

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In July, the UK will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

The UK plans to organise three signature events. The first signature event is a briefing on “[Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Risks for International Peace and Security](#)”. The UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs James Cleverly is expected to chair the meeting and Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief. The UK intends for the meeting to build on the “AI World Congress” held in London on 28 and 29 June and to shed light on the opportunities and risks posed by artificial intelligence.

The second signature event is an open debate on [sexual violence in conflict](#). The meeting will be chaired by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, the UK Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and the UN and Special Representative of the UK Prime Minister on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and two civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

The third signature event is the annual open debate on [children and armed conflict](#). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba, Deputy Executive Director for programmes at UNICEF Omar Abdi, and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

In July, the Security Council will also receive a briefing from force commanders of [UN peacekeeping](#) operations.

African issues on the programme of work in July are:

- [West Africa](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS);
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), renewal of the CAR sanctions regime and of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee; and
- [Sudan](#), the semi-annual briefing by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on its Darfur-related activities.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), possible reauthorisation of the cross-border aid mechanism and meetings on the political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons tracks;
- [Iran](#), briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments and renewal of the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA);
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s 1701 report; and
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the quarterly open debate.

The Council is expected to meet on two European issues in July. There will be a briefing on [Ukraine](#), which will be chaired by UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly. The Council may hold additional meetings on Ukraine depending on developments. Council members will also hold consultations on [Cyprus](#) and renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

On the Americas, there will be a briefing and consultations on [Colombia](#). The Council is also expected to hold a meeting on the situation in [Haiti](#) and to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH).

Other issues could be raised in July depending on developments.

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In Hindsight: Selecting Subsidiary Body Chairs

With the Security Council elections behind them, incoming Council members—Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia—are now starting to discuss the allocation of the chairs and vice-chairs of the subsidiary bodies. For many years this process was shrouded in secrecy, with the permanent members deciding how to allocate these positions, often with minimal consultation. It has become more transparent, and with greater autonomy for the elected members, but difficulties in the last few years may suggest the need for further refinements.

Guidance and Practice in the Selection of the Subsidiary Body Chairs and Vice-Chairs

Elected members' growing frustration with their limited say in choosing the subsidiary bodies they chair led to strong calls by many outgoing chairs for a change in the process. In July 2016, the Council issued a presidential note on transitional arrangements (S/2016/619), which set out a new process for the allocation of subsidiary body positions. It said that consultations should begin as soon as possible after the elections and be conducted in a "balanced, transparent, efficient and inclusive way" by two members of the Council "working in full cooperation". The understanding was that these two members would be the chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG) and the coordinator of the permanent members, a position that rotates quarterly. The transitional arrangements conveyed in the 2016 note were incorporated in the 2017 "Note 507" on working methods.

Permanent members still hold significant sway over the distribution of the chairs. Once the incoming members have agreed on an initial list of subsidiary body chairs, the IWG chair conveys this to the P5 coordinator. Should any of the permanent members have a strong position on a particular elected member chairing a subsidiary body, their view is likely to prevail.

Issues during the Selection Process

One of the key elements of the 2016 note was a more defined timeline, with emphasis on inclusiveness in the selection of the chairs of subsidiary bodies. It called on Council members "to make every effort to agree provisionally on the appointment of the chairs of the subsidiary organs for the following year no later than 1 October". This change coincided with Council elections being moved forward from October to June, allowing more time for incoming members to prepare. In spite of this, the 1 October deadline has yet to be met. The incoming members have made a concerted effort every year, and came closest in 2019, when they reached agreement on 11 October. In 2020, it took until mid-December for a final list to emerge, and in 2021, the process was only concluded in early January 2022.

Last year the prospects for a quick agreement looked promising. The incoming members (I5) for 2023-2024 started their discussions immediately after the elections in June 2022, and swiftly agreed on how the 2023 vacancies would be allocated. Then the process stalled: at least one permanent member was opposed to a footnote in the draft specifying that incoming member Japan would chair the IWG in 2024, when the current chair, Albania, leaves. This months-long impasse led to a discussion under "any other business" in the new year, on 27 January 2023, where IWG chair Albania read out a joint

statement from the elected members (E10) voicing support for Japan as chair in 2024. Ecuador, as the coordinator of the E10 for January, transmitted a letter on behalf of the E10 (S/2023/68) reiterating their unanimous support for Japan assuming this position the following year. The letter also conveyed the expectation that the Council would take note of the positions of the current elected members and the new members that would join in 2024. The presidential note on the 2023 chairs and vice-chairs that was finally issued on 31 January did not include the footnote.

Footnotes in the note on subsidiary chairs and vice-chairs are a recent development. They first appeared in 2021, and were used again in 2022, to spell out how some positions will be filled in the future. They appear to have been used to mollify members who had failed to secure their preferred subsidiary body. For example, during the 2020 negotiations, India failed in its bid to chair the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) & Al-Qaida sanctions committee. The footnote to the 2021 note (S/2021/2) indicates that India would take up the position of chair of the 1373 CTC committee in 2022. Similarly, incoming member UAE's wish to chair the same committee, which was unavailable to them in 2022—having already been allocated to India—led to a footnote to the 2022 note (S/2022/2/Rev.4) signaling the UAE as the chair in 2023. The 2021 note also includes a footnote indicating that Mexico would be the vice-chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in 2022. The permanent members had been cool to such footnotes, citing, among other reasons, the issue of slots not being available to the next batch of incoming members.

Getting agreement on the allocation of chairs is affected by the composition of incoming members, their level of interest in chairing particular bodies, and, of course, which subsidiary bodies are available. In some years, several of the five incoming members have competed intensively over protection files, such as children and armed conflict, women, peace and security, and climate, peace and security. Other files are perceived as unpopular because they are politically sensitive, such as the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea sanctions committee and the 1970 Libya sanctions committee, or resource intensive, such as the counter-terrorism committees. Adding to the complications of finding a chair for these subsidiary bodies, the permanent members often have strong views about the suitability of particular members for certain committees.

Burden Sharing and a Fair Distribution of Work

The outcome of the selection process for chairs can mean some elected members have to devote extensive time and resources to subsidiary bodies. The calls for greater burden sharing, which began around 2016 as the number of subsidiary bodies increased, have grown louder. The presidential note adopted in December 2019 (S/2019/991) reaffirmed that the informal consultation process for the selection of chairs should take place in a balanced, transparent, efficient and inclusive way but also stressed that it should "take into account the need for a shared responsibility and a fair distribution of work for the selection of the Chairs among all members of the Council, bearing in mind the capacities and resources of members".

While there have been suggestions that permanent members should also take on the chairing of subsidiary bodies, a role performed

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exclusively by elected members since 2009¹, members are aware of the potential drawbacks, including permanent members holding onto such positions for too long. Permanent members are vice-chairs of several committees, but this rarely proves a substantive role.

The issue of subsidiary body chairs is intimately linked to that of penholderships. (The penholder role is an informal one and refers to the member of the Council leading the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on a particular Council agenda item.) Most penholding remains in the hands of France, the UK, and the US (P3). It is usually the case, as well, that the elected member chairing a given sanctions committee is not the penholder on the corresponding country file. But there are signs that the P3 has become significantly more open to sharing the pen with elected members. In 2019–2020, Germany sharing the pen with the UK on Libya and Sudan sanctions appeared to be a one-off development. The past year has proven otherwise. In 2022, Mexico was co-pen with France on Ukraine humanitarian issues, with the US on Haiti and the UK on Colombia, as well as co-pen with France on Mali sanctions—a committee that it chaired. In 2023, Ecuador took over as co-pen on Haiti and on Ukraine humanitarian issues. Albania has been the co-pen on the Ukraine political file with the US in both 2022 and 2023. These developments have prompted elected members to explore the possibility of a more structured link between chairing a given subsidiary body and holding the pen on that issue—as well as seeking other opportunities to take on penholderships.

Reflections on the Process

Newly-elected members now approach the discussion of subsidiary body chairs with a clear idea of how a particular subsidiary body matches their priorities and resources. While this is an indication of early preparation and strong interest in some issues, it can lead to inflexible positions. Early agreement on the list of chairs requires compromise and the willingness to accept “reserve positions” when

a member’s first choice is not accommodated. Past practice has shown that leaving a gap in the list because of I5 disagreement has led to the permanent members making more changes to the list. The delay in getting agreement to the 2023 list meant that no subsidiary bodies were able to function until February. A system of ensuring that subsidiary bodies are able to continue to do their work pending agreement on the full list may need to be considered.

Since 2016, it has been harder to fill the combination of subsidiary bodies available in some years due to their heavy resource requirements, political sensitivity, or both. With this a recurring problem, it may be worth considering reallocating the chairs available in given years to create a more equitable distribution.

Incoming members may not arrive with full knowledge of the role of the chair and how it differs across subsidiary bodies. Early briefings from the Secretariat on the intricacies of how different subsidiary bodies operate might reduce some members’ anxiety over taking on a sanctions committee. The IWG in 2021, under the chairmanship of St Vincent and the Grenadines, discussed a note on capacity building to facilitate the process of appointment of subsidiary body chairs, but were unable to get agreement.

The unity of the incoming members and the support of the sitting elected members for each year’s proposed arrangements are integral to minimising changes from the P5. Keeping the current E10 members informed of how the consultative process is advancing will help maintain this solidarity as well as increasing the transparency of the process. In this context, it seems Albania, as the chair of the IWG, has suggested that the selection process be discussed in IWG meetings if there is no agreement on the list by 1 October. This measure, too, may support the incoming members in navigating what is their first post-electoral test of working together, namely agreeing on the distribution of available chairs.

Available Subsidiary Body Chair Positions in 2024

Of the fourteen active sanctions regimes, ten will be vacant in 2024. Of the six working groups that are part of the selection process, four will be vacant in 2024.

SUBSIDIARY BODY	CURRENT CHAIR	FORMER CHAIRS (2010 – 2023)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism	UAE	Türkiye (2010), India (2011-2012), Morocco (2013), Lithuania (2014-2015), Egypt (2016-2017), Peru (2018-2019), Tunisia (2020-2021), India (2022).
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1518 (2003)	Albania	Nigeria (2010-2011, 2015), Togo (2012-2013), Chad (2014), Egypt (2016-2017), Poland (2018-2019), Estonia (2020-2021), Albania (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Gabon	Brazil (2010-2011), Azerbaijan (2012-2013), Jordan (2014-2015), Egypt (2016-2017), Kuwait (2018-2019), Niger (2020-2021), Gabon (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning the Sudan	Ghana	Austria (2010), Colombia (2011-2012), Argentina (2013-2014), Venezuela (2015-2016), Ukraine (2017), Poland (2018-2019), Estonia (2020-2021), Ghana (2022-present)

¹ The UK chaired the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee in 2001 and 2002 and Russia chaired it in 2004 and 2005. France was the first chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, a position it held from 2005 – 2008.

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SUBSIDIARY BODY	CURRENT CHAIR	FORMER CHAIRS (2010 – 2023)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1636 (2005) concerning Lebanon Sanctions	Albania	Gabon (2010-2011), Togo (2012-2013), Chad (2014-2015), Japan (2016-2017), Equatorial Guinea (2018-2019), Viet Nam (2020-2021), Albania (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau	UAE	Morocco (2012-2013), Nigeria (2014-2015), Uruguay (2016-2017), Equatorial Guinea (2018-2019), Tunisia (2020-2021), UAE (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African	Ghana	Lithuania (2014-2015), Ukraine (2016-2017), Côte d'Ivoire (2018-2019), Niger (2020-2021), Ghana (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014) concerning Yemen	Albania	Lithuania (2014-2015), Japan (2016-2017), Peru (2018-2019), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2020-2021), Albania (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan	Gabon	Chile (2015), Senegal (2016-2017), Poland (2018-2019), Viet Nam (2020-2021), Gabon (2022-present)
Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2653 (2022) concerning Haiti	Gabon	
Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations	Ghana	Japan (2010), Nigeria (2011), Morocco (2012), Pakistan (2013), Rwanda (2014), Chad (2015), Senegal (2016-2017), Côte d'Ivoire (2018-2019), Tunisia (2020-2021), Ghana (2022-present)
Working Group established pursuant to resolution 1566 (2004)	UAE	Türkiye (2010), India (2011-2012), Morocco (2013), Lithuania (2014-2015), Egypt (2016-2017), Peru (2018-2019), Niger (2020-2021), UAE (2022-present)
Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions	Albania	Japan (2010, 2016-2017), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2011), Portugal (2012), Argentina (2013-2014), Angola (2015), Kuwait (2018-2019), Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2020-2021), Albania (2022-present)
Informal Working Group on International Tribunals	Gabon	Austria (2010), Portugal (2011), Guatemala (2012-2013), Chile (2014-2015), Uruguay (2016-2017), Peru (2018-2019), Viet Nam (2020-2021), Gabon (2022-present)

Available Positions in Informal Subsidiary Bodies

These positions are not part of the list of chairs of subsidiary bodies as they are informal groups.

INFORMAL SUBSIDIARY BODY	OUTGOING CO-CHAIRS	REMAINING CO-CHAIRS
Informal Expert Group on Climate Change, Peace and Security	UAE	Switzerland and Mozambique
2242 Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security	UAE	Switzerland

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DPRK (North Korea)

On 2 June, the Council convened for an opening briefing on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) (S/PV.9336). Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, the UK, and the US requested the meeting after the DPRK attempted to launch a military reconnaissance satellite on 31 May. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed and the Republic of Korea (ROK) participated in the meeting under rule 39 and 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure respectively.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 5 June, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report (S/2023/389) on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (S/PV.9338). The Council was briefed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central

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African States Gilberto da Piedade Verissimo, and Marie Tamoifo, Founder and Regional Coordinator of the Network of Young Leaders for Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems.

Security Council Elections

On 6 June, the 77th session of the UN General Assembly held elections for membership of the Security Council. The five seats available for election in 2023, according to the regular distribution among regions, were: two seats for the African Group; one seat for the Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Asia-Pacific Group); one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC); and one seat for the Eastern European Group. Among these, only the Eastern European Group had contested elections, with Belarus running against Slovenia. After the first round of voting, the following members were elected for the 2024–2025 term: Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Slovenia.

Iraq (UNITAD)

On 7 June, the Security Council received a briefing (S/PV.9341) from Christian Ritscher, the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). Iraq also participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States

On 8 June, the Security Council convened a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS) (S/PV.9343). The meeting, which was one of the signature events of the June Council Presidency of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was chaired by Khalifa Shaheen Almarar, Minister of State at the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit; and Dr. Omnia El Omrani, who was the Youth Envoy for the President of the 27th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27), held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in 2022.

International Criminal Tribunals

On 12 June, the Council held its semi-annual debate (S/PV.9344) on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The IRMCT's president, Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, and its chief prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, briefed. They met with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to the debate. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Rwanda, and Serbia participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Climate Change, Peace and Security

On 13 June, as one of the signature events of its presidency, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) convened a ministerial-level open debate on climate change, peace and security under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.9345). Mariam Almheiri, the UAE's Minister of Climate Change and Environment, chaired the meeting. The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Juan Manuel Santos—former President of Colombia, Nobel Peace Laureate, and a member of The Elders—and

Salma Kadry, Climate, Peace and Security Expert at the Consortium of International Agricultural Research.

Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace

On 14 June, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) convened a high-level briefing on "The Values of Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace" (S/PV.9346). This was one of the signature events of the UAE's June presidency. UAE Minister of State Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi chaired the meeting, at which the briefers were: Secretary-General António Guterres; Sheikh Ahmed Muhammed Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of al-Azhar and Chairman of the Muslim Council of Elders; Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for Relations with States and International Organisations of the Holy See; and Latifa Ibn Ziaten, the Founder and President of Association IMAD pour la Jeunesse et la Paix.

Following the briefing, the Security Council adopted resolution 2686 on tolerance and international peace and security, which was co-authored by the UAE and the UK. Although the resolution was adopted unanimously, several Council members delivered explanations of vote (S/PV.9347). France, for instance, regretted that the resolution was selective and "too weak" on such issues as freedom of expression, human rights, women's rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, adding that it contained "a conception of extremism which is potentially libticide".

UNDOF (Golan)

Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on 15 June. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. On 29 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2689 renewing the UNDOF mandate for six months.

Libya

On 19 June, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9351) followed by closed consultations on Libya. Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdoulaye Bathily briefed the Council on the latest political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country. Dr. Abeir Imneina, Head of the Washm Center for Women's Studies in Libya, also briefed the Council on the challenges faced by Libyan civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and women. Additionally, the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kimihiro Ishikane (Japan), presented the periodic report on the committee's activities.

Mali

On 16 June, the Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Mali (S/PV.9350). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) El-Ghassim Wane briefed, presenting the Secretary-General's 1 June report on Mali (S/2023/402). Speaking at the session, Mali's Transitional Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Abdoulaye Diop called for the withdrawal of MINUSMA "without delay". On 30 June, the Council adopted resolution 2690, which terminated the mandate of the MINUSMA as of 30 June and requested the UN to

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immediately start on 1 July the transfer of its tasks and the orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal of its personnel, with the objective of completing this process by 31 December.

Council members issued a press statement on 9 June condemning an attack against MINUSMA near Ber, in the region of Timbuktu, which killed one peacekeeper from Burkina Faso and injured seven others (SC/15316). (Several days later, a second peacekeeper died from his injuries.)

South Sudan

The Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on 20 June (S/PV.9353). The briefers were: Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicholas Haysom, Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) Major General (Retired) Charles Tai Gituai, and Marc Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

Afghanistan

On 21 June, the Council convened for an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Afghanistan (S/PV.9354). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and Shabana Basij-Rasikh, the Co-Founder and President of the School of Leadership, Afghanistan, briefed. Head and Representative of OCHA in Geneva and Director of the Coordination Division Ramesh Rajasingham also briefed the Council via videoconference during the closed consultations. Rajasingham briefed on behalf of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths pursuant to resolution 2615 of 22 December 2021, which established a humanitarian exception to the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime and requested that the Emergency Relief Coordinator brief the Council on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan every six months. Afghanistan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan also participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Gulf of Guinea Piracy

On 21 June, the Security Council convened for a briefing on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea to mark the ten-year anniversary of the "Yaoundé Code of Conduct" that created the Gulf of Guinea's

maritime security architecture (S/PV.9355). The Council heard briefings from Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, President of the Commission of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Gilberto Da Piedade Verissimo, President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission Omar Alieu Touray, and Executive Secretary of the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC) Jose Mba Abeso.

Somalia

On 22 June, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in Somalia (S/PV.9356). The UAE's Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Shakhboot Bin Nahyan Al Nahyan, chaired the meeting. The briefers were the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Catriona Laing; the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef; and Cindy McCain, the newly appointed Executive Director of WFP. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud attended the meeting and called for the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on his country under the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions regime. On 27 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2687, extending the mandate of ATMIS for six months until 31 December.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 26 June, the Security Council held a briefing and closed consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) (S/PV.9358). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee briefed the Council on the latest developments in DRC and the activities of the mission. The DRC and Rwanda representatives participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. On 27 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2688, extending the 1533 DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2024 and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2024.

Children and Armed Conflict

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on children and armed conflict. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba is expected to present the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, which was made public on 27 June. Other speakers are likely to include UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for programmes Omar Abdi and a

child civil society briefer.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is expected to conduct a field mission to Nigeria from 10 to 13 July, its first country visit since 2019, when working group members travelled to Mali.

Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's annual report covers the period from

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January through December 2022 and provides information on the six grave violations against children in situations on the agenda of the Council, as well as in other situations of concern. The six grave violations are child recruitment and use; killing and maiming; abductions; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and the denial of humanitarian access. The report records 27,180 grave violations against children in 24 country situations and one regional situation (the Lake Chad Basin), which represents an increase from 2021 (23,982). It notes that the most violations took place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Somalia, Ukraine, and Syria.

The report highlights several worrying trends, such as a 112 per cent increase in attacks on schools (1,163) and hospitals (647), mainly in Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Israel and the OPT, Myanmar, Mali, and Afghanistan. It also cites the use of explosive weapons—including those with a wide impact area—in populated areas as among the factors that have had the most severe effect. While in previous years the majority of violations were attributed to non-state armed groups, in 2022 such actors accounted for half of the violations.

This year's annual report adds Haiti and Niger as situations of concern with immediate effect. Information about violations committed against children in these country situations will be included in the Secretary-General's future reports. It also removes India as a situation of concern, citing measures taken by the government to better protect children.

As in previous years, the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report—which list parties that have committed grave violations against children—have attracted substantial attention. Much of the discussion has centred on listings and omissions relating to Ukraine and Israel and the OPT.

The Secretary-General decided to list the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups for committing attacks on schools and hospitals (480) and the killing of children (136) in Ukraine. This marks the first time that a permanent member of the Security Council is listed in the annual report's annexes. He also expressed concern about the high number of children killed (80) and maimed (175) and attacks on schools and hospitals (212) by Ukrainian armed forces but did not list them in the report's annexes. The Secretary-General urged the Ukrainian armed forces immediately to implement measures to protect children and to prevent attacks on schools and hospitals, adding that he will be "particularly attentive to this situation in the preparation of my next report".

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, allegations related to the transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia have created international controversy and have often been raised at the Security Council. In a 27 June press conference, Gamba noted that while the transfer of children does not constitute a grave violation, she has engaged with Russia on the matter, adding that Moscow has offered to share information with the UN about "children displaced", including to facilitate reunification of children with their families. Gamba visited Moscow on 18 and 19 May to engage with Russian authorities on preventing and ending violations against children, during which she met with Russia's Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova. (On 17 March, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Lvova-Belova and Russian President

Vladimir Putin for allegedly committing the war crime of "unlawful deportation" and "unlawful transfer" of children from Ukraine to Russia.) The meeting was criticised by several interlocutors, including civil society organisations and member states, some of which apparently made *démarches* to the Secretary-General.

Several civil society organisations and member states have criticised the Secretary-General for failing to hold accountable Israeli security forces and Palestinian armed groups, neither of which were listed in the annual report's annexes. Several civil society organisations have called for Israel's listing, with some also calling for the listing of Palestinian armed groups. According to the report, Israeli forces were responsible for killing 42 children and maiming 370 others, while 563 children required medical assistance after inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli forces. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) was responsible for killing nine children, while two others were killed by other Palestinian perpetrators. A total of 100 Palestinian children were maimed by the PIJ due to rockets fired in Gaza, while seven Israeli children were injured by Palestinian perpetrators.

In last year's annual report, the Secretary-General documented a substantial number of airstrikes by Israeli armed forces, which resulted in a "significant increase in the number of cases of violence against children". He warned that "should the situation repeat itself in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Israel should be listed". The 2022 report also documented a substantial number of rocket strikes by Palestinian armed groups, which resulted in a "significant increase in the number of cases of violence against children". The Secretary-General warned that "if the high number of violations against children were to be repeated in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, should be listed".

In response to questions posed during the 27 June press conference, Gamba said that Israel and the Palestinian armed groups were not listed in this year's annual report because the number of airstrikes and rocket strikes in 2022 decreased compared to 2021. She added that Israel, Hamas, and the PIJ have engaged with her—including during her visit to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza (12-15 December 2022)—and that all parties have exchanged letters with her that identify measures aimed at preventing and ending violations against children. Prior to the publication of this year's annual report, Israel had reportedly challenged the data presented in the report. In a 5 June interview, the Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN, Gilad Erdan, suggested that Israel may cease cooperation with some UN agencies if its forces were listed in the report.

Developments in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Since February, when Malta assumed the chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the group has held three formal meetings and four informal meetings. On 27 June, it agreed on conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan. The working group is currently negotiating conclusions on the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict in Mali.

Five sets of conclusions remain pending: on three Secretary-General's reports that were presented in 2021 (Afghanistan, Myanmar,

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and Syria) and two that were presented in 2022 (Nigeria and Somalia). In line with the two-year reporting cycle, the Secretary-General is expected soon to present another report on Myanmar, as his latest report on the country covers the period from 1 September 2018 to 30 June 2020. Difficult dynamics on these country situations have prevented agreement on the conclusions, which require consensus.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure the effectiveness of the tools that support the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. In this regard, the conclusions issued by the working group play an important role in promoting accountability and encouraging conflict parties to take concrete action aimed at preventing and ending violations against children. The working group's inability to adopt conclusions on some country situations for nearly two years is a matter of concern, as it hampers its ability to respond to developments on the ground in a timely manner.

Enhancing the transparency and visibility of the work carried out by the working group may assist in this regard. An option would be to request the chair to provide the Security Council a periodic report on developments related to the working group, similar to periodic briefings provided by chairs of sanctions committees. Such briefings could indicate which conclusions are pending agreement. The working group could also seek to keep the Security Council updated more regularly on developments in the children and armed conflict agenda, including through briefings by the chair following field visits or the adoption of conclusions. Members could also consider utilising suggestions from the 2006 toolkit, proposed by then-chair France, which provides options for the working group, such as convening press conferences to highlight specific issues related to the children and armed conflict agenda. Council members have often chosen to convene press conferences on other thematic issues—such as women, peace and security (WPS) and climate and security—ahead of Council meetings on various country files.

Concerns have been raised that if parties that commit a substantial number of violations are not listed or if parties that appear not to have stopped committing violations against children are nonetheless

taken off the annexes, the credibility of the Secretary-General's report may be called into question. Council members could call for the consistent and transparent application of the criteria for listing and de-listing parties, which were set out in the Secretary-General's 2010 annual report. That report said that a party would be de-listed if the UN had verified that it "has ceased commission of all the said grave violations" for which it was listed.

Council Dynamics

There is strong support overall for the children and armed conflict agenda among Council members. However, political sensitivities in the Council are also evident at the subsidiary body level, resulting in protracted negotiations before consensus can be reached on some conclusions in the working group. It seems that in the past two years, agreement on some of the conclusions on African country situations has been delayed, including because of concerns raised by the African members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and former Council member Kenya) about references to the relevant countries' governments. Mozambique, which succeeded Kenya in the African seat and is included as a situation of concern in the Secretary-General's report, has also taken a strong position against the inclusion of such references.

The difficult dynamics on Ukraine have also coloured the Council's work on children and armed conflict. Council members have at times used Arria-formula meetings to promote differing narratives about the conflict's effects on children. On 5 April, Russia organised an Arria-formula meeting which featured a controversial briefing by Lvova-Belova. Representatives of several Council members—including Albania, Malta, the UK, and the US—walked out of the conference room when she took the floor. On 28 April, Albania, France, and the US, together with non-Council member Ukraine, convened an Arria-formula meeting on the abduction and deportation of children during armed conflict, which mainly focused on Ukraine. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 4 April and 28 April.) It remains to be seen whether Russia's listing in the annexes of Secretary-General's report may increase Council divisiveness and further complicate the working group's ability to carry out its work.

Iran

Expected Council Action

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

of the Joint Commission are expected to brief the Council.

Key Recent Developments

Efforts to revive the JCPOA remain stalled following a breakdown in negotiations last year and subsequent political developments that led to a further deterioration in relations between the parties. In May 2018, then-US President Donald Trump announced that the US, which was originally a signatory of the JCPOA, was withdrawing from the agreement, and went on to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran. Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it has subsequently taken several steps that directly contravene its terms, including enriching uranium to levels higher than JCPOA-mandated

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. Secretary-General's Report S/2022/912 (12 December 2022) was on the implementation of resolution 2231.

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limits and removing cameras and monitoring equipment required by the agreement. In April 2021, following the election of current US President Joseph Biden, the US, Iran, and other parties to the JCPOA began talks in Vienna to revive the agreement.

Those discussions progressed until August 2022, when the EU circulated what it described as a “final” draft agreement. Iran reportedly insisted as a condition for accepting the deal that the IAEA close its investigation into traces of enriched uranium it discovered at three undeclared sites in Iran in 2019. The US and European parties to the JCPOA objected to this demand, which they viewed as a separate issue related to Iran’s obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On 17 November 2022, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution rebuking Iran and directing it to comply with the IAEA’s investigation. In response, Iran announced on 22 November 2022 that it had started enriching uranium to 60 percent purity at its Fordow nuclear facility, a level approaching that required to produce a nuclear weapon and well above the 3.67 percent limit imposed by the JCPOA.

In parallel to these developments, other events further strained diplomatic relations between the parties and entrenched the impasse in JCPOA negotiations. In September 2022, anti-government protests broke out in Iran following the death of Mahsa Amini in police custody, prompting a forceful response from Iranian security services that led to hundreds of deaths and thousands of arrests. Starting in late September 2022, Iran carried out several attacks against Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups in northeastern Iraq, which Iran accused of fomenting the protests. In October 2022, France, Germany, the UK, and the US accused Iran of transferring unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia—allegedly used to carry out attacks in Ukraine—in a purported violation of resolution 2231. Since these incidents, the US has maintained that it still seeks a diplomatic solution to Iran’s nuclear program but that talks to revive the JCPOA are currently not a priority.

With negotiations stalled, Iran has increased its production of highly enriched uranium. In its February quarterly report, the IAEA said that Iran’s stockpile of 60-percent enriched uranium had grown by 25.2 kilograms to 87.5 kilograms over the previous three months. Notably, the report also said that the agency had detected traces of uranium enriched to 83.7 percent—just below the roughly 90-percent level considered weapons-grade—at Iran’s Fordow facility. At a US congressional hearing on 28 February, a senior defence official in the Biden administration said the US government estimated that Iran’s “breakout capacity”—the amount of time it would take to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon—was about 12 days.

Iran claimed the enrichment to 83.7 percent was accidental and due to “unintended fluctuations” in enrichment levels. On 4 March, the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran released a joint statement under which Iran agreed to allow the IAEA to “implement further appropriate verification and monitoring activities”, including the installation of surveillance cameras and enrichment monitoring devices at certain nuclear facilities.

According to the IAEA’s most recent report, dated 31 May, Iran’s stockpile of 60-percent enriched uranium has further increased to 114 kilograms over the past three months. The report said that the agency is no longer actively investigating the 83.7 percent enrichment,

however, after Iran “provided information that is not inconsistent with its explanation for the origin” of these particles. Similarly, the report said that the agency had no further questions regarding the detection of depleted uranium at Iran’s Marivan facility—one of the three it began investigating in 2019—after Iran provided the agency with a “possible explanation” for its presence. Regarding the agreement on new verification and monitoring measures announced in March, IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said in his introductory statement at the IAEA Board of Governors’ meeting on 5 June that only a “fraction” of the envisioned measures had been implemented.

While JCPOA negotiations remain dormant, media reported in mid-June that Iran and the US were engaged in indirect talks in Oman regarding a more limited “informal agreement” aimed at easing diplomatic tensions. Under such a deal, the US might allow Iran to access some frozen assets abroad in exchange for a commitment by Iran to halt production of 60-percent enriched uranium and to cease attacks on American troops in Iraq and Syria through its proxies in the region. The deal could also involve the release of American citizens detained in Iran.

