

Monthly Forecast

1	Overview
2	In Hindsight: UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment
4	Status Update since our October Forecast
6	Sudan
8	Ukraine
10	Bosnia and Herzegovina
12	Sudan/South Sudan
13	Yemen
14	Libya
16	UN Peacekeeping
17	Somalia
18	Central African Republic
20	Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force
22	Lebanon
24	Syria
25	DPRK (North Korea)

Overview

In November, China holds the presidency of the Security Council.

China plans to organise one signature event during the month, which is expected to focus on the [peace, security, and development nexus](#). Secretary-General António Guterres is the anticipated briefer.

In November, the Security Council will hold its annual briefing with the [heads of police components of UN peace operations](#). The anticipated briefers are: Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Christophe Bizimungu, the Police Commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Christine Fossen, the Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in the South Sudan (UNMISS); Faisal Shahkar, the UN Police Adviser; and Karin Landgren, the Executive Director of Security Council Report.

African issues on the programme of work in November are:

- [Libya](#), the semi-annual briefing by the ICC Prosecutor concerning cases in the country;
- [Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel \(FC-G5S\)](#), briefing and consultations on the activities of the force;
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations and mandate renewal of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA);
- [Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) and the mission's mandate renewal;
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), renewal of the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and
- [Somalia](#), renewal of the mandate of the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime and its Panel of Experts, and potentially a resolution authorising a technical pause in the drawdown of 3,000 AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) personnel.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting on developments

and renewal of the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee;

- [“The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”](#), the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on the situation in Gaza and Israel; and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701, which was adopted in 2006 and called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a group Hezbollah and Israel.

Regarding European issues, the Council is scheduled to hold the semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and to reauthorise the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA). There are also likely to be one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#).

Asian issues planned for November are consultations on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee and an Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) on [Afghanistan](#) to discuss the independent assessment of the challenges facing the country, as requested in resolution 2679 of 16 March.

Regarding [counter-terrorism](#), the Council is expected to receive a briefing from the chairs of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, and the 1540 Committee. (Adopted in 2004, resolution 1540 aims to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction and encourages enhanced international cooperation in this regard.)

The Security Council and General Assembly will both hold elections for the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) in November.

The 15 current Council members and the incoming five (Algeria, Guyana, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia) will participate in the annual [“Hitting the Ground Running” workshop](#) organised by Finland on 2 and 3 November.

Other issues could be raised in November depending on developments.

1 November 2023

This report is available online at securitycouncilreport.org.

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

In Hindsight: UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment

It has been nearly a decade since the Security Council authorised its most recent UN peacekeeping mission, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), in 2014. During this time, four UN peacekeeping missions—in Côte d'Ivoire (2017), Haiti (2017), Liberia (2018), and Sudan/Darfur (2020)—wound down their operations and saw their responsibilities transferred to the host government, UN Special Political Missions (SPMs) and/or UN Country Teams (UNCTs). New SPMs were deployed in Colombia (2016) and Yemen (2019), and peacekeeping missions were replaced by SPMs in Haiti in 2019 and Sudan in 2020. These transitions took place amidst declining international attention to UN peace operations and rising fiscal constraints, with some major financial contributors, most notably the US during the Trump administration, determined to trim the UN peacekeeping budget.

The discourse on transitions has recently intensified in response to the changing nature of conflict, underpinned by complex and multifaceted peace, security, and development challenges. A characteristic of current conflicts is their wider regional implications influenced by transnational actors and geopolitical rivalries involving major powers, contributing to their protracted nature.

As well, host countries and communities have grown frustrated with the perceived ineffectiveness of UN peace operations. At times, inflated public expectations and disappointments have been influenced by disinformation campaigns. This has been especially evident in Mali, where in June 2023, the host government sought the immediate withdrawal of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where the host government requested the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) to accelerate mission transition. These developments—and transitions in countries such as Sudan and Haiti, where the political and security environments have deteriorated following the departure of UN peacekeeping missions—have spotlighted the issue of effective peacekeeping transitions. This month, *Security Council Report* will issue a research report analysing the Security Council's engagement on transitions. This *In Hindsight* highlights some themes of this upcoming report.

