should be a small, temporary and efficient structure, whose functions and size will diminish over time, with a small number of

UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2637 (22 June 2022) extended the term of the IRMCT's prosecutor until 30 June 2024. Security Council Letter S/2022/583 (28 July 2022) transmitted the tenth annual report of the IRMCT. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9217 (12 December 2022) was the semi-annual debate on the work of the IRMCT. Other S/2022/148 (23 February 2022) was the report of the OIOS, reviewing the methods and work of the IRMCT.

International Criminal Tribunals

staff commensurate with its reduced functions”.

Under resolution 1966, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for subsequent periods of two years thereafter unless the Security Council decides otherwise. The Council most recently extended the IRMCT’s operating period and Brammertz’s term in resolution 2637, which was adopted on 22 June 2022 with 14 votes in favour and Russia abstaining. It contained new elements—including language urging member states to intensify cooperation to enforce sentences handed down by the ICTR, the ICTY, and the IRMCT—and welcomed the continuing support already provided by states in this regard. It called on the IRMCT, as part of its completion strategy, to provide options regarding the transfer of its remaining activities in due course. It also noted the prosecutor’s confirmation in May 2022 of the deaths of two fugitives indicted by the ICTR and included new language noting that decisions on the relocation of persons who have been acquitted or completed their sentences should take into account, among other matters, the readiness of the state of origin to accept its nationals, the consent or any objections raised by the individuals to be relocated and the availability of other relocation states. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 21 June 2022.)

The Council’s last semi-annual debate on the IRMCT took place on 12 December 2022. Brammertz and Gatti Santana briefed. In her briefing, Gatti Santana provided an update regarding the two remaining cases concerning core international crimes currently being managed by the IRMCT, the appeal in *Prosecutor v. Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović* and the trial of Félicien Kabuga. Gatti Santana also highlighted several of the new elements in resolution 2637 and outlined the priorities for her presidency, including by noting that she had presented a road map for developing an IRMCT-wide scenario-based workforce plan to the Council’s Informal Working Group on International Tribunals on 9 December 2022, which laid out the remaining residual functions with preliminary projections involving three drawdown phases. Gatti Santana further said that eight persons, who have been acquitted or completed their sentences, have not been relocated and are under de facto house arrest, before noting that member state assistance “will go a long way to helping the [IRMCT] move ahead with its transition plans”.

Brammertz highlighted that there are still more than 1,000 fugitives wanted by Rwandan prosecutors for crimes committed during the 1994 genocide and emphasised that some of these individuals are currently residing in third countries, before saying that his office will work with national authorities responsible for extraditing or prosecuting those individuals. Brammertz also noted that more than 3,000 suspected perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide living in the former Yugoslavia have yet to be investigated or prosecuted and noted that over the past five years, his office had received an average of 362 requests per year for assistance with these cases. He further referred to difficulties encountered by prosecutors in the region caused by a lack of cooperation from Croatian authorities.

Regarding the search for remaining fugitives formally accused by the ICTR, Brammertz said that the IRMCT’s top priority is

Fulgence Kayishema, who was indicted for the April 1994 murders of more than 2,000 people. Brammertz reported that, although the investigation had been impeded since 2018 by a lack of cooperation from South Africa, coordination had improved, and the investigation was progressing quickly after South Africa established a dedicated national investigative team to work directly with the IRMCT’s tracking team. Kayishema was arrested in South Africa on 24 May and is expected to face an extradition hearing in the coming weeks.

On 24 and 25 January, the IRMCT heard oral arguments in *Prosecutor v. Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović*. The pronouncement of the appeal judgment in this case is scheduled for 31 May. In mid-March, the trial hearing in *Prosecutor v. Félicien Kabuga*, which began in late September 2022, was stayed pending a determination from the IRMCT regarding Kabuga’s fitness to stand trial.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to continue monitoring the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate. Members may choose to use the closed format of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals to have a frank discussion with Gatti Santana regarding her priorities for the IRMCT, including the scenario-based workforce plan she referred to during the 12 December 2022 debate.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, except for Russia, which was also consistently critical of the ICTY. Russia has regularly criticised the appointment of Brammertz, who was the ICTY prosecutor from 2008 until its closure in 2017, and it abstained on previous resolutions re-appointing him in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022.

As a result, the negotiations on resolution 2637, which most recently extended Brammertz’s term, were lengthy and difficult. An area of disagreement during the negotiations was how to characterise the conclusions of the 23 February 2022 report of the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reviewing the methods and work of the IRMCT. Russia apparently proposed language noting that the IRMCT failed to implement all OIOS recommendations and suggested language calling on the OIOS to generate new recommendations on the evaluation of the IRMCT’s methods and work pertaining to its closure, especially with a focus on staff reduction. Russia also apparently sought the inclusion of language expressing concern that the IRMCT had failed to demonstrate any visible reduction in its staff or budget. Most members did not support such language, however, and it was not added to the resolution.

Language regarding the importance of ensuring the rights of persons detained on the authority of the IRMCT—including those related to healthcare—was also contentious. At least two members were apparently in favour of the deletion of this text, but Russia opposed the deletion. Russia has repeatedly emphasised the importance of the protection of detainees of the IRMCT, including their access to medical care, specifically referring to the case of Ratko Mladić.

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

Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a high-level briefing on the theme “The Values of Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace” under the agenda item “Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. This is one of the signature events of the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE) June presidency. Secretary-General António Guterres and the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Muhammed Ahmed At-Tayyeb, are the expected briefers. A high-level representative of the Holy See is also an anticipated briefier.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 21 December 2020, General Assembly resolution 75/200—which was tabled by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE and was adopted by consensus—proclaimed 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity and “[a]cknowledge[d] that tolerance, pluralistic tradition, mutual respect and the diversity of religions and beliefs promote human fraternity”. In his statements on the International Day of Human Fraternity, the Secretary-General has linked human fraternity to “the values of compassion, religious understanding, and mutual respect”, as well as to the importance of “stand[ing] firm against bigotry” and recognising “diversity as a richness that strengthens us all”.

The June high-level briefing will be the first time that the Security Council holds a meeting on human fraternity. According to a concept note circulated by the UAE, the briefing intends to highlight the “impact of intolerance, hate speech and incitement to hatred, racism and other manifestations of extremism in exacerbating threats across the peace continuum” as well as the role that tolerance, human fraternity and peaceful coexistence can play in sustaining and promoting peace. One of the objectives of the meeting stated in the concept note is to strengthen the UN’s, member states’, and other actors’ approaches to addressing the “drivers of intolerance and extremism”, including by “taking stock of the insights gained from the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2019), as well as the role of religious leaders, women and youth in strengthening resilience against intolerance and extremism”. (The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech consists of 13 commitments for action by the UN system to enhance UN efforts to address root causes and drivers of hate speech and to enable effective UN responses to the impact of hate speech on societies.)

Council members are increasingly discussing a range of cross-cutting issues under the rubric of emerging threats to international peace and security or as factors that can strengthen societies’ resilience to those threats. As part of discussions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, recent meetings have emphasised issues such as trust, resilience, dialogue, diversity, inequality, and exclusion. In October 2021, for instance, the Security Council held an open debate on “Diversity, State-building and the search for peace” under Kenya’s presidency. Under Mexico’s November 2021 presidency, the Council held open debates on preventive diplomacy as a common objective for UN organs and on “Exclusion, inequality and conflict”.

More recently, during Switzerland’s May presidency, the Security Council held an open debate on “Futureproofing trust for sustaining peace” which, in light of current and emerging threats to peace

and security, encouraged a reflection on the Council’s approaches towards building trust and fostering sustainable peace. In addition, the 26 January open debate on “Investment in people to enhance resilience against complex challenges” under the Japanese presidency aimed at providing an opportunity to review the Council’s work on peacebuilding and discuss how to adapt and strengthen it considering contemporary threats and challenges to the maintenance of international peace and security. Through the August 2022 briefing on common security through dialogue and cooperation, China intended to provide an opportunity for Council members to consider the concept of security from a broader perspective, including how to address emerging and non-traditional threats, and to encourage reflection on ways to enhance mutual trust, reduce strategic risks, and promote common security through dialogue and cooperation.

Council members have more often approached issues such as hate speech, tolerance, intolerance, and the role of religious and community leaders in the context of country situations than in thematic discussions. For example, “supporting and undertaking local mediation efforts and national level advocacy to prevent escalation of violence and to counter hate speech” is part of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s (MONUSCO) protection of civilians mandate, as renewed in resolutions 2612 and 2666 in 2021 and 2022, respectively. Resolution 2155, which in May 2014 revised the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), strongly condemned “the use of radio to broadcast hate speech and transmit messages instigating sexual violence against a particular ethnic group”. The 20 February presidential statement on Israeli settlements in the West Bank, noted “with deep concern instances of discrimination, intolerance and hate speech motivated by racism or directed against persons belonging to religious communities, in particular cases motivated by Islamophobia, antisemitism or Christianophobia”.

While Council members have more frequently approached issues such as hate speech and intolerance in country situations, Kenya and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect organised a closed Arria-formula meeting on hate speech and social media in October 2021. In addition, in March 2021, the UK organised an open Arria-formula meeting on religion, belief and conflict. According to the concept note issued by the UK, the meeting was intended to examine, among other issues, how religious actors in peace processes can help support conflict resolution in a gender-sensitive way.

Key Issues and Options

How to better prevent conflict and promote and support inclusive and sustainable peace are key issues for the Council, as well as for the wider UN system and membership. In this regard, the concept note for the briefing states that one of its objectives is to provide an opportunity for UN member states “to renew their commitments to preventing conflict and promoting and sustaining peace, including by fostering a more comprehensive understanding of how peacebuilding, sustainable development and societal resilience can contribute to peace and security”.

As the organiser of this high-level briefing, the UAE could prepare

UN DOCUMENT ON HUMAN FRATERNITY General Assembly Document A/RES/75/200 (21 December 2020) was a General Assembly resolution proclaiming 4 February as the International Day of Human Fraternity.

Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace

a chair's summary of the meeting to capture salient themes of the discussion to be circulated in a Council letter.

Council Dynamics

Council dynamics on hate speech, interreligious dialogue, and tolerance as broader thematic issues have yet to be fully and directly tested. At the time of writing, however, Council members are negotiating a draft resolution on tolerance in international peace and security which appears to focus on the promotion of tolerance and peaceful coexistence as ways to address issues such as hate speech and manifestations of extremism. The negotiations on this draft, which is co-penned by the UAE and the UK, may clarify Council dynamics on these issues.

Nonetheless, dynamics at the General Assembly on initiatives on similar issues may be indicative of possible Council dynamics. In July 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/309 on “Promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech”. China, Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, and the UAE were among the co-sponsors of the text, which was adopted by consensus. In its explanation of position, however, Slovenia—delivering a statement on behalf of the EU, including candidate country Albania—regretted that the text looked “at hate speech only in the context of religious intolerance”, adding that “[o]nly a comprehensive approach tackling all aspects and grounds of discrimination and violence can have a real impact”. In that regard, it also stressed

the “vital importance of ensuring respect for the right to freedom of opinion and expression, to access to information, and to privacy”.

In December 2021, the General Assembly adopted resolution 76/69 on “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace” with 139 votes in favour, including from many current Council members, and nine abstentions, including the UK and the US. In its explanation of vote, the US said that it opposes “any attempts to unduly limit” the exercise of the freedoms of expression and religion or belief and expressed “strong reservations” about a paragraph “where the text suggests that protections for freedoms of expression and religion or belief are at odds with one another”. Among other issues, the EU lamented that the resolution lacked a “stronger affirmation of the positive role that human rights, including the freedom of expression, play in furthering intercultural and interreligious dialogue”.

When the General Assembly adopted resolution 75/200 on the “International Day of Human Fraternity” in December 2020, both the EU and the US, while joining the consensus, expressed reservations about a reference to “pluralistic tradition” in the text. The EU regretted that an earlier reference to “pluralism” was changed to “pluralistic tradition” and argued that “[p]luralism is not a tradition but a fundamental principle”. The US noted that “pluralistic tradition” could be read restrictively and said that it would have preferred a reference to “religious pluralism” instead.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is expected to extend for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 30 June. Ahead of the mandate renewal, the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 22 June, and the most recent developments.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 16 March, noted that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria generally held during the reporting period of 21 November 2022 to 20 February. However, it also said that violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement persisted, observing that the overall security situation in UNDOF's area of operations remained volatile and raising concerns about the safety and security of the military and civilian personnel of UNDOF and Observer Group Golan (OGG), which is comprised of military observers from the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). As such, the Secretary-General “urge[d] the parties to the Agreement to exercise utmost restraint and comply with the Agreement”.

The report added that UNDOF maintained its assessment that UN personnel in its area of operations faced a significant threat from explosive remnants of war, including unexploded ordnance and

mines and a probable threat from the possible presence of sleeper cells of armed groups. It further observed that although the security situation in the northern and central parts of UNDOF's area of operations on the Bravo side (Syrian Golan) generally remained calm, the southern sector continued to be volatile, with security incidents reportedly occurring in locations within the area of limitation, including along UNDOF patrol routes in Dara'a Governorate.

The Secretary-General's upcoming report is expected to focus on the continued violations of the disengagement agreement, especially firing from the Israeli side over the ceasefire line, the presence of Syrian forces in the area of separation, and the existence of unauthorised weapons in the limitation area. Moreover, the report is expected to focus on the volatile situation in the region, especially the southern part of the area of limitation on the Bravo side.

The region has witnessed several notable developments over the past couple of months. On 9 April, the Israeli forces conducted artillery and drone strikes in Syria, followed by airstrikes targeting a Syrian army compound, radar systems, and artillery positions. The 9 April airstrikes came as a response to the rockets launched towards northern Israel from Syrian territory earlier that day. According to a 9 April Al Jazeera article, the al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, claimed responsibility for the rockets launched from Syrian territory.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Israeli

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF Security Council Resolution S/RES/2671 (22 December 2022) was the resolution renewing UNDOF's mandate for six months. Secretary-General's Report S/2023/203 (16 March 2023) was the Secretary-General's 90-day UNDOF report.

UNDOF (Golan)

ground forces bombarded a position on the outskirts of Quneitra on 24 April, allegedly targeting Hezbollah-linked militias. On 18 April, Israel had launched strikes in the same region targeting Iran-backed groups.

In a 7 March press release, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Micheál Martin announced that the Irish Defence Forces infantry group of approximately 130 personnel would be withdrawn from UNDOF. The press release noted that this decision followed the conclusion of an assessment of the sustainability of the defence forces' overseas commitments. It added that the decision ensures that the defence forces have the capacity to fulfil their commitment to the EU Battlegroup 2024/2025 (this comprises multinational military units which form a part of the EU's military rapid reaction capacity to respond to emerging crises and conflicts around the world), allow the forces to consolidate their overseas commitments and prepare for future peacekeeping missions. The press release said the withdrawal date will be finalised after discussion with DPO.

Key Issues and Options

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

An important issue, which is described in the Secretary-General's 16 March report, is the constraints on the movement of UNDOF personnel, which have affected their operational and administrative activities.

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

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

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 52nd session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) heard from Christian Salazar Volkman, Director of the Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division at the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), who presented the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/52/76). Among other issues, the report analysed developments regarding settlement advancement between 2012 and 2022. According to the report, Israel's plan to double the settler population in the Golan by 2027 and to increase the number of settlements was "unprecedented". The report underscored that seizing lands for settlements and military zones limited the Syrian population's access to land and water, directly violating their rights to housing, food, and health. In his statement, Volkman said that some of the recommendations contained in the report—including the call on Israel to cease and reverse settlement activities in accordance with relevant UN resolutions—would make an "immediate difference".

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2671 on 22 December 2022, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, illustrated that the Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. There was little disagreement among Council members during the negotiations, which were apparently straightforward. Some Council members believe that the situation has turned into a protracted conflict owing to continued violations of the disengagement agreement by both sides.

Despite deep divisions in the Council regarding the Syria file and opposing positions held by the co-penholders on UNDOF, Russia and the US, about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, the two countries continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. This arrangement has enabled close engagement with the parties on the ground. It seems that the antagonism between Russia and the US over the conflict in Ukraine has not affected their work on UNDOF; the difficult dynamics witnessed on other Council files were not evident during the negotiations on UNDOF's mandate in December 2022.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

From 8 to 13 April, delegations from Saudi Arabia and Oman visited Sana'a for talks with the Houthi rebel group. The visit raised

expectations that the Houthis and Saudi Arabia could be nearing an agreement in talks that Oman has facilitated since October 2022, when Yemen's truce agreement from April 2022 expired. Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition in support of Yemen's internationally recognised government, said that talks in Sana'a were "constructive", but no breakthroughs have been announced.

Any agreement in this dialogue is expected to include launching an inter-Yemeni political process mediated by Grundberg, who has been trying to coordinate his activities with the parties of the Houthi-Saudi negotiations. Grundberg visited Sana'a on 2 and 3 May, saying

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2675](#) (15 February 2023) extended the Yemen asset freeze and travel ban sanctions measures for nine months until 15 November and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts until 15 December. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9323](#) (17 May 2023) was a briefing on Yemen by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg, OCHA Deputy Director of Operations and Advocacy Edem Wosornu, and Yasmeen al-Eryani, the co-executive director for knowledge production at the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies. [Security Council Press Statement SC/15272](#) (27 April 2023) welcomed the visit in April to Sana'a by the Saudi Arabian and Omani delegations and their support for UN mediation efforts.

Yemen

afterward that he had “frank, detailed and constructive discussions on the way forward” with Houthi authorities. Also on 3 May, he met in Aden with the president of the Yemeni government’s Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), Rashad al-Alimi. This was followed by meetings with senior regional and Yemeni officials in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi and senior officials in Washington D.C. Briefing the Council on 17 May, Grundberg said that he was encouraged by these discussions and that he believed “outstanding issues can be resolved”.

OCHA Deputy Director of Operations and Advocacy Edem Wosornu reported to the Council at the 17 May briefing on Yemen’s massive humanitarian needs and the challenges facing relief efforts, including access restrictions, primarily in Houthi-controlled areas, and funding shortages. Yasmeen al-Eryani, the co-executive director for knowledge production at the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies, also briefed the Council. While welcoming the Houthi-Saudi negotiations, al-Eryani warned about the risks of a “hasty peace deal” and emphasised the need for an agreement that accounts for Yemen’s people as a whole and that is mediated under UN auspices. Al-Eryani similarly highlighted that any agreement that ignores principles of transitional justice could lead to a cycle of conflict and revenge.

In other developments, Southern Yemeni political factions met from 4 to 8 May in Aden for the Southern National Consultative Meeting. At the five-day meeting, they signed a “national charter”, and several groups announced that they were joining the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC). In the wake of this meeting, STC President Aidarous al-Zubaidi, who is also vice-president of the PLC, issued several resolutions, which included reshuffling the STC presidency on 9 May. As part of the reshuffle, al-Zubaidi appointed the PLC’s Abd Al Rahman al-Mahrami—who commands one of Yemen’s strongest military units, known as the Giants Brigades—and PLC member Faraj Salmeen Muhammad Al Bahsani to the STC. With these appointments, three PLC members are now part of the STC.

Further progress was made in efforts to prevent a massive oil spill from the FSO Safer, the decrepit oil tanker moored off the Ras Isa peninsula in the Red Sea. The replacement vessel of the FSO Safer that the UN Development Programme (UNDP) purchased in March arrived in Djibouti on 7 May. On 30 May, another vessel, called the Ndeavor, which will be used for the salvage operation, arrived in the area of the FSO Safer. At a 30 May press conference announcing the Ndeavor’s arrival, UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen David Gressly said that the preparatory work for the operation would start the next day, and that the transfer of oil from the FSO Safer to the replacement vessel, called the Nautica, could potentially be completed over the next four to six weeks.