Key Issues and Options

With the prospects for a revival of the JCPOA remaining dim, at least in the near term, the key issue for the Security Council is how to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Analysts have suggested that the steps undertaken by Iran since the US’ withdrawal from the agreement, including its uranium-enrichment activities, are likely to make a return to the original terms of the agreement and full compliance with those terms difficult, particularly given the institutional knowledge acquired by Iran’s nuclear programme and the IAEA’s diminished monitoring capabilities, which prevent it from establishing a new baseline against which to measure compliance with a future agreement. The Iranian government’s violent repression of anti-government protests and apparent support for the Russian war effort in Ukraine have also made reviving the JCPOA politically difficult for the Biden administration.

Given Iran’s non-compliance with the terms of the JCPOA, Council members could initiate the “snapback mechanism” in resolution 2231 if they decide the agreement is no longer viable. This process—which is not subject to the veto—would reinstate the UN sanctions that were in place before the JCPOA was agreed upon. Some analysts have suggested that the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) may initiate this option before the restrictions imposed by resolution 2231 on Iran’s ballistic program expire in October 2023. It does not appear that such a measure is imminent, however, as the indirect bilateral talks between Iran and the US continue and the P3 maintain that their “red line” for initiating the snapback remains the detection of weapons-grade uranium in Iran.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally united in their support for the JCPOA, although a revival of the deal is unlikely given current political dynamics.

Some members, including the P3 and other like-minded states, remain concerned about Iran’s activities that contravene the JCPOA and its lack of cooperation with the IAEA. Some may criticise Iran for raising demands that are beyond the scope of the JCPOA during the

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Vienna talks and blame Iran for the failure to reach an agreement. The US and European members might reiterate the allegations that Iran has supplied UAVs to Russia for use in Ukraine—as they did during the Council’s most recent briefing on Ukraine held on 23 June—and express concern at what they view as Iran’s destabilising behaviour in the region, including through its proxies in Iraq and Syria.

China and Russia are more supportive of Iran. Both states have

previously blamed the US for the collapse of the JCPOA, criticising it for withdrawing from the deal and imposing unilateral sanctions on the Iranian regime. In February, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi undertook a three-day visit to China, during which the countries issued a joint statement calling for the lifting of sanctions as an integral step towards reviving the JCPOA.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). The current mandate expires on 15 July.

In addition, Special Representative and head of BINUH María Isabel Salvador will brief the Council on recent developments in the country and the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on BINUH. A civil society representative is also expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

Haiti’s protracted political impasse remains a key concern and a driver of the country’s deteriorating security and humanitarian situations. Following the assassination of Prime Minister Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, opposing factions have been unable to agree on modalities for holding elections to restore constitutional order. In December 2022, Prime Minister Ariel Henry—who assumed office in an interim capacity after Moïse’s assassination—signed a document titled “The National Consensus for an Inclusive Transition and Transparent Elections”, along with representatives of some political parties, civil society organisations, and members of the private sector. The document outlines steps for holding general elections in the country, stipulating a 14-month transition period, with elections to be held by the end of 2023 and a new elected government to enter office in February 2024. To facilitate this process, the document calls for the establishment of a “High Transitional Council” (HTC) to promote dialogue among various factions on the political and security conditions required for elections to take place. On 6 February, Henry formally installed the HTC, comprising three members from the country’s political, business, and civil sectors.

The national consensus document remains contentious, however. In a 30 January statement, eight political organisations and the Montana Group—a civil society coalition that had previously put forward a separate transition plan seeking a transitional government under different interim leadership—conveyed their disagreement with the process surrounding the document, calling for Henry’s departure and fresh negotiations for a more inclusive accord. These divisions continue to complicate efforts to organise elections with buy-in from all stakeholders.

To foster a broader agreement, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) convened a meeting of Haitian political leaders and civil society activists in Kingston, Jamaica, from 11 to 13 June.

Discussions were facilitated by CARICOM’s “eminent persons group” on Haiti, comprising three former prime ministers in the region: Perry Christie of the Bahamas, Bruce Golding of Jamaica, and Kenny Anthony of St. Lucia. While the meeting did not yield any breakthroughs, participants reportedly did commit to continuing discussions in Haiti, including with members of the HTC, which notably declined the invitation to participate in the Kingston talks.

While Haiti’s political gridlock persists, the country’s security situation continues to deteriorate amidst rampant gang violence. According to BINUH’s latest quarterly human rights report, dated 9 May, the first quarter of 2023 saw a 28 percent increase in the number of people killed, injured, or kidnapped compared with the previous quarter, with a total of 1,634 cases reported. The Secretary-General’s most recent annual report on children in armed conflict, dated 5 June, lists Haiti for the first time as a “situation of concern”. In response to the escalating violence—which the Haitian National Police (HNP) does not have sufficient resources to contain—a vigilante movement known as “bwa kwale” has emerged, reportedly resulting in the death of nearly 200 suspected gang members since April. While the movement has led to a decrease in gang-related crime, human rights activists and legal experts have expressed concern at the extrajudicial attacks.

The country’s humanitarian situation also remains dire. The most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification survey—conducted by a group of humanitarian organisations and inter-governmental institutions—projected that approximately five million people (nearly half of the Haitian population) would experience acute food insecurity between March and June. Reflecting these worsening conditions, the most recent biannual report of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) on acute food insecurity, forecasting trends from June to November, classified Haiti for the first time as a “hunger hotspot of the highest concern”. Additionally, Haiti was included as one of three countries (with Burkina Faso and the Democratic Republic of Congo) in OCHA’s most recent “white note” on acute risks of conflict-induced famine, submitted to the Security Council per resolution 2417. Meanwhile, more than 165,000 people are internally displaced in Haiti because of gang violence, according to the International Office for Migration (IOM). Severe flooding following heavy rains and a 4.9 Richter scale earthquake on 6 June have

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2653 (21 October 2022) established a sanctions regime on Haiti, including targeted assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo measures. S/RES/2645 (15 July 2022) renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for one year until 15 July 2023. **Secretary-General’s Reports** S/2023/274 (14 April 2023) was the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on Haiti. S/2022/747 (8 October 2022) transmitted the Secretary-General’s report outlining options for enhanced security support for Haiti, which was submitted in line with resolution 2645. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.9311 (26 April 2023) was the 90-day briefing of the Special Representative and head of BINUH. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/15277 (8 May 2023) expressed deep concern over the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Haiti.

Haiti

further exacerbated this situation.

On 16 June, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) convened a high-level special emergency meeting to address Haiti's humanitarian and development needs. At the meeting, ECOSOC president Lachezara Stoeva (Bulgaria) noted that the UN's 2023 humanitarian response plan for Haiti—which calls for \$720 million, more than double last year's amount and the highest since the 2010 earthquake—was only 22.6 percent funded. From 18 to 20 June, WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain and UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell visited Haiti to assess the country's needs and UN-provided support.

In light of the country's deepening crisis, the Secretary-General's most recent report on Haiti, dated 14 April, reiterated “the urgent need for the deployment of an international specialized armed force”, as originally requested by the Haitian government in October 2022 and subsequently recommended by the Secretary-General's special report to the Council outlining options to enhance security support for Haiti. The Secretary-General's April report said that such a force “remains crucial to the efforts of national authorities to stem the violence and human rights abuses committed against the Haitian people, restore the rule of law and create conditions conducive to credible elections”. Salvador repeated this call during her Council briefing on 26 April.

On 8 May, Council members issued a press statement expressing deep concern about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Haiti and condemning the increasing violence, criminal activities, and human rights abuses and violations. The statement said that Council members, “mindful of the need for security support” for the country, reaffirmed their call to all political actors to engage constructively in meaningful negotiations to allow the holding of elections and encouraged efforts to ensure wider participation in the political process. The Council still has not responded to Haiti's request for an international specialised force, however, as efforts continue to identify a country to lead such a deployment.

Human Rights-Related Developments

William O'Neill, UN Expert on Human Rights in Haiti, began an official visit to Haiti on 19 June through 29 June. This is O'Neill's first official visit to Haiti since his designation as the UN Expert on Human Rights in Haiti, during which he is scheduled to meet Prime Minister Ariel Henry, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, Maria Isabel Salvador, and representatives of human rights and civil society organisations.

On 10 May, a group of UN experts issued a statement expressing “grave concern” over increasing violence in Haiti, particularly sexual violence and gang exploitation against women and children. Noting that the armed gangs have, according to reports, seized control of urban areas and are engaged in “killings, violence, rape, kidnapping and intimidation in order to expand their influence”, the experts stressed that systematic violence against women and girls is being used as an “instrument of power and as a means of exerting territorial control”. The experts emphasised that it was difficult to quantify the number of victims, with most cases being either ignored or unreported.

On 9 May, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a statement warning against a “never-ending cycle of violence” in Haiti, reiterating his call to the international community to deploy a “specialized and human-rights compliant support force, with a comprehensive action plan to assist Haiti's institutions”.

Key Issues and Options

The central task for the Security Council remains supporting Haitian authorities in addressing the country's political impasse and security

crisis. In this context, a key issue for the Security Council in July is renewing BINUH's mandate. Previous reporting had suggested that the US—co-penholder with Ecuador on Haiti—was considering a more robust security posture for the mission as an alternative to the deployment of an international force. It now appears, however, that the co-penholders are seeking only limited changes to the mandate, primarily addressing some logistical and security requests that the mission has made.

Meanwhile, Council discussions on the deployment of an international force continue. It seems the UN Secretariat has prepared a “non-paper” outlining possible parameters of such a deployment. The Secretary-General apparently presented the non-paper—described as a discussion tool rather than a planning document—during his monthly lunch with Council ambassadors on 12 June. The document was also the subject of an informal expert-level briefing that the co-penholders convened with Council members, regional countries, and other stakeholders on 14 June. As these discussions proceed, the US is continuing bilateral consultations to identify a country to lead the deployment.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about the spiralling situation in Haiti and generally agree on the need for a multidimensional, Haitian-led political solution that addresses both security and socioeconomic challenges. Views on the appropriate Council response vary, however, and may complicate negotiations to renew BINUH's mandate.

Last year's negotiations were challenging. This was in part because China, which had previously argued for scaling down UN support for the country in the absence of desired results on the ground, changed its stance and proposed the establishment of a multinational police force to assist the HNP. Other Council members were not opposed to this suggestion in principle but wanted more time to consider it. As a compromise, resolution 2645 renewing BINUH's mandate requested the Secretary-General to submit within 90 days of the resolution's adoption a report to the Security Council regarding “possible options for enhanced security support for the HNP's efforts to combat high levels of gang violence”. This resulted in the aforementioned special report of 10 October 2022, in which the Secretary-General recommended the deployment of an international specialised force to support the HNP.

As the Council has still not responded to the report, the issue may again influence mandate negotiations. The co-penholders seemingly intend to keep the two tracks separate, making limited changes to the mandate in the expectation that the Council will later authorise the deployment of an international force. This strategy could pave the way for relatively straightforward negotiations over the mandate.

The future deployment of an international force is not guaranteed, however. The continued absence of a lead country remains an obstacle and, even if identified, some Council members may still oppose the deployment. In Russia's statement at the Council's April briefing, it criticised what it described as a tradition of “outside political engineering” in Haiti, while China's statement at the January briefing similarly underscored the importance of “draw[ing] the appropriate lessons from failed external interventions so as to avoid repeating

those mistakes”—an indication that it may be reverting to its previous non-interventionist stance on Haiti. Given these uncertainties, some Council members advocating for a more robust international

response to Haiti’s crisis may consider BINUH’s mandate renewal the best opportunity to strengthen international support for the country and therefore seek more substantial changes to the mandate.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen with UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg. A representative of OCHA and the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen David Gressly are also expected to brief. The head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Beary, is expected to brief during the consultations. The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of UNMHA, which expires on 14 July.

Key Recent Developments

Grundberg has continued his shuttle diplomacy with the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group. His efforts are occurring in parallel with Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia that have helped maintain the longest lull in fighting in Yemen’s eight-year conflict, beginning with the start of the now-expired April 2022 truce.

On 4 June, Grundberg met in Riyadh with representatives of the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia’s ambassador to Yemen, and the P5 ambassadors to Yemen (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the UK). The next day, he met in Muscat with senior Omani officials and Houthi chief negotiator Mohammed Abdulsalam. On 9 June, Yemenia Airways announced that it would increase to six the number of weekly flights between the Houthi-held capital of Sana’a and Amman, Jordan; the April 2022 truce agreement resumed commercial flights out of Sana’a airport for the first time since 2016. In a further sign of easing tensions between the Houthis and Saudis, on 17 June, the first flight from Sana’a to Saudi Arabia since 2016 carried 270 Yemeni citizens to Jeddah for the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca required once in a lifetime of every Muslim who can afford it and is physically able to undertake it. A second flight of Yemeni pilgrims on 20 June carried a Houthi delegation, which included, according to news reports, the head of the Houthi military committee for negotiations, General Yahya Ruzami.

Grundberg briefed Council members via videoconference from The Hague during closed consultations on 12 June. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths and General Beary briefed in person during the consultations.

Beary’s rare in-person briefing occurred as Council members received the Secretary-General’s annual review of UNMHA before its mandate expires next month. The review, dated 12 June, details how the mission conducted visits over the past year to both sides of the new frontlines in southern Hodeidah governorate, which it had previously not been able to access, following government forces’ withdrawal from Hodeidah city in November 2021. It sets out UNMHA’s increased civic engagement with local communities and efforts to support the UN country team. Still, UNMHA faced persistent restrictions by the Houthis on its freedom of movement, particularly in monitoring the civilian nature of the ports. The review

further adds that daily ceasefire violations, though not amounting to major or sustained escalations, remain of concern.

From 16 to 18 June, the eighth meeting of the UN- and ICRC-chaired Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees Exchange Agreement was held in Amman. This was the committee’s first meeting since the Yemeni government and the Houthis agreed at talks in March in Geneva to release nearly 900 detainees, who were released from 14 to 16 April. In a statement, the Office of the Special Envoy said that the government and the Houthis discussed “the necessity of achieving tangible progress to reach a gradual release of [detainees] based on the ‘all-for-all’ principle”; “all-for-all” refers to the parties releasing all detainees as agreed to in the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement.

In developments indicating the disunity of the anti-Houthi forces, Saudi Arabia hosted talks between political and tribal representatives of Hadramawt governorate from 19 May to 21 June in Riyadh. At its conclusion, these representatives announced the formation of the Hadramawt National Council (HNC) and the approval of a political charter. The creation of the HNC for the governorate appeared to be an alternative to the separatist Southern Transitional Council (STC). In May, the STC organised in Aden a “Southern National Consultative Meeting” that adopted a political charter which reiterated the call for a separate southern state. The STC, which is supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), strengthened its military and political position when, on 9 May, it integrated into its leadership two members of Yemen’s eight-person Presidential Leadership Council (PLC).

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 June, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement calling for the immediate release of a group of followers of the Baha’i faith. The statement observed that a sermon by Shamseddin Sharafeddin, the Mufti in Sana’a, incited hatred against Baha’i adherents and other religious groups, noting that it was a “serious concern”. The statement emphasised that the sermon “starkly defies international law”.

Sharafeddin, who was appointed by the de facto authorities in Sana’a, accused the Baha’i followers of apostasy and threatened them with death if they did not repent.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 19 June, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to hear a briefing by Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba.

