

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In October, Brazil holds the presidency of the Security Council.

Brazil plans to organise two signature events. The first signature event is an open debate on “Peace through Dialogue: The Contribution of Regional, Sub-regional and Bilateral Arrangements to the [Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes](#)”. The second signature event is the annual open debate on [women, peace, and security](#). UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and a high-level representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are the anticipated briefers. A civil society representative is also expected to brief. Both meetings are expected to be chaired by Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira.

In October, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual debate on [cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations](#), focusing on the AU. The 17th annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) will be held on 6 October. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa, the home of the AU headquarters. This year, the meeting will be held in Addis Ababa, and will be preceded by the eighth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC, which is set to take place on 5 October.

The Security Council is scheduled to hold its [annual private meeting with the President of the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#), Judge Joan E. Donoghue.

[UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) Filippo Grandi is also expected to brief the Council in October.

African issues on the programme of work in October are:

- [Western Sahara](#), consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the mandate renewal of MINURSO;
- [Great Lakes region](#), the biannual briefing and consultations;
- [Libya](#), renewal of the authorisation of measures related to the illicit export of petroleum

from Libya, briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), and the mandate renewal of UNSMIL;

- [Somalia](#), briefing by the Chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee (Ambassador Ishikane Kimihiro of Japan), briefing and consultations on the situation in Somalia, and the mandate renewal of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM); and
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), briefing and consultations.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Iraq](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI);
- [Yemen](#), monthly briefing and consultations on developments;
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF);
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559;
- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks; 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 October. A briefing on the UN Interim Administration Mission in [Kosovo](#) (UNMIK) is anticipated, and one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) are likely during the month.

Two issues in the Americas will be discussed in October:

- [Haiti](#), renewal of the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime, a briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), and a vote on a draft resolution authorising member states to deploy a non-UN multinational force to Haiti; and
- [Colombia](#), a briefing and consultations on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia and renewal of the verification mission’s mandate.

Other issues could be raised in October depending on developments.

2 October 2023
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The UN Security Council and Regional Organisations: A Brief Exploration of Chapter VIII

The Importance of Chapter VIII Today

The Secretary-General's *New Agenda for Peace* calls for strong partnerships between the UN and regional frameworks as part of “networked multilateralism”.¹ Current geopolitical shifts make it imperative to reflect on how such partnerships should function—how the Security Council and regional organisations relate to each other in the maintenance of international peace and security. This is especially important in assessing how and when the Council must be involved with regional arrangements, including peace and enforcement operations.

Regional arrangements or agencies have an explicit role under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter in dealing with matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security “as are appropriate for regional action”, subject to certain caveats, while the Security Council’s primary responsibility and superior enforcement role are strongly enshrined in Chapters V-VII of the Charter. The Council itself has a mixed record in interpreting the provisions of the UN Charter, however.

Shifting Approaches to Chapter VIII

Analysts have called Chapter VIII an “ambivalent compromise”.² The text reflects the divisions at the time of its drafting between “universalists”, who were determined that the new organisation should not be undermined by regional organisations acting in the same sphere, and “regionalists”, who wanted regional organisations to keep a role in maintaining international peace and security.³

In practice, the Council has taken an à la carte approach to regional organisations, variously cooperating with them, deferring to them, or asserting its own primacy, depending on the prevailing politics and the issue at hand. Between 1948 and 1982, powerful Council members amplified the roles of regional organisations in which they exercised significant influence, or turned to these organisations to legitimise the action they wanted to take, bypassing the Council.⁴

With the end of the Cold War, the Secretary-General and member states approached regional organisations with renewed vigour, exemplified by the Secretary-General’s 1992 Agenda for Peace in which then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that “regional action as a matter of decentralization, delegation and cooperation with UN efforts could not only lighten the burden of the Council but also contribute to a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization in international affairs”.⁵

In January 1993, the Secretary-General invited regional organisations to improve coordination with the UN. The Security Council adopted its first resolution on the UN and regional organisations in 2005, infused with the intention to “strengthen the interaction and cooperation with these organizations in maintaining international peace and security”.⁶ It also reiterated the obligation of international organisations, under Article 54 of the Charter, to keep the Council

fully informed of their activities for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Enhanced Interaction with Regional Organisations

By this time, Council meetings focusing on regional organisations were starting to take hold. An April 2003 debate, featuring a briefing by then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan, began a practice that has endured over the past two decades of frequent interaction between the Council and regional arrangements. Annual consultative meetings with the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council have been convened since 2007. Debates, briefings, and other meetings on cooperation with a host of regional organisations—including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the AU, the European Union (EU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), among others—are now the norm.

Council decisions encouraging regular interaction with regional organisations and requesting the UN Secretary-General to report on the relationship between the UN and these organisations have prompted a number of these meetings. At times, elected members have also chosen to focus on the relationship between the UN and an organisation from their region in signature events during their monthly presidencies.

What led to these enhanced interactions? The answer may lie in the Council’s July 2004 presidential statement on cooperation between the UN and regional organisations in stabilisation processes. It noted that effectively addressing the numerous conflict situations confronting the international community would require “an increased level of cooperation with regional organizations, where appropriate”.⁷ In short, the Council recognised that it was overburdened.

Notwithstanding the increased activity, the nature of the Council’s engagements with regional organisations—and their effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security—varies greatly, depending on the issue and the regional organisation. The most developed relationship is with the AU, in line with the multiple situations in Africa on the Council’s agenda. However, even this relationship continues to face challenges in terms of burden-sharing, coordination, and differing perceptions of roles and responsibilities.

Interpreting Chapter VIII: Enforcement Action and Peaceful Settlement

The ambivalently qualified entry point of Chapter VIII (“Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements...for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security...”) goes on to specify that these matters must be “appropriate for regional action”, and that the arrangements, agencies, and their action must be consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations. This opening article,

1 *New Agenda for Peace*, <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-new-agenda-for-peace-en.pdf>

2 H.P. Neuhold, *The Charter of the United Nations, A Commentary*, ed. B. Simma, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 686.

3 See discussion in Robert C. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 159-182.

4 See extensive discussion in Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *The UN Security Council in the 21st Century*, ed D. Malone et al, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2016), 475-490.

5 United Nations, “An Agenda for Peace: S/24111.” 31 January 1992.

6 United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 1631 (2005).” 17 October 2005.

7 United Nations Security Council, “Statement of the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2004/27 (2004).” 20 July 2004.

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Article 52, while encouraging regional organisations in the pacific settlement of local disputes, adds that nothing in this article “impairs the application of Articles 34 and 35” of the Charter—respectively on the Council’s investigation of “any dispute, or any situation which might lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute”, and the right of any member state to bring such situations to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly.

Article 53 of the Charter refers to the Council *utilising* regional arrangements for enforcement action *under its authority* (emphasis added), going on to say that “no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements...without the authorization of the Security Council”. Following the military coup in Niger in July, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) threatened to take “all necessary means”, including the use of force to restore democratic rule in Niger. If ECOWAS intervenes militarily in this situation, under Article VIII, the Council would be the strict letter of the UN Charter need to authorise this action. The Council has at times tacitly authorised operations, or acknowledged them belatedly, including insofar as the AU and ECOWAS forces are concerned. For example, the Council adopted resolution 788 in November 1992 commending the efforts of ECOWAS “to restore peace, security and stability in Liberia”⁸, more than two years after the sub-regional organisation’s force in the country (that is, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, or ECOMOG) had been deployed.

Some members have insisted that the Council should not address conflict situations while the relevant regional organisation is engaged (as African members have argued in the case of Tigray), or that the regional organisation should lead (ASEAN, in the case of Myanmar). On the other hand, others contend that the Council is not doing its job in the face of prolonged crises that regional arrangements appear unable to resolve.

The Primacy of the Council

Dag Hammarskjöld, speaking in 1954, emphasised that “where resort to [regional] arrangements is chosen in the first instance, that choice should not be permitted to cast any doubt on the ultimate responsibility of the UN.”⁹ The UN Charter and the practice of the Council confirm that the Security Council has the authority to act at any time in respect of any dispute, including issues that are also under consideration in regional arrangements¹⁰ and organisations. The Council’s 2004 presidential statement underlined its own

primacy over regional arrangements, as also evident from Articles 24 and 103 of the Charter.¹¹

It remains up to the Council to determine which matters it discusses, addresses, investigates, or delegates to a regional or subregional organisation. As part of the Council’s authority—and accountability—it can decide whether a matter is appropriate for regional action within the meaning of Article 52 of the UN Charter, and, again, whether it wishes to rely on regional arrangements for enforcement action under its own authority pursuant to Article 53. While the Council can delegate authority in any particular case, it cannot ignore its primary responsibility for international peace and security.

Article 54 says that “The Security Council shall at all times be kept fully informed of activities undertaken or in contemplation under regional arrangements or by regional agencies for the maintenance of international peace and security.” The Council has at times imposed specific reporting obligations on regional arrangements or coalitions—for example, in the cases of Afghanistan (S/RES/1510), Libya (S/RES/1973), and Iraq (S/RES/678).

Conclusion

At the Charter’s drafting, the question of whether regional arrangements should be able to use force on their own initiative has been described as the most important issue “in the argument concerning the political order of the postwar period”.¹² Some states feared that “local arrangements might degenerate into simple aggressive alliances incompatible with the aims and policies of the contemplated world organization”.¹³

There is little doubt that regional organisations capable of preventing, deterring or responding to armed conflict, in particular, would be invaluable in supporting the Security Council in its task of maintaining international peace and security. But for this to become reality, there needs to be greater coordination between the Council and the regional arrangements in addressing potential and current conflicts. Having a regular cycle for meetings with other regional organisations, such as the LAS and ASEAN, could allow for more substantive discussions and a greater focus on specific country situations. With the October meeting of the Council and the AUPSC, as well as this year’s possible draft resolution on the financing of AU-led peace operations, the coming months present a singular opportunity to reflect on the deepening of partnerships between the Security Council and regional organisations.

8 United Nations Security Council, “Resolution 788 (1992)”, 19 November 1992.

9 H.P. Neuhold, *The Charter of the United Nations, A Commentary*, ed. B. Simma, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 712.

10 United Nations Security Council, “Statement of the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2004/27 (2004)”, 20 July 2004.

11 W. Hummer and M. Schweitzer, *The Charter of the United Nations, A Commentary*, ed. B. Simma, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 838-9. Article 24(1) provides that member states confer primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace security on the Council and also agree that the Council acts on their behalf in carrying out duties under this responsibility. Article 103 provides that member states’ obligations imposed by the Charter prevail over their obligations under any other international agreement.

12 Bruno Simma, *The Charter of the United Nations, A Commentary*, ed. B. Simma, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 732, referencing R.B. Russel and J.E. Muther, *A History of the United Nations Charter* (1958)

13 *Ibid.*

Status Update since our September Forecast

Working Methods Open Debate

The Council held its annual working methods open debate on 5 September (S/PV.9410). Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania), the chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, was the briefer. Thirty-seven members, other than Council members, made statements. Ecuador presented a joint statement on behalf of the Council's elected members (E10). Among the areas covered in the debate were: the use of the veto, penholders, the selection of subsidiary body chairs, implementation of Note 507, the frequency and format of meetings, and the two presidential notes on working methods adopted in August.

UN Peacekeeping

On 7 September, the Security Council held its annual meeting on UN peacekeeping pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017 (S/PV.9413). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members on the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) and the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiatives. (A4P seeks to enhance the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping and address its key challenges, while A4P+ outlines the main priorities for peacekeeping reform for 2021-2023.) Council members also discussed a 1 September report of the Secretary-General on the overall performance of UN peacekeeping operations (S/2023/646), which was submitted to the Council pursuant to a 31 August 2022 presidential statement on peace and security in Africa.

Sudan

On 13 September, the Security Council convened for an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) (S/PV.9417). Special Representative and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes briefed on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report, dated 31 August, which covered developments from 7 May to 20 August (S/2023/644). Perthes announced at the meeting that he was resigning his post. Edem Wosornu, Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division, and Mayada Adil, a civil society representative, also briefed.

Protection of Civilians

On 14 September, Albania convened an open debate on "Advancing public-private humanitarian partnership" under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.9418). Cindy H. McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP); Michael Miebach, CEO of Mastercard; and Jared Cohen, Co-Head of the Office of Applied Innovation and President of Global Affairs at Goldman Sachs, briefed the Council. One of the signature events of Albania's September Council presidency, the meeting was chaired by Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Igli Hasani.

South Sudan

On 15 September, the Security Council convened for an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (S/PV.9420). Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and head of UNMISS Nicholas

Haysom briefed on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report (S/2023/657), which was published on 11 September and covered developments from 1 June to 31 August. Edem Wosornu, the Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division, and Racheal Juan, advocacy and peace coordinator for the South Sudan Council of Churches, also briefed.

Informal Interactive Dialogue with the League of Arab States

On 21 September, Security Council members held a high-level informal interactive dialogue (IID) with representatives of the League of Arab States (LAS). Albanian Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Igli Hasani chaired the meeting. The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit, and members of the Arab Summit Troika. The Arab Summit Troika is a group of three rotating countries that monitors the implementation of resolutions and commitments adopted by the LAS, which consists of the outgoing, current, and incoming Arab Summit chairs (Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain).

Nagorno-Karabakh

On 21 September, there was a briefing on the situation in the Nagorno-Karabakh region (S/PV.9422). France requested the meeting following a letter sent by Armenia to the president of the Security Council. The letter cited Article 35 (1) of the UN Charter, which states that any UN member state "may bring any dispute, or any situation referred to in Article 34 [that is, one that may lead to international friction or give rise to a dispute] to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly". Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed. Armenia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ararat Mirzoyan and Azerbaijan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jeyhun Bayramov participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Afghanistan

On 26 September, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Afghanistan (S/PV.9423). The Council was briefed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva; UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous; and Karima Bennoune, a law professor at the University of Michigan Law School and former UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. Council members who have signed on to the Shared Commitments on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)—Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the UK, and the US—read a joint statement on Afghanistan ahead of the meeting.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 29 September, 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.9427). Special

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Representative of the Secretary-General and head of MONUSCO Bintou Keita briefed the Council on the latest developments in DRC and the activities of the mission. The DRC's Vice Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Christophe Lutundula, and the Rwandan representative, Ambassador Claver Gatete, participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. France, the penholder on the DRC, proposed a draft presidential statement following the meeting. At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating the draft.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 29 September, Council members held closed consultations on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. The meeting was requested by Albania, France, Japan, Malta, the UK, and the US to discuss "developments related to the DPRK's continued pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions".

Counter-Terrorism

On 29 September, Council members issued a press statement condemning terrorist attacks that were carried out in Pakistan on the same day (SC/15431). The attacks killed at least 58 people and injured over 80 more.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

On 25 October, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), which will be titled: "Women's participation in international peace and security: from theory to practice". UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and a high-level representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross are the anticipated briefers. A civil society representative is also expected to brief. One of the signature events of Brazil's presidency, the open debate will be chaired by Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira. It appears that Brazil intends to focus the open debate on the origins of the WPS agenda and on the role of civil society in its inception.

No outcome is expected.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's annual report on WPS—expected ahead of the open debate—will provide an update on the implementation of the agenda over the past year. The focus of this year's report is expected to be on achieving a radical shift in women's meaningful participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. (This is one of the "five goals for the decade" set out in the Secretary-General's 2020 WPS annual report.)

At the 7 March Security Council open debate on "Women, Peace and Security: Towards the 25th Anniversary of Resolution 1325", Bahous noted that although "we have witnessed some historic firsts for gender equality" since the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000, "we should also remember that we have significantly changed neither the composition of the people who sit at peace negotiation tables nor the impunity enjoyed by those who commit atrocities against women and girls". In recent months, women civil society representatives have highlighted these and other challenges in their briefings on various situations on the Council's agenda, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Libya, and Iraq.

Council members retained WPS-related language in several resolutions and were at times able to strengthen it, such as in resolution 2677 of 15 March, which renewed the mandate of the UN Mission

in South Sudan, and resolution 2674, which in January extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. In April, the Council adopted resolution 2681 condemning the Taliban's decision to ban Afghan women from working for the UN in Afghanistan, while resolution 2679—which in March requested an independent assessment to provide recommendations for an integrated approach in the international community to address the challenges facing Afghanistan—mandated for consultations with, among other actors, Afghan women and civil society, and identified the rights of women and girls as one of the challenges that the assessment's recommendations should focus on. More generally, in recent years members have paid increasing attention to the gendered effects of conflict on children.

At the same time, at a recent event on innovations in implementing the WPS agenda, UN Women Deputy Executive Director a.i. Sarah Hendriks noted that, if current trends continue, the percentage of Council resolutions adopted this year containing WPS provisions will drop to about 50 percent, the lowest in the past seven years. Neither of the two press statements that directly addressed developments since fighting erupted in April between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces includes language on WPS, nor did a presidential statement on Israeli settlements adopted in February. In a likely reference to the fact that the listing criteria for the Security Council's 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee have not been updated since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, Bahous recently recommended updating the criteria in the context of a dedicated session of the Committee on the role it can play in responding to violations of women's rights in Afghanistan.

Reprisals against individuals and groups cooperating with the UN, including women civil society representatives briefing the Council, remain a source of concern. Last year's annual WPS report said that nine women civil society representatives who briefed the Council from January 2021 to May 2022 reported having faced reprisals. This year's report is expected to provide an update on this issue, which is also highlighted in a recent Secretary-General's report on "Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights". This report covers the case of

UN DOCUMENTS ON WPS Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2242 (13 October 2015) expressed the Council's intention to invite women civil society briefers to Council meetings. S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on WPS.