Security Council on Transitions

The Council has played a critical role in overseeing and observing the management and implementation of transition processes, including as an element of its field missions. On a visiting mission to Timor-Leste in November 2012, Council members observed the drawdown and exit of the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). They visited Haiti in June 2017 to review the transition from MINUSTAH to MINUJUSTH. A similar visit to Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau in February 2019 allowed Council members to take stock of these countries' transition processes and engage with UN officials in the field on what lessons and best practices could be drawn from these transitions. Council members visited DRC in March 2023 to, among other things, assess progress in the implementation of MONUSCO's transition plan.

The Council has held several thematic discussions on transitions, spearheaded by elected members. In November 2000, the

Netherlands, an elected Security Council member from 1999-2000, organised an open debate under the theme “no exit without strategy” to discuss the role of the Council in transitions. In July 2019, Peru, which served on the Council in 2018-2019, organised a briefing on peacebuilding and sustaining peace with a particular focus on strengthening partnerships for nationally-owned transitions. In December 2020, Tunisia, an elected Security Council member in 2020-2021, convened a meeting in its capacity as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, to discuss “Transitions and exit strategies in peacekeeping operations: taking stock and looking forward”. Ireland, an elected member in 2021-2022, convened an open debate in September 2021 on peace operations transitions.

The Council has adopted two thematic outcomes on transitions. In a 21 December 2017 presidential statement, facilitated by elected member Egypt (2016-2017), the Security Council recognised the importance of adequately resourcing the peacebuilding components of UN peacekeeping missions, including during mission transitions and drawdowns. As an outcome of the September 2021 open debate initiated by Ireland, the Council adopted resolution 2594, which considered UN transition processes as a unique global partnership that draws together the contributions and commitments of the entire UN system. Pursuant to resolution 2594, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Council on 29 June 2022, providing an update on ongoing and recently completed transitions since September 2019.

Council Dynamics

While Council members have acknowledged that well-planned and -managed transitions have the potential to prevent a relapse into conflict, sustain the progress achieved in conflict management and resolution, and lay the groundwork for lasting peace, since the adoption of resolution 2594 and Ireland's departure from the Council, no member appears to have prioritised transitions or convened a follow-up discussion on the Secretary-General's June 2022 report.

Council members generally concur on the “primacy of politics” in driving transition processes” (the phrase, from the 2015 High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, denotes that political solutions create enduring peace). But different groups of Council members tend to emphasise different aspects of transitions. China, Russia and the three African members (A3) generally give heightened deference to host country views and prioritise peacekeeping operations' support for the implementation of peace processes, the extension of state authority, and security sector reform (SSR). Other Council members, including the other permanent members (P3)—France, the UK, and the US—acknowledge the need to engage host countries and listen to their views and perspectives, but also stress host countries' responsibilities in improving governance, promoting inclusivity and protecting civilians. They argue that the success of transitions hinges on the support of dedicated and accountable host governments, and on inclusive transition processes that provide equitable political opportunities for women, youth, and marginalised and underprivileged populations.

Against the backdrop of complex conflict settings with difficult regional and geopolitical dimensions, Council members' differences

In Hindsight: UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment

often manifest themselves in mandate renewal negotiations. Several members seek to advance thematic language in these negotiations, including on human rights, the rule of law; justice and accountability; women, peace, and security, and children and armed conflict. On the other hand, China and Russia tend to suggest that such issues are peripheral to missions' core mandates. Upcoming transitions are likely to be affected by the significant political fault lines among Council members.

Complicating the challenge is that the P3 which, at the time of writing in October 2023, among them hold the pen on 11 out of the 12 UN peacekeeping operations and eight out of the 12 special political missions (SPMs) mandated by the Security Council—in the main appear to have less leverage with host countries. Some host countries, particularly in Africa, have become increasingly critical of the penholding arrangements, spurred in large part by prevailing divisions within the Council and the support they are receiving from China and Russia, as well as other like-minded members.