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. Council members could reiterate

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. [S/RES/2643](#) (13 July 2022) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 14 July 2023. [Security Council Letter S/2023/432](#) (12 June 2023) was the Secretary-General’s annual review of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9323](#) (17 May 2023) was a briefing on Yemen.

Yemen

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. Landmines and explosive remnants of war have become an issue of greater concern in the truce and post-truce period, impeding the return 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 29 percent funded, as at 30 June.

Council members are also likely to continue closely monitoring progress in the FSO Safer salvage operation to prevent a massive oil spill in the Red Sea off the coast of Hodeidah governorate. On 19 June, the Office of the UN spokesperson said that the transfer of oil from the FSO Safer to the replacement vessel that the UN Development Programme has procured was expected to begin by the end of June.

Another key issue for the Council in July is to renew the

mandate of UNMHA. The Council may extend the mandate for a further 12 months, which includes monitoring the 2018 Hodeidah ceasefire agreement.

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 show the Council's general consensus on Yemen. Council members' approach to mandate renewals this year—the February renewal of the Yemen sanctions regime and now the upcoming renewal of UNMHA—has been to avoid significant changes that could disrupt ongoing diplomatic processes.

The UAE has been a leading member of 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 agreement on 10 March to restore relations between those two countries, which, China 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.

Syria

In July, the Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution extending the authorisation for the Syria cross-border aid mechanism, prior to its expiry on 10 July. The Security Council will also hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria and on the use of chemical weapons in the country.

Key Recent Developments

Syria continues to grapple with the devastating humanitarian consequences of the 6 February earthquake and its aftershocks. In connection with the earthquake, approximately 6,000 people have died and more than 12,000 have been injured in Syria. An outbreak of cholera has compounded the already grim humanitarian situation in the country. According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) 18 June situation report on the cholera outbreak in Syria, 132,782 suspected cases, including 104 deaths attributed to the disease, were reported across the country between 25 August 2022 and 20 May.

Prior to the earthquake, humanitarian aid was delivered to northwest Syria from Türkiye through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing. (Resolution 2672 of 9 January extended the authorisation through this crossing for six months without requiring the consent of the Syrian government.) Following the earthquake, starting on 13 February, the Syrian government opened two additional crossing points—Bab

al-Salam and Al Ra'ee—from Türkiye to northwest Syria for an initial period of three months for the delivery of humanitarian aid. 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.

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 3,260 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies from seven UN agencies have crossed to northwest Syria from Türkiye since 9 February through the three border crossings: Bab al-Hawa (2,748 trucks), Bab al-Salam (433 trucks), and Al Ra'ee (79 trucks).

On 30 May, the Council convened its monthly meeting on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. 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

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2672](#) (9 January 2023) was the resolution that extended the authorisation for the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months, until 10 July 2023. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9333](#) (30 May 2023) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

Syria

Syria. She called for a 12-month extension of the Security Council authorisation of the cross-border aid mechanism.

The EU-sponsored seventh Brussels Conference, titled “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”, was convened on 14-15 June. The conference aimed at mobilising the international community in support of a comprehensive and credible political solution to the Syria conflict in line with resolution 2254 and addressing critical humanitarian issues. Conference participants pledged €5.6 billion, including €4.6 billion for 2023 and €1 billion for 2024 and future years. The funding aims to support people in Syria and neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees. The amount pledged was less than last year’s annual Brussels conference, where participants pledged €6.4 billion for 2022 and future years.

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 11.6 percent funded.

In his remarks at the Brussels conference, Pedersen called for ensuring adequate funding for addressing essential needs and noted that swift disbursements of the funding are needed to support the Syrian people as well as host communities in the wider region. He added that he is engaging with relevant parties in a renewed effort to reconvene the Constitutional Committee in Geneva as soon as possible. He emphasised the need for a 12-month extension of the Council’s authorisation of the cross-border aid mechanism. In regard to the renewed political attention on Syria, he noted that “if this opportunity is seized and if players coordinate and work together, I am convinced that it is possible to move forward”. (For more on recent political developments in Syria, see our June Forecast.)

On 22 June, Security Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID), in accordance with resolution 2672 of 9 January, which encouraged Council members to convene IIDs every two months “with participation of donors, interested regional parties and representatives of the international humanitarian agencies operating in Syria”. This was the third IID held since the 6 February earthquake. The meeting featured a briefing by Edem Wosornu, OCHA’s Director for Operations and Advocacy Division. Three other UN officials—UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria Adam Abdelmoula, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis Muhannad Ibrahim Ahmed Hadi, and Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis David Carden—were also on hand to respond to questions. In addition to Council members and Syria, interested regional parties (Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye) and donors (Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and the EU) participated in the meeting.

Pedersen has continued to engage 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 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 2 June Twitter post, the Special Envoy’s office noted that Pedersen engaged constructively with the Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC) to discuss the latest developments and how to move the political process forward in line with resolution 2254. On 9 June,

Pedersen met Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for in-depth discussions on how to strengthen the Syrian political process in accordance with resolution 2254, considering recent international and regional developments. In the meeting, Pedersen also highlighted the need to reconvene the Constitutional Committee.

On 15 June, in an effort to advance the Syrian political process, Pedersen held discussions with numerous stakeholders on the margins of the Brussels conference, including Lebanese Foreign Minister Abdallah Rashid Bouhabib, German Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office Tobias Lindner, Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, and European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič.

On 26 June, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths met Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. In a Twitter post, Griffiths said that the meeting had focused on issues of humanitarian assistance in Syria and avenues to engage the wider region around early recovery priorities. On the same day, Griffiths met Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Faisal Mekdad for a discussion on the humanitarian situation in the country.

Hostilities continue in some parts of Syria. On 25 June, Russian air strikes hit a market outside Jisr al-Shughour in Idlib governorate, killing at least 11 civilians, according to media reports. In a 26 June statement, Carden expressed deep concerns about an escalation of hostilities in northwest Syria, in light of the recent attacks in Idlib governorate. The statement called on all parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to ensure that civilians and civilian infrastructure are protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

On 29 June, UN General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing an Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, under the auspices of the UN. The mechanism aims “to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and to provide adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing, in close cooperation and complementarity with all relevant actors”. The resolution was adopted with 83 votes in favour, 11 against and 62 abstentions. Nine Council members voted in favour of the resolution (Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, UK and the US), whereas three abstained (Gabon, Ghana and the United Arab Emirates) and two voted against (China and Russia).

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 19 June statement, several UN experts urged the General Assembly to establish a human rights body to address the issue of missing and forcibly disappeared persons in Syria. The statement noted that the proposed human rights body “must be guided by a victim and survivor-centred approach” and allow the families of those missing and disappeared to participate in all stages of the process, including in its establishment, design, implementation, evaluation, and decision-making. The experts emphasised the importance of a gender-sensitive approach in addressing enforced disappearances and further called for working towards accountability through the relevant mechanisms available at the national or international level.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council in July is the decision on the extension of the cross-border aid mechanism, which expires on 10 July. One option for the Council would be to adopt a resolution extending the mandate

Syria

of the cross-border mechanism, allowing the humanitarian aid to continue flowing through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for 12 months.

Other options for the Council would be to adopt a resolution extending the authorisation for the cross-border mechanism for a shorter period, with the opportunity for further extension, similar to resolution 2642. Council members could also consider extending the authorisation for additional border crossings in the same resolution.

Another important and ongoing issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs in Syria. Periodic briefings from OCHA 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.

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

Council Dynamics

Syria remains a divisive file. China and Russia are supportive of the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country's

sovereignty and territorial integrity and drawing connections between unilateral coercive measures on Syria and the challenging humanitarian situation in the country. In contrast, the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other 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.

Most members emphasise that the cross-border aid mechanism is essential for saving lives in Syria and strongly support its continuation. Other members, such as China and Russia, tend to argue that cross-border deliveries are extraordinary measures that undermine Syria's sovereignty.

At the 30 May Council briefing, several Council members expressed support for the extension of the cross-border mechanism's authorisation, including Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the US. In its statement, the US said that it will work with Syria humanitarian penholders—Brazil and Switzerland—to seek a 12-month authorisation for all three border crossings—Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee. It further noted that such a resolution will provide confidence, predictability and support for humanitarian workers, the UN, and the Syrians. On the other hand, Russia noted that it sees "no reason at all to extend" the cross-border mechanism. It added that, with coordination and contact with the Syrian government, the UN could work without a Council resolution.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

In July, Security Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart is expected to brief.

UNFICYP's mandate expires on 31 January 2024.

Key Recent Developments

Over the past six months, there has been no meaningful progress on the political front and no direct formal engagement between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders in the context of unification talks, which have been stalled since the collapse of negotiations at Crans-Montana in July 2017. Efforts to reinvigorate the political process have failed to find common ground for the resumption of talks. The recently elected Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Christodoulides is firmly committed to a settlement based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation (BBF) with political equality, as stipulated in previous Security Council resolutions, while Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar insists on a two-state solution based on sovereign equality.

After winning the election in February, Christodoulides has intensified his efforts to break the deadlock in the peace talks, underscoring his campaign pledge to make a peace deal an overriding priority. In an informal 23 February meeting hosted by Stewart,

Christodoulides tested the waters with Tatar about reviving the stalemated talks before Christodoulides took office on 1 March. The topics of the informal meeting included the earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria earlier in February, in which Turkish Cypriots were among those killed. The two leaders expressed their sympathy for the victims and their families. However, no other informal or formal meetings between the two are known to have happened since then. Tatar insists that negotiations between the two sides can only begin when sovereign equality and the equal international status of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are confirmed.

Christodoulides appears to be pushing for more active EU involvement in the negotiations, including a European envoy, as he believes the bloc can provide necessary incentives to create a win-win situation. According to media reports, European political leaders have responded positively to Christodoulides' efforts. As a response to Christodoulides' efforts, Tatar reiterated in a European Parliament speech on 13 June that "the EU leadership must understand that efforts to involve other players besides the UN in the Cyprus conflict are futile. No one can interfere in a possible process if the Turkish Cypriot side does not consent".

From 15 to 18 March, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo made her first trip to Cyprus—a visit that had been scheduled last year. She had meetings

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with Christodoulides and Tatar, exchanging views on the Cyprus issue. She also reiterated the Secretary-General's commitment to "supporting the two leaders in their effort to find a mutually acceptable way forward".

During a phone call with Christodoulides on 15 June, Secretary-General António Guterres reaffirmed his commitment to a settlement of the Cyprus dispute within the relevant Security Council resolutions. Christodoulides said he was ready to resume talks from where they left off at Crans-Montana. The Secretary-General's report on good offices in Cyprus is expected to be released in early July before the consultations in the Council.

Appointing an envoy of the Secretary-General, an issue that remains deadlocked, also came up during the phone call. The Greek Cypriot leader "underlined the added value of appointing an envoy of the Secretary-General", a position that has remained vacant since Jane Holl Lute's resignation in September 2021. At the time of writing, the Turkish Cypriot leadership has not released a statement or otherwise commented on the issue. In an informal 27 September 2021 meeting Guterres hosted for former Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Tatar, however, Tatar objected to the appointment of a UN special envoy, preferring a personal envoy, according to media reports. (Special envoys are usually assigned to undertake special missions related to matters of which the Security Council or the General Assembly are seized, while personal envoys undertake missions at the Secretary-General's initiative.) Tatar reportedly argued that a special envoy would be constrained by having to operate strictly within the framework of the BBF with political equality, but a personal envoy would have greater autonomy to explore new ideas, including his proposed two-state solution. This matter appears unlikely to be resolved quickly.

Tensions between the Republic of Cyprus and Türkiye resurfaced over reports that a Turkish aircraft overflew and photographed Deneia, one of the four villages in the UN buffer zone—the first time a flight of this type has happened. Christodoulides called the flight a violation of UN resolutions and decisions on Cyprus. This is one of the latest incidents in the buffer zone in recent years, which have included entry obstruction to buffer zones and construction at the Cetinkaya stadium, heightening tension between the two sides as they consider these activities to violate UN resolutions or to be unauthorised.

On 13 June, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan visited the northern part of the island and reiterated his support for a two-state solution. "If there is a return to the negotiation table, the way to do this is through recognition of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus," he said. The visit marked his first trip abroad after winning re-election in May. Responding to Erdoğan later that day, Christodoulides reiterated during a European Parliament debate his "unwavering efforts" to reunify Cyprus through a comprehensive settlement in line with international law, UN Security Council resolutions and EU law, values and principles.

On 17 May, US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield met with Christodoulides in Reykjavik, Iceland, on the margins of the Council of Europe Summit. Thomas-Greenfield reiterated the US commitment to deepening its bilateral relationship with the Republic of Cyprus. She expressed continued US support for a Cypriot-led, UN-facilitated effort to reunify the island as a BBF.

Human Rights-Related Developments

At the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk presented a report on 7 March about Cyprus (A/HRC/52/18) that provided an overview of human rights issues in Cyprus from 1 December 2021 to 30 November 2022. The report noted that because of the island's continued division, "monitoring and reporting by international mechanisms on the human rights situation in the northern part of Cyprus have remained limited". In his statement, Türk observed that the division of Cyprus continues to affect the human rights of people across the island, particularly concerning missing persons and freedom of movement, expression, and religion, among others. The report also noted the negative socio-economic impact of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, affecting the economic and social rights of people in vulnerable situations.

Key Issues and Options

Since the collapse of the 2017 unification talks, the key issue for the Security Council has been the lack of meaningful progress on the political front and the diminishing prospects for reaching a political settlement of the Cyprus problem. In the consultations, Council members could reiterate their firm commitment to a peaceful settlement based on a framework of BBF with political equality as stipulated in previous Security Council resolutions.

Council members could urge the parties to reach an agreement regarding the Secretary-General's proposal to appoint a UN envoy on Cyprus to succeed Lute, stressing that the envoy could provide critical support in the search for common ground with the goal of returning to formal negotiations, while reassuring the parties that the envoy will not be constrained in their search for common grounds for the resumption of talks.

Another issue for the Security Council is for both sides to promote and strengthen intercommunal contacts to improve the public atmosphere for negotiating a peaceful settlement, while providing platforms to address island-wide matters such as health, climate change, and migration. The Council may call on the leaders of both communities to further support the work of the twelve Technical Committees, established by the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the UN, to build confidence and improve the daily lives of Cypriots. They may also call on the leadership of both sides as a matter of priority to support the Technical Committee on Gender Equality. In this regard, they may encourage the parties to implement recommendations under the action plan on women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the settlement process and to review the plan's implementation every six months.

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

Some Council members may comment on recent developments on the ground since the last consultation on Cyprus, including heightened tension in the buffer zone and new developments related to the Turkish Cypriots' efforts to reopen a part of the fenced-off area of Varosha.

Cyprus

Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda. Council members with a vested interest in Cyprus include France, Russia, and the UK, which also serves as the penholder on the issue.

While the Council is united in its support for the political process, members diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the unification talks. Some members have previously supported a comprehensive

strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. Russia remains adamant that there be no external interference or attempts to enforce solutions and schedules to influence the peace talks.

Council members will encourage the Secretary-General to continue working with the parties to find common ground for formal negotiations to resume.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu is expected to brief on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission, which covers the period from 27 March to 26 June. A woman civil society representative is also expected to brief.

The verification mission's mandate expires on 31 October.