Women, Peace and Security

Aminata Dicko, who faced intimidation and reprisals after briefing at the 27 January Council meeting on Mali—including a criminal complaint against her that featured as evidence the video of her Council statement. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 7 February.)

Council members Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the UK have given continuity to the WPS presidencies initiative started in late 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico. In July, the US, too, signed on to the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS. (For background, see our Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges research report.) Engagement on the commitments was uneven, however.

Malta, the UAE, and Albania gave a WPS focus to three mandated country-specific meetings during their presidencies, respectively on Somalia in February, the Central African Republic in June, and Afghanistan in September. In July, the UK hosted the annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) as one of the signature events of its presidency. Council members who have signed on to the shared commitments also held several WPS-focused press stakeouts, including, for the first time under this initiative, two in which women civil society representatives delivered remarks immediately after the members participating in the initiative.

While the period from September 2021 to September 2022 saw a high number of women civil society representatives briefing the Council during some of the participating presidencies—with Ireland setting a record of 16 such briefers in September 2021—none of the participating presidencies invited ten or more women civil society briefers during the period from October 2022 to August 2023. One of the commitments is to draw attention to, and follow up on, “the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers in Council meetings”, but it appears that participants in the initiative have yet to develop systematic processes to do this. Nonetheless, in the first such effort, Switzerland sent a letter to the Security Council listing the briefings delivered by women civil society representatives during its May presidency to draw attention to their statements.

Since January, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS has met six times, with recent meetings focusing on Colombia, Haiti and Syria. The IEG is expected to hold its fourth meeting with women’s protection advisers from several UN missions in November.

In July, Secretary-General António Guterres released *A New Agenda for Peace*. Among other issues, this document speaks of the “growing backlash against women’s rights, including on sexual and reproductive health” and argues for dismantling “the patriarchy and oppressive power structures which stand in the way of progress on gender equality or women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life”. Analysts have noted, however, that the recommendations offered by the Secretary-General on this issue do not match the depth of the challenges described in the report. Similarly, *Reaching Critical Will*, the disarmament programme of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, has argued that although *A New Agenda for Peace* includes “bold recommendations on several disarmament issues” and provides “a solid analysis of the geopolitical competition and military spending”, it fails to adequately link “patriarchy to militarism; nor does it address at all the relationship between militarism and the climate and ecological crises”.

Peacebuilding Commission Developments

The recently published second assessment of the Gender Strategy Action Plan, which the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) adopted in February 2021, found that 92 percent of the PBC’s advice, briefings and submissions to the General Assembly, Security Council and the Economic and Social Council during 2022 included gender-responsive recommendations, while the rate of participation of women peacebuilders at the PBC last year – that is, the number of women briefers as a percentage of the number of PBC meetings – was 87.5 percent.

The assessment noted shortcomings, however, including the fact that only 19 of the PBC’s 65 outcome documents contained references to information provided by women peacebuilders. It also flagged that despite “consistent references to women” in PBC outcome documents, messaging was often generic, for example, referring to “the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding”, but without analysis or specific recommendations. The assessment recommended, among other things, improving follow-up to the PBC’s engagement with women peacebuilders and strengthening the integration of gender analysis based on sex-disaggregated data.

Key Issues and Options

The pivotal issue for the Security Council remains the full implementation of the WPS agenda and its impact on the ground.

A key issue for Council members supportive of the agenda is to preserve and strengthen WPS language in upcoming mandate renewals and follow up on the implementation of these decisions. These members could also strengthen coordination ahead of key Council negotiations and meetings and use the information from IEG meetings to address specific issues. Asking UN briefers to provide substantive updates to the Council on issues relevant to the WPS agenda is a further option.

In line with resolution 2242 on WPS 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 briever, including carrying out risk assessments, developing protection plans, and responding to any reprisals.

Members could also convene a closed Arrria-formula meeting with Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mary Lawlor, the representatives of relevant UN entities, and NGO coalitions to discuss ways to reinforce the prevention and response to reprisals against human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders (WHRDs). In a recent report, Lawlor recommended that UN missions in conflict, post-conflict or crisis-affected situations be mandated to monitor and report on violations targeting WHRDs.

Members interested in maintaining the momentum of the shared commitments initiative as a tool to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda may consider strategies to strengthen the clear and substantive implementation of the commitments across participating members. While the purview of the agenda is wider than the shared commitments initiative, these pledges also require signatories to uphold, and advocate for, the full implementation of “the provisions of all previous Council resolutions” pertaining to the WPS agenda and to “ensur[e] that Security Council products integrate strong WPS language”.

Women, Peace and Security

Council Dynamics

While notable implementation gaps persist, Council members are generally supportive of the WPS agenda. Nevertheless, Council dynamics on WPS remain difficult and have been further complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. During the recent negotiations on the mandate renewal for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, none of the proposals for new WPS-related language was accommodated, apparently in order to avoid making transactional concessions to China and Russia on contentious aspects of the resolution.

Furthermore, Russia has objected to briefings by Special

Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten in sanctions committee meetings and opposed her participation at the annual open debate on CRSV in July. (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.)

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

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Hostilities remain concentrated in the eastern Donbas and southern Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine. Since launching their counteroffensive in June, Ukrainian forces have struggled to break through Russia's defensive lines, heavily fortified with extensive minefields. After recapturing the village of Robotyne in the Zaporizhzhia region in August, Ukrainian forces have been widening their breach of Russian defensive lines in the area.

Concurrently, Ukrainian troops have continued offensive operations around the city of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region. According to the UK's Ministry of Defence, Ukraine has recaptured the villages of Klishchiivka and Andriivka, located approximately eight kilometres south of Bakhmut. Further north, Ukrainian forces are defending against a Russian offensive in the eastern Luhansk region.

Meanwhile, Russia and Ukraine continue to conduct air, missile, and drone attacks against each other. Russia has targeted Ukraine's ports and grain infrastructure, and Ukraine has targeted military objects in Crimea. Following Russia's termination of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI) on 17 July, Ukraine has relied heavily on exporting grain through the Danube River into the Romanian Black Sea port cities of Sulina and Constanta. In response, Russia has launched several attacks on ports and grain depots along the Danube River in Ukraine, destroying hundreds of thousands of tonnes of grain, according to Ukrainian officials. As at 7 September, Russia had damaged or destroyed over 26 Ukrainian port facilities, warehouses, silos, and grain elevators since July, according to UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. On 8 September, the UK announced plans to increase surveillance of Russian naval activity in the Black Sea in an effort to deter attacks on civilian shipping and grain infrastructure in Ukraine.

Over the past month, Ukraine has intensified its attacks on the Crimean Peninsula. The latest missile strike on 22 September struck the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. A week earlier, on 14 September, Ukrainian drones and cruise missiles destroyed a Russian S-400 air defence system located on the

Crimean Peninsula. Crimea has served as a pivotal hub for Russia's military operations in Ukraine. The Russian Black Sea Fleet, a pillar of the Russian navy, has fired missiles at civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and threatened commercial shipping in the Black Sea following Moscow's termination of the BSGI in July.

September witnessed a flurry of multilateral diplomatic activity, with many discussions touching on the situation in Ukraine. During the Group of 20 (G20) Summit, which took place on 9 and 10 September, members managed to set aside their differences regarding the war in Ukraine and agree on a joint declaration, which asserted that "all states must refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition against the territorial integrity and sovereignty or political independence of any state". The declaration also affirmed that "[t]he use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible". While the statement acknowledged the "human suffering and negative added impacts of the war in Ukraine", it avoided designating Russia as the aggressor. On 9 September, Oleg Nikolenko, the spokesperson of Ukraine's foreign ministry, criticised the joint statement, calling it "nothing to be proud of", while thanking "the partners who tried to include strong wording in the text".

The Security Council has remained actively engaged on the situation in Ukraine, holding four meetings on the issue in September. At the request of Albania and the US, the Council convened for a meeting on 8 September to discuss the regional and municipal elections that Russia organised in the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions. On 12 September, Russia requested a briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item to discuss "the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine and other factors negatively affecting the prospects for resolving the crisis in Ukraine and around it". The Council convened for a high-level open debate on Ukraine on 20 September. The meeting, titled "Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter through effective multilateralism: Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine", was a signature event of Albania's September Council presidency. On 26 September, at Russia's request, the Council held a meeting to mark the one-year anniversary of the attack on the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 7 September and 19 September.)

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9424 (26 September 2023) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia. [S/PV.9421](#) (20 September 2023) was a high-level briefing on Ukraine, organised as a signature event of Albania's Council presidency in September. [S/PV.9415](#) (12 September 2023) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia. [S/PV.9414](#) (8 September 2023) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Albania and the US.

Ukraine

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 September, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Ukraine issued a statement upon the conclusion of its visit to Kyiv and Uman. The COI noted the recent issuance of an extensive “conference room paper”, which provides a detailed account supporting the COI’s findings. The paper sets out violations by the Russian armed forces, including wilful killings, torture, rape, and sexual violence. Many of these violations constitute war crimes, and if confirmed by further investigations, some may amount to crimes against humanity, according to the paper. The COI’s representatives called on the Russian authorities to ensure that they hold all perpetrators accountable and reminded the Ukrainian authorities to conclude investigations of the cases where the COI found violations by the Ukrainian armed forces. The COI will submit written reports of its activities to the General Assembly in October and to the Human Rights Council (HRC) in March 2024. The COI is expected to brief the HRC on 25 September during its 54th session, and UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif will brief the HRC on 9 October on cooperation with and assistance to Ukraine in the field of human rights, as requested by HRC resolution A/HRC/RES/53/30.

On 10 September, in a statement issued at the end of her official seven-day visit to Ukraine, Alice Jill Edwards, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, emphasised that “the volume of credible allegations of torture and other inhumane acts that are being perpetrated against civilians and prisoners of war by Russian authorities appears to be unabating”. Edwards underscored that none of these acts seem unintentional or accidental, but rather “orchestrated as part of a State policy to intimidate, instil fear, punish, or extract information and confessions”. During her visit, the Special Rapporteur also inspected the conditions of Russian prisoners of war. She noted that “sincere efforts” were made by the Ukrainian authorities to treat Russian prisoners of war with respect. Edwards will present a report to the HRC during its 55th session in March 2024.

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. The direct involvement of a permanent member in the conflict, however, continues to limit the Council’s options.

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.

Ukraine’s diplomatic approach has evolved considerably since the collapse of peace talks with Moscow in April 2022. Rather than resuming dialogue with Russia, Ukraine has focused on rallying international backing for a ten-point peace formula introduced by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at a G20 summit on 15 November 2022. The peace formula includes calls for nuclear safety, food and energy security, the withdrawal of Russian troops from

Ukraine, restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity, the release of all prisoners and deportees, and the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian war crimes. Speaking at the general debate of the 78th session of the General Assembly on 19 September, Zelenskyy underscored that attaining peace in Ukraine requires collective global efforts, rather than isolated “dialogue between the so-called great powers...behind closed doors”.

At the Council’s high-level open debate on Ukraine on 20 September, Zelenskyy, attending in person for the first time since the start of the war, elaborated on Ukraine’s strategy to garner support for his peace formula and the eventual organisation of a “global peace summit”. Zelenskyy proposed the formation of ten groups comprising national security advisors and diplomats. Each group would be responsible for drafting “decisions and legislative proposals” aligned with each point of the peace formula. It seems that by segmenting support based on individual points, Zelenskyy aims to appeal to member states that have been neutral or hesitant to condemn Russia during the conflict. Several elements of the peace formula—including ensuring food security and maintaining nuclear safety—resonate with states that have chosen a multi-aligned approach to the conflict, strengthening ties with both Moscow and Kyiv and its allies.

At the open debate, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov criticised Ukraine’s diplomatic stance. He argued that while Russia is ready to restart peace talks, Kyiv remains unwilling to seek a peaceful resolution. Lavrov pointed to a decree signed by Zelenskyy on 4 October 2022, which formally declared the prospect of peace talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin “impossible”. Moscow holds Ukraine’s Western allies responsible for the collapse of the peace talks in April 2022. During the debate, Lavrov insinuated that if the US truly wants peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow to resume, it should “give the signal for Zelenskyy’s [decree] to be cancelled”.

Despite the rhetoric calling for peace, prospects for a resolution remain bleak as both sides continue to rely on military means to shape the war’s outcome. After the Council’s high-level open debate, Zelenskyy travelled to Washington DC, where he met with US President Joe Biden and members of the US Congress. On 21 September, the US announced a new military assistance package worth \$128 million. Meanwhile, Russia hosted a summit with Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) leader Kim Jong-un on 13 September, amid growing speculation of a potential arms agreement between the two nations. During the summit, Kim Jong-un affirmed that the DPRK “will continue to support every decision” made by Putin, as Russia engages “in a sacred battle to defend its state sovereignty and security in the face of the hegemonic forces that oppose” it. On 18 September, Lavrov hosted his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. The following day, the Kremlin announced that Putin will travel to Beijing in October to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The visit will mark his first international trip since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for him in March over alleged war crimes related to the forced removal of children from Ukraine.

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will hold an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in Iraq. Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert will brief the Council on recent developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's latest reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property.

Key Recent Developments

It has been one year since the Iraqi parliament approved a new cabinet led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani, ending the political deadlock that had gripped the country following the October 2021 parliamentary election. The new government has pursued a government programme focused on combatting corruption, addressing unemployment, supporting vulnerable and low-income groups, reforming the economic and financial sectors, and enhancing public services. On 13 March, the government announced a draft budget law for 2023-2025 to advance these priorities. On 12 June, the Iraqi parliament approved the budget, allocating a record \$153 billion annually.

Among other provisions, the government programme included commitments to amending electoral legislation and to holding elections within a year. Consequently, parliament voted on 27 March to abolish the 2020 election law, which was adopted in the wake of the 2019 anti-government protests, and to reinstate the prior election law of 2018. The restored law replaced a first-past-the-post system with proportional representation and reduced the number of electoral districts, which some analysts predict will favour established political parties at the expense of independent candidates. While a date has not yet been set for parliamentary elections, the government announced on 20 June that provincial elections will be held on 18 December—the first such elections to be held since 2013 (after the 2018 provincial elections were postponed for technical reasons and the provincial councils were subsequently abolished following the 2019 protests). On 3 August, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) announced that it would hold its own long-delayed elections in February 2024.

Discussions about sharing oil revenue between the federal government and the KRG persist. On 23 March, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) ruled that the KRG's oil exports to Türkiye without Baghdad's approval violated a 1973 pipeline agreement between Iraq and Türkiye, prompting the latter to halt these oil flows, which constitute approximately 0.5 percent of global supply. Baghdad and Erbil subsequently reached a temporary agreement to restart the exports, according to which the KRG would allow federal oversight of its oil revenues in exchange for a share of the newly adopted federal budget.

Despite this agreement, however, Türkiye has not yet reopened the pipeline while it reportedly seeks to negotiate the settlement that the ICC ordered Türkiye to pay Iraq and to resolve a separate but related case that remains pending with the chamber. According to estimates, the prolonged shutdown has so far cost the KRG \$4 billion in lost export revenue, leaving the region increasingly reliant on pay-outs from the federal government. Following protests in

the Kurdistan region over unpaid civil service salaries, the federal government announced on 17 September that it would disburse an additional \$1.6 billion annually to the region.

Regarding the security situation, the Secretary-General's latest biannual report on the threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to international peace and security, dated 31 July, said that the group continued to command between 5,000 and 7,000 members across Iraq and Syria, "despite sustained counterterrorism operations by Member States". According to the report, counterterrorism efforts by Iraqi forces continued to result in a reduction in ISIL/Da'esh activities, but the group has maintained its low-grade insurgency, exploiting security gaps along the border of the Kurdistan region to enable attacks and resupply its cells in desert and mountainous areas.

Additionally, in late August, interethnic violence involving Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen broke out in the northern city of Kirkuk. The unrest followed the federal government's announcement that it would return to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)—the largest party in the KRG—a building that had previously served as the party headquarters but had been occupied by the federal government since it seized Kirkuk in 2017. On 28 August, Arabs and Turkmen protested outside the building, seeking to halt its return to the KDP and the resumption of party activity in the city. Kurdish counter-protesters confronted the group, leading to a violent dispute and the deployment of Iraqi security forces. According to reports, four Kurds died, and two Iraqi officers were injured in the unrest.

There have also been security-related developments regarding Iraq's bilateral relationships with neighbouring countries. Following a series of Iranian air strikes in September and November 2022 against Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups in Iraq's Kurdistan region, Iran and Iraq announced a border security agreement in March aimed at "protecting the common borders between the two countries and consolidating cooperation in several security fields", according to a statement by al-Sudani's office. In September, as part of the deal, Iraq began disarming and relocating Kurdish-Iranian groups from the Kurdistan region to refugee camps farther from the border.

Türkiye has also continued to conduct periodic military operations against Kurdish targets in Iraq. Most recently, on 18 September, Türkiye launched a drone attack on Arbat airport, killing three Kurdish counterterrorism officers. The following day, Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid issued a statement condemning the "repeated Turkish attacks" on Iraqi territory. UNAMI also issued a statement condemning the attack on Arbat and emphasising that "[a]ttacks repeatedly violating Iraqi sovereignty must stop".