A pledging conference on 4 May that the Netherlands and the UK hosted for the operation raised \$5.6 million in new funding. At the 30 May press conference, Steiner and Gressly said that \$14 million was still required for the operation’s emergency phase—the transfer of the oil between the ships—and an additional \$15 million had to be secured for the second phase, which includes towing and scrapping the Safer.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 16 May, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee held informal consultations

to discuss the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen (UNVIM), which provides verification and inspection of commercial vessels sailing to Houthi-held ports to ensure compliance with the targeted arms embargo established by resolution 2216 of 14 April 2015. Deputy Project Manager of UNVIM Pascal Goodman and Senior Partnership Advisor of the UN Office of Project Services Marija Bateman briefed.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to support ongoing peace talks and efforts to establish a formal ceasefire and political process. Details of a potential deal in the Houthi-Saudi talks have not been made public, but according to news reports, they may include establishing a ceasefire and the payment of public employees in Houthi territory, possibly through revenues from Yemen’s oil and gas reserves, which the Yemeni government controls. Continuing prisoner exchange negotiations between the conflict parties, which the UN and the ICRC have mediated, are an important confidence-building measure. Council members could reiterate the importance of an inclusive Yemeni political process under UN mediation for a sustainable resolution of the conflict.

Despite some positive signs in the peace process, Yemen continues to face massive humanitarian needs. An estimated 21.6 million people in Yemen require aid or protection. Access constraints and interference in relief include the Houthis’ enforcement of mahram, requiring women to be accompanied by male guardians, which has negatively affected aid operations. Support for Yemen’s economy is also critical to mitigating the humanitarian crisis; the UN is revising an economic framework it had previously developed to address the broader economic drivers of humanitarian need. Landmines and explosive remnants of war have become an issue of greater concern in the truce and post-truce period, impeding returns of displaced people and hindering economic recovery.

Members may reiterate calls on all parties to facilitate the safe, rapid, and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to all civilians in need and to protect humanitarian personnel and assets in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law. In addition, they may urge donors to support the Yemen 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which calls for \$4.3 billion but is only about 20 percent funded. Members are also likely to continue closely monitoring progress in the FSO Safer salvage operation.

Council Dynamics

Council members have welcomed the potential for the Houthi-Saudi talks to yield meaningful results. At the same time, members stress the ultimate importance of an inclusive Yemeni political process facilitated by UN mediation to achieve a sustainable resolution to the conflict. Joint meetings of the Riyadh-based ambassadors to Yemen of the Council’s permanent members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) show the Council’s general unity of approach towards Yemen.

The United Arab Emirates has been a leading member in the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and takes a strong interest in Council decisions on Yemen. Since 2021, the US has had a Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, who has actively supported Grundberg’s efforts to establish a political process and to resolve the threat posed by the FSO Safer. China helped mediate the Saudi-Iran

Yemen

agreement on 10 March to restore relations between those two countries, which, it has highlighted, could create conditions to improve the situation in Yemen.

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

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza is expected to brief.

The mandate of MINUSCA expires on 15 November 2023. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2023, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2023.

Key Recent Developments

On 21 February, Rugwabiza briefed the Council on efforts to advance the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR and the dissolution of four signatory armed groups in December 2022. She also described the ongoing preparations for the local elections that will be held for the first time since 1988, and the related challenges, including funding shortfalls and security constraints. Rugwabiza noted the increasing military activities of armed groups with the onset of the dry season (which gives forces greater mobility) and growing tensions along CAR's borders. She reported the lifting of the government's ban on MINUSCA's night flights, which was a contentious issue during the mission's mandate renewal in November 2022. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 20 February.) Rugwabiza noted the lack of any meaningful improvement in the human rights situation in the country and expressed serious concerns about the increasing incidence of conflict-related sexual violence.

Pursuant to resolution 2659 of 14 November 2022, which renewed the mandate of MINUSCA, the mission is to provide assistance to the CAR authorities in organising local elections. According to the Secretary-General's 16 February report, the first round of local elections is set to take place on 16 July and the second round on 15 October. MINUSCA signed an Integrated Electoral Security Plan with the CAR government on 14 February to facilitate the requisite security measures, but the budget shortfall that the CAR government is facing in organising local elections remains a challenge. It seems that partners have been reluctant to provide funding because of concerns that the money might be used to organise a constitutional referendum, which has been a contentious issue in CAR.

The CAR government established a committee in August 2022 to draft a new constitution that would remove presidential term limits. The current constitution, adopted in 2016 following popular consultations, does not allow the president to run for a third term. After the government's decision was invalidated by the CAR Constitutional

Court in September 2022, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra removed the president of the Constitutional Court, Danièle Darlan, in October 2022. In her 21 February briefing, Rugwabiza informed the Council of the assurances given by the CAR prime minister "that local elections will not be combined with any eventual referendum on the Constitution".

The growing insecurity in the CAR because of the resumption of military activities by some armed groups has been a major concern. Rugwabiza said that the mission had "witnessed new developments in the modus operandi of armed groups, namely, the use of explosive devices and drones, negatively impacting the population, national security forces, humanitarian actors and United Nations peacekeepers". She described the mission's efforts to maintain its mobility and effectiveness in responding to these evolving threats and in protecting civilians. Armed groups operating across the border with neighbouring countries, particularly in the resource-rich areas in the northwest and northeast, have been a particular concern in recent months.

In early January, Sudan announced that it was closing its borders with CAR, reportedly because of concerns over unnamed actors operating on the Sudanese side of the border to plot regime change in the CAR. The regional dimension of the country's security situation has now been amplified by the ongoing fighting in Sudan and the influx of refugees and returnees to the CAR. According to OCHA, 9,725 people have crossed the border into CAR because of the fighting, and this number is expected to rise. The northeast part of CAR depends on Sudan for supplies, but traffic along the border is now reportedly disrupted due to insecurity.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a statement on 31 March during the high-level dialogue on the CAR. Emphasising his grave concerns that the "relentless cycle of communal, religious and ethnic violence...will escalate... with major setbacks for peace and reconciliation efforts", Türk underscored that it was the civilian population, first and foremost, that bear the brunt of abuses. The Human Rights Division of MINUSCA documented an increase in human rights and humanitarian law abuses and violations from 564 in the first quarter of 2022 to 1,300 in the last quarter. Türk noted that government forces and their allies committed 58 percent of violations, explicitly targeting the Fulani and Muslim communities.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 30 March, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee held a briefing for regional states and other interested member states on the midterm report of the Panel of Experts assisting the work of the committee, which was released on 10 February. On 26 April, the committee held informal consultations to discuss the panel's final report, which was due by 30 May.

The committee chair was expected to undertake a visiting mission to the

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2659 (14 November 2022) renewed MINUSCA's mandate for one year until 15 November 2023. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/108](#) (16 February 2023) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in the CAR. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9265](#) (21 February 2023) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

CAR in April, but the visit was apparently postponed at the request of CAR authorities. The visit is now expected to take place from 6 to 9 June.

PBC-related Developments

The chair of the PBC Central African Republic country configuration, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), briefed the Council at its 21 February meeting on the CAR. Hilale called on donors to mobilise funds to fill the nearly \$7 million budget gap for the upcoming local elections. He highlighted the CAR Special Criminal Court and the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission as essential mechanisms for promoting reconciliation and combatting impunity, which contribute to conflict prevention and long-term sustainable peace. Hilale also encouraged continuing dialogue between the government and the international financial institutions to support investments in socio-economic recovery and development, which are critical for implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situation in the CAR continues to be a key issue for Council members in June. Council members could be interested to learn about the regional implications of the conflict in Sudan and its likely impact on the security and humanitarian situation in the CAR.

A possible option is for the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee to organise a joint meeting with the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and invite the head of the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and representatives of regional and sub-regional organisations to brief Council members on the regional implications of the conflict in Sudan, including the security and humanitarian impact on the CAR.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members welcome the dissolution of four signatory armed

groups but remain concerned by the increasing military activities of other non-signatory armed groups, including along the borders of CAR. In this regard, they welcomed the February meeting between Touadéra and Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby in Luanda under the auspices of Angolan President João Lourenço, who is the current chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Following this meeting, former CAR president François Bozizé, who leads a rebel coalition known as the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) based in Chad, reportedly left N'Djamena for Guinea-Bissau.

Some Council members continue to raise serious concerns about human rights abuses committed by armed groups, the CAR armed forces (FACA), and the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company. Russia has argued that this is a campaign to discredit the group and that the accusations are not supported by verified facts.

In March, China lost nine of its citizens in an attack on a gold mining site near Bambari, the second largest city in CAR. Amid much speculation about the perpetrators of the attack, the CAR authorities accused the CPC, but the rebel coalition denied the accusation, blaming the Wagner Group.

It seems that the US has been seeking to engage with the CAR government but considers its partnership with the Wagner Group an obstacle to improving relations. It has been encouraging the government to strengthen ties with MINUSCA and “other responsible partners” as an alternative to its relations with the Wagner Group, as the US representative said at the 8 December 2022 briefing on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

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

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 15 March 2024.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 4 August 2022, all signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) agreed to a roadmap extending the transitional period by 24 months to enable the implementation of its key outstanding tasks. The original transitional period in the R-ARCSS ended on 22 February. Key aspects of the roadmap relate to the unification of forces and their redeployment, the drafting of the permanent constitution, and the electoral process. In a 21 February press statement, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) announced the beginning of the extended transition period, which is to end on 22 February 2025, with elections to be

held in December 2024. In addition, the government also declared that there would be no more extensions of the timelines.