Key Recent Developments

The administration of Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego has continued to advance its policy of "total peace", which entails the promotion of dialogue with armed groups operating in the country, as well as the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace signed in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

The government has been pursuing peace talks with armed groups it deems as having a political agenda, while also discussing possible agreements with groups characterised as criminal, that focus on ceasing violence in exchange for judicial benefits. In a 14 February letter to the Security Council, Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán referenced the government's dialogue efforts with five such armed groups and indicated the government's intention to request UN verification of these processes. (For more, see our April Forecast.) On 12 April, the Security Council sent a letter to the Secretary-General requesting him to submit recommendations on the possible role that the UN can play in this regard, including "implications for the configuration of the verification mission".

The Secretary-General submitted his recommendations in a 13 June letter, in which he expressed hope that the Security Council will "consider favourably" an expansion of the verification mission's mandate to participate in the monitoring and verification of ceasefires. The letter says that there are "two most immediate opportunities for the Mission to add value" through monitoring and verification, namely in the processes with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), which mainly consists of former FARC-EP dissidents who did not sign the 2016 accord. (The government characterises both groups as political.) It adds that ceasefires with the other groups referenced in the

government's 14 February letter are "at either an embryonic stage or not currently in effect" and therefore there is presently "no role for the Mission to play in those ceasefires, although this could change as circumstances evolve".

From 2 May to 9 June, the Colombian government and the ELN held a third round of negotiations in Cuba. At the talk's conclusion, the parties announced an agreement on a six-month national, bilateral ceasefire starting on 3 August, that will be subject to renewal based on the parties' joint evaluation. The envisioned monitoring and verification mechanism will comprise representatives from the government, the ELN, the verification mission (subject to Security Council authorisation), and the Colombian Catholic Church.

In early 2023, the government and the EMC FARC-EP negotiated a ceasefire protocol that focuses on a halt to offensive actions between the group and government security forces. In April, the parties announced their representatives to the peace dialogue and the establishment of a ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism similarly comprised of representatives of the government, EMC FARC-EP, the Colombian Catholic Church, and an international component that will include the verification mission, again subject to Security Council authorisation. The dialogue process experienced a setback in May following the killing of several indigenous youths in the southern department of Putumayo by the EMC FARC-EP, leading the government to announce the ceasefire's suspension in four departments where it would resume offensive operations against the group. According to the Secretary-General's 13 June letter, despite the ceasefire's partial suspension, there has been "no reported upsurge in fighting to date". The letter also notes that the government is seeking to reactivate the monitoring mechanism while maintaining contacts with the group aimed at establishing dialogue.

The Secretary-General's 13 June letter presents two options for the possible expansion of the verification mission's mandate, both of which will require additional personnel beyond the mission's current ceiling of 120 observers.

The first option calls for a limited expansion authorising the mission's participation in monitoring and verifying the government's anticipated ceasefires with the ELN and the EMC FARC-EP. The Security Council could consider additional authorisations to monitor and verify potential ceasefires with the other groups mentioned in the government's 14 February letter, based on the Secretary-General's updates about the status of dialogue with these groups. This option would require 95 additional observers.

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/477](#) (26 June 2023) was the most recent 90-day report on Colombia. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9303](#) (13 April 2023) was the Security Council's latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

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The second option would be a broad, one-time expansion authorising the mission's participation in monitoring and verifying the government's ceasefires with all groups identified in the government's 14 February letter. The mission would first focus on the expected ceasefires with the ELN and the EMC FARC-EP and could then participate in other ceasefire mechanisms that may be established with other groups without requiring additional Council authorisation. This option would require 130 additional observers.

On 4 May, the Colombian Congress approved the government's National Development Plan for 2022-2026, which outlines public policy priorities and allocates funding for their implementation. According to the Secretary-General's report, the plan includes obligations related to the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement in 50 of its 373 articles, on such issues as comprehensive rural reform (including through establishing mechanisms to accelerate the purchase of land), reintegration of former combatants, and transitional justice.

Violence continued to affect communities (including indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities), former FARC-EP members, human rights defenders, and social leaders. The verification mission verified the killing of 12 ex-combatants during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, compared to six killed during the previous reporting period. This brought to 375 the number of former FARC-EP members killed since the signing of the 2016 agreement. The Secretary-General's report notes that the persistent violence continues to jeopardise the reintegration process of former combatants, as evidenced by the urgent relocation of the former territorial area for training and reintegration (TATR) in the Mesetas municipality in the Meta department. Following threats issued by the EMC FARC-EP to the TATR's residents in March, the government announced that it will facilitate the residents' safe relocation to a new area. In June, the government purchased and handed over a 1,400-hectare productive plot to the former combatants from Mesetas. The Secretary-General's report notes that five former TATRs in the Antioquia, Cauca, Meta, and Putumayo departments are also facing security risks and require urgent support.

During a 29 March visit to the Mesetas TATR, Petro announced that the government is working on mechanisms to expedite the implementation of the 2016 agreement, adding that an official will be appointed to oversee the implementation of the peace process with the former FARC-EP. At the time of writing, this official has yet to be named.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 31 May, Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, issued a statement following her nine-day visit to Colombia. Warning that trafficking in persons, especially children, by non-state armed groups and criminal organisations continues to undermine peacebuilding in Colombia, Mullally urged the Colombian government to include the issue of trafficking in persons in Colombia's "Total Peace" dialogues. Mullally commended the Colombian government's commitment to protecting victims' rights and combatting impunity but underscored that this commitment should be implemented throughout Colombia, especially in rural areas.

Women, Peace and Security

From 22 to 26 May, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten carried out her first visit to Colombia in this role. According to a 1 June statement, during Patten's visit, "a number of

interlocutors highlighted that sexual violence remains a prominent feature of the conflict, especially in territories under control of armed groups". The violence is disproportionately affecting indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+) persons and women leaders. Patten also expressed concern about the sharp increase in the number of cases of "trafficking of persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation by armed groups and criminal networks". During her visit, Patten met with Colombian authorities, UN officials, members of the diplomatic community, and civil society organisations. She also met with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Bogotá and Cartagena, who highlighted the challenges that they have faced in accessing services, justice, protection, and reparations.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to consider the Colombian government's request for expanding the verification mission's mandate to support dialogue efforts with armed groups operating in the country, including through the monitoring of ceasefires. During July, Council members are expected to begin negotiating a draft resolution on the matter. To inform their deliberations on the proposals presented in the Secretary-General's 13 June letter, members may wish to interact with relevant Colombian stakeholders, such as Colombia's High Commissioner for Peace, Danilo Rueda, who has been overseeing dialogues with armed groups operating in the country, and civil society organisations.

Council members are likely to be watching closely preparations for local elections that are set to take place in October, as electoral campaign periods in Colombia have historically been characterised by heightened violence. According to the Secretary-General's report, the verification mission has already recorded the killing of six members of different political parties. Civil society organisations have warned of potential violence against candidates, including members of the former FARC-EP, 500 of whom are expected to run countrywide. The EMC FARC-EP, in apparent retaliation to the government's partial suspension of the ceasefire agreement, has threatened to prevent candidates from campaigning in the regions where the ceasefire has been suspended. Council members are expected to issue a press statement following next month's meeting, as has been a common practice in connection with quarterly Colombia meetings. In their press statement, members may wish to call for greater institutional efforts to guarantee fair and secure participation in the electoral process, particularly of women former combatants.

The situation of children in conflict-affected areas in Colombia is another matter of concern. According to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, published on 27 June, 130 children were recruited and used in 2022, including by former FARC-EP dissident groups (87) and the ELN (18). Council members can emphasise in their statement that measures relating to the protection of children can serve as an early confidence-building measure in peace negotiations and call on parties to include such considerations in their dialogues.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the peace process in Colombia and for the verification mission's work. Members are generally attentive to requests from the Colombian government and have often responded positively by expanding the mission's mandate. However, deliberations on the government's recent request might

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prove more complicated.

Some members may feel that a cautious approach is needed regarding groups characterised as criminal and advocate a case-by-case analysis of a possible UN role in such dialogue efforts. These members may prefer the first option (limited mandate expansion) proposed by the Secretary-General's 13 June letter. Members may also raise concerns about the potential risks to UN personnel in verifying ceasefires with armed groups operating in the country. Russia mentioned these issues during the Council's latest meeting on Colombia, held on 13 April. It said that the "question of contacts between the United Nations and the recognized criminal groups involved in drug trafficking requires separate and serious analysis, including in consideration of the possible consequences for the Mission's credibility".

Additionally, the possible budgetary implications of increasing

the mission's observer ceiling may be an issue for some Council members; China, for example, raised concerns about the matter during negotiations on previous expansions of the verification mission's mandate.

Petro strongly condemned Russia following a 27 June missile attack on a restaurant in the city of Kramatorsk in Ukraine in which three Colombians—including Sergio Jaramillo, one of the 2016 peace agreement's negotiators—were injured. The president had taken a less critical stance over Russia's aggression against Ukraine than his predecessor, Iván Duque. The former president's criticism of Russia has at times complicated the Council's work on the Colombia file. It remains to be seen whether this recent development will have a similar effect.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

Sudan is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Security Council referred the situation in Darfur, Sudan, to the ICC through the adoption of resolution 1593 on 31 March 2005. (Algeria, Brazil, China, and the US abstained on the resolution.) The Council invited the ICC Prosecutor to update it every six months on actions taken pursuant to resolution 1593. The investigations regarding Darfur focus on allegations of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur since 1 July 2002.

More than 17 years after the Council's ICC referral, the first trial opened on 5 April 2022 with the case of Prosecutor v. Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman ("Ali Kushayb"), which is ongoing. Four ICC arrest warrants remain outstanding; these are against former President Omar Al Bashir, Ahmad Muhammad Harun, Abdel Raheem Muhammad Hussein, and Abdallah Banda Abakaer Nourain. Sudan remains under an obligation to surrender the four remaining suspects in the Darfur situation to the court, pursuant to resolution 1593 and the subsequent orders of ICC judges.

Khan last briefed the Council on 25 January. In his remarks, he noted that the trial of Ali Kushayb had made swift progress and that 50 witnesses had been heard by the ICC over the course of 78 working days. He added with regret that cooperation with the Sudanese government had deteriorated in recent months and that the government had failed to meet the requirements of cooperation as set out in resolution 1593. Among other issues, he noted that access to documentation and witnesses remained restricted, multiple entry visas had not been granted by the Sudanese government, and new administrative hurdles had been created, including the need to obtain internal travel permits. Khan said that "a change of posture

is needed by those charged with responsibility or those who have assumed responsibility in the Sudan".

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 (known as Hemedti), the Deputy Chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council. In addition to heavy fighting in Khartoum, hostilities in Darfur have been severe, marked by significant inter-communal violence, with Arab militias supporting the RSF and targeting non-Arab groups in Darfur. The inter-ethnic component of the fighting has raised alarm among several Council members. Some members appear to be concerned about the potential for inter-communal fighting to spin out of control, recalling the conflict in Darfur in the 2000s that claimed the lives of some 300,000 people.

Despite several calls for a ceasefire from regional stakeholders and the broader international community, fighting entered its third month in June, causing a deep humanitarian crisis. According to the 22 June OCHA Situation Report, at least 1,081 people had reportedly been killed and over 11,714 injured across the country since 15 April. Moreover, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), since the onset of fighting, approximately 2.153 million people have been displaced within Sudan, and over 583,426 people have fled the country as at 27 June.

Following the outbreak of the fighting, several incidents were reported of prisoners escaping or being released (prison officials contacted by UNITAMS estimated the number of inmates released from prisons in Khartoum to be about 12,000). According to the Secretary-General's most recent report on UNITAMS (S/2023/355, dated 16 May, in a 26 April statement, the SAF claimed that prior to the outbreak of fighting in April, Bashir and some other officials of the former regime had been moved to a military hospital on the recommendation of the medical staff of Kober prison.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/1593](#) (31 March 2005) was the resolution that referred the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9249](#) (25 January 2023) was the semi-annual ICC briefing.

Sudan

Sudan's humanitarian needs are significant and have evolved 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 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 17.4 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 the 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 9 June, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a statement emphasising its concern about the "devastating impact of the fighting in Sudan on civilians". The statement called on the warring parties to ensure the protection of civilians and called on those responsible to be held accountable.

On 11 May, the Human Rights Council, in a special session, expanded the mandate of the UN expert on human rights in Sudan, Radhouane Nouicer, to monitor and report on all human rights violations and abuses committed during the ongoing conflict between the SAF and the RSF. In a 23 May statement, Nouicer noted that a "full array of human rights – economic, social and cultural as much as civil and political – are being violated, and both parties have singularly failed to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law". He said that Sudan is facing a chronic shortage of food and drinking water and further pointed out the indiscriminate attacks in residential areas and widespread looting. He called on the warring parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians from the effects of hostilities.

Key Issues and Options

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

It remains to be seen how the recent fighting that erupted in Sudan on 15 April between the SAF and the RSF may hinder the ICC's cooperation with the Sudanese government.

A related issue for the Council is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs in Sudan and address the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by the Sudanese warring parties. According to local media reports, on 26 June, Hemeti acknowledged the human rights violations committed by his forces and announced the establishment of a court to combat these crimes.

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

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

At the last semi-annual briefing on 25 January, wide-ranging views were expressed on the ICC's work in relation to Darfur. Many members welcomed the progress on Ali Kushayb's trial while calling on Sudan to cooperate more with the court, including providing access to key witnesses and allowing the court to establish a greater field presence. Russia was critical of the court's work and does not regard the case against Ali Kushayb as a breakthrough.

Russia's already negative view of the ICC hardened following the court's announcement on 17 March that it had issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for allegedly committing the war crime of "unlawful deportation" and "unlawful transfer" of children from Ukraine to Russia. On 11 May, when the ICC prosecutor most recently briefed the Council on the court's work in Libya, the Russian representative expressed the view that the ICC "has become a very obedient puppet of Western countries and is acting on the orders and in the political interests of Western countries" adding that the prosecutor's "presence in our building is not only pointless, but it is also an insult to the Organization".

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

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

On 14 July, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which this year is titled "Promoting Implementation of Security Council Resolutions

on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence". The UK Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and the UN and the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, will chair the meeting.

UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2467 (23 April 2019) was on sexual violence in conflict, passed with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). S/RES/1960 (16 December 2010) requested the Secretary-General to add an annex to the annual report on CRSV listing conflict parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of CRSV. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/272** (29 March 2022) was the Secretary-General's annual report on CRSV.

Women, Peace and Security

One of the signature events of the UK's July presidency, the open debate is expected to focus on closing the gap in the implementation of the existing legal and normative framework on CRSV. Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and two civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

No outcome is expected.

Key Recent Developments

Despite the existence of a comprehensive legal and normative framework on CRSV, awareness campaigns, research and advocacy, Patten has recently warned that “the global trendlines of conflict-related sexual violence are worsening”. In her 19 June remarks at the ninth commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, she identified “[a]rms proliferation, increasing militarization, and shrinking civic space” as factors that “continue to exacerbate sexual violence and challenge safe reporting and response”, while new threats “from the largely ungoverned digital space” are also emerging.

The Secretary-General's annual reports define CRSV as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict”. The reports say that it “also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict”. This year's report on CRSV will cover the period from January to December 2022 and will provide the basis for the July open debate. It appears that the annual report will include more than 20 countries where sexual violence was used as a tactic of war, torture, terror, and political repression, documenting more than 2,400 UN-verified cases of sexual violence while acknowledging that this figure does not reflect the full scale of CRSV in 2022 due to underreporting owing to issues including stigma and fear of retaliation.

There is a high incidence of CRSV in several situations on the Council's agenda. In Haiti, where the security situation continues to worsen, sexual violence and exploitation are being perpetrated by rival armed gangs in their drive to expand their territorial control in urban areas.