On 30 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2682, renewing UNAMI's mandate for another year. On 15 September, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2697, renewing the mandate of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) for a final one-year non-extendable term. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 29 May and 14 September.)

Iraq

Human Rights-Related Developments

From 6 to 9 August, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk undertook an official mission to Iraq at the invitation of the government. During his visit, Türk met with senior government leaders, civil society representatives, and religious leaders. In a 9 August press conference concluding the visit, Türk stressed the need to act immediately on the climate emergency, asserting that “the era of global boiling has begun” and noting that Iraq is among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Türk acknowledged the government’s commitment to address climate change and water scarcity as priorities. However, he noted that actions by government officials against journalists, members of civil society, and environmental activists – such as violence, intimidation, and criminal defamation suits – have had a “chilling effect” on freedom of expression in the country.

In a 23 August statement, Human Rights Watch called on the Iraqi government to “immediately withdraw a proposed law currently before parliament that would impose the death penalty for same-sex conduct and imprisonment for transgender expression”. The statement said that the law, if adopted, “would violate fundamental human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association, privacy, equality, and nondiscrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Iraq”.

Women, Peace, and Security

Khanim Latif – Founder and Director of Asuda for Combating Violence Against Women – briefed the Council during the 18 May meeting on the situation in Iraq. She spoke about the prevalence of violence against women in Iraq – including against women human rights defenders – and stressed that “[w]ithout protection from violence and freedom from discrimination, women cannot engage fully or equally on a political, social or economic level”. Among other recommendations, Latif urged the Council to call on the Iraqi government to provide access to shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, including ensuring access to “psychosocial support, justice and legal services, as well as economic empowerment and opportunities for a safe future”. She also called on the government to allocate a budget for, and implement, the March 2021 Yazidi Survivors Law.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues for the Council include supporting the Iraqi government in maintaining its political and economic stability, promoting human rights (such as the freedom of expression and the rights of women), and addressing the adverse effects of climate change on the country’s long-term development.

One option would be to adopt a statement welcoming the progress that Iraq has made in governance over the past year, while expressing concern about violence against women and calling for stepped-up efforts to curtail gender-based violence.

In addition to the Special Representative’s briefing, the Council could invite a civil society representative in October to brief on the challenges facing Iraq.

Council and Broader Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of the Iraqi government and the assistance provided by UNAMI. While divisions emerged among Council members in relation to proposed Council products concerning the strikes carried out by Iran in the Kurdish region of Iraq in September and November 2022, these tensions have since eased: the recent adoptions of resolutions 2682 and 2697—respectively renewing the mandates of UNAMI and UNITAD—were both unanimous.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, however, as demonstrated by Iran’s and Türkiye’s attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan and the influence of countries in the region on domestic politics. The Iraqi government routinely declares that it does not wish to become a theatre for broader geopolitical tensions, seeking a balanced relationship with regional and international security partners.

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

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission, which covers the period from 27 June to 26 September. The chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Ivan Šimonović (Croatia), and a civil society representative may also brief the Council.

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

Key Recent Developments

Over one year has passed since President Gustavo Petro Urrego assumed office on 7 August 2022. During that period, his administration’s pursuit of “total peace”—which entails 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)—has produced mixed results. Progress has been made in dialogue efforts with armed groups, particularly with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), and in advancing certain aspects of the 2016 peace agreement, including rural reform and transitional justice. However, some Colombian actors have continued calling on the government to further prioritise implementation of the 2016 agreement, including provisions on security guarantees for former combatants as well as its gender and ethnic chapters.

During the period covered by the Secretary-General’s report, pervasive 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 14 ex-combatants, compared to 12 killed during the previous reporting period. According to the Secretary-General’s report, the Special Investigation Unit of the Office of the Attorney-General reported three new convictions in cases

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2694 (2 August 2023) expanded the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor and verify the implementation of a bilateral ceasefire between the Colombian government and the ELN. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2023/701** (26 September 2023) was the most recent 90-day report on Colombia. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9374** (12 July 2023) was the Security Council’s latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

Colombia

related to attacks against former combatants, for a total of 70 convictions—less than 15 percent—in the 475 such cases that are under the office’s investigation. On two occasions during the period covered by the Secretary-General’s report, ex-combatants and members of the Comunes party, which is comprised of former members of the FARC-EP, demonstrated in front of the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the Attorney-General, calling on the government to provide security guarantees and accountability for attacks against signatories of the 2016 accord.

In a notable development, on 7 September, the National Commission on Security Guarantees (NCSG), a body established by the 2016 agreement, presented a public policy for dismantling criminal organisations and their support networks and an action plan for its implementation. In the past several years, many national and international interlocutors—including Security Council members in their press statements on Colombia—have called on the NCSG to present this policy, which is a key component of the 2016 agreement’s chapter on security guarantees. According to the action plan, the government will seek to promote comprehensive actions that address the multiple causes—including socioeconomic, political, ideological, and cultural—that contribute to the creation and persistence of criminal structures. The plan stipulates, among other things, the strengthening of the state’s presence in areas where institutional weakness has allowed such structures to take root.

The Secretary-General’s report emphasises that the creation of an office within the presidency dedicated to advancing implementation of the 2016 peace agreement is essential to coordinating entities and policies related to the accord’s security guarantees. More than six months since Petro announced in March his intention to establish such an office and to appoint a high-level official to oversee the implementation of the peace process with the former FARC-EP, this official has yet to be named.

The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP)—the judicial component of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repitition established by the 2016 agreement—has continued to advance its work. In a notable development on Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by state agents, also known as “false positives”), on 30 August, the SJP indicted one general and eight soldiers for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Antioquia department during 2002 and 2003, resulting in 130 victims of extrajudicial killings. Regarding Case 01 (on crimes committed by the FARC-EP such as hostage-taking and other serious deprivations of liberty), the SJP in July indicted ten former members of the FARC-EP central command who operated in the Tolima, Quindío, and Huila departments, charging them with war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture and sexual violence. On 27 September, the SJP opened a new macro-case, Case 11, on gender-based violence.

Recent months have also witnessed progress in the government’s dialogue efforts with armed groups operating in the country. On 3 August, a bilateral six-month ceasefire agreed between the Colombian government and the ELN came into force. On the same day, the sides established a “National Participation Committee”, which is tasked with designing a methodology for the participation of civil society in the process.

The Security Council expanded the verification mission’s mandate to monitor and verify the implementation of the ceasefire between the government and the ELN in resolution 2694 of 2 August. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 2 August.) The Secretary-General’s report describes the mission’s new work as part of the ceasefire’s Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, noting that the parties “have successfully avoided any significant confrontation” during the reporting period.

In resolution 2694, the Council indicated its willingness to consider mandating the verification mission to monitor and verify a ceasefire with the Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP), when the Secretary-General “confirms a ceasefire including appropriate verification protocols has been reached” with the armed group. (The EMC FARC-EP mainly consists of former FARC-EP dissidents who did not sign the 2016 accord.) On 19 September, the government and the EMC FARC-EP announced their decision to install a “peace dialogue” table on 8 October. The parties also pledged to begin implementing, on that day, a ten-month bilateral, national ceasefire, committing to uphold respect for the civilian population.

Shortly after the announcement, the EMC FARC-EP carried out two separate car bomb attacks targeting police stations in the Valle del Cauca department on 20 and 22 September, which killed two civilians and injured ten people, respectively. Government officials condemned these attacks but did not indicate a change in the planned entry into force of the ceasefire on 8 October. After the 22 September attack, the EMC FARC-EP announced that it has unilaterally decided to cease its offensive actions from September 22 to 8 October.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 8 September, the international human rights expert Antonia Urrejola concluded her first visit to Colombia since her appointment on 26 July by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk. Urrejola’s mandate includes identifying and verifying the “obstacles to the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement”. At the conclusion of her visit, the expert issued a statement, referencing the exchanges she has had with senior representatives of the government, human rights defenders, members of civil society, and various UN representatives in Colombia. Urrejola said that the contents of the meetings will be the basis of her report to the Human Rights Council at its 55th session and noted her forthcoming visit to Colombia in November to continue gathering information in line with her mandate.

On 14 September, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli, issued a statement announcing that he would conduct an official visit to Colombia from 19 to 29 September. During his visit, Salvioli inspected approaches towards “addressing the legacy of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law” committed during the 50-year armed conflict and considered the measures undertaken by Colombian authorities to promote truth, justice, and reparations, among other matters.

Women, Peace and Security

On 21 August, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) held a meeting on Colombia, at which Ruiz Massieu briefed. Among other issues, participants discussed the development of Colombia’s first National Action Plan on Security Council resolution 1325, women’s participation in the talks with the ELN and other armed groups, the implementation of the gender provisions of the 2016 peace agreement, and measures to address violence against women human rights defenders, social leaders,

Colombia

former combatants, and in public life and politics.

UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, recommended that in the upcoming negotiations on the verification mission's mandate renewal, the Council consider demanding the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the implementation of the 2016 accord and in the negotiations with other armed actors in Colombia. UN Women also recommended requesting the mission to continue integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue in its planning, verification and reporting, as well as recognising the importance of ensuring adequate expertise to perform the functions added to the mandate. UN Women further recommended urging the adequate implementation of the Comprehensive Programme of Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders and integrating a gender perspective in the work of Colombia's National Protection Unit.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in October is to renew the verification mission's mandate. The Council could choose to adopt a straightforward renewal of the mandate, without altering its tasks. Council members may also consider if recent developments require any alteration to the mission's mandate, including in respect of the expected ceasefire between the government and the EMC FARC-EP. Members may also consider incorporating the recommendations presented by UN Women during the 21 August meeting of the IEG on WPS.

Another important issue for Council members is the local elections in Colombia planned for late October. Council members are likely to be watching closely preparations for these elections, set to take place on 29 October, as electoral campaign periods in Colombia have historically been characterised by heightened violence. During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, the verification mission received reports of several killings of members of political parties from across the spectrum, including of a woman candidate and an indigenous candidate. In the press statement that members routinely issue following their quarterly meeting on Colombia, they may wish to call for greater institutional efforts to guarantee fair and

secure participation in the electoral process, particularly of women former combatants.

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, as reflected in the recent unanimous adoption of resolution 2694, which responded to the government's 14 February request to the Council regarding the expansion of the verification mission's mandate.

Although the Secretary-General in a 13 June letter presented two options for the mission's mandate expansion—namely, a limited expansion focused only on the ELN and the EMC FARC-EP or a broader expansion incorporating all armed groups that are engaging in dialogue—the Council opted to approve only a role in verifying the ceasefire with the ELN. Some members, such as the US, apparently 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. It also seems that many members felt during the negotiations that the process with the EMC FARC-EP was not yet sufficiently advanced and therefore did not want to include this aspect in the mandate expansion. Some other members, however, apparently held the view that approving a role for the mission in the dialogue efforts with the EMC FARC-EP could have been beneficial since this group often competes for the same territories as the ELN.

Additionally, China apparently raised concerns about the possible budgetary implications of increasing the mission's observer ceiling to perform the new additional monitoring tasks. As a result, the number of approved additional observers was reduced from 70 to 68 in the course of negotiations.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

UN-AU Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold the annual debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the AU. Special Representative to the AU and head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga is the expected briefer.

Key Recent Developments

On 11 October 2022, the Council held a ministerial-level debate on UN-AU cooperation. Secretary-General António Guterres and AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat briefed the Council. The meeting highlighted the 20th anniversary of the AU. It also drew attention to the issue of climate security in Africa, which was the topic of a signature event by Gabon during its Security Council

presidency that month. Following the meeting, Gabon's proposed draft presidential statement could not be adopted because of the lack of consensus over climate language.

The annual debate usually takes place under an African Security Council presidency, but Mozambique's presidency in March was the only one for an African member this year. Therefore, the three African members (the A3)—Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique—seem to have reached an understanding with Brazil to consider the Secretary-General's annual report on "Strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including on the work of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU)" during its Security Council presidency in October.

The latest Secretary-General's report, published on 28 August, describes the partnership between the UN and the AU in conflict

UN DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND THE AU Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2457 (27 February 2019) was on silencing the guns in Africa. S/RES/2378 (20 September 2017) was on UN peacekeeping reform. S/RES/2320 (18 November 2016) was on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations in the maintenance of international peace and security. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2022/6 (31 August 2022) was on peace and security in Africa. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2023/629 (28 August 2023) was on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UNOAU. S/2022/643 (25 August 2022) was on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UNOAU. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.9149 (11 October 2022) was a meeting on the cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security.

UN-AU Cooperation

prevention and peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace support operations, and peacebuilding and the rule of law. It provides updates on the financing of AU peace support operations (AUPSOs) and refers to the Secretary-General's 1 May report on this issue, which was drafted pursuant to a 31 August 2022 presidential statement. It also mentions the AU consensus paper on predictable, adequate, and sustainable financing for AU peace and security activities adopted at the 36th AU Summit in February. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 24 May.)

During the Brazilian Presidency in October, the 17th annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) will also be held. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa, the home of the AU headquarters; this year's meeting will be held in Addis Ababa on 6 October. The AUPSC has proposed several agenda items for the meeting, including the situations in Sudan, the Sahel region, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia and the activities of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

This meeting is expected to be preceded on 5 October by the eighth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC. The aim of the joint seminar is to exchange views on how to enhance cooperation between the two Councils. Working methods will be discussed. The seventh informal joint seminar last year in New York welcomed the monthly meetings of the President of the Security Council and the Chairperson of the AUPSC. Participants also encouraged the UN and the AU to undertake joint assessment missions, as well as greater working-level coordination and consultation ahead of their joint meetings. Furthermore, they supported the regular participation of UN and AU Special Representatives in meetings of the Security Council and the AUPSC in order to provide the AU and UN perspectives on relevant topics related to African issues.

The other agenda item for the informal seminar is the long-standing issue of securing adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing for AUPSOs. This issue has gathered momentum in the Security Council since last year, as the AUPSC requested the A3 in May to "resume consultations with the relevant stakeholders towards the adoption of a UN Security Council resolution on financing AU-led PSOs". (For more information, see our 26 April research report titled *The Financing of AU Peace Support Operations: Prospects for Progress in the Security Council?*) On 23 September, the AUPSC held a ministerial-level meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly's high-level segment to discuss this issue. In his statement at the meeting, AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat expressed the Commission's readiness to support the A3 in advancing a draft resolution that is expected to be considered by the Security Council in December 2023.

The agenda items the AUPSC proposed for the joint consultative meeting and the joint seminar have broad support, and Council members are expected to accept them. It seems that the A3 have suggested including the youth, peace and security agenda in the joint seminar. Over the last couple of years, the AU Committee of

Experts has visited New York ahead of the annual consultations to meet with Security Council counterparts and negotiate the draft outcome document of the meeting. This year, for the first time, Security Council experts are expected to travel to Addis Ababa on 3-4 October in preparation for the annual consultation and will meet with their AUPSC counterparts.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members will be how to address the most pressing peace and security situations in Africa. Aside from specific conflicts, several thematic issues—including the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism, the resurgence of coups, the increasing role of mercenaries on the continent, and the worsening humanitarian situation with massive human displacement due to ongoing conflicts—may draw the attention of Council members.

Council members could consider conducting visiting missions to some of the conflict situations in Africa. Since late 2019, they have only undertaken two visiting missions: one to the Sahel region in October 2021 and another to the DRC in March. It has been eight years since Council members visited Somalia and four since they visited South Sudan. Apparently, there were discussions among Council members about adding one of these countries to their Addis Ababa trip, but it did not materialise.

Another major issue is how to address the long-standing request for the financing of AUPSOs from UN-assessed contributions. Council members seem to be supportive of adopting a framework resolution on the issue before the end of this year and are awaiting a draft from the A3.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the cooperation and partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security. The role of the A3 has been vital in this regard. In recent years, the A3 have enhanced their position in the Council through joint statements and coordinated positions advanced in negotiations on various Council products, particularly as they relate to Africa.

It remains to be seen, however, how the recent coup in Gabon will affect A3 dynamics over the coming months. At the annual Security Council briefing on peacekeeping held on 8 September, the A3 did not deliver a joint statement. On 31 August, the AUPSC suspended Gabon from all activities of the AU and its organs until the restoration of constitutional order in that country. (Gabon is expected to participate in the 17th annual consultation as a Security Council member.)

The A3 are spearheading efforts to advance a framework resolution on the financing of AUPSOs. They may circulate the draft resolution to Council members after the annual consultation between the two Councils. Although Council members are broadly supportive, issues related to accountability and human rights, burden-sharing, and fiduciary responsibilities are expected to complicate the upcoming negotiations.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement (the 1974 agreement) between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur War. Its mandate is to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces, as well as the areas of separation (a demilitarised buffer zone) and limitation (where Israeli and Syrian troops and equipment are restricted) in the Golan.

Carrying out the mandate entails observing violations of the 1974 agreement, reporting them, and liaising with both sides. UNDOF protests violations it observes of the 1974 agreement. Such violations regularly include unauthorised personnel and equipment in the areas of separation and limitation, the firing of weapons across the ceasefire line, and drones and aircraft crossing the ceasefire line.

On 10 June, the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Christian Saunders, visited UNDOF. According to a press statement released following the visit, Saunders interacted with female peacekeepers and inspected their accommodations along with other basic facilities within the camp. He also discussed with mission leadership UNDOF's commitment and efforts toward preventing and ending sexual exploitation and abuse, the statement added.