Some of the permanent members that provide significant support to the peacekeeping budget periodically emphasise the need to cut costs. However, there is at least rhetorical agreement that financial considerations should not dictate the drawdown, reconfiguration, and exit of missions. Members also believe that missions should be provided with the resources to support fragile countries in transition and note that failure to do so can risk reversing the hard-won gains.

Options for Council Action

In light of the formidable challenges currently confronting UN peace operations and the difficult discussions surrounding the drawdown and exit of larger multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions, transitions have taken on heightened relevance in the work of the Security Council, despite its lack of follow-up discussion on the Secretary-General's 29 June 2022 transitions report.

Even though missions are expected to develop a comprehensive transition plan at least 24 months before withdrawal or reconfiguration, based on the Secretary-General's 2019 policy directive, some transition processes have had limited lead time due to unexpected developments, such as the withdrawal of the host country's consent. This highlights the imperative to reassess UN policies and guidelines on transition planning and management to factor in less-than-ideal drawdown scenarios.

The role of UNCTs has been critical in taking over residual responsibilities from UN peace operations and sustaining the UN's continued political engagement and cooperation with host countries in preserving peace and security gains. While UNCTs are increasingly involved in integrated planning processes, their views and concerns may not always be fully taken on board by missions and UN headquarters. Council members may want to bear in mind the Secretary-General's call, in his 29 June 2022 report on transitions in UN peace operations, to make sure that "Security Council mandates

are crafted on the basis of a realistic understanding of country team capacities and capabilities and that sufficient resources are projected and committed to supporting peacebuilding activities to avoid funding cliffs after the departure of a mission". Given that the Council does not mandate the agencies, funds, and programmes, and has limited interaction with them, Council members may want to reflect on how best to acquire this understanding. They could consider making greater use of the PBC's convening role to enhance engagement with UNCTs.

The role of host countries is crucial in the success or failure of a UN transition. This, as well as sustaining peace at community level, requires meaningful engagement with host governments and with civil society, including with women and youth representatives in the field. Many peace operations have noted the gap in public (and, at times, host government) expectations; countering this through strategic communication and public engagement has become more important, albeit harder, in the face of powerful disinformation campaigns waged against UN field presences.

Council members have recognised the need to strengthen partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations in transition processes; as well, discussion of the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs) has gained momentum. While predictions of a rapid decline in UN peace operations may be exaggerated, there is at present little appetite for larger multidimensional UN peace operations. There seems to be a growing recognition that current conflicts, with no sign of resolution, require more mobile and agile forces willing to take greater risks in countering violent armed groups and terrorists. Regional peace support operations may be better suited for such tasks, a perspective encapsulated in the Secretary-General's July policy brief, *A New Agenda for Peace*.

Depending on the evolution of this discussion (at the time of writing, the A3 seems likely to table a draft framework resolution on the financing of AU-led peace operations before the end of 2023), a possible trend is of UN peacekeeping operations transitioning into UN peace support missions mandated to provide political and operational backstopping to AUPSOs. The Secretary-General's 1 May 2023 report on the financing of AUPSOs seems to lean towards the UN support office option that is considered flexible and practical in tailoring support to AUPSOs in accordance with specific needs and circumstances.

These developments may bring about a shift in the UN's hitherto UN-centric thinking about transitions. If AUPSOs take over stabilisation responsibilities as UN peace operations draw down and exit (in contrast to the historical trend of AUPSOs having transitioned into UN peacekeeping operations, as in the CAR, Mali, Liberia, Burundi, and elsewhere), the AU will also need capacity in the planning and management of transitions. Council members should recognise and actively anticipate the potential emergence of this trend.

Status Update since our October Forecast

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 8 October, Security Council members convened for emergency closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Malta, later joined by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), requested the meeting to address the recent escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed.

On 13 October, Council members convened in closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Brazil, later joined by the UAE, called for the meeting. Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira chaired the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres briefed. Wennesland also participated in the meeting.