Regarding the war in Ukraine, OHCHR documented 109 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by Russian personnel between February 2022 and January 2023. While most of these incidents occurred in places of detention, “[o]thers, including rape, were perpetrated in areas controlled by Russian forces, mostly against women”. OHCHR also registered 24 cases of sexual violence committed by Ukrainian personnel between March and July 2022, which consisted mainly of “threats of sexual violence during initial stages of detention, as well as forced public stripping”.

In South Sudan, the UN verified 299 incidents of CRSV in 2022, compared with 194 in 2021. While most of these cases were attributed to non-state armed groups, 38 percent were attributed to the armed forces and five percent to the police. Reports of CRSV have also emerged in the context of the conflict between the Sudan Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan.

In Colombia, despite improvements in the peace and security

situation, CRSV remains a “feature of the conflict, especially in territories under control of armed groups, disproportionately affecting indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, members of the LGBTIQ+ community and women leaders”.

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar has collected information relating to the commission of sexual and gender-based crimes in Myanmar, including crimes perpetrated by members of the security forces, since the military takeover on 1 February 2021.

CRSV also remains a major concern in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In May, Patten visited the Bulengo internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Goma. In a 25 May statement, she expressed concern about CRSV allegations in this area “perpetrated by armed men, who have targeted women and girls attempting to return to their homes or as they carry out their daily livelihood activities, including collecting firewood, food or water”, adding that humanitarian actors reported having “provided assistance to over 600 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in six IDP camps over the course of two weeks”.

Other situations of concern likely to be detailed in the Secretary-General's report include Council agenda items Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Libya, and Somalia, as well as Ethiopia, which is not on the formal agenda but has been discussed several times by Council members in recent years.

As mandated by resolution 1960 adopted in 2010, this year's report will again include an annex listing “parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council”. The 2022 annual report noted that more than 70 percent of the parties listed in the annex were persistent perpetrators, meaning that they had been listed in the annex for five or more years. National military and police forces listed in the annex are prohibited from contributing to UN peace operations.

A recent UN Institute for Disarmament Research report concluded that, while arms control and disarmament measures alone cannot prevent CRSV, they can play an important preventive role and contribute “to both long-term structural prevention and short-term operational prevention”. For instance, the report said that reducing the availability of small arms and light weapons through an enhanced implementation of arms control and disarmament instruments not only makes it “harder for perpetrators to commit CRSV” but may also help decrease a conflict's intensity and “the conditions that lead to the normalization of sexual violence in conflict”.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 21 October 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2653, which established a sanctions regime on Haiti, including targeted assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo measures, and designated one person under the regime. The resolution included the “[p]lanning, directing or committing acts involving sexual and gender-based violence, including rape and sexual slavery, in Haiti” as a standalone designation criterion.

The EU, the UK, and the US have recently designated a number of individuals involved in sexual and gender-based violence under their respective sanctions regimes.

Women, Peace and Security

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Security Council remains strengthening the substantive implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda. Regarding the topic of the open debate, the persistence of CRSV across conflict situations continues to be a key issue of concern.

Adopted in 2019, resolution 2467 recognised that CRSV occurs on a continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls. To address CRSV from a structural perspective, including its political aspects and consequences, one option is to include in Council discussions of CRSV a focus on the theme of the continuum of violence and other intersecting forms of inequality that women and girls face both during conflict and in peacetime, as well as a focus on the nexus of protection and participation.

In line with the recommendations presented at the 22 December 2022 meeting with women's protection advisers of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS, Council members could support the deployment of women's protection advisers in peace operations, as well as in transition processes from peacekeeping operations to special political missions and country teams. In this regard, members may also support the maintenance of existing women's protection adviser positions in the context of the Fifth Committee and request the inclusion of enhanced capacity in contexts in which it is inadequate.

Patten was last invited to brief one of the Security Council's sanctions committees in December 2021—the committee established pursuant to resolution 2140 on Yemen. Members may strengthen the gender and CRSV expertise informing the work of sanctions committees and invite Patten to share information with these committees and at relevant Council meetings.

In line with resolution 2242 and the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS, members should continue

to invite diverse women civil society representatives to brief the Council regularly and follow up on their information and recommendations. It is essential that members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briefer, including carrying out risk assessment, developing protection plans and responding to any reprisals.

Council Dynamics

While notable implementation gaps persist, Council members are generally supportive of the WPS agenda, and their views converge on the need to eradicate CRSV. Nevertheless, Council dynamics on WPS remain difficult. For instance, during the recent negotiations of resolution 2686 on tolerance and international peace and security, China and Russia opposed language on human rights, gender, and WPS. During the negotiations, some members considered strengthening the draft with language from resolution 2467. (This resolution is the most recent Council outcome on CRSV. It recognised the need for a survivor-centred approach and identified discrimination against women and girls, the under-representation of women in decision-making and leadership roles, and the lack of availability of services for survivors among the factors that exacerbate the disproportionate impact of CRSV on women and girls.) It seems that Russia opposed this proposal on the grounds that resolution 2467 had not been adopted by consensus, with China and Russia abstaining; as a result, the proposed language was not included in resolution 2686. (For background on resolution 2686, see our *What's in Blue* story of 14 June.) It further appears that Russia has objected to Patten briefing in sanctions committee meetings.

The UK is the penholder on WPS, and the US is the penholder on CRSV. The United Arab Emirates and Switzerland are the co-chairs of the IEG on WPS.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold a briefing on the situation in Ukraine. UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly is expected to chair the meeting. The Council may hold additional meetings on the country, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

In early June, Ukraine launched a series of counteroffensive efforts focused primarily on the eastern Donetsk and southern Zaporizhzhia regions. Despite recapturing several villages, the counteroffensive has encountered strong resistance from Russian forces. In an 18 June intelligence update, the UK's Ministry of Defence noted that Russia was conducting "relatively effective defensive operations" in the south and that both sides were "suffering high casualties". Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal suggested on 22 June that Ukraine's counteroffensive would "take time" but emphasised that he remained "optimistic" about its eventual success. Shmyhal's remarks came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

acknowledged in a 21 June interview that progress on the battlefield had been "slower than desired".

On 6 June, the Kakhovka Dam located in the southern Kherson region of Ukraine was destroyed, leading to widespread flooding along the lower Dnieper River. Kyiv and Moscow have accused each other of destroying the dam. According to a 22 June OCHA humanitarian impact and response report, the incident has led to "an unconfirmed number of civilians killed and injured and a worsened humanitarian situation in areas already facing the dire consequences of war". In addition to displacing more than 4,000 people in the southern Kherson and Mykolaiv regions, the incident and subsequent depletion of the Kakhovka reservoir has left hundreds of thousands of people without access to drinking water.

The Security Council held an emergency meeting on 6 June to discuss the incident at the request of Russia and Ukraine, supported by Albania and the US. During the meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths characterised the dam's destruction as "one of the most significant incidents of

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9364 (29 June 2023) was a briefing on the issue of "Western arms supplies to Ukraine and their implications for diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis", requested by Russia. S/PV.9357 (23 June 2023) was a briefing on the situation in Ukraine, requested by Albania and the US. S/PV.9340 (6 June 2023) was an emergency meeting requested by Russia and Ukraine, with support from Albania and the US, which focused on the 6 June destruction of the Kakhovka Dam.

Ukraine

damage to civilian infrastructure since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022".

The Council convened four subsequent meetings on Ukraine in June. At Russia's request, Council members held two meetings under "any other business" on 15 June and 27 June to discuss developments related to the 26 September 2022 explosions that caused damage to the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea. On 23 June, the Council convened for a briefing during which Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo provided an update on the security and humanitarian situation in Ukraine. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 22 June.) On 29 June, the Council held a briefing, at Russia's request, on the issue of "Western arms supplies to Ukraine and their implications for diplomatic efforts to resolve the Ukrainian crisis".

On 23 June, Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Russian private security company the Wagner Group, released a video accusing the Russian Ministry of Defence of orchestrating a missile strike on a Wagner Group outpost in eastern Ukraine. Prigozhin has frequently criticised the Russian military leadership for their insubstantial support to Wagner Group troops fighting in the city of Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine. Tensions escalated in early June, when Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu ordered all "volunteer detachments" to formalise contracts with the ministry by 1 July, in an apparent attempt to consolidate the ministry's command over operations in Ukraine.

In several ensuing audio clips posted on Telegram on 23 June, Prigozhin dismissed the government's reasoning for invading Ukraine, asserting that the war had been waged to further the interests of a "clan of oligarchs". Prigozhin also blamed Russia's military leadership for the country's shortcomings in Ukraine, as he declared that Wagner Group forces would lead a "march for justice" to Moscow "to find out why there is such chaos in the country". Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) responded by opening a criminal probe into Prigozhin.

On 24 June, elements of the Wagner Group took control of the military command centre in the southern city of Rostov-on-Don, apparently encountering minimal resistance from the Russian military. Prigozhin subsequently ordered a few thousand Wagner troops to proceed to Moscow while he commanded the rebellion from Rostov-on-Don. In a televised address on the same day, Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to punish those involved in what he called an "armed mutiny", accusing Prigozhin of committing "treason" because of "inflated ambitions and personal interest".

Within a few hours, Wagner Group forces advanced within 200 kilometres of Moscow, establishing artillery positions south of the city, before ultimately pulling back. Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko reportedly brokered a deal between Putin and Prigozhin, who agreed to call off the march in exchange for amnesty and Prigozhin's exile to Belarus. Prigozhin conveyed that "a demonstration of protest was enough", cautioning that "a lot of Russian blood could be spilled" if the Wagner Group were to advance further towards Moscow.

On 26 June, Prigozhin released another audio message on Telegram claiming that the march was not an attempted coup to overthrow the government but rather a protest against the Russian military leadership. On 25 June, the Kremlin confirmed that Wagner Group soldiers would still be offered military contracts with Russia's Defence Ministry. In an interview with Russian media on 26 June,

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that the incident would not affect Russia's military activities in Ukraine. He further emphasised that it would not create difficulties in Russia's relations with its foreign "partners and friends" or disrupt Russia's operations in Mali and the Central African Republic. In a call with US President Joe Biden, Zelenskyy described the incident as exposing "the weakness of Putin's regime".

The Secretary-General, in his annual report on children and armed conflict, published on 27 June, said that he is "appalled by the high number of grave violations against children in Ukraine following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation". In the annexes to his report, he listed the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups for committing attacks on schools and hospitals (480 verified instances) and the killing of children (136 verified victims). The Secretary-General expressed concern about the high number of children killed (80) and maimed (175) and attacks on schools and hospitals (212) by Ukrainian armed forces but did not list them in the report's annexes. He urged the Ukrainian armed forces immediately to implement measures to protect children and to prevent attacks on schools and hospitals, adding that he will be "particularly attentive to this situation in the preparation of my next report". (For more, see the Children and Armed Conflict brief in our July forecast.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 15 June, Alice Jill Edwards, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, issued a statement expressing alarm at reports and testimonies which indicate that Russian military forces in Ukraine "consistently and intentionally" inflict "severe physical and psychological pain and suffering on Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war". Edwards, together with other independent UN experts, sent a letter to Russian authorities in which they emphasised that the "consistency and methods" of the alleged torture suggest coordination, planning, and organisation, as well as "direct authorisation, deliberate policy or official tolerance from superior authorities". Edwards plans to visit Ukraine later this year to conduct a fact-finding inquiry as part of her mandate.

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 start of talks between Russia and Ukraine in pursuit of a peace agreement, including by providing support and facilitating coordination among various diplomatic 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 ensuring the extension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI), which is set to expire on 17 July. Russia has 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. The Tolyatti-Odesa ammonia pipeline, which had been the subject of UN-led discussions between Russia, Türkiye, and Ukraine to facilitate the export of Russian ammonia fertiliser, sustained partial damage due to reported explosions on 7 June. Council members may wish to convene a

Ukraine

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 to the implementation of 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, leaving Russia in control of a significant amount of territory in eastern and southern Ukraine.

Despite the prevailing divisions, several member states, including three from the BRICS bloc—which comprises Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa—have initiated diplomatic efforts aimed at promoting dialogue towards a political settlement of the war in Ukraine. So have other countries: at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on 3 June, Indonesian Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto presented a peace plan aimed at resolving the conflict in Ukraine. His proposal involved an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of both sides to 15 kilometres from their current positions, allowing for

the establishment of a demilitarised zone to be monitored by UN peacekeepers. Subianto also suggested that a referendum, overseen by the UN, be conducted in Ukraine's "disputed territories". Kyiv and many of its Western allies dismissed the proposal, particularly objecting to the use of the term "disputed territories".

On 16 and 17 June, a high-level delegation from Africa—comprising representatives from Comoros, Egypt, Senegal, South Africa, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and Zambia—visited Ukraine and Russia in search of a negotiated settlement to the war. The delegation presented a ten-point proposal to the parties, emphasising a commitment to pursuing a peaceful resolution to the conflict through diplomatic means and based on the principles outlined in the UN Charter. The proposal also called for de-escalation and the consideration of security guarantees for both sides.

In a joint press conference following the meeting in Kyiv, Zelenskyy rejected peace talks with Moscow, arguing that Russia views negotiations as an opportunity to strengthen itself for further military action. He reiterated that any peace proposal must include the "real withdrawal of Russian troops" from Ukraine. In St. Petersburg, Putin dismissed the African delegation's peace plan, challenging assumptions about Ukraine's internationally recognised borders and the source of the global food security crisis. Putin maintained that "Russia has never rejected any [peace] talks", suggesting that Kyiv chose to withdraw from negotiations in March 2022 under pressure from its Western allies.

Artificial Intelligence

Expected Council Action

In July, the UK is planning to organise a high-level briefing on "Artificial Intelligence (AI): Opportunities and Risks for International Peace and Security" under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item. James Cleverly, the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs, will chair the meeting. Anticipated briefers are UN Secretary-General António Guterres; Demis Hassabis, CEO of Google DeepMind; and Kai-Fu Lee, Co-founder of Sinovation Ventures.

No outcome is anticipated.

Background

In recent years, there have been significant advances in the development of AI-powered tools and technologies. AI systems can perform a wide range of cognitive tasks, such as generating text, identifying patterns, and interpreting speech. AI systems can learn how to perform certain tasks by processing large datasets, which they use to model their own decision-making.

AI technologies and tools are playing an increasingly critical role in the UN's work. They contribute to conflict prevention by improving early warning and early action, facilitate the coordination of humanitarian assistance, support peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians, expand access to mediation processes, and aid

in reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. The use of AI has the potential to facilitate major improvements in addressing threats to international peace and security.

On the other hand, AI poses a serious risk if misused by states and non-state actors to contribute to instability and exacerbate conflict situations, including through the spread of online disinformation and hate speech. Rogue actors can use AI tools and technologies to increase their cyber-attack capabilities. AI could potentially be used to design bioweapons and weapons of mass destruction.

The meeting appears to be part of the broader campaign by the UK to bring more attention to the challenges posed by the rapid development of AI. In a 7 June statement, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced that the UK will host the first major summit on AI safety later in 2023. The summit is expected to foster discussions on the risks of AI and options for internationally coordinated action to mitigate them. Another objective of the summit is to provide a platform for countries' collaborative efforts in developing a shared approach to alleviating these risks.