On 29 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2689, renewing the mandate of UNDOF for six months until 31 December. The resolution called on the parties to exercise maximum restraint and prevent any breaches of the ceasefire and the area of separation. It further encouraged them "to take full advantage of UNDOF's liaison function regularly to address issues of mutual concern".

Israel and Syria have continued to send letters to the Security Council accusing each other of violating the 1974 agreement. In a 27 July letter addressed to the Council and the Secretary-General, the Syrian government said that Israel "launched an attack against certain points belonging to the internal security forces in the town of Qahtaniyah in Qunaytirah, resulting in material damage". The Israeli government, in turn, wrote to the Council and the Secretary-General on 28 July, noting that "Syrian violations of the Alpha line [Israeli-occupied Golan side] and armed presence in the area of separation occur daily".

The region has witnessed a sharp rise in hostilities over the last few months. Speaking at an 11 September conference in Herzliya, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said that Israel "will not allow the establishment of a second Hezbollah in the Syrian Golan Heights, and the use of Syrian soil as a springboard for the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah". According to media reports, on 13 September, airstrikes allegedly conducted by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) hit the port city of Tartous, killing two Syrian soldiers and injuring six more. Later that day, Israel again conducted airstrikes in the vicinity of Hama, "causing material damage", the media report added.

In a 21 September Twitter post, the IDF said their tanks "struck [two] temporary structures that were being used by the Syrian army".

It claimed that these structures violated the 1974 agreement, while noting that "the IDF holds the Syrian regime responsible for all activities emanating from its territory and will not allow any attempts to violate Israeli sovereignty". According to local media reports, these positions were set up near Majdal Shams, a town in northern Golan, and were being used by the Syrian army to store military infrastructure.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 April, during its 52nd session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution concerning human rights in the "occupied Syrian Golan" (A/HRC/RES/52/33). Among other things, the resolution called upon Israel to comply with relevant General Assembly, Security Council and HRC resolutions, in particular Security Council resolution 497 of 17 December 1981, which decided that Israel's decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the "occupied Syrian Golan" was null and void and without international legal effect; deplored the "continuing settlement policies and practices in the occupied Syrian Golan"; and further called upon Israel to "cease changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan". The resolution was adopted with 31 votes in favour, 14 against, and two abstentions. Council members China, Gabon and the United Arab Emirates voted in favour of the resolution, whereas France, the United Kingdom, and the United States voted against.

The same day, the HRC also adopted a resolution (A/HRC/RES/52/35) condemning the "continuing settlement and related activities by Israel" in the Syrian Golan, including the transfer of its nationals into the occupied territory, construction and expansion of settlements, and demolition of community infrastructure. The resolution also demanded that Israel cease all settlement activities in the Syrian Golan immediately.

Key Issues and Options

One key issue is the challenges the mission faces in carrying out its mandate, such as the restrictions on the movement and access of UNDOF personnel. At next month's consultations, Council members may be interested in more information from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) briefer on progress on UNDOF's return to the Bravo side (Syrian Golan). The military observers of the Observer Group Golan (OGG) had to vacate the observation posts in 2014 owing to the deteriorating security situation in Syria.

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

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2689 on 29 June, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, illustrated that the Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. Members also seemingly perceive UNDOF as a positive aspect of the Council's work. There was little disagreement among Council members during the negotiations, which were apparently straightforward. No Council member felt the need to give an explanation of vote following the adoption. Some Council members believe that the situation has turned into a protracted conflict owing to continued violations of the disengagement agreement by both sides.

Despite deep divisions in the Council regarding the Syria file and

UNDOF (Golan)

opposing positions by the UNDOF co-penholders—Russia and the US—about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, the two countries continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. This arrangement has enabled close engagement with the

parties on the ground. It seems that the antagonism between Russia and the US over the conflict in Ukraine has not affected their work on UNDOF; the difficult dynamics witnessed in other Council files were not evident during the negotiations on UNDOF's mandate in June.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing on Yemen, followed by closed consultations. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA will 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 mandate of the Yemen sanctions measures, which comprise an assets freeze and travel ban, expires on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

A delegation of the Houthi rebel group visited Riyadh from 15 to 19 September, holding a new round of Omani-mediated talks with Saudi Arabia—which leads a military coalition in support of Yemen's internationally recognised government—on a possible ceasefire agreement. It was the first official visit by the Houthis since the start of Yemen's war more than eight years ago. Saudi Arabia welcomed the “positive results” of the five-day talks the Houthi delegation held with Saudi Defense Minister Khalid bin Salman Al Saud. The talks “were aimed at achieving a road map to support the peace process in Yemen”, according to a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. Media reports cited sources as saying that some progress was made on such issues as a timeline to withdraw foreign troops from Yemen and a mechanism for paying public servants' salaries.

Parallel to this process, Grundberg continued his regular consultations with the parties and other relevant actors. In late August, he held a virtual meeting with Iranian officials, followed by a visit to Cairo to meet with Egyptian and League of Arab States officials and Yemeni government parliamentarians, which included discussing the possible establishment of direct flights from Houthi-held Sana'a to the Egyptian capital. The UN Envoy then held talks with Yemeni government representatives in Aden and Marib in Yemen, where he met with the chair of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC), Rashad al-Alimi, and the president of the separatist Southern Transitional Council and PLC vice-president, Aidarous al-Zubaidi. Grundberg also consulted Emirati and Saudi officials during visits to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh on 6 September and 7 September, respectively. In a 20 September statement, Grundberg welcomed the recently concluded Houthi visit to Riyadh.

Grundberg briefed Council members in closed consultations during their monthly meeting on Yemen on 11 September. At the closed-door session, Council members also heard briefings by Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya and Beary. Following the meeting, Council members issued press elements expressing their support for the UN-led peace process and

welcoming the efforts by Saudi Arabia and Oman “and their ongoing support to the mediation efforts of the United Nations.”

In further diplomatic activity, the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud and Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, respectively—met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on 19 September in New York on the sidelines of the General Assembly's high-level week. The Saudi Press Agency reported that Saudi Arabia “was commended for hosting the Sanaa delegation”, while Blinken, according to his opening remarks, described the current situation as “a moment of opportunity” to advance peace in Yemen. A US statement said that the “Secretary and the Foreign Ministers agreed that cooperation among the three governments and Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council is essential to advancing UN-led peace efforts”. A media report said that the US had pushed for the trilateral meeting to address differences between the two coalition countries that could undermine efforts for a peace deal.

On 25 September, Bahrain announced that a Houthi drone attack killed one Bahraini officer and one Bahraini soldier, and wounded several other soldiers serving in the Saudi-led coalition along Saudi Arabia's southern border. The attack was a rare Houthi cross-border attack since the UN mediated a now expired truce agreement in April 2022.

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 an inter-Yemeni political process under UN auspices. Differences over the use of Yemen's resources and associated revenues to pay the salaries of public employees have been one of the main issues impeding progress in the Houthi-Saudi talks, which started in October 2022. A related issue is the fragile relations between the various factions that make up the anti-Houthi forces and that form the Yemeni government's PLC, including the separatist STC movement, which is supported by the UAE. Concerns have also been raised within Yemen's government about Saudi Arabia, seeking to extricate itself from the war, potentially reaching a deal with the Houthis, which could lack the concurrence of other Yemeni stakeholders.

Council members could encourage the parties to continue talks and show flexibility to reach a ceasefire agreement. They may further reiterate the importance of an inclusive Yemeni political process mediated by the UN for a sustainable resolution of the conflict.

Yemen continues to face massive humanitarian needs, which remains a key issue. An estimated 21.6 million people require aid or protection. Access constraints and interference in relief operations

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2691 (10 July 2023) extended the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement until 14 July 2024. 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

Yemen

include the Houthis' enforcement of mahram, requiring Yemeni women aid workers to be accompanied by male guardians, which has negatively affected aid delivery. Funding shortfalls for the 2023 UN humanitarian response plan are causing relief programmes and services to be scaled back or cut. Moreover, economic conditions are exacerbating the humanitarian situation in addition to potentially undermining political efforts. Misinformation and disinformation against humanitarians in Yemen have been exacerbating safety concerns, affecting the response.

Council members may highlight worries about policies that are fuelling socioeconomic challenges and tensions—Houthi drone attacks on oil terminals last year and restrictions on inter-Yemeni trade have caused significant revenue shortages for the government, which have hindered the provision of services. Members may further reiterate calls for 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, which calls for \$4.3 billion but was only 32 percent funded as at 21 September.

Council members could similarly reiterate calls for donors to help fill the remaining funding requirements, and to deliver committed funds, for completing the UN-led FSO Safer salvage operation. A

potential environmental crisis was recently averted after the successful extraction of the oil from the moored vessel off Hodeidah governorate, but a funding gap still exists to complete the operation. This includes towing and scraping the ship and installing a buoy to moor the replacement vessel of the FSO Safer.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the UN Special Envoy's mediation efforts. Members have further welcomed the potential for the Houthi-Saudi talks to yield meaningful results. At the same time, they stress the ultimate importance of an inclusive Yemeni political process under UN auspices to achieve a sustainable resolution to the conflict. The UAE has been a leading member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and is active in pushing for its views, coordinated with the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia, to be reflected in Council products. Russia has traditionally objected to language in Council products that it perceives as too critical of the Houthis or not balanced. The US maintains a Special Envoy to Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, who often seeks to support the UN and other mediation efforts.

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

Libya

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which expires on 31 October. The Council is also expected to renew the authorisation of measures in resolution 2146 of 19 March 2014 related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. The current authorisation expires on 30 October.

Additionally, the Council will hold its bimonthly briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative and head of UNSMIL Abdoulaye Bathily will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and aligned with the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments—which has persisted since the indefinite postponement of elections scheduled for December 2021—is a root cause of Libya's political, security, and economic instability.

On 10 September, Storm Daniel hit Libya's eastern region,

wreaking catastrophic damage that has highlighted the severity of the country's governance deficit. The storm brought torrential rainfall and strong winds, causing two dams to burst in the coastal town of Derna, large parts of which were consequently flooded. According to the latest available numbers from UN agencies, nearly 4,000 people have died, 9,000 people are still missing, and 40,000 people remain displaced. The Libyan Red Crescent has put the death toll as high as 11,000. OCHA has launched an emergency flash appeal of \$71.4 million to address humanitarian needs, while UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths allocated \$10 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund.

Analysts have cited the impacts of Libya's political instability—including poorly maintained infrastructure and deficient emergency planning—as factors that exacerbated the damage caused by the storm. The country's divided government has complicated the coordination of the international humanitarian response, including reports that Haftar is using his effective control over the region to leverage the aid operation for his own political benefit. The Libyan attorney-general has announced an investigation into the causes of the dam failure, but this has not quelled public protests that have called for an international investigation as the only credible path to accountability. In his 19 September opening address to the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General António Guterres said that Derna saw “many of

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2656 (28 October 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2023. S/RES/2644 (13 July 2022) renewed the measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 30 October 2023 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 November 2023. S/RES/2146 (19 March 2014) imposed measures on vessels transporting crude oil that had been illicitly exported from Libya. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2023/2** (16 March 2023) reaffirmed the Security Council's commitment to an inclusive, Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process leading to elections, facilitated by the UN, and supported by the international community. **Secretary-General's Report S/2023/589** (8 August 2023) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9402** (22 August 2023) was on Libya.

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the world’s challenges coalesce[e] in an awful hellscape” marked by climate change, violent conflict, and political instability. He called the disaster “a sad snapshot of the state of our world—the flood of inequity, of injustice, of inability to confront the challenges in our midst”.

The storm struck during a period of heightened political and security tensions in Libya. On 14 August, violent clashes broke out in Tripoli after Mahmoud Hamza, leader of the 444 Brigade—a militia affiliated with the GNU’s Ministry of Defense that controls most of southern Tripoli—was detained at Mitiga International Airport by the Special Deterrence Force (SDF), a rival group aligned with the Ministry of Interior that serves as a de facto police force and controls much of the city’s infrastructure, including the Mitiga airport. Hamza’s detention prompted heavy fighting between the two groups, reportedly resulting in at least 55 deaths, marking the deadliest violence in the Tripoli region in several years. On 16 August, the SDF released Hamza, after which the situation reportedly stabilised.

In late August, protests erupted in several Libyan cities after reports that GNU Foreign Minister Najla el-Mangoush had secretly met with her Israeli counterpart in Rome—the first known meeting between the two countries’ top diplomats—as Libya does not formally recognise Israel. Dbeibah, who claimed he had not been informed of the meeting in advance, subsequently fired Mangoush and rejected the possibility of normalising diplomatic ties with Israel. However, media reports have cited unnamed GNU officials claiming that Dbeibah had, in fact, sanctioned the meeting in an attempt to bolster US support for his government.

Regarding the broader political situation in Libya, both the UN and national actors have concentrated recent efforts on facilitating agreement on a new roadmap for national elections to unify the country’s divided government. In March, the HoR and the GNU-aligned High State Council (HSC) established a “joint 6+6 committee”—composed of six representatives from each body—to draft electoral laws to enable elections. On 7 June, the joint committee announced that it had reached agreement on draft legislation. On 25 July, the HoR approved the draft and referred it to the HSC for a vote.

The proposed legislation remains controversial, however, with various political factions contesting several of its provisions. According to the Secretary-General’s most recent report on UNSMIL, dated 8 August, the disputed elements include “proposals with regard to the eligibility of dual nationals to run in the presidential elections; the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections sequentially, one after the other; making the holding of parliamentary elections dependent on the success of the presidential elections; and establishing a new interim executive before holding elections”. In his 22 August briefing to the Council, Bathily updated the Council on his recent engagement with Libyan actors to improve and advance the electoral framework, including his efforts to convene a meeting of the main stakeholders to reach a political agreement on the four politically contested issues.

The provision for establishing a new interim government has proven most controversial. The UN has previously opposed such a move, concerned that it would diminish stakeholders’ incentives to follow through on their electoral commitments and instead reinforce the status quo. In an apparent shift, however, Bathily said during his

August briefing to the Council that “a unified government, agreed upon by the major players, is an imperative for leading the country to elections”. Similarly, the US, which had also expressed scepticism about establishing a new interim government, said during the briefing that it was “open to supporting the formation of a technocratic caretaker government, the sole task of which would be to bring the country to free and fair elections”.

In a 23 August press statement, Council members reaffirmed their strong commitment to an inclusive, Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process, in line with relevant Council resolutions and building on progress in the 6+6 negotiations aimed at producing viable electoral laws. Members reiterated their support for Bathily’s mediation and good offices role and urged Libyan stakeholders to engage fully, transparently, and in good faith with the Special Representative in a Libyan-led and UNSMIL-facilitated negotiation to reach agreement on politically contested issues pertaining to elections.

On 29 September, the Council adopted resolution 2698, renewing for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect and seize vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking from Libya. The resolution received 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia).

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 13 September, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a statement expressing concern about the floods in Libya, which he described as “another lethal reminder of the catastrophic impact that a changing climate can have on our world”. Türk called on all Libyan political actors to overcome political deadlocks and divisions and to act collectively to ensure access to relief. He emphasised that human rights must be “at the centre of response to this heartbreaking situation”.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 18 August, the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to consider the final report of the committee’s Panel of Experts, submitted in accordance with paragraph 13 of resolution 2644 of 13 July 2022. The report covered a range of issues, including acts that threaten the peace, stability or security of Libya, particularly the acts of Libyan armed groups; violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, including in the context of human trafficking and migrant smuggling; violations of the arms embargo; illicit exports of refined petroleum products; and implementation of the assets freeze. The committee discussed the recommendations contained in the final report and is considering follow-up action.

On 4 August, the committee met with a delegation from the Libyan Investment Authority (LIA), the country’s sovereign wealth fund, which remains subject to assets-freeze measures under the Libya sanctions regime. Representatives of Ernst & Young—an audit company retained by the LIA—and the Libya Panel of Experts also attended the meeting.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in October is renewing UNSMIL’s mandate. As was the case for the current mandate in resolution 2656 of 28 October 2022, the Council is likely to retain the mission’s core mandated tasks as set out in resolution 2542 of 15 September 2020 and paragraph 16 of resolution 2570 of 16 April 2021. The Council might consider adding language welcoming the 6+6 committee’s draft electoral legislation, urging national stakeholders to reach consensus on politically contentious issues and calling on Bathily to

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step up his mediation and good offices role in this regard. The Council might also consider strengthening UNSMIL's role in supporting and coordinating the international humanitarian response to Storm Daniel.

Another issue for the Council is reauthorising the measures set out in resolution 2146 of 19 March 2014 related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. That resolution authorised member states to inspect on the high seas vessels designated by the 1970 Sanctions Committee for facilitating such export. The authorisation was most recently renewed by resolution 2644, which also extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts until 15 November.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led inclusive process to result in elections foreseen as restoring political, security, and economic stability. They are also broadly supportive of Bathily's mediation efforts in this regard. While positions have previously diverged on whether to establish a new interim government

prior to holding elections, views now appear to be converging in favour after both the UN and the US expressed support for this course of action during the Council's August meeting on Libya, after having previously opposed it.