The most recent quarterly report (covering the period from 1 January to 31 March) of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS, noted that it continued to face multifaceted challenges, including lack of dedicated financial resources, and an insufficient level of trust and confidence among the signatory parties. It added that, in March, the signatory parties reached an agreement on the unification of the middle and lower-level military command structures, based on a 60 percent ratio for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), 30 percent for the SPLM-in Opposition (SLPM-IO), and 10 percent for the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA). It further noted that attacks on humanitarian workers and looting of their supplies have exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation in the country.

In a 24 May press conference, Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom assessed the challenges facing the country and the UNMISS' efforts to address those challenges. Haysom

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2677 (15 March 2023) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 15 March 2024. Sanctions Committee Document S/2023/294 (26 April 2023) was the final report of the Panel of Experts on South Sudan submitted pursuant to resolution 2633 (2022).

South Sudan

noted that, according to the mission's assessment, the constitution-making process, election-planning tasks, and several aspects of transitional security arrangements are behind schedule. As to whether the elections could be held in December 2024, Haysom noted that currently, the conditions do not exist to hold such elections as the structures are not established for a transparent, free, and fair election. He added that there are numerous steps that the government and other stakeholders need to take to create these conditions, including the passage of the National Electoral Bill, the reconstitution of the Political Parties Council, and progress on the Constitution Making Bill.

Haysom expressed concerns about the effect of the country's dire economic situation, notably on increased criminality and attacks on humanitarian workers, including looting of food and non-food aid. He said that climate shocks have compounded the existing humanitarian and economic crisis, affecting three-quarters of the South Sudanese population. Haysom added that the ongoing clashes in Sudan have led to an influx of refugees and returnees in South Sudan and that, according to reports, the competition for access to basic needs, such as water, has taken on an ethnic dimension in Renk, Eastern Nile State, sparking conflict between Nuer and Dinka communities.

According to the data published by UNHCR on 25 May, a total of 76,825 people have crossed into South Sudan from Sudan since the outbreak of fighting in Sudan on 15 April, including 2,039 Sudanese refugees, 2,443 non-Sudanese refugees, and 72,343 refugee returnees, according to UNHCR. In light of these developments, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths allocated \$8 million on 19 May from the UN Central Emergency Fund to South Sudan to support the humanitarian response.

In a 24 May press release, the Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim in South Sudan, Peter Van der Auweraert, condemned a targeted attack and looting of humanitarian assets outside the UN compound in Bor, Jonglei State, that took place a day earlier. According to the statement, approximately seven metric tonnes of food aid belonging to the World Food Programme (WFP) was looted. In response to the attack, the WFP paused operations out of Bor. The WFP Country Director in South Sudan, Mary-Ellen McGroarty, said that the pause in operations "will have an impact upon more than a million people in Jonglei and Pibor, many of whom are women and children, who rely on the assistance WFP provides".

On 26 April, the Panel of Experts of the 2106 South Sudan Sanctions Committee released its final report, in accordance with resolution 2633 of 26 May 2022. The report said that displacement and food security remain at their highest levels. It noted that the humanitarian and economic crises have set communities against one another in competition for increasingly scarce resources, compounded by flooding and impediments to humanitarian relief. The report added that oil revenues have failed to reach the institutions aimed at stabilising the situation through regular salary payments, humanitarian relief, and development. Accordingly, the report noted that "while some progress has been made towards the implementation of the peace agreement, delays continue to test the patience of those who remain hopeful that it will eventually deliver relief from insecurity and humanitarian hardship".

Intercommunal and subnational violence persists in many areas of

the country. According to the 18 March annual brief of the UNMISS Human Rights Division on violence affecting civilians, 3,469 cases were documented in 2022 relating to civilians, mostly of killing, injury, abduction, or conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), amounting to a two percent increase over 2021. It added that, during the reporting period, the number of recorded cases of injuries, abductions and CRSV increased by 17, 6 and 96 percent, respectively.

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2683 renewing the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2024—including targeted sanctions (assets freezes and travel bans) and an arms embargo. The resolution was adopted with 10 votes in favour and five abstentions (China, Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, and Russia). (For more information, see our 29 May *What's in Blue* story.)

Women, Peace and Security

At the 6 March briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, Malta noted that, over the past two years, the Security Council has been briefed on South Sudan six times by women from civil society and that it shares "their frustration with the pace of reform, the unmet quotas for women's political participation and the high level of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence". Malta urged South Sudan "to ensure that civil society organizations, including those for women and young people, are safe and respected and that their freedom remains unhindered". Several participants referred to the International Conference on Women's Transformative Leadership held in Juba from 13 to 15 February. Ecuador, for instance, said that the recommendations emerging from the conference "should be internalized in a cross-cutting manner in the peace and development agenda of South Sudan". Albania said that the "alarming increase of conflict-related sexual violence and the large-scale abductions of women and children clearly indicate a need for the protection of civilians to remain a key priority" for UNMISS, while the United Arab Emirates highlighted women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in political discussion as an important factor for the success of the transitional period in South Sudan.

Peacebuilding Commission-Related Developments

In a 3 March letter, PBC chair Ambassador Ivan Šimonović (Croatia) submitted written advice to Council members ahead of the 6 March Council briefing on South Sudan. The PBC highlighted the importance of South Sudanese authorities continuing to improve participatory dialogue in the lead-up to the 2024 elections, including through widened civil and political space. It also stressed the importance of the transitional government continuing its efforts to build effective, inclusive, and accountable government institutions, including at the local level, to foster dialogue and reconciliation and to strengthen social cohesion. Among other points, the PBC called for improving the provision of socio-economic opportunities to address intercommunal violence and encouraged the government to continue to implement the youth and peace and security agenda in South Sudan at the national and local levels.

Key Issues and Options

An ongoing concern for the Council is the significant political challenges in South Sudan stemming from the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to demonstrate progress towards implementing the outstanding issues of the R-ARCSS in accordance with the timelines set out in the roadmap.

A related issue for several Council members is the need for the government to engage with civil society and other interested parties in relation to the roadmap and its implementation.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement urging the parties to implement the roadmap in a timely and

South Sudan

inclusive manner.

Another option is to consider a Council visiting mission to South Sudan to assess the situation and engage further with the various parties. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan was in 2019.)

An additional key issue for Council members is the humanitarian and food security situation. An option would be to seek regular briefings on these from OCHA.

The impact of the conflict in neighbouring Sudan on the humanitarian and political situation in South Sudan is also an important matter for the Council. In his 24 May press briefing, Haysom commended the efforts of South Sudanese President Salva Kiir towards finding a political solution to the conflict in Sudan. (Kiir is leading the mediation efforts on behalf of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development). At the same time, he encouraged Kiir to not allow the situation in Sudan to distract him from making progress in implementing the political roadmap in South Sudan.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, the ongoing sub-national and intercommunal violence, the high levels of sexual violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises. Members such as the UK and the US expressed reservations about extending the transitional period in August 2022 and called on the government to demonstrate its commitment to implementing the R-ARCSS in line with the deadlines set out in the roadmap. On the other hand, in the 6 March

briefing, Russia said, “[W]e believe that the decision to extend the transitional period until February 2025 is the right one under the current circumstances”.

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

The negotiations on the resolution renewing sanctions on South Sudan, until 31 May 2024, were contentious. It seems that members such as the A3, China, and Russia were of the view that the Council should make efforts towards the progressive easing or lifting of sanctions on South Sudan. China apparently maintained the position that the sanction measures should be eased substantially in order to support the country in enhancing its capacity-building and better implementing the R-ARCSS. On the other hand, several Council members—including Brazil, France, Switzerland, and the UK—were in favour of renewing the sanctions regime. Apparently, while acknowledging the progress achieved by the South Sudanese government on some of the key benchmarks, they pointed to the lack of progress on other benchmarks, including the proper management of existing arms and ammunition stockpiles. These members also maintained that the benchmarks remain relevant and necessary.

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

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan. Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and a representative of civil society are expected to brief.

Under resolution 2615, the Council is also scheduled to receive a briefing on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan during June.

UNAMA’s mandate expires on 17 March 2024.

Key Recent Developments

The situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate markedly in recent months, with the humanitarian crisis remaining particularly grim. OCHA’s latest humanitarian update on Afghanistan, which was published on 24 May, said 28 million Afghans—more than two-thirds of the population—will require life-saving assistance in 2023.

Food insecurity levels in Afghanistan are especially high. The 30 April World Food Programme (WFP) Afghanistan situation report noted that the country is currently experiencing its highest risk of famine in a quarter of a century, with more than 20 million people acutely food insecure and 6.1 million people on the brink of famine-like conditions. On 10 May, the Food and Agriculture Organisation

(FAO) warned of a large-scale locust outbreak in northern and north-eastern Afghanistan, which it said could dramatically worsen food insecurity in the country.

Efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis have been complicated by the policies and practices of the Taliban, including the ban on Afghan women working for the UN announced on 4 April. In a 5 April statement regarding the Taliban’s decision, UNAMA said that the Taliban had notified the UN that “with immediate effect, no Afghan woman is permitted to work for the UN in Afghanistan, and that this measure will be strongly enforced”. Among other matters, the statement also said that “several UN national female personnel have already experienced restrictions on their movements, including harassment, intimidation, and detention” and indicated that “the UN has therefore instructed all national staff—men and women—not to report to the office until further notice”.

Council members held closed consultations to discuss the ban on 6 April, following a request from Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the penholders on the file. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 5 April). On 27 April, the Council adopted resolution 2681, which among other matters, condemned the ban and called on the Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restrict the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls.

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2678](#) (16 March 2023) extended UNAMA’s mandate until 17 March 2024. [S/RES/2679](#) (16 March 2023) requested that the Secretary-General conduct and provide an independent assessment on Afghanistan. [S/RES/2681](#) (27 April 2023) condemned the ban on Afghan women working for the UN and called on the Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restrict the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls, among other matters.

Afghanistan

(For more information on the negotiations, see our *What's in Blue* story of 27 April.) Resolution 2681 was co-sponsored by more than 90 member states.