In recent years, Council members have shown increased interest in addressing the role of emerging technologies and their implications for international peace and security. These include meetings on: technology and security (23 May 2022); technology and peacekeeping (18 August 2021); and cybersecurity (29 June 2021). Certain

UN DOCUMENTS ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES Security Council Meetings S/PV.9039 (23 May 2022) was the briefing on technology and security. S/PV.8838 (18 August 2021) was the briefing on technology and peacekeeping. S/2021/621 (29 June 2021) was the high-level virtual debate on cybersecurity.

AI-related issues have been raised in some of these meetings and in informal meetings held under the Arria-formula meeting format.

The meeting planned for July will be the first formal Council meeting focused exclusively on AI.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In July, Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a group Hezbollah and Israel. Briefings are expected from Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. The Secretary-General's report, which is due on 12 July, will cover the period from 21 February to 20 June.

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August.

Key Recent Developments

Lebanon has been without a president since Michel Aoun's term ended on 31 October 2022. On 14 June, the parliament failed—for the 12th time—to elect a president. According to Lebanon's power-sharing set-up, the president must be a Maronite Christian. In the first round of voting, a candidate needs 86 votes to be elected president (a two-thirds majority of the elected parliamentarians), while 65 votes (a simple majority) are needed in subsequent rounds. However, a quorum of 86 members of parliament is also needed for a valid ballot, meaning that the election can be thwarted if enough parliamentarians do not attend the session. At the 14 June session, neither of the two candidates—Jihad Azour and Suleiman Frangieh—received the required votes to be elected in the first round of voting, after which parliamentarians from Hezbollah and the Amal Movement reportedly withdrew, preventing a second round from taking place owing to a lack of quorum.

Against the backdrop of a prolonged socioeconomic crisis in Lebanon, key international interlocutors have expressed frustration at the continuing presidential vacuum. In a 14 June post on Twitter, Wronecka said that “[t]he prolonged vacuum undermines Lebanon's democratic practices and further delays the long overdue reforms and solutions needed to steer the country back to a path of recovery”. In a 16 June statement, the International Support Group for Lebanon—which consists of the Arab League, the EU, the UN, China, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK, and the US—regretted the failed election and urged “the political leadership and Members of Parliament to assume their responsibilities and prioritize the national interest by electing a new President without further delay”.

On 7 June, French President Emmanuel Macron appointed Jean-Yves Le Drian as his personal envoy to Lebanon to facilitate a “consensual and effective” solution to the country's political impasse. From 21 to 24 June, Le Drian was in Lebanon for his first visit to the country in this capacity. At the time of writing, it remains unclear whether the Lebanese parties will be able to agree on a compromise candidate.

The presidential crisis is compounded by the fact that, over one year since the 15 May 2022 legislative elections, Lebanon's government remains in caretaker status. Further, amid concerns that funding

for the May 2023 municipal elections had not been secured, the parliament voted in April to extend the term of local government officials until 31 May 2024, paving the way for a postponement of the elections for up to a year. (Municipal elections were originally supposed to take place in May 2022 but were initially postponed to May 2023 to avoid their coinciding with the May 2022 legislative elections.) In a recent article, the International Crisis Group stressed the importance of holding municipal elections promptly, arguing that their further postponement could seriously undermine local councils and administrators who have played a key role in keeping the country running during the ongoing socioeconomic and political crises.

An 11 May letter signed by Lebanese and international civil society organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, said that the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) “have recently and summarily deported hundreds of Syrians back to Syria, where they are at risk of persecution or torture” and that the deportations were carried out against the backdrop of “an alarming surge in anti-refugee rhetoric in Lebanon and other coercive measures intended to pressure refugees to return”. The letter called on Lebanon to halt summary deportations to Syria and on the international community to step up “its assistance, particularly its resettlement and alternative pathways programmes”.

On 14 and 15 June, the EU hosted the seventh Brussels Conference on “Supporting the future of Syria and the region”, which resulted in international pledges totalling 4.6 billion euros for 2023 and one billion euros for 2024 and beyond. Save the Children noted, however, that this amount is a “drastic drop from last year, in the face of [the] sky rocketing needs” of 6.8 million people displaced in Syria and the more than 5 million refugees in neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Türkiye.

The situation in southern Lebanon has remained tense after the exchange of fire between Israel and armed groups in April, which saw the highest number of rockets fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel since 2006 in response to raids by the Israeli police on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount site in Jerusalem. (For background, see the brief on Lebanon in our May Forecast). Recently, Lebanese and Israeli media have reported tensions across the Blue Line—a border demarcation between Lebanon and Israel—on several occasions. During the 8 June regular meeting of the tripartite mechanism, which consists of representatives of UNIFIL, the Israel Defense Forces and the LAF, UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Aroldo Lázaro encouraged the two countries to continue to avail themselves of UNIFIL's “liaison and coordination mechanisms while avoiding unilateral actions”. He also appealed to the parties to engage in talks on the demarcation of the Blue Line, stressing the need to get “beyond the immediate incidents and looking to how we resolve them”. There does not, however, appear to be any concrete movement in this direction from the parties.

On 1 June, a military court in Lebanon charged five men with the 14 December 2022 killing of an Irish peacekeeper following an attack

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory and free and fair presidential elections. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2023/184 (10 March 2023) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701.

Lebanon

on a UNIFIL convoy. Council members had condemned the attack in a 15 December 2022 press statement, calling on the Lebanese government to investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice. The statement recalled “the necessity for all parties to ensure that UNIFIL personnel are safe and secure”.

On 12 June, a court in London ordered the UK-registered company Savaro Ltd., which is linked to the ammonium nitrate that exploded in the 4 August 2020 Beirut port blast, to pay compensation to some of the victims. The Lebanese inquiry into responsibility for the explosion remains stalled.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Data from the Lebanese authorities cited by Amnesty International shows that deaths in custody nearly doubled in 2022 compared to 2018, rising from 18 in 2018 to 34 in 2022. In a 7 June report, Amnesty International found that this sharp increase is linked to the economic crisis which began in 2019 and exacerbated longstanding structural problems in places of detention, such as overcrowding and poor sanitation. Nevertheless, the organisation also found “shortcomings from prison and health authorities in providing adequate and timely medical care to people in prison, including in emergency cases” and called on the Lebanese authorities promptly to investigate all deaths in custody, decrease prison overcrowding and, with the support of the international community, allocate additional resources to improving conditions and healthcare provision in places of detention.

Key Issues and Options

The peace and security situation in southern Lebanon remains in precarious balance. Key aspects of resolutions 1701 and 1559—which in 2004 called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all militias, and the extension of government

control over the whole Lebanese territory—remain unimplemented. The substantial amount of weaponry held by Hezbollah and other non-state actors in Lebanon, as well as Israel’s violations of Lebanon’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, are ongoing issues. Against this backdrop, the risk that serious incidents across the Blue Line could trigger a chain reaction leading to a wider violent escalation cannot be discounted.

The swift election of a president, the formation of a government, and the implementation of reforms aimed at addressing the ongoing socioeconomic instability are further issues.

An option for Council members would be to consider issuing a presidential statement stressing the importance of the effective implementation of resolutions 1559 and 1701, urging the Lebanese Parliament to elect a president, and calling for the formation of a new government. The statement could also underscore the importance of reforms to promote socioeconomic stability and of respecting the principle of non-refoulement.

Council Dynamics

There is broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. Differences remain among Council members over Hezbollah. Some draw a distinction between Hezbollah’s political and military wings and have designated only its military wing as a terrorist organisation. Other members, including the UK and the US, have listed the Shi’a group in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. In contrast, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari is the expected briefer.

Key Recent Developments

On 18 June, the Israeli government changed long-standing settlement planning and approval procedures to significantly expedite these processes, and on 26 June, it approved plans advancing more than 5,500 settlement units. These developments, which were met with expressions of concern by key international interlocutors, compound the Israeli government’s other recent moves in this direction. In February, for instance, Israel approved plans advancing over 7,000 housing units in settlements across the West Bank, and in March, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) repealed the provisions of the 2005 Disengagement Law pertaining to four northern West Bank settlements—including the Homesh outpost—that were evacuated concurrent with Israel’s disengagement from the Gaza Strip. On 18 May, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) issued an order allowing

Israelis to re-enter the area of the Homesh outpost.

Demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures are also on the rise, with OCHA reporting the demolition or seizure of 290 structures—43 of which had been provided as humanitarian aid—and the displacement of 413 people during the first three months of 2023. These figures represent, respectively, a 46 and 78 percent increase compared with the first quarter of 2022, which saw the highest number of demolitions since 2016.

Violence in the West Bank continues to escalate. Recent incidents have included the 19 June IDF raid and ensuing exchanges of fire in the Jenin refugee camp, during which five Palestinians were killed and two more later died of their wounds, and the 20 June shooting attack near the settlement of Eli, during which four Israelis were killed by two Palestinians. Following the 20 June shooting attack and through 25 June, Israeli settlers targeted several Palestinian towns and villages in the West Bank, causing extensive damage. A Palestinian man was shot and killed during the violence. (Following these developments, Council members held an extraordinary meeting on 23 June and, on 27 June, agreed on press elements. For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 23 June.)

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2023/1 (20 February 2023) reiterated that continued Israeli settlement activity is imperilling the viability of the two-state solution.

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At the 27 June Security Council meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Wennesland said that these “attacks followed a similar pattern, with large numbers of settlers, many armed, in some cases escorted by I[sraeli] S[ecurity] F[orces], setting fire to dozens of houses and vehicles, as well as fields owned by Palestinians, followed by confrontations, in many cases leading to casualties”. He noted that, while some authorities condemned the attacks—with, for instance, a joint statement by Israeli security forces referring to the settler attacks as “nationalist terrorism”—others delivered inflammatory statements. Wennesland referred in particular to a recent statement by Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israel’s National Security Minister and leader of the far-right Otzma Yehudit party, who called for a widespread military campaign in the West Bank, urging Israeli security forces to “blow up buildings [and] assassinate terrorists. Not one, or two, but dozens, hundreds, or if needed, thousands” and called on settlers to “run to the hilltops” and establish additional outposts. Wennesland also noted that some Palestinian factions celebrated the 20 June shooting attack and called for additional attacks.

The compounding effects of settlement expansion, demolitions, and settler violence were particularly evident in the displacement in May of the Palestinian herding community of Ein Samiya in the West Bank. According to a 25 May statement by Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) Yvonne Helle, “the Israeli authorities have repeatedly demolished homes and other structures [these families] own and have threatened to destroy their only school. At the same time, land available for the grazing of livestock has decreased due to settlement expansion and both children and adults have been subjected to settler violence”, leaving no viable choice for this community than to leave.

International interlocutors have noted the reappearance of heavy weaponry during Israel’s operations in the West Bank as a concerning development. In a 23 June statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that the airstrikes conducted by the IDF during the 19 June raid in Jenin were “a major intensification of the use of weaponry more generally associated with the conduct of armed hostilities rather than a law enforcement operation”. (During the raid, Israel deployed helicopter gunships in the West Bank for the first time in about 20 years.) On 21 June, three Palestinians were killed in an Israeli drone strike on a car that the IDF said was carrying “a terrorist cell” that had carried out shooting attacks in the West Bank. According to media reports citing a statement by the IDF, this was the first such strike in the West Bank since 2006. In his statement, Türk said that the Israeli authorities are required “to ensure that all operations are planned and implemented to minimize the use of lethal force”.

The ceasefire, which halted the 9–13 May round of hostilities between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in the Gaza Strip, has held. However, there is an ongoing risk that developments in the West Bank may have spillover effects in Gaza, leading to a new violent confrontation. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 10 May.)

On 27 June, the Secretary-General published his annual report on children and armed conflict, which documented 3,133 grave violations that were perpetrated against 1,139 Palestinian children and eight Israeli children in 2022. Several civil society organisations

and member states have criticised the Secretary-General for failing to hold accountable Israeli security forces and Palestinian armed groups, neither of which were listed in the annual report’s annexes. Several civil society organisations have called for Israel’s listing, with some also calling for the listing of Palestinian armed groups. (For more, see the Children and Armed Conflict brief in our July Forecast.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 8 June, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT, including East Jerusalem and Israel, issued a report which found that “freedom of association, expression and opinion, and the right to peaceful assembly, are being violated by the Government of Israel, the Government of the State of Palestine and the de facto authorities in Gaza” (A/HRC/53/22). Introducing the report to the HRC on 20 June, Commissioner Navanethem Pillay said that “the majority of violations are being committed by Israeli authorities”. Among other issues, the report says that the commission concluded that the designations by Israeli authorities of six Palestinian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as terrorist organisations—which Council members discussed during several meetings in 2021 and 2022—were “unjustified, undertaken to silence civil society voices, and violate human rights, including freedom of association, freedom of expression and opinion, and the rights to peaceful assembly, to privacy and to fair trial”. The report also says that the commission has “documented several cases of sexual and gender-based violence by Palestinian security forces against Palestinian women human rights defenders”. (The commission was established by HRC resolution S-30/1 adopted on 27 May 2021. While some UN member states oppose the commission’s open-ended mandate, others support it.)

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue for the Security Council remains to determine how it can support the resumption of political negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians to move towards a resolution of the conflict and achieve a two-state solution. The deteriorating security situation and violence against civilians remain important matters of concern for Council members. While the Council has met on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” twelve times in six months, it has been unable to put forward a shared strategy to prevent the further worsening of the situation.

Deterring developments that undermine the viability of the two-state solution and a peaceful resolution of the conflict—such as the expansion of Israeli settlements, forced evictions and demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures, and the alteration of the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem—is also a key issue. In a recent statement, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson and former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, respectively Chair and Deputy Chair of The Elders, warned that a “‘one-state reality’ is now rapidly extinguishing the prospect of a two-state solution”.

On 20 February, the Council adopted a presidential statement expressing “deep concern and dismay” about Israel’s announcements regarding expansion of settlement activity. One option for the Council would be to adopt a follow-up presidential statement reacting to recent announcements of further construction and expansion of settlements and to the decision of the Israeli government to alter settlement planning procedures. The statement could echo the 28 June statement by the Secretary-General’s spokesperson and previous Council outcomes, condemning the advancement of settlement activity and reiterating that settlements constitute a flagrant violation

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of international law and are a major obstacle to the realisation of a viable two-state solution and a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace. The statement could also call for immediate de-escalation, calm, and restraint.

If Council dynamics impede agreement on a presidential statement, different groupings of Council members could consider delivering their own statement to this effect. These groupings could also explore and spearhead further options and proposals to promote broader and more effective Council action on this file.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is broad support among Council members for the two-state solution. With varying degrees of emphasis, members also routinely call for an end to settlement activity and demolitions and condemn violence against civilians, including acts of terror and settler-related violence.

Nevertheless, dynamics on this file remain difficult. China, for instance, proposed issuing press elements during the 10 May emergency consultations, which had been called to discuss the hostilities between Israel and the PIJ. However, consensus could not be achieved. In particular, it seems that the US opposed the proposal, arguing that an outcome would not be helpful at that stage, and that it was preferable to leave space for quiet diplomacy. On 27 June, Security Council members agreed on press elements on the 23 June

closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” after a failed attempt to do so on the day of the consultations. This was the first Council outcome, albeit an informal one, on this file since the 20 February presidential statement.

In recent Council meetings on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Russia has regularly accused the US of blocking the Council’s adoption of any substantive decision on the Middle East peace process and the efforts of the Middle East Quartet—which consists of the EU, Russia, the UN, and the US.

Many members have called for the implementation of the commitments agreed at the meetings of senior officials from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the US, Egypt, and Jordan in Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh. Although the joint communiqué issued after the 19 March Sharm El Sheikh meeting strongly suggests that the five parties would reconvene in April, no such meeting has taken place. At press time, further meetings under this US-led format appear unlikely in the immediate future, with senior Palestinian Authority leaders stressing that it is not possible to continue holding these conferences “if there is no actual and tangible positive development on the ground”.