Between September 2021 and July 2022, the Council renewed UNSMIL's mandate five times through short-term extensions because of disagreements among Council members on several issues, including the length of the mandate, the restructuring of the mission, and the appointment of UNSMIL's leadership. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 13 September 2021, 1 October 2021, 31 January 2022, 29 April 2022 and 28 July 2022.) Following the appointment of Bathily in September 2022, however, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2656 on 28 October 2022, which renewed UNSMIL's mandate for one year. In October, the Council is likely to adopt another one-year extension.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which expires on 31 October. Ahead of the mandate renewal, Council members are also likely to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's annual report on the situation concerning Western Sahara, which member states anticipate receiving by 2 October.

Key Recent Developments

On 27 October 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2654, renewing the mandate of MINURSO for another year with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Russia and then-Council member Kenya). The resolution introduced new language stressing the importance for "all concerned expanding on their positions in order to advance a solution". It seems that the term "all concerned" was inserted to accommodate different views regarding the parties to the conflict, while giving the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, Staffan de Mistura, the space to determine how to move forward with the political process. The resolution also expressed support for "building on the progress and framework of the former Personal Envoy" and strongly encouraged Morocco, the Polisario Front—the entity representing the inhabitants of the Western Sahara region, known as Sahrawis—Algeria, and Mauritania to engage with the Personal Envoy. In addition, it introduced new language calling for the resumption of the safe and regular resupply of MINURSO team sites. This language appears to have been added in response to movement restrictions the Polisario Front has imposed on the mission that have negatively affected the serviceability and life cycles of equipment, according to the Secretary-General's October 2022 report on Western Sahara. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 26 October 2022.)

On 17 July, Israel announced that it would recognise Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara and intended to consider opening a consulate in Dakhla, a city in the disputed territory. In a Twitter post following the announcement, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said that "[t]his step will strengthen the relations between the two countries...and will contribute to the efforts exerted to expand cooperation and deepen peace and stability in our region". In a 19 July press release, Morocco's King Mohammed VI welcomed Israel's decision, saying it would contribute to closer ties between Morocco and Israel. In a statement the next day (20 July), the Algerian foreign ministry criticised Israel's decision, which it said "cannot in any way legitimise the occupation of Sahrawi lands".

On 27 July, the Secretary-General submitted his report on the "Question of Western Sahara", covering developments from 1 September 2022 to 30 June pursuant to General Assembly resolution A/RES/77/133 of 16 December 2022. The report noted that during this period, the situation in Western Sahara was characterised by low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front, creating challenges to MINURSO's operational environment. It added that constraints on MINURSO's logistical supply and maintenance chain to team sites east of the berm continued to seriously impede the mission's ability to sustain its field presence. (The berm refers to an approximately 1,700-mile-long earthen wall that divides the Moroccan-administered portion of Western Sahara from that held by the Polisario Front.) The report said that following high-level engagement, MINURSO was able to conduct three separate ground convoy movements between April and June to its team sites east of the berm in Agwanit, Mehaires, Mijek, and Tifariti, delivering urgently needed fuel and other supplies.

The 15th BRICS summit was held in Johannesburg from 22 to 24 August. Brahim Ghali, the Secretary General of the Polisario Front,

UN DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN SAHARA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2654 (27 October 2022) renewed the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2023. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9168 (27 October 2022) contained the explanation of votes after the adoption of resolution 2654 renewing MINURSO's mandate.

Western Sahara

attended the BRICS-Africa dialogue meeting on 24 August. The declaration adopted at the conclusion of the BRICS summit emphasised “the need to achieve an enduring and mutually acceptable political solution to the question of Western Sahara in accordance with relevant [Security Council] resolutions and in fulfilment of the mandate of...[MINURSO]”.

De Mistura has continued his diplomatic efforts in a bid to advance the political process. On 4 September, he embarked on a regional tour with Laayoune as his first stop, followed by Dakhla on 6 September. This was his first visit to Western Sahara since his appointment as Personal Envoy in November 2021. In response to a question concerning the aim of de Mistura’s visit to the region during a 5 September press briefing, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq said that de Mistura “looks forward to further deepening consultations with all concerned on the prospects of constructively advancing the political process on Western Sahara in the course of these regional engagements”.

On 8 September, de Mistura met Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita in Rabat. During the meeting, Bourita reportedly reiterated Morocco’s position regarding its autonomy plan. (The plan, which Morocco submitted to the UN in 2007, calls for integrating the territory into Morocco, with the Sahrawi people managing their internal affairs while being represented externally by Morocco.)

On 11 September, de Mistura met Ghali in New York. According to a media report, Ghali emphasised the “Sahrawi people’s commitment to defending their national rights and aspirations by all legal means enshrined by the UN charter and AU’s constitutive act”. On 13 September, de Mistura met with Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf in Algiers. According to a press statement released by the Algerian foreign ministry following the meeting, Attaf supported de Mistura’s efforts, expressing hope that they “lead to the revival of direct negotiations between the two parties to the conflict, namely the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front, without pre-conditions and in good faith, to find a political solution preserving Western Sahara people’s right to self-determination”.

De Mistura also held a meeting with Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El-Ghazouani in Nouakchott on 14 September.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is to renew the mandate of MINURSO and consider what changes to the mission’s mandate, if any, are necessary.

Another important issue for Council members to consider is how

to bring all the parties to the negotiating table. Resolution 2654 called on all parties to resume negotiations with a view to “achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara”. Significant obstacles remain in the peace process, however. The Polisario Front announced in November 2020 that it would no longer respect the ceasefire agreement it signed with Morocco in 1991.

A possible option for the Council would be to issue a presidential statement expressing support for de Mistura’s efforts and urging all parties to resume negotiations.

The human rights situation is another issue of concern. The Secretary-General’s 3 October 2022 report noted that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was unable to conduct any visits to Western Sahara for the seventh consecutive year despite multiple requests and the Security Council strongly encouraging enhanced cooperation with OHCHR in resolution 2602 of 29 October 2021. The report added that OHCHR continued to receive allegations of human rights violations in Western Sahara, reportedly committed by Moroccan security forces.

Council Dynamics

The US, the penholder on Western Sahara, recognised Morocco’s sovereignty over the region in December 2020 during the Trump administration. The Biden administration has not changed this position. France has traditionally supported the Moroccan autonomy plan, and Gabon and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are also supportive of Morocco. Council members Ghana and Mozambique maintain diplomatic relations with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

Divisions among Council members were apparent in the meeting on Western Sahara on 27 October 2022. In its explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 2654, Russia noted that “[i]n the past few years, the resolutions on the renewal of MINURSO’s mandate have included amendments that in our view harm the unbiased and impartial approach needed to resolve the issue of Western Sahara”. It objected to the references to the “round-table format” meetings, calling them irrelevant and limiting the mediation efforts of de Mistura. In addition, Russia noted that the final settlement should be based on mutually acceptable outcomes that could contribute to a fair political resolution for Morocco and the Polisario Front and provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. On the other hand, the UAE expressed support for Morocco’s autonomy plan while recognising its sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara.

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Expected Council Action

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

of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region.

Key Recent Developments

Several regional meetings have taken place since April when Xia last briefed the Council. The Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) of

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GREAT LAKES [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/19](#) (20 October 2021) was on the situation in the Great Lakes region. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2023/237](#) (30 March 2023) was on the implementation of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9307](#) (19 April 2023) was a Security Council briefing on the situation in the Great Lakes region.

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

the PSC-F held its 11th high-level meeting in Bujumbura, Burundi on 6 May, attended by regional leaders and guarantor institutions of the PSC-F. Participants discussed developments in the Great Lakes region and assessed the progress and challenges in the implementation of the PSC-F ten years after its signing on 24 February 2013 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. According to the meeting's communiqué, the regional leaders requested the Technical Support Committee (TSC), composed of senior officials of the signatories of the PSC-F, to conduct an independent, frank, and sincere assessment of its implementation. The conclusions and recommendations of this assessment are expected to form part of a roadmap for the revitalisation of the PSC-F, to be submitted to the next high-level meeting of the oversight mechanism in Uganda next year.

On 31 May, regional leaders of the East African Community (EAC) agreed to extend the EAC Regional Force's (EACRF) mandate for an additional six months, from 8 March to 8 September. (The status of forces agreement (SOFA) was signed between the DRC government and the EAC in September 2022 to enable the deployment of the EACRF for an initial period of six months and negotiations were underway to renew the agreement after it expired in March.) The EACRF was deployed in November 2022 in areas vacated by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), an armed group operating in the DRC's North Kivu province that was dormant in the past decade and became active again in 2022. The force was part of the ongoing regional diplomatic efforts spearheaded by the EAC to address the situation in eastern DRC, known as the Nairobi process. Nevertheless, the Congolese government did not want the EACRF to stay after the end of its initial mandate and had turned its attention towards the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which on 8 May decided to deploy its regional standby force to restore peace and stability in the eastern DRC.

In August, the EAC defence ministers met in Nairobi to assess the progress by the EACRF in restoring stability in its area of deployment and recommended extending its mandate pending the consent of the Congolese government to renew the status of forces agreement. Following the visit to Kinshasa in August by Burundian President Evariste Ndayishimiye, the current chair of the EAC, the Congolese government softened its stance on the EACRF and signalled its consent to allow the force to stay after the expiry of its mandate on 8 September. Therefore, the EAC leaders met in an extraordinary summit in Nairobi on 5 September on the sidelines of the Africa climate summit hosted by Kenya and decided to extend the EACRF mandate for another three months until 8 December.

Meanwhile, the SADC Troika—consisting of the chairperson (Namibia), the incoming chairperson (Zambia), and the previous chairperson (South Africa) of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence, and Security—held its extraordinary summit virtually on 11 July and approved the mandate for deploying the SADC Mission in DRC (SADCIDRC). According to the Chairperson of the SADC Troika, SADCIDRC was expected to be deployed by 30 September.

Aside from the EAC and SADC, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has also been involved in regional efforts to address the situation in eastern DRC, known as the Luanda process. On 3 June, the ICGLR held an extraordinary summit in Luanda, Republic of Angola to review the situation in the Great

Lakes region, including the eastern DRC. The meeting welcomed the outcome of the 31 May EAC extraordinary summit, recognised the reduction of violence in North Kivu, reiterated the need for local and foreign armed groups to disarm unconditionally, and called on the Congolese government to accelerate the implementation of its Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme (P-DDRCS).

On 27 June, a Quadripartite Summit of the EAC, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the ICGLR, and the SADC was held in Luanda under the AU's auspices. Other participants included the DRC, Rwanda, and the UN. The meeting agreed on a joint framework that will seek to promote coherence among the existing initiatives of the four regional mechanisms engaged in the DRC with a clear division of responsibilities and agreed timelines.

On 2 August, the Secretary-General presented his options for reconfiguring the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO) pursuant to resolution 2666 of 20 December 2022, which renewed the mission's mandate. These options were expected to take into account the mission's role in light of other existing international, regional, and bilateral initiatives in support of the DRC. The Secretary-General proposed an enhanced role for the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) to reinforce ongoing regional initiatives. He also proposed a division of labour between MONUSCO and the regional forces to optimise their respective contributions to creating a secure environment. The report (S/2023/574) further indicated the need to adjust MONUSCO's mandate to enable the mission to leverage its operational and logistical capabilities in support of the EACRF and possibly the SADCIDRC when it is deployed.

Women, Peace and Security

On 14 July, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten briefed the Security Council at its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). She said that, with 701 CRSV violations, the DRC presented the highest number of UN-verified cases of CRSV in 2022. Patten added, however, that thousands more cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported by UN humanitarian service providers, "including alarming levels of sexual exploitation of children at more than 1,000 sites in and around displacement camps". Addressing the prevalence of sexual violence perpetrated against women carrying out livelihood activities around the camps, such as searching for food and collecting wood or water, Patten said that "women and girls face an unacceptable choice between economic subsistence and sexual violence and between their livelihoods and their lives". "How food insecurity increases the risk of exposure to sexual violence" should not be underestimated, she said.

Peacebuilding Commission Developments

At the Council's 19 April briefing on the Great Lakes region, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Ivan Šimonović (Croatia), briefed. He encouraged the Council to emphasise the importance of inclusivity for long-term sustainable peace in the region, including through the participation of women and youth in political and peace processes. Šimonović suggested that the Council support efforts for sustainable and transparent management of natural resources and request international and regional financial institutions to enhance their support for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs. Among other points, he called for the Council to continue to reiterate the importance of a strategic and coherent approach by the UN and stakeholders in the region, "in particular in the context of MONUSCO's transition".

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is how to revitalise the PSC-F framework to address the root causes of instability in the DRC and the Great Lakes region. They will be keen to follow up on the outcome of the 11th Regional Oversight Mechanism meeting in Bujumbura.

The other related issue is the status of the ongoing regional initiatives—notably the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Council members might be interested in hearing of their progress and challenges in finding a solution to the security situation in eastern DRC. Preparations were ongoing to convene the fourth round of inter-Congolese dialogue under the Nairobi process, but it has not yet happened.

While Council members remain supportive of regional initiatives, they continue to stress that they should be complementary and mutually reinforcing. The outcome of the quadripartite summit may draw their attention in this regard.

The Secretary-General's report on options for reconfiguring MONUSCO and its relevant recommendations on the enhanced role of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes may be of particular interest. In light of the upcoming mandate renewal of MONUSCO in December, Council members might be keen to know what more the Special Envoy's office can do in support of regional initiatives.

A possible option for Council members is to adopt a presidential statement to react to several developments in the Great Lakes region. The Council last adopted a presidential statement on the region on 20 October 2021.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict in the Great Lakes region through a comprehensive regional approach. They believe the principles and commitments enshrined in the PSC-F remain relevant and may welcome the outcome of the 11th meeting of the regional oversight mechanism, including the decision to reinvigorate PSC-F. Council members continue to emphasise the need to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law and promote accountability and justice.

Council members also highlight the need to address the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which is fuelling the conflict in eastern DRC. They support the implementation of the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which was developed by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes. One of the key priorities of the strategy is promoting sustainable and transparent management of natural resources as well as trade and investment.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia.

In addition, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), which is set to expire on 31 October. The Chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Ishikane Kimihiro (Japan), is also expected to brief the Council.

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

Key Recent Developments

On 22 June, the Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in Somalia. Special Representative for Somalia and head of UNSOM Catriona Laing; Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) for Somalia and head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) Mohamed El-Amine Souef; and Executive Director of the World Food Programme Cindy McCain briefed. In her remarks, Laing said that the Somali government has made significant progress in advancing key national priorities; in this regard, she highlighted the appointment of the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission, the passage of 11 pieces of legislation (six of which have been signed into law), and the successful conduct of district council

elections in Puntland state. She pointed out several key priorities for UNSOM, including positioning UNSOM to play a lead role in bringing together the international community's efforts on stabilisation in the country, prioritising support for state-building processes (particularly those related to elections), and supporting ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict in Las Anod. (Las Anod is a disputed area between Puntland and the self-proclaimed region of Somaliland).

On 14 September, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) held a meeting on the situation in Somalia and ATMIS operations. In a communiqué adopted following the meeting, the AUPSC expressed concern that Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, retains influence on some of the main supply routes in the country, enabling them to extort money from the public through illegal taxation. It reiterated the Somali government's request for the lifting of the arms embargo—imposed under the 751 Al-Shabab sanctions regime—in order to enable the Somalia security forces (SSF) to obtain adequate military equipment. Furthermore, it requested the AU Commission, in collaboration with the Somali government, to evaluate the progress the government has made in terms of reforms, force generation, and readiness to stabilise the country, and to conduct a needs assessment to determine the support required by the Somali government in its fight against al-Shabaab.

The AUPSC also requested the Chairperson of the AU Commission to formulate a viable ATMIS exit strategy, including proposals for the AU's continued engagement with and support for Somalia

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2687 (27 June 2023) renewed the authorisation of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) for six months. S/RES/2657 (31 October 2022) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 October 2023. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9356** (22 June 2023) was the meeting on the situation in Somalia.

Somalia

after 31 December 2024, when ATMIS is expected to exit. It emphasised the importance of ensuring that the withdrawal of ATMIS troops is undertaken in a manner that does not leave the mission vulnerable to attacks and that focuses on the protection of civilians within ATMIS' area of operations. In addition, it expressed concern that Al-Shabaab may exploit any security gaps during or following the drawdown of the 3,000 ATMIS troops if the drawdown is not implemented judiciously.

In a 19 September letter addressed to the President of the Security Council, the Somali government requested a three-month technical pause in the drawdown of 3,000 ATMIS personnel as set out in resolution 2687. The letter said that, following the 26 August attack by Al-Shabaab in the Galguduud region, Somali forces suffered significant setbacks, with forces retreating from several towns that they had recently taken. It added that such incidents have exposed Somali forces' vulnerabilities on the frontlines and have necessitated a thorough reorganisation to sustain the momentum in countering threats from Al-Shabaab. It noted that, during the proposed three-month technical pause, the Somali government will conduct a comprehensive reassessment of the operational needs of the Somali National Armed Forces. The letter also proposed a series of strategic actions, including prioritising offensive operations against Al-Shabaab and the flexibility to resize or relocate Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) as needed.

Tensions have continued between Somaliland security forces and the local Dhulbahante clan in Las Anod following the assassination in December 2022 of a local opposition politician from that clan. Fighting erupted on 6 February, the same day that Dhulbahante clan elders in Sool announced their intention to form their own independent federal state in Somalia, named SSC-Khaatumo, comprising the Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn regions. In a 7 June press statement, Council members expressed concern over the ongoing violence in Las Anod and welcomed efforts and initiatives by the Somali government, Ethiopia, and clan elders to secure a ceasefire and promote an inclusive national dialogue to address the situation. The statement called on all parties to reach a ceasefire agreement urgently and for UNSOM to provide further support in accordance with its mandate, including by engaging with all parties where necessary.