On 11 April, UNAMA issued an additional statement in relation to the ban, which said that Otunbayeva had “initiated an operational review period up to 5 May”, during which “the UN in Afghanistan will conduct the necessary consultations, make required operational adjustments, and accelerate contingency planning for all possible outcomes”. The statement clarified that “limited and calibrated exceptions for critical tasks” had been made to the instruction to national staff to not report to UN offices, and indicated that the UN will endeavour to continue humanitarian activities “in line with the humanitarian principles and criteria outlined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in January 2022, during which we will assess the scope, parameters, and consequences of the ban, and pause activities where impeded.” The statement also noted that the “matter will be under constant review.”

In a 5 May statement, UNAMA said that it had conducted extensive consultations with multiple Afghan stakeholders while continuing to engage with the Taliban to obtain a reversal of the ban. The statement further said, “we must remain focused on our objective to support the people of Afghanistan. We cannot disengage despite the challenges.” On the same day, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq said there had been no change to the UN’s “posture on the ground”.

Although UN national staff have been instructed not to report to UN offices, reports have recently emerged which suggest that UN agencies are nonetheless taking different approaches to respond to the ban. During an 18 May press briefing, UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan Fran Equiza said that UNICEF’s female Afghan staff have been able to provide care. On 22 May, UN Women issued a statement which said that all of its national staff, both men and women, have worked from home since the ban was put in place.

Other practices and policies of the Taliban have also had a negative impact on the provision of humanitarian assistance. OCHA’s humanitarian access snapshot for March, which was published on 25 May, says that incidents of interference with humanitarian activities, including aid diversion and interference with beneficiary selection and staff recruitment, had tripled compared to the same period last year.

Despite the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the country, the 2023 Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan, which calls for \$4.63 billion in aid, was only 8.6 percent funded at the time of writing. It appears that the lack of funding is beginning to affect the humanitarian response. OCHA’s 10 April ICCT pipeline tracking report for April to June notes that several different types of critical supplies are at risk of pipeline break due to funding gaps. According to media reports, the lack of funding may also lead the WFP to cease food distribution in Afghanistan by June.

On 16 March, the Council unanimously adopted two resolutions on Afghanistan: resolution 2678, which extended UNAMA’s mandate until 17 March 2024, and resolution 2679, which requested that the Secretary-General conduct an independent assessment and provide the Council with forward-looking recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach in order to address the challenges faced by Afghanistan by 17 November. (For more, see our *What’s*

in Blue story of 15 March.) On 25 April, the UN announced that Feridun Sinirlioğlu had been appointed Special Coordinator of the independent assessment.

On 1 and 2 May, Secretary-General António Guterres convened a meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan. China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Türkiye, Turkmenistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uzbekistan, as well as the EU, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), were invited to participate. In remarks delivered following the meeting, Guterres said that “the meeting was about developing a common international approach” and that participants had agreed on the need for a strategy for engaging with the Taliban. Guterres also said that he was ready to convene a second meeting of special envoys and that the UN will not waver in its commitment to Afghanistan.

Taliban officials have attended several meetings with regional countries in recent months. On 6 May, Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang in Islamabad. In a statement released following the meeting, the three countries noted that they had reaffirmed their commitment to trilateral cooperation under China’s Belt and Road Initiative and to jointly extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan. On 13 April, Muttaqi met with representatives of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in Samarkand. Muttaqi is subject to a travel ban under the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime and was authorised to travel by the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

The security situation in Afghanistan remains precarious. During her last briefing to the Council on 8 March, Otunbayeva said that UNAMA’s ability to deliver has been affected by growing concerns over the looming threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K). On 27 March, a terrorist attack targeted Afghanistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, killing at least six people and wounding several more. The attack, which was claimed by ISIL-K, was condemned by Council members in a 28 March press statement.

On 27 May, at least three people were killed after fighting broke out between Iranian and Taliban security forces along the border between Afghanistan’s Nimroz province and Iran’s Sistan and Baluchestan provinces. Each side blamed the other for sparking the clashes, which came amid a dispute between Iran and the Taliban over water rights to the Helmand River.

On 18 April, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) released its Afghanistan Socio-Economic Outlook 2023. The report documents the economic challenges currently facing Afghanistan, including the ongoing fiscal crisis, and projects that Afghanistan will experience a decline in real GDP growth and GDP per capita even if international support remains at 2022 levels. It also concludes that without continuity in girls’ education and women’s ability to pursue work, Afghanistan’s economic progress “will remain severely muted”.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 May, a group of UN Special Rapporteurs and members of human rights working groups appointed by the Human Rights Council released a

Afghanistan

statement expressing alarm at the Taliban Supreme Court's 4 May announcement that it had sanctioned the use of punishments that include stoning, flogging, and burying under a wall. The experts noted that the Taliban have been implementing judicially sanctioned and ad hoc corporal punishment since November 2022 and said that "stoning people to death or burying them under a wall constitutes torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment...these cruel punishments are contrary to international law."

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, and the Chair of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Dorothy Estrada-Tanck, visited Afghanistan from 27 April to 4 May. In a statement regarding the visit, the experts said that the Taliban have been ruling Afghanistan "through the most extreme forms of misogyny" and destroying the progress toward gender equality achieved in the past two decades. A joint report on the situation of women and girls' rights in Afghanistan will be presented to the Human Rights Council during its 53rd session in June.

On 8 May, UNAMA released a report on corporal punishment and the death penalty in Afghanistan. The report found that at least 274 men, 58 women, and two boys have been publicly flogged in the last six months alone. On the previous day, UNAMA released its latest report on the overall human rights situation in Afghanistan, which documented a range of human rights violations perpetrated by the Taliban.

Women, Peace and Security

Zubaida Akbar—Afghanistan Programme Officer at Freedom Now—briefed the Council during the 8 March open briefing on Afghanistan. Among other recommendations, she said that the Security Council "should demand that the Taliban respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, girls, LGBTQI+ people and all other marginalized groups, and end all restrictions on women's rights". Akbar also called on the Council to regularly issue resolutions and statements "condemning the Taliban's abuses against women and girls, and ensure that there are no exemptions to travel bans for Taliban leaders". Regarding the role of the UN, she said that there should be no high-level visits to Afghanistan by the UN "without a clear objective informed by the priorities and concerns of Afghan women" and urged Otunbayeva to prioritise reporting on the situation of women and marginalised groups in Afghanistan during her briefings to the Council.

Key Issues and Options

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is a major issue for the Council. An informal meeting with humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan could allow Council members to learn more about the challenges facing those working to deliver aid in the country, particularly after the Taliban banned Afghan women from working for the UN. Such a meeting could also provide Council members with an opportunity to discuss whether there is anything the Council can do to alleviate the problems faced by humanitarian organisations in Afghanistan.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls, is another significant issue. Council members could

hold an informal meeting with representatives of UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and civil society to discuss how the Council can exert pressure on the Taliban regarding its practices and policies that restrict human rights.

The Council could also consider reviewing the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime, which, apart from the humanitarian exception established by resolution 2615, has not been updated since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. Such a review could analyse whether the regime is fit for purpose and whether it should be updated in light of current circumstances.

The security situation in Afghanistan and the threat of terrorism are both key concerns. The Council could request a briefing from a counter-terrorism expert, which would provide an opportunity for Council members to discuss the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and help generate ideas for bolstering the Council's work in this area.

Council Dynamics

Although Council members are generally united in their desire to see a prosperous, peaceful Afghanistan free from terrorism and ruled by an inclusive government that respects the rights of women and girls, they are divided over how to achieve this goal. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded states, argue that the Taliban must adhere to international norms if it wants to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community. Several of these members tend to favour maintaining pressure on the Taliban, particularly regarding its policies and practices that violate the rights of women and girls.

China and Russia, on the other hand, have contended that the international community should provide assistance to Afghanistan without linking that assistance to other issues, such as human rights, and appear to prefer dialogue and engagement with the Taliban over increased pressure.

China and Russia have also called for Afghanistan's frozen assets to be returned to the country, while other members have said that these assets cannot be transferred to Afghanistan until a properly functioning central bank has been established. These members often express concern that the funds could be used for terrorist purposes. Moreover, China and Russia regularly blame the US and NATO for the problems facing Afghanistan, while the US and others contend that the Taliban bears primary responsibility for the issues facing the country. Many of these divisions were evident during the negotiation of resolution 2681. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 27 April.)

Gulf of Guinea Piracy

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is expected to hold a briefing on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

Key Recent Developments

On 31 May 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2634 on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. It was the Council's first resolution on this issue since resolution 2039 of February 2012, which urged Gulf of Guinea states to organise a summit and develop a regional counter-piracy strategy. Subsequently, at a June 2013 summit, 25 West and Central African countries signed the "Yaoundé Code of Conduct", which has since formed the main maritime security architecture for addressing piracy in the Gulf of Guinea.

Last year's resolution, initiated by Ghana and Norway, sought to bring renewed attention to Gulf of Guinea piracy and mobilise greater support for efforts to tackle the problem. It expressed the Council's deep concern about the "grave and persistent threat" posed by piracy, armed robbery, and transnational organised crime in the Gulf to international navigation, security, and the sustainable development of regional states. The resolution called on states in the region to criminalise and prosecute acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea under their domestic laws and emphasised the need to enhance and support national, regional, and international efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea.

In accordance with resolution 2634, the Secretary-General submitted a report, dated 1 November 2022, on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf, which the Council considered at a 22 November 2022 briefing. Instances of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf peaked in 2020 (123 incidents)—in recent years, pirates have increasingly targeted ships to kidnap crews for ransom—but since then, there has been a notable decline in attacks, with 45 incidents in 2021 and a continuation of this trend in 2022. The Secretary-General's report attributed the reduction to several factors, including the impact of piracy convictions in Nigeria and Togo in July 2021, the deterrent effects of increased naval patrols by Nigeria, and the deployment of international navies to the region, along with improved cooperation among Gulf of Guinea countries.