On 16 October, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution proposed by Russia on the escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The draft failed to be adopted because it did not garner the requisite number of votes. (A resolution on substantive matters needs nine affirmative votes to be adopted, absent a veto by one of the five permanent members of the Council.) The draft received five votes in favour (China, Gabon, Mozambique, Russia, and the UAE); four votes against (France, Japan, the UK, and the US); while six members abstained (Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, Ghana, Malta, and Switzerland).

On 18 October, Council members voted on a further draft resolution concerning Israel and Gaza, authored by Brazil. The draft failed to be adopted owing to a veto cast by the US. Twelve members voted in favour of the draft resolution (Albania, Brazil, China, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, and the UAE), while two members abstained (Russia and the UK). (Before the vote on the draft resolution proposed by Brazil, Council members voted on two amendments to the Brazilian draft proposed by Russia. Both amendments failed to be incorporated because they did not garner the required votes.)

Following the 18 October vote, the Security Council held an emergency briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The meeting was called by Russia and the UAE, later joined by China, after the 17 October strike on the Al Ahli hospital in Gaza. Wennesland and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed.

On 24 October, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Vieira chaired the meeting. Guterres, Wennesland, and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) Lynn Hastings briefed.

On 25 October, Council members voted on two draft resolutions on Gaza and Israel authored by the US and by Russia. China and Russia vetoed the US draft, which the United Arab Emirates (UAE) also voted against. Ten members voted in favour of the draft resolution (Albania, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UK, and the US), while two members abstained (Brazil and Mozambique). The Russian draft failed to be adopted because it did not garner the requisite number of votes. It received four votes in favour (China, Gabon, Russia, and the UAE) and two votes against (the UK and the US), while the remaining nine members abstained (Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Ghana, Japan,

Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland).

On 27 October, at its resumed Tenth Emergency Special Session (ESS), the General Assembly adopted a resolution on “Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, calling for “an immediate, durable sustainable humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities”. The resolution was adopted with 120 votes in favour, 14 against and 45 abstentions. The ESS was resumed after the 18 October Security Council’s failure on 18 October to adopt a draft resolution proposed by Brazil, and the reception by the Office of the President of the General Assembly of three letters requesting the session’s resumption.

On 30 October, Council members convened for an emergency open briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. The UAE, later joined by China, requested the meeting to discuss the situation in Gaza. Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini, OCHA’s Director of the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division Lisa Doughten, and Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell briefed.

Iraq

On 10 October, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9432) on Iraq. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert briefed on recent developments in the country and on the Secretary-General’s reports on UNAMI (S/2023/700) and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property (S/2023/698). Dhafaf Al-Jarahi, Country Manager at the Iraq Foundation, also briefed. Iraq participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

Colombia

On 11 October, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9434) on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2023/701). The Council was also briefed by Deputy Permanent Representative Hrvoje Ćurić Hrvatinčić of Croatia, who chairs the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), and by Rodrigo Botero García, General Director of the non-governmental organisation Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development.

On 17 October, Council members issued a press statement on Colombia (SC/15449), in which they stressed the importance of ensuring the comprehensive 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). They also acknowledged efforts to seek broader peace, including through the implementation of agreements between the Colombian government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the recent announcement regarding a ceasefire between the government and the armed group Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (EMC FARC-EP).

On 31 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2704,

Status Update since our October Forecast

extending the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for another year, until 31 October 2024.

UN-AU Cooperation

On 12 October, the Security Council held its annual debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security, with a particular focus on the UN's cooperation with the AU (S/PV. 9435). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga briefed the Council on 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 the work of the UNOAU (S/2023/629). Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the AU to the UN, and Solomon Ayele Dersso, Managing Director of Amani Africa, also briefed.

Afghanistan

On 14 October, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 13 October terrorist attack against the Imam Zaman Mosque in Pule Khomri, the capital of Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan (SC/15442). The attack, which was claimed by ISIL/Da'esh-K (ISIL/Da'esh's Afghan affiliate) killed dozens of people and wounded many more.