Following intense fighting, SSC-Khaatumo forces announced on 25 August that they had taken control of the entire regions of Sool and Sanaag, and Somaliland's Goojacade military base, which is located on the outskirts of Las Anod. The SSC-Khaatumo forces reportedly captured numerous Somaliland soldiers, several of whom are senior military officers. On 7 September, Council members discussed the deteriorating situation in Las Anod under "any other business", at which Laing briefed. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 6 September.)

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 28 September, the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions committee held informal consultations, during which it received a briefing from OCHA on its recent report providing an update on the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Somalia. In the same session, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) briefed the Committee on its work related to resolution 2662 of 17 November 2022, which renewed the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime for one year.

On 29 September, the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions committee held informal consultations to discuss the final report of the Panel of Experts supporting the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 54th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to hold an interactive dialogue on 10 October on the report of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan, (A/HRC/54/78), which was released on 21 August. The report, which covered developments from 1 July 2022 to 30 June, noted that Dyfan was unable to visit Somalia due to a "lack of formal acceptance of a visit" by the Somali government. It further said that the humanitarian situation in the country remained alarming, owing to continued conflict and insecurity. All parties to the conflict continued to commit serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law with impunity, the report added.

Regarding the conflict in Las Anod, the report said that between 27 December 2022 and 15 June, the human rights and protection group of UNSOM documented at least 552 civilian casualties, of whom 87 were killed and 465 were injured.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in October is how to support the Somali government in implementing its national priorities. A possible option is for Council members to extend UNSOM's mandate for one year and request the mission to continue aligning its support with the government's priorities.

The ATMIS drawdown process is another issue for Council members. In December 2022, the AUPSC supported the Somali government's request for a revision of the operational timelines for the ATMIS withdrawal, and the Security Council in turn accepted the revised operational timeline through the adoption of resolution 2670 of 21 December 2022. This time, the Somali government has addressed its request directly to the Security Council. Since ATMIS is an AU mission, Council members may want to hear from the AUPSC before they react to the request.

A related issue is the financing of ATMIS for the proposed extension, as its current mandate is due to expire on 31 December.

Another key issue for Council members is the security situation in Las Anod. In the upcoming UNSOM mandate renewal, Council members may wish to express concern about the fighting in the region and its impact on the humanitarian situation, as well as support for UNSOM's efforts in bringing the conflict to a peaceful resolution.

Council Dynamics

Council members support the government's priorities and recognise the many challenges facing the country, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab, and they support ongoing efforts to fight the group. Some members, however, believe that a security approach will not be sufficient and underscore the need to make progress in governance, justice, and economic reforms. Other Council members emphasise the need for progress in implementing the Somali Transition Plan, including national force generation. African members and China have raised the funding challenge facing ATMIS and called for adequate, sustainable, and predictable financing for the mission.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In October, Security Council members are expected to receive their semi-annual briefing in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559. Adopted in 2004, the resolution called for the withdrawal of foreign forces from Lebanon, the disarmament of all militias, and the extension of government control over the whole Lebanese territory. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is the anticipated briefer.

Key Recent Developments

With opposing political blocks unable to agree on a compromise candidate, Lebanon has been without a president for almost one year—since Michel Aoun's term ended on 31 October 2022. The presidential vacuum is compounded by the fact that Lebanon's government remains in caretaker status.

National and international initiatives to overcome the deadlock—such as that of French President Emmanuel Macron's envoy Jean-Yves Le Drian and that of Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri—have yet to bear fruit. On 19 September, representatives of Egypt, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United States met on the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly (UNGA) high-level segment in New York to discuss the presidential impasse. However, the meeting's outcomes remain unclear, with no official communication from the participants and contradictory media reports.

Almost one and a half years after the April 2022 Staff Level Agreement between Lebanon and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Lebanon does not appear close to satisfying the IMF's preconditions for releasing around \$3 billion. A 15 September press release issued after an IMF team visited Beirut stressed that inaction on “urgently needed reforms weighs heavily on the economy” and that the country “continues to face enormous economic challenges, with a collapsed banking sector, eroding public services, deteriorating infrastructure, worsening poverty and unemployment conditions, and widening inequality”.

The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559, which is due on 11 October, is expected to provide updates on several issues, including the maintenance of weapons outside the control of the Lebanese authorities, the continued presence of armed militias in Lebanon, and violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity.

On 9 August, a truck belonging to the Shi'a group Hezbollah—which was later found to be transporting ammunition—overturned on a road in the town of Kahaleh near Beirut. The incident was followed by an exchange of fire between Hezbollah and local Christian militias, which resulted in two deaths.

In televised remarks at an 11 September conference, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant showed aerial images of what he described as an airport set up by Iran in southern Lebanon to target Israel.

Since 31 July, at least 30 people have been killed, hundreds injured, and thousands displaced in connection with armed clashes between Palestinian factions following the killing of a Palestinian National Security Forces commander by opposing fighters in the Ein El Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp located near the city of Saida

in southern Lebanon. Several ceasefires have been announced and subsequently broken since the start of the hostilities, which have caused large-scale infrastructural damage across the camp, including to facilities of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Following high-level contacts between Palestinian and Lebanese actors, a ceasefire came into effect on 14 September, which at the time of writing was still in place. According to media reports, however, “hundreds of displaced residents see no immediate prospects of return” to the camp, having lost their homes or not trusting that the ceasefire will hold. Speaking at an 11 August UN press briefing, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Lebanon Dorothee Klaus underscored that the distress experienced by the displaced refugees “needs to be understood in the context of multiple displacements that Palestine refugees have experienced over the past 75 years”.

Israel continues to occupy the northern portion of the village of Ghajar, which straddles the Blue Line, and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line. In an 11 July letter to the Security Council, Lebanon said that Israel had “surrounded the town with a metal fence, a concrete wall and barbed wire, and installed cameras”. (The Blue Line is a withdrawal line set by the UN in 2000 to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. While not representing an international border, it acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between the two states.)

The Secretary-General's 13 July report on the implementation of resolution 1701 said that the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had observed two tents installed south of the Blue Line in the area of the Sheb'a Farms. In a 12 July speech, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah reportedly said that Hezbollah had erected a tent “behind the withdrawal line”—that is, the Blue Line—to draw attention to Israel's occupation of northern Ghajar. While one of the two tents was relocated north of the Blue Line on 1 July, it seems that the second tent remains in place south of the Blue Line.

On 31 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2695, which extended UNIFIL's mandate for another year. Thirteen members voted in favour of the resolution while Russia and China abstained. This was the first non-unanimous renewal of UNIFIL's mandate since 1985. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 31 August.) Resolution 2695 retained language introduced for the first time last year reaffirming that, pursuant to the Agreement on the Status of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (SOFA), UNIFIL does not require prior authorisation to undertake its tasks and that it is authorised to conduct its operations independently. However, in an apparent compromise, this year the phrase “while continuing to coordinate with the Government of Lebanon, as per the SOFA” was added in response to the demands of the Lebanese government and Hezbollah, championed in the Council by China and Russia. These members had opposed language on UNIFIL's not needing prior authorisation to undertake its tasks, demanding instead language requiring UNIFIL to coordinate with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). They similarly sought the deletion of language on UNIFIL's “announced and unannounced patrols”, which was, however, retained.

Upon adoption, the representative of Lebanon regretted that “the text did not fully reflect all Lebanese concerns”. However, at a 6

Lebanon

September meeting with the UNIFIL Force Commander, Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati affirmed the government's commitment to the Council's decision, adding that the "government is ready to cooperate with UNIFIL".

Anti-refugee sentiment remains a source of concern in Lebanon, which hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. Speaking at the UNGA high-level segment on 20 September, Mikati said that, "twelve years into the Syrian crisis, Lebanon is still bearing the burden of successive waves of displacement with far-reaching economic and social repercussions on all aspects of life, thus threatening Lebanon's very existence", adding that the international community's response remains inadequate. On 22 September, LAF Commander Joseph Aoun reportedly said that the "immigration of Syrians represents an existential threat to Lebanon" following the arrest in one week of around 1,000 people who attempted to cross into Lebanon from Syria.

Over three years since the 4 August 2020 Beirut port explosion, the inquiry into responsibility for the blast remains stalled.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 5 September statement, a coalition of Lebanese and international civil society organisations – including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch – urged the Lebanese authorities immediately to scrap two recent bills that "would explicitly criminalize same-sex relations between consenting adults and punish anyone who 'promotes homosexuality' with up to three years' in prison". The statement said that the introduction of the two bills follows "a series of hostile incidents over the past year and an unlawful ministerial ban on events around homosexuality".

Key Issues and Options

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. The swift election of a president, the formation of a government, and the implementation of reforms aimed at addressing the ongoing socio-economic instability are further issues. If the presidential appointment process continues to stall, the Council may consider issuing a statement urging the swift election of a president.

Council Dynamics

The difficult negotiations and the lack of unanimity on UNIFIL's mandate renewal reflect the worsening dynamics within the Security Council.

While Council members are generally supportive of the need for UNIFIL to operate effectively in its area of operations, some members' views diverge on how the mission's freedom of movement should be exercised. Most members believe that coordination between UNIFIL and the LAF, while important, is not, and should not be, a precondition for UNIFIL to carry out its mandated functions. During the negotiations, Russia and China, echoing the position of Lebanon and Hezbollah, maintained the opposite, even though in 2022 these members voted in favour of resolution 2650, which did not contain language subordinating UNIFIL's freedom of movement to coordination with the LAF. While most members were apparently able to accept adding compromise language acknowledging the existing coordination between UNIFIL and the LAF, it seems that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the strongest opponent of any such compromise, even submitting an amendment (later withdrawn) to revert to the language used in resolution 2650.

Members' positions differ regarding Hezbollah. Some members distinguish 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, oppose the Shi'a group and have listed it in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. Upon adoption of resolution 2695, the UAE criticised "the hesitation to name Hizbullah and its group"—a reference to the Lebanese organisation Green Without Borders (GWB)—in the resolution, adding that "[n]o amount of accommodation will change the fact that the pursuit of progress in Lebanon through partnership with Hizbullah has yielded only disappointment and misery". On the other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate socio-political force in Lebanon. (Lebanon says that GWB is an environmental protection organisation. Israel maintains that GWB is a "fictitious organization" acting as a front for Hezbollah.)

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Kosovo

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 27 February, Prime Minister Albin Kurti of Kosovo and Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić agreed to an EU proposal to normalise

relations between Kosovo and Serbia. The 11-point agreement commits Kosovo and Serbia to developing normal, good-neighbourly relations with each other on the basis of equal rights. It also stipulates that neither can represent the other in the international sphere and that Serbia will not object to Kosovo's membership in international organisations. In exchange, Kosovo commits to forming "specific arrangements and guarantees...to ensure an appropriate level of self-management" for the Serbian community in Kosovo. On 18 March, Belgrade and Pristina agreed on an annex outlining steps for the agreement's implementation. Notably, it emphasised independent implementation of the agreement's 11 points. On 18 April, Belgrade and Pristina established a Joint Monitoring Committee to oversee

UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9312 (27 April 2023) was a meeting on the situation in Kosovo.

Kosovo

the agreement's implementation.

Despite progress in the EU-mediated dialogue aimed at normalising relations between Kosovo and Serbia, the political status of Kosovo Serbs in the north has remained a source of tension. Ethnic Albanians make up more than 90 percent of Kosovo's population but are a small minority in the north, where over 50,000 ethnic Serbs reside. On 21 April, the main political party in Serb-dominated northern Kosovo, the Serbian List, urged the ethnic Serb community to boycott the elections scheduled for 23 April in four northern municipalities, labelling them as "undemocratic", after multiple ethnic Serb candidates withdrew from the election. Consequently, only four percent of eligible voters participated. This low turnout led to the election of ethnic Albanian political parties, with the ruling Vetëvendosje party and the Democratic Party of Kosovo emerging victorious. Following the election results, Milan Radoičić, the vice president of the Serbian List, declared that ethnic Serbs "would never accept" governance by officials elected with such minimal turnout in the northern municipalities.

Tensions escalated on 26 May when Kosovo Serbs in three northern municipalities tried to block the newly elected ethnic Albanian officials from entering municipal buildings. The situation turned volatile in the town of Zvečan, where police intervention led to confrontations with the protesters, resulting in dozens of injuries. In response to the clashes, Vučić put the Serbian army on high alert and ordered Serbian troops to the Kosovo border.

The situation deteriorated further on 29 May when the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) stepped in to disperse the Kosovo Serb protesters, leading to many injuries, including to approximately 93 NATO troops. On the same day, NATO issued a statement condemning the "unprovoked attacks against KFOR troops" in northern Kosovo as "totally unacceptable". On 30 May, NATO announced the deployment of an additional 700 troops to Kosovo to stabilise the situation.

Tensions persisted in northern Kosovo throughout June, prompting international calls for de-escalation between Belgrade and Pristina. On 3 June, the EU called on Pristina to suspend police operations near the municipal buildings in northern Kosovo and to organise early elections "as soon as possible" in the four municipalities.

In a 13 June letter to High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell, Kurti detailed a five-point plan to defuse tensions in the north. Kurti expressed readiness to reduce the police presence and conduct new elections in the north. On 29 June, he agreed to scale back police deployment and to schedule early elections in the northern municipalities. On 11 July, Pristina reduced the police presence around the municipal buildings by 25 percent.

September saw another setback in the EU-mediated dialogue, however. Talks held in Brussels on 14 September yielded no progress. Borrell attributed the deadlock to Kurti's insistence that Serbia formally recognise Kosovo as a prerequisite for advancing the February agreement. Following the meeting, Borrell said that while Vučić accepted the EU's proposal on implementing the political aspects of normalisation simultaneously, "Kurti was not ready to move forward and start a credible process towards establishing the Association/Community", adding that Kurti "insisted instead on formalising de facto recognition [of Kosovo] as the first step".

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 54th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) will receive the report (A/HRC/54/24/Add.2) of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, Fabián Salvioli. The report draws on Salvioli's 22 November - 2 December 2022 visit to Serbia and Kosovo, during which he evaluated the progress made in redressing "serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law" committed during the armed conflicts in the 1990s. In his report, Salvioli acknowledged the international community's support for efforts to locate missing persons in Serbia and Kosovo in the conflict's aftermath. However, the report emphasised the lack of cooperation in recent years, difficulties in advancing accountability and reparations, and the insufficiency of measures "to promote memory of past violence, to curb divisive sentiments and to promote reconciliation". Salvioli underscored the "politicisation of the search for missing persons and the manipulation of its humanitarian mandate for political gain" and expressed alarm about ongoing "ethnocentric, nationalist and/or biased or incomplete narratives about the conflict in politics, the media, culture and education" in Serbia and Kosovo. In his recommendations, the Special Rapporteur called on the authorities in Serbia and Kosovo to focus on transitional justice, noting that its success will be essential in order to achieve reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Key Issues and Options

The Council's main priority is to maintain stability in Kosovo and promote the de-escalation of tensions in the north. It will continue to monitor diplomatic efforts to advance the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and any efforts towards reaching a final, legally binding agreement on Kosovo. To this end, Council members could consider pursuing a press statement welcoming the 27 February agreement on the path to normalisation between Kosovo and Serbia and calling on both sides to implement the agreement and its annex in good faith.

Another key issue is how to promote constructive dialogue on this politically charged issue in the Council. Despite the progress made earlier this year in normalising relations between Belgrade and Pristina, tensions were evident during the Council's 27 April meeting on the situation in Kosovo. Both sides used the Council's open session to advance contrasting narratives about the drivers of regional instability. Towards the end of the meeting, Albania took the floor to urge participants to move beyond entrenched debates "about the historical perspectives, about which we disagree," and to concentrate instead on the positive strides made in recent months. As the Council president in October, Brazil may consider changing the format of the meeting from an open briefing to closed consultations. This could allow for a more candid discussion of challenges to the implementation of the February agreement.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting the EU-facilitated dialogue to establish conditions for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Deep divisions among permanent members, however, have continued to characterise the Council's approach to the issue. Among the five permanent Council members, France, the UK, and the US recognise Kosovo's independence and tend to be supportive of its government; China and Russia do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia's position and its claim to territorial integrity. Seven elected members (Albania, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates) recognise Kosovo's independence while three (Brazil,

Kosovo

Ecuador, and Mozambique) do not.

The issue of modifying UNMIK's mandate with a view to its possible drawdown is another point of contention among Council members. The US has been the most vocal proponent of ending UNMIK's mandate and reducing the frequency of briefings, citing the level of stability in Kosovo. Similarly, the UK has called for a review of UNMIK's mandate, arguing that conditions on the

ground have completely changed since UNMIK was established 23 years ago. At the 27 April briefing, Albania proposed reducing the frequency of Council meetings to one per year. Russia, however, has opposed the idea of altering UNMIK's mandate and cutting its budget, advocating instead for maintaining the open and regular nature of Council meetings on the situation in Kosovo.

Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

Expected Council Action

In October, as one of the signature events of its presidency, Brazil is planning to convene a high-level open debate on "Peace through Dialogue: The Contribution of Regional, Sub-regional and Bilateral Arrangements to the Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes".