Despite the progress, the Secretary-General's report said that the Yaoundé Architecture's implementation had been impeded by inadequate staffing; a lack of appropriate equipment, logistical support, and predictable and sustainable financing; and issues pertaining to the timeliness and effectiveness of information. He suggested the need for countries that are signatories of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct to provide through their respective regional structures—the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC)—further strategic guidance to achieve the full potential of the architecture, which suffers from a lack of clarity on the division of labour within its regional structures. The report highlighted that continued efforts were required to consolidate the gains and prevent a reversal.

On 25 April, the Third Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the GGC met in Accra. At the high-level meeting, the new executive secretary of the GGC was appointed, José Mba Abeso of Equatorial Guinea. Gulf of Guinea heads of state directed the GGC to develop a strategic framework within three months by reviewing current systems and structures to build on those that work well and explore mechanisms to strengthen areas identified as weak, according to the GGC's Director of Administration and Regional Coordination, Emmanuel Budo Addo who briefed the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at a 19 May meeting on the Gulf of Guinea.

So far in 2023, pirate and armed robbery incidents in the Gulf have continued to decrease. Just five incidents were reported in the first quarter of 2023 compared to eight in the first quarter of 2022 and 16 in 2021, according to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB). However, the 25 March hijacking of the Danish-owned, Liberian-flagged *Monjasa Reformer* approximately 140 nautical miles west of Pointe Noire, Republic of the Congo, shows that the threat remains. A French patrol vessel located the vessel several days later, finding that six of the ship's 16 crew members had been kidnapped. On 8 May, the owner of the *Monjasa Reformer* confirmed that all crew members had been recovered from an undisclosed location in Nigeria.

Pirates also boarded the Singapore-flagged chemical tanker *Success 9* off Côte d'Ivoire on 10 April. Several days later, an Ivorian naval patrol reached the ship. According to news reports, pirates abandoned the tanker after stealing cargo and personal belongings of the crew, who were all accounted for. On 2 May, pirates reportedly kidnapped the captain and two other officers of a US bulk carrier off the coast of Gabon; Georgia announced on 24 May the release of its two nationals who were kidnapped in the attack.

Peacebuilding Commission-Related Developments

On 19 May, the PBC met on the Gulf of Guinea. It heard briefings by Budo Addo of the GGC; Colonel Emmanuel Bell Bell, Head of Information Sharing and Communications at Interregional Coordination Center in Yaoundé; Jacqueline Seck, Officer-in-Charge, West Africa Division, Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; Delphine Schantz, Representative of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime; Kamal-Deen Ali, Executive Director, Center for Maritime Law and Security Africa; and Ife Okafor-Yarwood, Lecturer at the University of St. Andrews. In addition to counter-piracy efforts, the discussion highlighted the need to also address root causes, such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by foreign industrial vessels and environmental degradation, which have disrupted the livelihoods of coastal communities.

This was the PBC's second meeting on piracy in the Gulf, having discussed this issue during a June 2021 meeting. The PBC also submitted written advice to the Council on the issue in an 18 November 2022 letter regarding its briefing on the Secretary-General's 1 November report.

Key Issues and Options

June marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Yaoundé Architecture, created to improve cooperation among Gulf of Guinea states to fight piracy, including through the establishment of a series

UN DOCUMENTS ON GULF OF GUINEA PIRACY [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2634](#) (31 May 2022) condemned piracy and armed robbery at sea, including acts of murder, kidnapping, and hostage-taking in the Gulf of Guinea. [S/RES/2039](#) (29 February 2012) welcomed a UN assessment mission on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and called on states to implement its recommendations. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2016/4](#) (25 April 2016) encouraged regional states, regional organisations and international partners to fully operationalise the Gulf of Guinea counter-piracy mechanisms. [S/PRST/2013/13](#) (14 August 2013) welcomed the summit on maritime safety and security in the Gulf of Guinea and stressed the importance of regional coordination for counter-piracy efforts. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/818](#) (1 November 2022) was a report on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9198](#) (22 November 2022) was a briefing on Gulf of Guinea piracy. [S/PV.9050](#) (31 May 2022) contained the explanation of votes on resolution 2634 on Gulf of Guinea piracy. [Security Council Letter S/2021/722](#) (12 August 2021) contained the record of briefings and statements from a 9 August videoconference open debate on maritime security.

Gulf of Guinea Piracy

of maritime centres. The key issue for the Council in light of this anniversary is to reflect on the achievements and the remaining challenges in the implementation of this Architecture. Related to this is maintaining efforts that have helped reduce piracy and armed robbery incidents in order to avoid a reversal of the progress achieved in recent years.

Underlying socioeconomic challenges that cause people to join piracy organisations is another key issue, including other maritime crimes such as illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Possible or potential links between terrorist and piracy groups are an important recurring concern.

Council members could issue a press statement, marking the ten-year anniversary of the Yaoundé Architecture and welcoming progress in fighting piracy in the Gulf, while encouraging continued efforts in this regard. Such a statement could also highlight the need to address the root causes of piracy to provide a long-term solution to this threat.

Council Dynamics

Ghana has sought to maintain Council attention on countering Gulf of piracy; both Gabon and Ghana are signatories of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct. Council members Brazil, France, Japan, Switzerland, the UK, and the US are members of the G7++ Group of Friends of the Gulf of Guinea (FOGG), which supports the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct.

Last year's negotiations on resolution 2634 lasted over five months but not because of significant differences between members about piracy in the Gulf. Instead, the main dispute was over how to refer to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The UNCLOS has become a sensitive issue during discussions related to maritime security, which stems from China's claims in the South China Sea. In negotiations on resolution 2634, China sought language providing a narrower interpretation of UNCLOS' jurisdiction and universality than was acceptable to most members.

Ghana was co-penholder with former Council member Norway on resolution 2634.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia. The new Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Catriona Laing (UK), is expected to brief. Appointed on 3 May, Laing succeeds James Swan, who served as Special Representative and head of UNSOM from May 2019 to October 2022. The Council is also expected to extend the authorisation of AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) late in the month.

Key Recent Developments

The Somali government remains focused on intensifying its fight against Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Its operations have dislodged the group from key strongholds in central Somalia's Galmudug and HirShabelle regions, thereby opening main supply routes and population centres. Reportedly, preparations are underway to launch a second phase of offensive operations against Al-Shabaab in Jubaland and South West regions. Nevertheless, the group retains the ability to carry out asymmetrical attacks against both civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as state institutions.

Pursuant to resolution 2670 of 21 December 2022, the Security Council requested the Somali government to provide a report on the implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan (STP) and National Security Architecture (NSA), which have been developed to facilitate the gradual handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to the Somali security forces. The Somali government submitted its report on 30 April which, among other things, detailed its force generation and integration efforts. Currently, 3,000 Somali troops, who were trained in Eritrea and repatriated to Somalia, are undergoing the process of reintegration, and the repatriation process

of an additional 4,000 troops trained in Eritrea has already started, according to the report. Furthermore, 3,000 Somali troops trained in Uganda are expected to return to Somalia, while 1,500 troops in Egypt and 2,500 troops in Ethiopia are being trained with the support of the UAE.

ATMIS marked its one-year anniversary on 1 April. The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) convened a meeting on 28 April to reflect on the progress and challenges of the mission one year after it replaced the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Pursuant to resolution 2628 of 31 March 2022, which reconfigured the mission, the AU submitted its report on 12 April to the Security Council on the implementation of the ATMIS mandate. The mission is expected to complete the drawdown of 2,000 personnel by 30 June as part of the phased and gradual handover of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces. (Subsequent drawdowns of the mission, which currently consists of over 18,500 troops, are planned for September 2023 and June 2024; the mission is expected to exit in December 2024). On 27 April, ATMIS troop-contributing countries (TCCs) held a summit in Entebbe, Uganda, under the chairmanship of President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. According to the summit's communiqué, the leaders agreed on the procedures for the drawdown of the 2,000 personnel.

One of the main challenges facing ATMIS is a funding shortfall, and the summit mandated the presidents of Djibouti and Kenya to engage with partners on this issue on behalf of the ATMIS TCCs. At its 36th summit held on 18-19 February in Addis Ababa, the AU approved the disbursement of \$2 million from the AU Peace Fund's Crisis Reserve Facility to support ATMIS. The AUPSC has called on the Security Council to hold "a special session on predictable, adequate, sustainable and multi-year funding for ATMIS".

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2670 (21 December 2022) extended the deadline for the first phase of the drawdown of ATMIS personnel until 30 June 2023. S/RES/2657 (31 October 2022) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 October 2023. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9267** (22 February 2023) was on the situation in Somalia.

Somalia

On 27 March, the Security Council held a private meeting on the situation in Somalia that included a discussion of the funding issue. Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia and head of ATMIS Mohamed El-Amine Souef and EU Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Annette Weber briefed. Participating in the meeting were Somalia and ATMIS TCCs—Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda. This was preceded by a joint AU and UN high-level meeting in New York on 22 March on securing predictable and sustainable funding for ATMIS. At that meeting, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye appealed to bilateral and international partners to fill the funding shortfall facing the mission. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, who also attended the high-level meeting, noted ATMIS' dire financial situation and stressed the urgent need to ensure "predictable, sustainable, and multi-year funding" for the mission.

The Security Council, pursuant to resolution 2670, requested the UN to undertake a technical assessment of progress in the implementation of the benchmarks set out in the Secretary-General's letter of 30 September 2022 on the UNSOM independent review. The Secretary-General submitted the technical assessment report on 25 April, which was done jointly with the Somali government, the AU, the EU, and other partners and describes the progress achieved toward the 14 identified benchmarks and 51 indicators contained in the independent review.