In June, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas travelled to China, where on 14 June, he and Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the establishment of a “strategic partnership”.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its biannual briefing on West Africa and the Sahel. The Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Leonardo Santos Simão, is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in much of the subregion remains dire, especially in large parts of the Sahel, which endures continued attacks by al-Qaida and Islamic State-affiliated groups and inter-communal fighting. Terrorism from the Sahel increasingly threatens coastal West African countries, notably Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, and Togo.

Addressing the Security Council on 16 June, Mali’s Transitional Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdoulaye Diop called for the withdrawal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) “without delay”. His demand came shortly after the Council had begun negotiations to renew the mission’s mandate and amid tensions between the UN peacekeeping operation and Malian authorities, who have restricted MINUSMA’s movement and objected to its human rights reporting. At the time of writing, Council members were still negotiating how to proceed with MINUSMA’s mandate, which was set to expire on 30 June.

In Burkina Faso, which is facing widespread terrorist violence that has spilled over from Mali, authorities said on 30 May that the government aimed to double the number of volunteers for the

civil defence militia (known as the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland) to 100,000 as part of transitional President Ibrahim Traoré’s pledge to recapture the territory that terrorist groups have seized since 2015, amounting to 40 percent of the country. Both Mali and Burkina Faso have committed to holding elections next year to restore constitutional order following military coups in 2020 and 2021 in Mali and in 2022 in Burkina, after years of worsening terrorist violence.

The scale of the crisis facing Burkina Faso was depicted in an 8 June OCHA white note to the Council about Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Haiti, which was submitted in accordance with resolution 2417 from May 2018. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to report swiftly to the Council when the “risk of conflict-induced famine and wide-spread food insecurity” occurs. According to the white note, nearly 2.2 million people in Burkina Faso, or 10 percent of the population, are acutely food insecure, including 22,500 people facing the risk of starvation. Because of the lean season, these numbers could reach 3.35 million people and 42,700 people, respectively, by August. The white note said that nearly 940,000 people in Burkina are estimated to live in 27 population centres that are either besieged or partially besieged by armed groups, including Dijibo, the capital city of Soum Province, which had 61,000 residents in 2019 and now hosts nearly 270,000 displaced persons.

Nigeria held presidential and legislative elections on 25 February. The Independent National Electoral Commission declared the

UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL Security Council Letter S/2023/70 and S/2023/71 (20 January 2023 and 27 January 2027) was an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and Security Council renewing the mandate of UNOWAS from 1 February 2023 to 31 January 2026. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9238** (10 January 2023) was a briefing on UNOWAS.

West Africa and the Sahel

candidate of the ruling All Progressive Congress party, Bola Tinubu, the winner with 36 percent of the vote but the post-election period was marred by legal challenges to the results. Tinubu took office on 29 May, identifying security as his administration's "top priority" during his inauguration ceremony. Nigeria faces multiple security crises—the insurgency by remnant groups of Boko Haram, including the Islamic State West Africa Province; banditry in the northwest and north-central regions; herder-farmer conflict; and separatist and other violence in its southeast.

Senegal has seen rising tensions over the potential run by President Macky Sall for a third term and his perceived intolerance towards challengers. On 1 June, a court found opposition leader Ousmane Sonko guilty of "corrupting youth", though it acquitted him of the charge of rape. Sonko was sentenced to two years in prison, barring him from running in the 2024 presidential election. Protests led to 16 reported deaths during clashes between Sonko's supporters and the police.

Earlier this year, the Council renewed the mandate of UNOWAS for three years until 31 January 2026 through an exchange of letters with the Secretary-General. UNOWAS' mandate remains organised around four objectives: monitoring political developments and good offices; enhancing regional and subregional partnerships to address cross-border and cross-cutting threats; supporting, through political advocacy and convening, implementation of the UN's Sahel Strategy; and promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, human rights, and the integration of gender in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

On 2 May, Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Leonardo Santos Simão of Mozambique as his new Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel and head of UNOWAS, and Chairman of the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission. Santos replaces Annadif Khatir Mahamat Saleh, who ended his assignment on 19 October 2022 after being named foreign minister in the transitional government of Chad.

Peacebuilding Commission-Related Developments

Ahead of the Council's 10 January briefing on West Africa and the Sahel, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) submitted written advice to the Council. The PBC recalled, among other issues, the need to strengthen institutions of democracy and good governance in countries undergoing transitions; underscored the importance of inclusive political dialogue in the lead-up to elections that will be held across the region in 2023; and reiterated the need to address the adverse effects of climate change. The PBC also submitted written advice to the Council for its 16 May briefing on the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Joint Force, created to combat terrorist groups in the Sahel.

From 14 to 16 February, the Chair of the PBC's Guinea-Bissau country configuration, Ambassador Ronaldo Costa Filho (Brazil), visited Guinea-Bissau, accompanied by the Officer-in-Charge, Head of Mission and Deputy Special Representative of UNOWAS, Giovanie Biha, and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Elizabeth Spehar. Costa debriefed members of the country configuration on 13 March about his visit, which largely focused on the forthcoming legislative elections in June for the National Assembly after its dissolution by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló in May 2022. On 25 April, the PBC's Liberia country configuration held a meeting focused on ensuring peaceful and inclusive legislative and presidential elections in Liberia, which are scheduled for 10 October 2023. On 28 April, the PBC discussed The Gambia at a session about transitional justice, which also considered situations in Colombia and Timor-Leste. On 23 June, the PBC

convened for a meeting on the Sahel.

Key Issues and Options

The expanding terrorism threat and the evolving security landscape in West Africa and the Sahel is a key issue. The pending departure of MINUSMA risks hastening the spillover of violence and refugees from Mali to the region. The efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with UN support, to restore constitutional order to Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali following the coups d'état in these countries over the past three years are another key issue. An ECOWAS summit to be held in early July is likely to focus on these issues, which may guide Council members' positions.

With MINUSMA's likely withdrawal, an emerging issue may be an enhanced role for UNOWAS to support the implementation of Mali's 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement and political transition. Members may consider and make sure that UNOWAS has the resources and capacities for the new demands placed on it over recent years.

Another prominent issue for Council members is how to address the region's structural conflict drivers, namely weak governance, underdevelopment, and climate change. Such efforts are guided by, for example, the UN's Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme, and the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilisation strategy.

A future issue for the Council will be how to respond to the strategic assessment of the Sahel being conducted by the Independent High-Level Panel on Security and Development, led by former Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou on behalf of the UN, the AU, ECOWAS, and the G5 Sahel. (The G5 Sahel comprises Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger; Mali withdrew from the group in May 2022). The Panel's report is expected to take stock of the situation and efforts to address the security crisis and to include recommendations such as supporting the Secretary-General's call for the deployment of an African peace support operation with an enforcement mandate to fight terrorism in the Sahel.

The Security Council may adopt a presidential statement, as is usually proposed by the UNOWAS penholders following these biannual meetings. Such a statement could underscore the importance of restoring constitutional order in regional countries under transition; welcome and encourage further cooperation between states of the region to address security challenges; and reaffirm the need for counter-terrorism efforts to respect international humanitarian and human rights law. A presidential statement could also reiterate calls for a comprehensive approach to tackle the region's security, peacebuilding, and development challenges.

Council Dynamics

Council members have long valued the good offices role of UNOWAS. Despite their support for the mission, however, members have not been able to agree for the past year and a half on what had been a customary presidential statement following UNOWAS briefings. Last year, elected member India blocked agreement on the text over its proposed climate security language. It seems that China and Russia have raised similar concerns during the first half of this year after negotiations resumed in January.

More broadly, Council discussion on the region has become increasingly polarised since the deployment of the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, to Mali in late 2021, which the US and European countries strongly criticise. Ghana is a member of

ECOWAS and the Accra Initiative, which was established in 2017 by several coastal West African countries and Burkina Faso to prevent the spillover of terrorism from the Sahel and to address transnational organised crime by strengthening security cooperation. In addition to

its concerns about the expanding terrorism threat, Ghana has championed renewed Council engagement on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Ghana and Switzerland are the penholders on UNOWAS.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to extend the sanctions imposed on the Central African Republic (CAR), which expire at the end of the month, and renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, which expires on 31 August.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) expires on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

On 20 June, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the CAR and head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza briefed the Council on efforts to advance the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, including the dissolution in April of two armed groups and factions of three other armed groups which are signatories to the peace agreement. She expressed concerns, however, about the deteriorating security situation on the country's borders with Chad, South Sudan and Sudan and noted the influx of refugees into CAR as a result of the outbreak of conflict in neighbouring Sudan. Rugwabiza referred to the UN's recent decision to repatriate a unit of 60 MINUSCA military personnel and their commander over serious allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and reiterated the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for such matters.

AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye also briefed the Council, highlighting the impact of the outbreak of fighting in Sudan in exacerbating the difficult security situation in the CAR. He called for the complete lifting of the arms embargo imposed on the CAR to enable its armed forces (FACA) to defend the country and protect its citizens in line with a 13 June AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) communiqué following its meeting on the situation in the CAR the same day.

In a 30 May decree, President Faustin Touadéra called for a referendum on a new constitution on 30 July, which was opposed by various CAR political and civil society actors. This is due to concerns that that new constitution would remove term limits, paving the way for the president to run for a third term, which is not permitted under the current constitution. At the 20 June meeting, some Council members expressed concern about the constitutional referendum and its implications for the country's political stability while others noted it as an achievement in the CAR's political process.

The ongoing preparations for local elections, which were expected to take place in the CAR for the first time since 1988, have been suspended until September, according to the Secretary-General's latest report. This was partly due to a lack of funds but also the need to prepare for the constitutional referendum in July.

A coalition of opposition parties laid out conditions for participating in local elections, including calls for the president to abandon the constitutional referendum, stop the harassment of opposition leaders, and agree to a reform of the National Electoral Authority. At the 20 June meeting, some Council members noted the temporary suspension of local elections and called on the CAR authorities to work towards an inclusive, transparent, and peaceful electoral process that guarantees the full and effective participation of all voices, including women and youth.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 15 May, the Secretary-General submitted his report on the progress achieved by the Central African authorities in the implementation of the key benchmarks set out in a 9 April 2019 presidential statement to review the arms embargo imposed on the CAR. These benchmarks include the reform of the security sector; the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation process; and the management of weapons and ammunition. The report noted that "further efforts in support of the capacities of national authorities in demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and repatriation and in weapons and ammunition management will be paramount in reducing the availability, diversion and proliferation of weapons and ammunition fuelling violent conflict".

The Panel of Experts' final report (S/2023/360), published on 18 May, noted recent trends that have led the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) forces, the main rebel coalition in CAR, to retreat towards the tri-border areas of CAR, Chad and Sudan. It described the regional security dynamics between the three countries in light of the activities of various armed groups across the tri-border areas. The report further indicated that armed groups were increasingly active in the southeast part of the CAR bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan, as well as in the west near the border with Cameroon.

The report referred to the meeting hosted by the Angolan President and chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), João Lourenço, in Luanda on 9 February, which brought together CAR President Touadéra and Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno. The outcome of this meeting was a decision to move François Bozizé, the sanctioned leader of the CPC based in Chad, to Guinea-Bissau. But the panel said that no exemption request was made to do so and noted violations of the travel ban with the movement of several other sanctioned individuals between CAR, Chad and Sudan.

The report provided detailed accounts of the increasing attacks by armed groups targeting the strategic and economic interests of the FACA and the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company. Gold-mining sites have increasingly become targets of attacks, and the report referred to the 19 March incident in central CAR that claimed the lives of nine Chinese workers of the Gold Coast Group company. The panel mentioned the increase in diamond exports from CAR last year but noted the suspensions imposed by the Kimberley Process, a multilateral trade regime established in 2003 with the goal of preventing the flow of conflict diamonds that limited export volumes and their per-carat value. The suspension limits exports from production areas in the east and some parts in the west of the country, according to the panel. In this regard, the CAR government is campaigning for the lifting of the suspensions, as reflected in the remarks by Sylvie Valérie Baipo Temon, the CAR Minister for Foreign Affairs, Francophonie and Central Africans Abroad,

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2683 (30 May 2023) renewed the South Sudan Sanctions regime for one year. S/RES/2648 (29 July 2022) extended the 2127 CAR sanctions regime until 31 July and the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 31 August. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/3 (9 April 2019) established benchmarks for suspending or progressively lifting arms embargo measures on the government of the CAR. Secretary-General's Report S/2023/356 (15 May 2023) was a letter from the Secretary-General on the progress in the implementation of benchmarks for a review of the arms embargo imposed on the CAR. 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.9352 (20 June 2023) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

at the 21 February Security Council meeting.

On 26 April, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to discuss the panel's final report, which was due by 30 May. Committee chair Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana), accompanied by Council experts, undertook a working visit to CAR from 6 to 9 June.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 16 June, Yao Agetse, the UN independent expert on the human rights situation in the CAR, issued a statement, noting that an upcoming constitutional referendum in the CAR “could complicate the country's human rights situation” and urged authorities to prevent increased hate speech and violence before, during, and after the vote. In his statement, Agetse urged the international community to remain vigilant about the situation in the CAR and urged the CAR authorities to use “all means possible to ensure that the referendum does not result in further human rights violations”.

Key Issues and Options

The arms embargo is likely to continue to be a key issue during the upcoming negotiations on renewing the 2127 CAR sanctions regime. The CAR government has continued to push for the lifting of the arms embargo, and the AUPSC reiterated this request in its 13 June communiqué. In the upcoming negotiations, CAR is likely to solicit the support of some Council members, including the three African members (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique), China and Russia, in pushing for a total lifting. Other members may oppose this move, however, arguing that the embargo does not prevent the CAR government from acquiring weapons.

One possible option is for France, the penholder on the CAR, to propose a further easing of the notification requirement to respond to the government's request, but this is unlikely to satisfy CAR and its supporters in the Council.

Council Dynamics

Council members are divided on the issue of the arms embargo. Although the Security Council took steps to further ease the embargo last year with the adoption of resolution 2648 of 29 July 2022, five Council members (China, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, and Russia) abstained from the vote, supporting CAR's request to lift the embargo. The decision by the Security Council to remove the notification requirement under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime seems to have been interpreted as a precedent for other sanctions regimes. For instance, during the negotiation on extending the 2206 South Sudan sanctions regime in May, the A3 made a similar proposal to advance their position on the lifting of the arms embargo imposed on South Sudan. The proposal faced opposition from other Council member states, which argued that the example of the DRC sanctions regime might not be appropriate for the South Sudan context. On 30 May, when the Council adopted resolution 2683 renewing the South Sudan sanctions regime for one year, it received ten votes in favour and abstentions from the A3, China and Russia. Resolution 2683 removed the requirement for the South Sudanese government to provide advance notification regarding the supply, sale, or transfer of non-lethal military equipment.

A similarly difficult discussion is likely to play out in the upcoming negotiation on the extension of the 2127 CAR sanctions regime. At the 20 June Security Council meeting on the situation in the CAR,

Temon reiterated her country's request to lift the arms embargo, and the A3, China and Russia supported this request in their statements. Other African countries—namely Angola, Burundi, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and South Sudan, which participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure—also expressed support and solidarity with the CAR. However, the US underscored the importance of the notification requirement in ensuring transparency and maintained that it does not prevent the CAR from securing the weapons it needs to confront armed groups.

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