Background

In July 2023, the Secretary-General issued *A New Agenda for Peace*, one of 11 policy briefs connected to his 2021 report, *Our Common Agenda*, which reflects his vision for the future of multilateralism. A New Agenda emphasises the importance of preventive diplomacy, and the "need for strong partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations". The policy brief says that the "underutilization of the different tools referred to in Article 33 of the Charter remains one of our greatest collective shortcomings". The article, in Chapter VI of the Charter, names these tools as "negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means" that the parties may choose to pursue. A New Agenda also asserts the need for "regional frameworks and organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter, that promote trust-building, transparency and détente".

The Council has long recognised the importance of regional and subregional organisations in preventing conflict. This is reflected in various outcomes it adopted during the post-Cold War era. In resolution 1625, adopted during the September 2005 World Summit, the Council affirmed "its determination to strengthen United Nations conflict prevention capacities by...supporting regional mediation initiatives in close consultation with regional and subregional organizations concerned". Similarly, in resolution 2171 of August 2014, it called for "enhanced cooperation and capacity building with regional and subregional organizations and arrangements to help to prevent armed conflicts, their spread and impact, including through cooperation in early warning mechanisms as well as to help facilitate preventive action".

While the Council has enhanced its interactions with regional organisations during the past two decades, these relationships have been limited and rarely used in the context of upstream conflict prevention. The most developed relationship is with the AU, although even the Council and the AU have struggled to develop a mutually acceptable understanding of roles, responsibilities, and

burden-sharing in efforts to prevent, mediate, manage, and resolve conflict. (For more on the Council's relationship with regional arrangements, see our *In Hindsight* in the current *Forecast*, "The UN Security Council and Regional Organizations: a Brief Exploration of Chapter VIII").

At the same time, the Council continues to engage in many conflict situations in which regional and sub-regional organisations and member states play a prominent mediation role. The East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) are leading sub-regional efforts to address the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led regional efforts to mediate the crisis in Myanmar. And the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is playing a key mediation role in Sudan, while other member states (for example, Egypt, as well as the US and Saudi Arabia) have set up separate negotiation tracks.

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Council is how it can make more effective use of Chapter VI tools, which focus on "The Pacific Settlement of Disputes".

A related issue is how the Council can more effectively support regional and sub-regional organisations and bilateral efforts to prevent and mediate conflicts.

One option would be for Brazil, as the initiator of the open debate, to produce a chair's summary that captures the key themes of the meeting and circulate the summary as a public document.

In the future, the Council could also consider holding an informal interactive dialogue with representatives of different regional organisations to discuss how the Council can most effectively support their efforts in preventing conflict and mediating intractable crises.

Another option would be for Council members to discuss informally how to encourage enhanced use of the use of tools in Article 33 (for example, conciliation, arbitration, and judicial settlement, among others).

Council Dynamics

Despite the seemingly strong rhetorical support for conflict prevention, the Council struggles to translate its words into concrete action. Concerns that prevention in practice could be used as a pretext to impinge on the sovereignty of independent states have been

UN DOCUMENTS ON CONFLICT PREVENTION [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2171](#) (21 August 2014) expressed the Council's determination to pursue the objective of prevention of armed conflict as an integral part of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. [S/RES/1625](#) (14 September 2005) reaffirmed the need to adopt a broad strategy regarding conflict prevention.

Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

an impediment to broader preventive action. The involvement of a powerful Council member, especially one of the permanent members, in a dispute or conflict can also significantly compromise the Council's involvement. At the same time, some members encourage more frequent use of Chapter VI (Peaceful Settlement of Disputes) and VIII (Regional Arrangements) tools of the UN Charter, rather than sanctions and other coercive measures outlined in Chapter VII (Action with respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace,

and Acts of Aggression), which are often more controversial.

Differing perceptions are often at play regarding the Council's role when regional and sub-regional organisations engage in conflict prevention. For example, African members were wary of Council engagement in Tigray (2020-2022) while the AU was mediating the conflict, whereas the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded members would have preferred more direct Council engagement.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to continue negotiations on a draft resolution authorising member states to deploy a non-UN multinational force to Haiti. Council members began discussion on the draft resolution in September.

The Council is also expected to renew the Haiti sanctions regime, which was established for an initial period of one year pursuant to resolution 2653 of 21 October 2022.

Additionally, the Council will hold its 90-day briefing on the situation in Haiti. Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH.

Key Recent Developments

Following the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Haiti has descended into a multidimensional crisis characterised by political deadlock, extreme violence, and dire humanitarian conditions. At the time of writing, the country lacks a single democratically elected official as the caretaker government led by Prime Minister Ariel Henry struggles to reach a political settlement with opposition groups on the organisation of elections. Politically connected criminal gangs have taken over an estimated 80 percent of Port-au-Prince, the capital, fuelling unprecedented levels of violence: according to the Secretary-General's latest BINUH report (S/2023/492), dated 3 July, 2,094 homicides were committed in the country between January and June, an increase of 67.5 percent compared with the second half of 2022.

In the absence of functioning state security institutions, a vigilante movement known as "Bwa Kalé" has emerged, resulting in the extrajudicial killing of at least 238 individuals allegedly linked to gangs, according to BINUH's latest quarterly human rights report, dated 31 August. About half of the country's population is food insecure and nearly 200,000 people are internally displaced. William O'Neill, the UN Expert on Human Rights in Haiti, said in July that he has "never seen the situation as bad as it is now" during the 30 years he has worked in the country.

On 7 October 2022, seeking to stabilise the country's security situation and stem the multidimensional crisis, the Haitian government

appealed for the immediate deployment of an "international specialised force" to temporarily reinforce the efforts of the Haitian National Police (HNP) to combat gangs. On 8 October 2022, Secretary-General António Guterres submitted to the Security Council a special report (S/2022/747) outlining options to enhance security support for Haiti, requested by resolution 2645 of 15 July 2022 renewing BINUH's mandate. The report recommended that "[o]ne or several Member States, acting bilaterally at the invitation of and in cooperation with the Government of Haiti, could deploy, as a matter of urgency, a rapid action force" to support the HNP. At the Council's 17 October 2022 (S/PV.9153) meeting on Haiti, the US noted that it and then-Council member Mexico—co-penholders on Haiti at the time—were working on a resolution that would "authorize a non-UN international security assistance mission to help improve the security situation". The US added that such a mission would be "led by a partner country with the deep, necessary experience required for such an effort to be effective" and would "operate under Chapter VII of the UN Charter".

On 21 October 2022, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2653, establishing a sanctions regime on Haiti that included targeted assets freeze, travel ban and arms embargo measures. The designation criteria outlined in the resolution include engaging in or supporting criminal activities and violence involving armed groups and criminal networks; supporting illicit trafficking and diversion of arms and related materiel; obstructing the delivery of humanitarian assistance to and inside Haiti; and attacking personnel or premises of UN missions and operations or providing support for such attacks. An annex to the resolution designated one person under the regime: Jimmy Cherizier (also known as "Barbeque"), who heads an alliance of Haitian gangs called the "G9 Family and Allies". (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 21 October 2022.)

Following the adoption of resolution 2653, Council action on Haiti stalled in the absence of a country willing to lead the proposed multinational force. As the domestic situation deteriorated further, the Haitian government reiterated its request for security support in a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 7 June.

On 14 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2692, renewing BINUH's mandate for another year and requesting the Secretary-General to report within 30 days on the full range of

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2692 (14 July 2023) renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for one year until 15 July 2024. S/RES/2653 (21 October 2022) established a sanctions regime on Haiti, including targeted assets freeze, travel ban, and arms embargo measures. **Secretary-General's Report S/2023/492** (3 July 2023) was the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on Haiti. **Security Council Letter S/2023/596** (14 August 2023) was from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council, outlining the full range of support options the UN could provide to enhance the security situation in Haiti. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15277** (8 May 2023) expressed deep concern over the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in Haiti.

Haiti

options for UN support to enhance the security situation in Haiti, including but not limited to support for a non-UN multinational force. The resolution also requested the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to update the Council every three months, through the Secretary-General's regular reporting on BINUH, on "sources and routes of illicit arms and financial flows, relevant UN activities and recommendations".

On 29 July, ten months after Haiti's initial request for security support, Kenyan Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua announced in a statement that his country had agreed to "positively consider" leading a multinational force to Haiti. The statement said that Kenya would deploy a contingent of 1,000 police officers "to help train and assist Haitian police restore [to] normalcy in the country and protect strategic installations". Subsequently, several Caribbean countries—including Jamaica, Barbados, and Antigua and Barbuda—announced their intention to participate, or consider participating, in the force. The pledges were welcomed by Haiti and the US, as well as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). In his report dated 14 August, requested by resolution 2692, the Secretary-General reiterated his recommendation to deploy a non-UN multinational force to Haiti and similarly welcomed the announcements of Kenya and partner countries.

From 21 to 23 August, a Kenyan delegation visited Haiti to assess needs on the ground and meet with Haitian and UN officials and members of the diplomatic community in the country. Following the assessment mission, Ecuador and the US—the Council's current co-penholders on Haiti—introduced a draft resolution authorising the multinational force. At the time of writing, the draft resolution remained under consideration by Council members.

On 15 September, the Dominican Republic closed its border with Haiti because of a dispute over rights to a river that runs along the border. The closure is expected to have a significant detrimental impact on Haitians, many of whom rely on cross-border financial flows and the import of essential products like food and medicines. On 16 September, the Secretary-General stressed through a spokesperson that "humanitarian exemptions from the border closure are urgently required to ensure the continuation of all UN activities in Haiti". In an 18 September statement, O'Neill said he was "extremely alarmed" by the Dominican Republic's decision, which he urged the government to reconsider.

On 22 September, the US hosted a ministerial-level event on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly to discuss the proposed multinational force. At the meeting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken pledged \$100 million to support the deployment—pending Congressional approval—as well as logistical support in the form of intelligence, airlift, communications, and medical capabilities. Several other countries in attendance reportedly also announced pledges of support.

Human Rights-Related Developments

From 19 to 28 June, O'Neill undertook his first official visit to the country. In a 28 June statement concluding the visit, O'Neill underscored that the human rights situation in Haiti is "dramatic", adding that "all rights are violated". He noted the efforts made by the Haitian National Police to combat gang violence, stressing that a specialised international force is "essential" and "must be coordinated in close collaboration with the police...to allow them to build their capacity...with all the guarantees of human rights due diligence".

In a 3 August statement, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers Margaret Satterthwaite expressed her grave concern about the attempted assassination of Haitian judge Wilner Morin in Port-au-Prince in May. Morin is investigating multiple high-profile corruption cases, and Satterthwaite noted her dismay at the "great vulnerability of independent justice operators who deal with high-impact corruption cases" in Haiti.

On 18 August, a statement from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights denounced the "extreme brutality of violence" being inflicted on the civilian population and relayed a call from UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk for "urgent action" to deploy a non-UN multinational force to support the Haitian National Police in "addressing the grave security situation and restoring the rule of law, in strict compliance with international human rights norms and standards".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 8 September, the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to consider the final report of the committee's Panel of Experts, submitted in accordance with paragraph 21 of resolution 2653. The report, which was due to the Security Council by 15 September and was not yet publicly available at the time of writing, may recommend additional individuals to designate under the Haiti sanctions regime.

Women, Peace, and Security

On 8 June, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in Haiti. Special Representative for Haiti and Head of BINUH María Isabel Salvador briefed. According to the summary of the meeting (S/2023/617), issued on 23 August by Switzerland and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the IEG co-chairs, together with the UK, as the penholder on WPS, Council members asked, among other questions, whether the UN had developed "the parameters that would be required in a non-United Nations international force to ensure that it would protect women and girls effectively". Members also asked for guidance on how the Security Council "can help to address gender equality issues, including through specific provisions" in BINUH's mandate. UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, recommended that the Council retain all existing WPS references from recent resolutions on Haiti. UN Women also recommended that members consider adding language demanding the full participation of women in all political dialogues and transitional arrangements and requesting that the UN periodically report on their representation in conflict resolution and decision-making processes. UN Women further recommended adding new language ensuring that "gender equality issues and attention to sexual and gender-based violence are prioritized in any additional deployments or international support to help the Government of Haiti tackle the armed gangs".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in October is adopting a resolution that would authorise the deployment of a non-UN multinational force to support the efforts of the HNP to re-establish security in Haiti. Council members began negotiating a draft resolution in early September.

Another issue for the Council is renewing the mandate of the Haiti sanctions regime, which expires on 21 October. To date, Cherizier remains the only individual designated under the regime. As part of the renewal, the Council may consider designating additional individuals and amending the arms embargo sanctions measures, following recommendations from the Panel of Experts and UNODC, respectively.

Haiti

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about the spiralling situation in Haiti and generally agree on the need for a Haitian-led political solution that addresses both security and socioeconomic challenges. Views vary on appropriate Council action to support this process, however, and have complicated negotiations over the draft resolution authorising the deployment of the multinational force to Haiti.

It appears that China has argued that negotiations at this stage are premature and that the Council should not authorise a deployment

until it has received additional information from Haiti and Kenya on their bilateral agreement regulating the multinational force, including details such as its rules of engagement, areas of deployment, resourcing, and exit strategy. China has apparently also argued that the Council should be cautious about invoking its authority under Chapter VII of the UN Charter—which concerns enforcement measures—and that the Council does not necessarily need to authorise a bilaterally agreed deployment. Instead, it may consider other options such as welcoming or endorsing it.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council last held a meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” on 27 September. Wennesland provided an oral report on the implementation of resolution 2334 of 23 December 2016, covering developments between 15 June and 19 September. Among other issues, Wennesland said that the Secretary-General remained “deeply troubled by the unrelenting expansion of Israeli settlements”, with more than 10,000 units advanced during the reporting period alone. He said that the demolition and seizure of Palestinian structures entail numerous rights violations and “raise concerns about the risk of forcible transfer”. He added that the Secretary-General was “gravely concerned by the intensification of violence in the occupied West Bank and Israel, at levels not seen in decades”. Wennesland also condemned all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and said that “Israel must act to stop all settler violence”.

In recent months, the US has conducted diplomatic outreach to advance an agreement on the normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia in exchange for the signing of a US-Saudi defence treaty and a civil nuclear programme for Saudi Arabia facilitated by the US, among other things. It is unclear how an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel may affect Saudi Arabia’s position on the Arab Peace Initiative, which was proposed by Riyadh in 2002, endorsed by the League of Arab States (LAS) that year, and re-endorsed by the LAS in 2007. It stipulates that a comprehensive peace and normalisation of relations with Israel must be preceded by an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and a “just solution” for Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN General Assembly resolution 194, which said, among other things, that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so”.

While it is not yet apparent what benefits, if any, the Palestinians would receive from an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel, according to media sources, the Saudi leadership has been “very attentive” to the requests of a Palestinian delegation that visited Riyadh in early September “in a bid to halt the prospect of an unconditional normalization agreement”. These requests reportedly include:

- the transfer of parts of West Bank territory currently under full Israeli control to the complete control of the Palestinian Authority;
- a cessation of Israeli settlement advancement in the West Bank;
- full UN membership for the Observer State of Palestine; and
- the reopening of the US Consulate in East Jerusalem, which was closed during the administration of former US President Donald Trump.

On the sidelines of the high-level segment of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), Saudi Arabia, the LAS, and the EU, in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan, hosted a ministerial-level forum on 18 September, titled “the Peace Day Effort”, to discuss ways to revive the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians. A joint statement issued by the forum’s organisers noted that “the Peace Day Effort” seeks to produce a “Peace Supporting Package” that “will maximize peace dividends for the Palestinians and Israelis once they reach a peace agreement”, and to elaborate “detailed programmes and contributions, conditional upon achieving a final status agreement” to that end.

In a 20 September televised interview, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that “the Palestinian issue is very important” for Saudi Arabia but also that “every day, we get closer” to a normalisation agreement.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the 78th UNGA general debate on 21 and 22 September, respectively.

In a likely reference to the possible deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia, Abbas said that “[t]hose who think that peace can prevail in the Middle East without the Palestinian people enjoying their full, legitimate and national rights would be mistaken”. He called for an international peace conference to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, asking UN Secretary-General António Guterres to undertake the necessary arrangements to convene such a conference and

UN DOCUMENT ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including acts of terror; it was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

adding that it could be “the last opportunity to salvage the two-state solution”. Abbas demanded protection for the Palestinian people from “the constant aggression of the occupation army and terrorist Israeli settlers”. He also called for the Observer State of Palestine to be granted full UN membership.

Netanyahu focused his speech on the agreements that normalised relations between some Arab states and Israel and on the role of Iran in the Middle East. He said that “we are at the cusp of [...] an historic peace between Israel and Saudi Arabia”, which would go “a long way in ending the Arab-Israeli conflict”, adding that such an agreement could be reached under the leadership of US President Joe Biden. He warned, however, about what he referred to as “the fanatics ruling Iran” who “would do anything they can to thwart this historic peace”. Regarding the role of the Palestinians in the context of the normalisation agreements, Netanyahu said that he believes that the Palestinians must not be given “a veto over new peace treaties with Arab states”.

The Ad-Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) met on the sidelines of the UNGA high-level segment on 20 September. (The AHLC is a 15-member committee that coordinates development assistance to the Palestinian people at policy level and is chaired by Norway.) The report prepared for the AHLC meeting by the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) outlined several immediate steps to reverse current negative trends. These include addressing key territorial and security issues—including those related to settlements and violence—through “[s]erious political talks” and the restoration of “mechanisms that facilitate more regular and sustained contacts between both sides”.