According to OCHA, drought persists despite seasonal rains in Somalia and the Ethiopian highlands, which caused flash floods. Secretary-General António Guterres visited Somalia in April as part of his annual visit to Muslim countries during the month of Ramadan. He used the opportunity to appeal to the international community to enhance humanitarian support to six million people who are in urgent need of assistance. He also visited camps for internally displaced persons in Baidoa, the capital of the South West State. On 24 May, the UN, Italy, Qatar, the UK, and the US, in collaboration with Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, were convening a high-level pledging conference for the humanitarian response in the Horn of Africa in New York.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 23 February, Isha Dyfan, the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, issued a statement expressing alarm at the high number of civilian casualties resulting from clashes between Somaliland security forces and clan members in Las Anod in the Sool region. In her statement, Dyfan noted reports of indiscriminate attacks against civilians and emphasised that they directly contravene international human rights law and humanitarian law. She warned that the ongoing clashes in Las Anod will directly contribute to an already worsening humanitarian situation in the wider Sool region. The fighting, which began on 5 February, has displaced more than 185,000 people, 89 percent of whom are women and children.

Dyfan's statement echoed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk's 7 February statement calling on the Somali government to "ensure an independent, effective and impartial investigation" once the clashes began in Las Anod. Noting that these killings came only a month after more than 20,000 people were already displaced by clashes, Türk expressed his concern that the situation would cause a deterioration in the "already fragile humanitarian situation".

Women, Peace and Security

As the Council's president for February, Malta chose to focus the 22 February open briefing on the situation in Somalia on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Ahead of the meeting, Malta circulated a concept note encouraging Council members to address various aspects of the WPS agenda in their interventions during the meeting. Several members—including Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, and Ghana, which delivered a statement on behalf of the three African members of the Council (A3)—referenced the situation of women in Somalia in their statements. Switzerland focused its full statement on WPS stressing, among other issues, the importance of safeguarding women's participation in political processes, as both candidates and as elected representatives. Malta expressed deep disappointment that the "conditions were not conducive to the safe participation of a civil society representative" at the meeting to brief the Council on WPS. Stressing that "the voice of civil society needs to be heard", Malta said that it had circulated the statement that would have been delivered by a representative of the Somali Gender Equity Movement.

Prior to the meeting, the Council members which have signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS—Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UAE, and the UK—delivered a WPS-focused statement to the press. Among other issues, the statement called for "sexual and gender-based violence prevention and responses to be mainstreamed into Somalia's drought response and famine prevention plan, and for women's participation in the elaboration of this plan".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 February, the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee held informal consultations with the Panel of Experts on developments in Somalia, the panel's ongoing investigations, and its areas of focus this year.

On 27 February, the Chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane (Japan), provided the 120-day briefing to the Security Council. During the meeting, Somalia reiterated its request for the full lifting of the arms embargo imposed on the country. Ishikane is expected to provide his next briefing to the Security Council in June.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in June will be the reauthorisation of the ATMIS mandate, which was extended until 30 June pursuant to resolution 2670. The Somali government's report on the implementation of the STP and NSA, the AU's report on the implementation of the ATMIS mandate, and the technical assessment jointly done by the UN, the AU, the EU, the Somali government, and other partners are likely to inform the upcoming negotiation.

The mandate renewal process is also likely to be dictated by the operational timelines of the next drawdown of ATMIS personnel. At the Kampala summit, the leaders underlined the need for a joint assessment of the next drawdown of 3,000 personnel, which is expected to occur by 30 September. The Somali government's efforts in force generation and integration are considered to be critical in light of the impending drawdown of ATMIS personnel.

The other important issue is the ongoing offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. Council members recognise the progress achieved in these operations, but stabilising the recently liberated areas and providing basic services to the people remains an ongoing challenge.

A possible option for Council members during the upcoming mandate renewal negotiation is to consider how the UN can assist in these stabilisation and peacebuilding efforts.

Council Dynamics

Council members support the Somali government's offensive

Somalia

operations against Al-Shabaab, but they may want to see more progress in the implementation of the STP and NSA to ensure the gradual handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to Somali security forces.

The funding shortfall facing ATMIS continues to be raised by the three African members (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique). The EU has been a major financial contributor, but it seems that there are expectations for other bilateral and international partners to share the burden, as observed during the AU-UN joint high-level meeting

in March. Recently, China, India, and the Republic of Korea have provided some funding to ATMIS.

Regarding the security situation, Council members have been concerned about the situation in Las Anod, a disputed area between Puntland and Somaliland. At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a draft presidential statement proposed by the UK, the penholder on Somalia on this issue. It seems that there is some disagreement on the draft text, including the format.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The anticipated briefer is the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita. The Council also expects to vote to extend the mandate of the 1533 DRC sanctions regime, which is set to expire on 1 July, and the mandate renewal of the Group of Experts, which is scheduled to expire on 1 August.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in the eastern DRC continues to be a major concern. Regional efforts under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), known as the Nairobi and Luanda processes, have been focused on securing a ceasefire, the withdrawal of the M23 Movement (M23, an armed group operating in the DRC's North Kivu province that was dormant in the past decade and became active again in 2022) from occupied areas, the disarmament and cantonment of its combatants, and the search for political solutions through dialogue.

Notwithstanding ongoing tensions, a ceasefire agreed in March has led to a fragile calm in the region. Briefing the Security Council on 19 April, Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia said that there had been no recent reports of major clashes between the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) and the M23. The group has withdrawn from several localities in North Kivu, as verified by the various mechanisms of the EAC and ICGLR. While the ceasefire seems to be holding, Xia noted that the withdrawal of M23 from occupied areas remains incomplete and that the disarmament and cantonment of combatants and the search for a durable political solution are still pending. Other local and external armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), and the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) continue to cause havoc in the region, he said.

Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, the EAC facilitator for the Nairobi peace process in the eastern DRC, convened a planning workshop ahead of the fourth round of talks, which are expected

to take place in the DRC. (The three previous rounds were held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2022.) The EAC Regional Force (EACRF) announced full deployment status following the arrival of the South Sudanese contingent in the eastern DRC in April. There has been disagreement, however, between the Congolese government and the EACRF regarding the force's mandate. While the Congolese government wants the EACRF to undertake offensive operations against the M23, EACRF troop-contributing countries said that they were not in the DRC to fight the group. It is against this backdrop that the EACRF force commander, Major General Jeff Nyagah (Kenya), resigned from his position. Nyagah reportedly cited "an aggravated threat to [his] safety and a systemic plan to frustrate efforts of the EACRF" in a 27 April letter to the EAC Secretary-General, although the authenticity of this letter has not been verified.

Subsequently, Kenya appointed Major General Alphaxard Muthuri Kiugu to replace Nyagah. The Congolese government expressed displeasure with Kenya's decision, arguing that it was made without any consultation. It now says that the regional force will have to leave in June when its mandate expires if its performance is found to be unsatisfactory. (EACRF was deployed for an initial period of six months, which expired in March. Although the EAC wanted a six-month extension of the mandate, it seems the Congolese government only agreed to three months.) The EAC chair, Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye, is expected to convene an extraordinary summit to discuss these issues.

The Congolese government, frustrated by the EACRF, has turned its attention towards the Southern African Development Community (SADC). On 8 May, the SADC Troika—consisting of the chairperson (Namibia), the incoming chairperson (Zambia), and the previous chairperson (South Africa) of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security—met in Windhoek, Namibia to discuss the situation in eastern DRC. The meeting was also attended by Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, the current chair of SADC, and troop-contributing countries of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade, namely Malawi, Tanzania, and South Africa. The meeting decided to deploy a SADC Force to restore peace and stability in eastern DRC, among other things.

On 6 May, the 11th meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolution S/RES/2667 (20 December 2022) lifted the notification requirements related to the arms embargo imposed within the framework of the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2023/3 (29 March 2023) was on the situation in the DRC. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9298 (29 March 2023) was on the situation in the DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

the DRC and the Region (PSC-F) was held in Bujumbura, Burundi in the presence of regional leaders, Secretary-General António Guterres, and AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat. Tshisekedi, who held the rotating chairmanship of the ROM for the past year, handed over the baton to Ndayishimiye. The meeting reviewed recent developments in the DRC and the Great Lakes region and discussed progress and challenges in the implementation of the PSC-F, which marked its tenth anniversary on 24 February. The communiqué adopted at the end of the ROM meeting underscored the need “to conduct an independent, frank, and sincere assessment” to revitalise the PSC-F. The assessment is expected to include PSC-F’s strengths and weaknesses and the signatory countries’ adherence to its principles and commitments. Its conclusions and recommendations are expected to be discussed at the next ROM meeting, which takes place once a year at the heads of state and government level.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 22 February, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris concluded her official visit to the DRC. In a statement after the visit, Brands Kehris expressed strong concern about the deterioration of security in eastern DRC and strongly condemned ongoing brutal attacks against civilians and “documented human rights violations and mass killings”. She echoed the Secretary-General’s push for “action for peace” in Africa and urged the authorities to “redouble their efforts to counter rising hatred and implement targeted initiatives to promote trust and cohesion within communities”.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 20 December 2022, the Council adopted resolution 2667, lifting the advance notification requirement for any shipment of arms and related material or any provision of assistance, advice, or training related to military activities in the DRC. The Council also requested the Congolese government to submit to it a confidential report on efforts to ensure the safe and effective management of weapons and ammunition, which was due by the end of May.

On 9 May, the Committee met to receive a briefing from MONUSCO representatives on the presence of armed groups, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and the proliferation of arms and related material. Rwanda is said to have proposed several names for designation under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. Several Council members put holds on the list. Although it seems that Russia has partially lifted its hold, other Council members have maintained their holds on the list, which has prevented the names from being designated.

PBC-Related Developments

The chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Ivan Šimonović (Croatia), briefed the Council at its 19 April meeting on the Great Lakes region. Šimonović highlighted 13 different messages and actions for the Council’s consideration. These included: encouraging the Council to call for the implementation by all states of the commitments in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region; calling for strengthened international support to alleviate the extreme humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC; and stressing the need to increase national and regional efforts to involve young people in political processes and socio-economic development. Šimonović also encouraged the Council to express support for efforts to establish the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources and to continue to reiterate the importance of a strategic and coherent approach by the UN and stakeholders to sustain peacebuilding gains, particularly in the context of MONUSCO’s transition.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for Council members in June is the extension of the 1533 DRC sanctions regime and its the Group of Experts.