Both Netanyahu and Abbas met with Guterres in New York. On 20 September, Netanyahu held a meeting with Biden, while Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh met with US Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr on the sidelines of the AHLC meeting on 21 September.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In an 8 September statement, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) said that it will conduct its first visit to the State of Palestine from 10 to 21 September to evaluate the measures undertaken to “protect people deprived of liberty from torture and ill-treatment”. The SPT delegation will also provide assistance in establishing a national preventive mechanism (NPM), a monitoring body that all States parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture must establish. In the statement, the head of the delegation, Daniel Fink (Switzerland), noted that the delegation will meet authorities at the highest levels and will visit detention facilities, interviewing detainees and staff.

Key Issues and Options

According to a recent policy brief by the European Council on Foreign Relations, “[t]hirty years after the Oslo accords, Israel’s annexation of Palestinian territory is entrenching open-ended conflict and what is increasingly recognised as apartheid”, while the prospects of wider regional destabilisation and a third intifada are on the rise “amid expanding Israeli military raids, growing settler violence, and the resurgence of Palestinian armed groups”.

Against this backdrop, 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. Deterring developments that further 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 altering of the status quo at the holy sites in Jerusalem—is also a key issue. The deteriorating security situation and violence against civilians remain important matters of concern for Council members.

As mentioned by Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania) at the press briefing on the plan of work for the Security Council for the month of September, Council members are considering a visiting mission to the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel. A visiting mission could be an option to generate momentum and complement efforts to revive political talks between Palestinians and Israelis. Besides demonstrating the Council’s support for the resumption of the peace process, a key objective of the visit could be to show a unified stance against any further undermining of the viability of the two-state solution. This would be the first Council visit to the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel.

A visiting mission might also expose Council members first-hand to the extent of the humanitarian need and the consequences on the ground of the suspension of support delivered by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the absence of a political solution. UNRWA is chronically underfunded, and funding shortages for WFP “have already resulted in the suspension of food and cash assistance for 200,000 Palestinians, most of whom live in Gaza, with another 150,000 Palestinians at risk of having their assistance suspended in October”, according to UNSCO’s AHLC report.

Council Dynamics

There is broad rhetorical 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, Council dynamics have precluded effective action in response to the non-implementation of its resolutions and a shared strategy to prevent the further deterioration of the situation.

The US appears to be of the view that the current circumstances are not ripe for the restart of the peace process and is instead investing its diplomatic capital in initiatives such as the normalisation agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia and the meetings of senior officials from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the US, Egypt, and Jordan in Aqaba and Sharm El Sheikh.

At the 27 September Security Council briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, some members referred to the possible normalisation of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia as a positive development. The UK argued that it is “unabashed in encouraging more countries to normalise their relationships with Israel”, but that it is “also committed to making sure that normalisation delivers concrete benefits for the Palestinian people”. Russia—which in previous meetings has accused the US of blocking the Council’s adoption of any substantive decision on the Middle East peace process and the efforts of the Middle East Quartet—said that the US “continues to promote an Arab-Israeli normalisation circumventing the logic of the Arab Peace Initiative put

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forward by Saudi Arabia in 2002 and predicated on first resolving the Palestinian question” before restoring relations with Israel,

adding that these actions undermine the “prospects for reviving direct negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis”.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold meetings on the political process and on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

On 11 July, the Security Council failed to reauthorise the Syria cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism, which was last authorised through resolution 2672 of 9 January and expired on 10 July. It had allowed for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to north-west Syria from Türkiye through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing without requiring the consent of the Syrian government. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 11 July and the In Hindsight in our August *Monthly Forecast*.)

Following weeks of bilateral engagement, the UN and the Syrian government reached an understanding on the continued use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing to deliver humanitarian aid into north-west Syria, formalised through an exchange of letters. In a 6 August letter, Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh (Syria) reiterated the Syrian government’s 13 July decision to open the Bab al-Hawa border for a period of six months. He further announced the government’s decision to extend its authorisation for the use of the Bab al-Salam and Al Ra’ee border crossings until 13 November. The letter also approved the use of the Sarmada and Saraqib crossings for cross-line operations—that is, across domestic conflict lines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control—for a six-month period, until 1 February 2024.

It appears that, on 11 September, the UN’s Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, David Carden, wrote a letter to the Humanitarian Action Coordination (HAC), which is reportedly a humanitarian wing of the Syrian Salvation Government. (The Syrian Salvation Government was established by the Hay’at Tahrir Al-Sham, a Council-listed terrorist group, to govern the territory it controls.) In the letter, Carden said that “the [UN] seeks [HAC’s] facilitation of unimpeded humanitarian access into and within Idleb, including via the Bab al-Hawa border crossing”. It added that the UN “acknowledges the continued support of the HAC to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets in north-west Syria”. Reportedly, the HAC responded with a letter the next day (12 September), saying that it had decided to “independently authorize” the use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing “to deliver humanitarian aid and to allow the passage of humanitarian missions for UN teams”.

On 19 September, humanitarian operations resumed through the Bab-al Hawa border crossing. According to OCHA data, at the time of writing, a total of 3,965 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies from seven UN agencies had crossed into north-west Syria from

Türkiye since 9 February through the three border crossings: Bab al-Hawa (3,128 trucks), Bab al-Salam (742 trucks), and Al Ra’ee (95 trucks).

In recent months, securing funding for the myriad of new and ongoing humanitarian challenges in the country has continued to be difficult. At the time of writing, the humanitarian response plan for 2023 (\$5.41 billion) was only 28.8 percent funded.

Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen has continued his engagement with stakeholders in the Syria political process through the “step-for-step” initiative. On 4 September, Pedersen met with Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC) President Badr Jamous. (The SNC represents the political opposition to the government.) According to a post on X (formerly Twitter) by the Special Envoy’s office, the meeting focused on the latest developments related to the Syrian crisis and efforts to advance the political process in line with resolution 2254. On the sidelines of the 78th session of the General Assembly, Pedersen met with ministers and senior officials of Bahrain, France, Iraq, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the US. In a 21 September tweet announcing these meetings, the special envoy’s office said that the situation in Syria is worsening on several fronts and that it remains vital for the Syrian-led and -owned political process to move forward, supported by constructive international diplomacy. The next day (22 September), Pedersen also held consultations with the members of the Astana Format (Iran, Russia, and Türkiye) and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

On 18 September, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with the foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and GCC Secretary General Jasem Albudaiwi in New York. In a joint statement following the meeting, the ministers welcomed the efforts of the Arab countries in resolving the Syrian crisis in line with resolution 2254. They reaffirmed support for the efforts of the US and coalition forces in their fight against Da’esh (also known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant [ISIL]) in Syria. They condemned “all actions that threaten the safety and security of these forces”, and emphasised the need to ensure full, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to all Syrians in need through all modalities, including cross-border and cross-line access.

On 22 September, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad arrived in China, in his first known trip to the country since 2004, to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping. During the meeting, the two leaders announced the establishment of a “strategic partnership”, which Xi said “will become an important milestone in the history of bilateral ties”. He added that “China supports Syria in conducting reconstruction, enhancing counter-terrorism capacity building, and promoting a political settlement of the Syrian issue”.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2672 (9 January 2023) was the resolution extending the authorisation for the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months, until 10 July 2023. Security Council Letter S/2023/603 (15 August 2023) was a letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council, transmitting the exchange of letters between OCHA and the Syrian government.

Syria

The region has witnessed an escalation in hostilities in recent months. On 28 August, the Aleppo airport was hit with airstrikes, allegedly conducted by Israel. In a statement later that day, the Syrian defence ministry said that the airstrikes caused material damage to the airport, putting it out of service. According to a 28 August Reuters article, regional intelligence sources said that the airstrikes “targeted an underground munitions depot run by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps within the compound of Nairab military airport next to Aleppo airport”. On 31 August, Syrian state media reported that the Syrian army, in cooperation with the Russian air force, carried out air and missile strikes in Hama and Idlib, destroying “weapons, equipment and ammunition, in addition to killing and wounding dozens”. The media report added that these strikes were conducted in response to recent attacks carried out by “terrorist organizations” on Syrian bases.

According to a 6 September OCHA flash update, an uptick in shelling was reported, starting on 1 September, across Idlib and northern Aleppo governorates. OCHA subsequently reported that five people had been killed and 22 others, including 11 children, had been injured as a result of this shelling.

According to a 31 August Reuters article, fighting erupted on 27 August between Arab tribal groups and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a predominantly Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government, in Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, northeast Syria. According to media reports, the clashes broke out after the SDF apprehended Abu Khawla, the Arab leader of the Deir-ez-Zor Military Council, a local SDF affiliate, accusing him of involvement in several crimes. A 14 September OCHA situation report noted that approximately 6,500 families have been displaced to government-held areas since the outbreak of fighting. It added that, according to local sources, 96 people had reportedly been killed and 106 injured since 27 August.

In a 25 September statement, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) noted that it had conducted a helicopter raid in northern Syria, capturing Abu Halil al-Fad’ani, whom it claims has had “relationships throughout the ISIS network in the region”. The statement added that, “[t]he capture of ISIS officials like al-Fad’ani increases our ability to locate, target, and remove terrorist [sic] from the battlefield”.

On 27 September, the Council met on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen, Director of OCHA’s Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu, and Regional Vice President (Middle East and North Africa) at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) Su’ad Jarbawi briefed. Wosornu noted that the reopening of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing is the result of an understanding with the Syrian government; of operational and security assurances from the de facto authorities in Idlib; and of consultations with a range of member states, including Türkiye and donors, non-governmental organisations, and other partners. In his remarks, Pedersen said that several stakeholders, including the Syrian parties, members of the Astana format, the Arab ministerial liaison committee—comprising Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and League of Arab States Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit—and western members, apprised him of their support for the resumption of the Constitutional Committee. He further noted that he seeks to continue the consultations to resume the work of the committee before the end

of this year. He added that there are new manifestations of popular frustration in Syria, referencing protests in al-Sweida governorate, with participants citing economic, social, and political grievances and demands. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 27 September.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 September, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) published its seventh report (A/HRC/54/58), which covered the developments from 1 January to 30 June. The report states that grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law continued across Syria, including in government-held areas and areas controlled by “non-State actors”. The report notes that the COI has reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian government “continued to commit acts of torture and ill-treatment, including practices causing death in detention, arbitrary detention...and enforced disappearances, confirming continuing patterns of crimes against humanity and war crimes”. The report adds that the COI received multiple reports of aid diversion, extortion and corruption, and documented aid obstruction and interference in the delivery of aid in the immediate aftermath of the 6 February earthquake.

On 22 September, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the COI on the 12 September report. In a press release following the meeting, the Chair of the COI, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, noted that, despite the diplomatic efforts to stabilise the situation in Syria, civilians continue to suffer from “escalating unrest and fighting along multiple frontlines, a near collapse of the economy, and persistent human rights violations and abuses”. He described the present stalemate in Syria as “intolerable”.

In a 14 September statement, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that the recent outbreak of fighting in north-east Syria has heavily impacted civilians and raises wider security concerns that risk exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis. He expressed concern that “tensions and hostilities in and around Deir-ez-Zor will be exploited by other parties trying to exert their influence”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure the continued flow of humanitarian aid to those in need in north-west Syria. A related and broader issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs throughout the country. The deteriorating socioeconomic conditions are also of concern. Another issue for Council members is the ongoing hostilities in the region and the risk of escalation.

Periodic briefings from OCHA have helped keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation on the ground. Council members could consider inviting representatives of Syrian humanitarian aid organisations to engage with them to explore avenues for improving and expanding aid delivery mechanisms, including early recovery projects, 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 Pedersen and interested member states with influence over the parties in Syria to discuss recent developments in his “step-for-step” initiative.

Council Dynamics

Over the years, Syria has been one of the most divisive files on the Council’s agenda. 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

Syria

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.

Council members also hold diverging views on normalising ties with the Syrian government. In the 27 April Council briefing, the US noted that it will not normalise relations with Syria and has

discouraged other member states from doing so. It added that the US will not lift sanctions on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad or support reconstruction in the absence of “genuine, comprehensive and enduring reforms and progress on the political process”. The European members of the Council hold a similar view. On the other hand, other Council members, including Russia, China, and the UAE, support the normalisation of ties with the Syrian government.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Expected Council Action

In October, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, will brief the Council. The briefing will focus on the situation of refugees in several countries on the Council’s agenda. No outcome is expected.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Over the past three decades, the Security Council has increasingly considered the links between the situation of refugees and threats to international peace and security. The High Commissioner for Refugees has briefed the Council several times about specific country situations on the Council’s agenda, including the Sahel in December 2012, Syria in December 2015, and Myanmar in February 2018. In addition to country-specific briefings, the Council has received several briefings under the agenda item “Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees”, which allows for a general update by the High Commissioner on the situation of refugees pertaining to various settings on the Council’s agenda.

The first briefing under this agenda item took place on 10 November 2000 by then-High Commissioner Sadako Ogata. Since then, the Council has received five such briefings, most recently on 2 November 2022 under Ghana’s Council presidency. During that meeting, Grandi emphasised that the 24 February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine had resulted in one of the fastest and largest displacement of people seen in decades, noting that around 14 million people had been displaced because of this conflict. He further stressed that various other conflict situations in the world, including Ethiopia, Myanmar, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, had resulted in significant displacement. He emphasised the need for the Security Council “to overcome its divisions and disagreements, at least when it discusses humanitarian issues, and hopefully when it addresses, or strives to address, the root causes that are displacing people around the world”.

In the past decade, UN member states have shown significant concern over the issue of forced displacement. In 2016, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, reaffirming the importance of the international refugee regime and paving the way for its affirmation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) two years later. The GCR remains a key global framework for addressing the issue of forced displacement

through more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing and offers guidance for states and international organisations on how to support refugees and meet their needs in ways that benefit them and their host communities. Its objectives are to ease pressures on host countries, promote refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, and support conditions in countries of origin to facilitate refugees’ safe return.

The main vehicles for follow-up and review under the GCR include the Global Refugee Forums (GRF) held every four years, the High-Level Officials Meeting held two years after each GRF, the biennial GCR indicator report, and the High Commissioner’s annual reporting to the General Assembly. The first High-Level Officials Meeting took place in December 2021. The next Global Refugee Forum is set to take place on 13-15 December 2023 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The global displacement crisis has continued to worsen since High Commissioner Grandi briefed the Council last year. By the end of 2022, the number of forcibly displaced people had reached 108.4 million, a 19 million increase from the end of 2021. UNHCR’s report, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement 2022*, released earlier this year, indicates that 52 percent of people displaced abroad in 2022 came from three countries of origin: Syria (6.5 million), Ukraine (5.7 million), and Afghanistan (5.7 million).

One recent crisis that has led to large-scale displacement is the conflict in Sudan. In April 2023, fighting erupted between rival armed forces in Sudan and resulted in the displacement of four million people internally. According to data released by UNHCR in September, about one million other Sudanese sought refuge in neighbouring countries. UNHCR projects that the number of Sudanese refugees will reach 1.8 million by the end of 2023.

Several natural disasters have also caused significant human displacement this year. In September, devastating floods in eastern Libya caused the displacement of over 40,000 people. In February, earthquakes in south-eastern Türkiye and northern Syria displaced an estimated three million, including in areas already hosting displaced persons from the Syrian conflict.

Key Issues and Options

One key issue is the combined effects of conflict, natural disasters, and climate change on the humanitarian needs of refugees and other displaced persons.

UN DOCUMENTS ON BRIEFINGS BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9178 (2 November 2022) was a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. S/PV.8919 (7 December 2021) was a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Another key issue is how to address UNHCR's funding gap. In 2023, UNHCR's budget rose to \$10.8 billion due to the increase in displaced people globally. According to data provided by UNHCR, only 32 percent of its global budget has been funded to date. While the Council does not control the purse strings, members could discuss how the funding gap exacerbates the humanitarian conditions facing persons displaced by conflict and appeal to member states to increase their financial support to UNHCR.

Another important issue is addressing the protection of refugees and displaced persons, including taking account of the differential effects of displacement on men, women, and children. In their interventions in this month's briefing, members may discuss ways to protect refugees from sexual and gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation.

In the future, Council members could consider convening private meetings or informal interactive dialogues to discuss the many challenges related to displacement in particular regions. These closed meeting formats allow for the participation of non-Council member states, one way in which they differ from closed consultations. As a result, they could enable a candid exchange of ideas among Council members and affected countries that may be conducive to strategic thinking and problem-solving concerning particular displacement crises.

Council Dynamics

The Council is generally united in its support of UNHCR and the work of the High Commissioner. It appears, however, that political sensitivities in the Council over issues such as Syria and Myanmar have affected Council deliberations on the issue of refugees. While all Council members agree on the need to promote the safe and voluntary return of refugees, there is a divergence of views on whether such conditions for return have been met in these countries.

Several Council members blame Russia for creating the displacement crisis in Ukraine and have repeatedly urged Russia to withdraw its troops from the country. They have also underscored concerns that Russia is forcibly migrating civilians, including children, to Russia. Russia denies accusations that it is forcibly transporting Ukrainian civilians to Russia, maintaining that such accusations are part of a disinformation campaign by Western countries.

Some Council members have emphasised the links between climate change and the displacement of people. During the November 2022 briefing, several members noted that the effects of climate change on displacement have been particularly evident in the Sahel region and the Horn of Africa, areas already affected by conflict.

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