The other issue is the security situation in eastern DRC. Council members might be interested in following up on the progress in the ongoing regional initiatives under the Nairobi and Luanda processes as well as the outcomes of the meeting of the RoM and the SADC Troika summit. A possible option is to issue a press statement welcoming the holding of the RoM meeting and supporting the revitalisation of the PSC framework.

Council Dynamics

The negotiations on MONUSCO’s mandate renewal in December 2022 were complicated by the discussion on lifting the notification requirements under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. Some Council members were not comfortable discussing the matter during a MONUSCO mandate renewal since the sanctions regime was set to be extended in June, but the Council eventually voted on a separate resolution, lifting the notification requirement. Therefore, the upcoming negotiation is not expected to be contentious, with Council members likely to agree to a straightforward renewal of the sanctions regime for another year. Nonetheless, some Council members might be interested in the Congolese government’s confidential report on its weapons and ammunition management.

Council members support ongoing regional initiatives to address the security situation in the eastern DRC, but during the negotiation on the draft presidential statement adopted following the Council’s visiting mission to the DRC in March, there was no agreement on language welcoming the deployment of EACRF. The final text “acknowledges” the deployment. Council members have been emphasising the need to ensure that the regional efforts are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The decision by SADC to deploy its force in eastern DRC, in addition to the EAC regional force and other bilateral forces already on the ground, is likely to raise issues of coordination. The AU is expected to convene a meeting of the EAC, the Economic Community of Central African States, ICGLR, and SADC to work toward this objective.

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

Syria

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its monthly meetings on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. Council members are also expected to hold an informal interactive dialogue (IID), in accordance with resolution 2672 of 9 January.

Key Recent Developments

Syria continues to grapple with the devastating humanitarian consequences of the 6 February earthquake and its aftershocks. According to UNICEF's 2 May situation report, approximately 6,000 people were killed and more than 12,000 injured in Syria. An outbreak of cholera has further compounded the already grim humanitarian situation in the country. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) 8 April situation report on the cholera outbreak in Syria, 111,084 suspected cases, including 104 deaths attributed to the disease, were reported across the country between 25 August 2022 and 8 April.

Prior to the earthquake, humanitarian aid was delivered to northwest Syria from Türkiye through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing. The opening of two additional border crossings in northwest Syria, Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee, has allowed the UN and other humanitarian organisations to accelerate aid delivery. According to OCHA data, at the time of writing, a total of 2,199 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies from seven UN agencies had crossed to northwest Syria from Türkiye since 9 February through the three border crossings: Bab al-Hawa (1,824 trucks), Bab al-Salam (307 trucks), and Al Ra'ee (68 trucks).

The additional border crossings were initially authorised to operate for three months, starting 13 February. In a 13 May post on Twitter, the Permanent Representative of Syria to the UN, Bassam Sabbagh, said that the Syrian government had decided to extend the authorisation for the two border crossings for another three months, ending on 13 August.

In recent months, securing funding for the myriad of new and ongoing humanitarian challenges in the country has continued to be difficult. At the time of writing, although the flash appeal for earthquake relief in Syria (\$397.6 million) was fully funded, the humanitarian response plan for 2023 (\$5.41 billion) was only 8.6 percent funded.

On 1 May, Jordan hosted a meeting of the foreign ministers of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria as a follow-up to the 14 April meeting of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, hosted by Saudi Arabia, which focused on the possibility of normalising relations with Syria and its readmission into the Arab League. In a statement after the meeting, the foreign ministers committed themselves to resolving the Syrian crisis through a political solution that preserves Syria's sovereignty and strengthens conditions for the voluntary and safe return of refugees in a way that achieves national reconciliation and restores Syria's security and stability. They also agreed to:

- continue the talks in accordance with an agreed timetable and in a way that integrates all international efforts;
- intensify efforts to work with the international community and the UN to accelerate the implementation of early recovery projects;

- enhance cooperation to advance efforts towards the exchange of abductees and detainees and search for missing persons;
- strengthen cooperation between the Syrian government, concerned countries, and the UN in formulating a comprehensive strategy to enhance security and combat terrorism;
- deepen cooperation between Syria, its neighbouring countries, and countries affected by drug trafficking across Syrian borders; and
- advance efforts to resume the work of the Constitutional Committee.

On 7 May, the League of Arab States (LAS) convened a ministerial-level extraordinary session in Cairo to discuss the situation in Syria. The ministers decided that the group would readmit Syria, whose LAS membership was suspended in 2011 because of the Syrian government's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters. The decision established a ministerial group, comprising Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, to liaise with the Syrian government and seek a solution to the Syrian crisis through reciprocal steps.

On 19 May, the 32nd regular session of the LAS Council meeting was convened at summit level in Saudi Arabia. In a declaration, adopted at the meeting, the LAS leaders expressed hope that the decision to readmit Syria into the group will support the country's stability and territorial integrity. The declaration stressed the "importance of continuing to intensify pan-Arab efforts aimed at helping Syria overcome its crisis". In a press conference, following the meeting, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud, while speaking about the normalisation of relations with the Syrian government, noted that Saudi Arabia understands "the point of view of the [US] and our partners in the west, but addressing the ongoing challenges requires a new approach and that will not come without dialogue". He added that Saudi Arabia will continue the dialogue with the European countries and the US to address the challenges.

On 10 May, the foreign ministers of Iran, Russia, Syria, and Türkiye met in Moscow as part of the recent rapprochement efforts between Syria and Türkiye brokered by Russia. In a post on Twitter following the meeting, the Turkish foreign minister noted that he had stressed enhanced cooperation to fight terrorism, working together to establish the basis for the return of Syrian refugees, advancing the Syrian political process, and protecting Syria's territorial integrity. In his opening remarks at the meeting, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that the launch of the process for Türkiye-Syria normalisation "exerts a noticeable positive influence not only on the situation around Syria but on the overall atmosphere throughout the Middle East". At the same time, according to a 10 May Reuters article, the Syrian foreign minister said that ending the illegal presence of all foreign militaries, including Türkiye's, from Syrian territories remained a priority.

Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen has continued engagement with stakeholders through the "step-for-step" initiative. Through this initiative, Pedersen is asking the Syrian government, the opposition, regional states, and other stakeholders what concessions they are willing to make in exchange for reciprocal actions on

Syria

matters such as abductees, detainees, and missing persons; humanitarian assistance and early recovery projects; and conditions for dignified, safe, and voluntary refugee returns.

In a 14 May post on Twitter, Pedersen noted that he had held a comprehensive discussion with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian; his special advisor, Ali-Asghar Khaji; and other senior officials on Syria. He noted that the coordination between the UN and the Astana group (Russia, Türkiye, and Iran) is an important part of efforts to resume the work of the Constitutional Committee. He further noted his recent engagement with al-Saud, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and Jordanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ayman Safadi.

On 15 May, Pedersen met with Burak Akçapar, Türkiye's deputy foreign minister. In a post on Twitter following the meeting, the Turkish foreign ministry noted that both parties discussed the latest developments in Syria and stressed the importance of advancing the political process in accordance with resolution 2254, including the Constitutional Committee.

On 30 May, the Council convened its monthly meeting on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Pedersen, OCHA Deputy Director of Operations and Advocacy Ghada Eltahir Mudawi and Middle East Regional Program Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council Morgane Aveline briefed. Mudawi provided an overview of the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the country and described the recent efforts of the UN and other actors to deliver humanitarian aid in Syria. She called for a 12-month extension of the Security Council authorisation of the cross-border mechanism, which is due to expire on 10 July. She added that OCHA aims to "broaden the geographical scope of missions to more areas of high severity of needs and less-served and less-covered locations".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs in Syria. Periodic briefings from Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths and other OCHA officials have helped keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation on the ground. Council members could also consider inviting representatives of Syrian humanitarian aid organisations to engage with them to explore avenues for improving aid delivery mechanisms in Syria.

A related issue is ensuring the continued flow of humanitarian aid into northwest Syria.

Another key long-standing issue is finding a way to break the political impasse in Syria and to provide political support for the

Special Envoy's efforts in this regard.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement that:

- expresses strong concern about the growing humanitarian needs in the country;
- expresses strong support for the efforts of the UN and humanitarian actors on the ground;
- condemns attacks on civilians and underscores the need for the parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law and human rights law;
- encourages donors to enhance their support for the Syrian humanitarian response plan;
- urges the Syrian government to facilitate unimpeded humanitarian access for the UN and other humanitarian agencies in the earthquake-affected areas; and
- expresses strong support for the Special Envoy's efforts to reinvigorate the political process.

Council Dynamics

Strong divisions persist among Council members on the Syria file. China and Russia tend to be sympathetic to the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and drawing connections between unilateral sanctions on Syria and the dire humanitarian situation in the country. On the other hand, the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded members criticise the government for violating international humanitarian law and human rights law, arbitrarily detaining people, and not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue.

Council members also hold divergent views about normalising ties with the Syrian government. In the 27 April Council briefing, the US noted that it will not normalise relations with Syria and has discouraged other member states from doing so. It added that the US will not lift sanctions on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or support reconstruction in the absence of "genuine, comprehensive and enduring reforms and progress on the political process". On the other hand, some Council members, including Russia, China, and the United Arab Emirates, support the normalisation of ties with the Syrian government.

On the humanitarian side, 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, continue 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.

Brazil and Switzerland are the proponents on Syrian humanitarian issues.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Lindiwe Knutson
Policy Analyst

Erik Ramberg
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Communications Officer

Gaurav Redhal
Research Assistant

Mai Nguyen
Research Intern

Security Council Report is a non-profit organisation supported by the Governments of Albania, Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and the Carnegie Corporation.

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 9429

Web securitycouncilreport.org

Follow [@SCRtweets](https://twitter.com/SCRtweets) on Twitter