UNDOF (Golan)

On 12 October, Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 16 October, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (S/PRST/2023/5). France, the penholder on the file, proposed the draft text following the Council's 28 September meeting on the situation in the DRC, including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) (S/PV.9427). The presidential statement, among other things, expresses the Council's "readiness to decide by the end of 2023 on the future of MONUSCO, its gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal and the concrete and realistic steps to be undertaken, as a matter of priority to implement this withdrawal". In this regard, the presidential statement requests MONUSCO and the Congolese government to develop, by November, a comprehensive disengagement plan with a timetable for MONUSCO's progressive and orderly withdrawal, building on the revised transition plan and its four key benchmarks.

Great Lakes Region

On 17 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Great Lakes region (S/PV. 9440). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed on the Secretary-General's latest semi-annual report on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region (PSC-F) (S/2023/730). João Samuel Caholo, Executive Secretary of the

International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and Joséphine Malimukono, President of the Concertation des Collectifs des Associations féminines de la région des Grands Lacs, also briefed. The representatives of Rwanda and the DRC participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Arria-formula Meeting on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

On 18 October, Security Council members held an open Arria-formula meeting on "Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence". The meeting was organised by Albania, the UK, and the US. Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania Igli Hasani chaired the meeting. The President of the Republic of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani, and the Team Leader of the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, Chloe Marnay-Baszanger, briefed. Two women civil society representatives, Bakira Hasečić and Niemat Ahmadi, also briefed.

Western Sahara

On 16 October, Council members held closed consultations to consider the Secretary-General's report on Western Sahara (S/2023/729), dated 3 October. The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, and the Special Representative and head of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), Alexander Ivanko, briefed. On 30 October, the Council adopted resolution 2703, renewing the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2024. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Mozambique and Russia).

Mali

On 19 October, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare briefed Council members on MINUSMA's withdrawal in closed consultations under "any other business".

Haiti

On 2 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2699, authorising member states to form and deploy a multinational security support mission to Haiti. The resolution received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia).

On 19 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2700, renewing the Haiti sanctions regime for one year.

On 23 October, the Council held an open briefing on Haiti (S/PV.9449). Special Representative and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest report on Haiti (S/2023/768). UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell and UNODC Executive Director Ghada Fathi Waly, as well as Mirlande Manigat, President of Haiti's High Transitional Council, also briefed the Council. The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Jamaica participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

On 20 October, the Security Council held an open debate on "Contributions of regional mechanisms to peace and security" under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item (S/

Status Update since our October Forecast

PV.9448). The meeting focused on the contribution of regional, sub-regional, and bilateral arrangements to the prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes. The briefers were: Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari; Michelle Bachelet, the former President of Chile and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Thabo Mbeki, the former President of South Africa; and Dr. Josefina Echavarría Álvarez, Professor of the Practice and the director of the Peace Accords Matrix (PAM) program at the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.

Kosovo

On 23 October, the Council held its second briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.9450). Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Ziadeh briefed on the Secretary-General's latest UNMIK report and recent developments (S/2023/735). Prime Minister of Serbia Ana Brnabić participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure and President Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu of Kosovo participated under rule 39. The discussion mainly focused on the need for continued dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the EU, as well as tensions in northern Kosovo.

Women, Peace and Security

On 25 October, the Security Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), which this year was titled "Women's participation in international peace and security: from theory to practice" (S/PV.9452, Resumption 1 and 2). Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauro Vieira chaired the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres provided opening remarks. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous; President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric Egger; and Glivânia Maria de Oliveira, the Director General of the Rio Branco Institute and Representative of Brazil in the negotiations between the government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), briefed. The Regional Director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa, Hala Al-Karib, also briefed.

International Court of Justice

On 27 October, the Council held its annual private meeting with Judge Joan E. Donoghue, the president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), which Council members expect to receive by 9 November.

The mandate of UNITAMS expires on 3 December.

Key Recent Developments

Sudan continues to grapple with the dire political, security and humanitarian consequences of the conflict that erupted on 15 April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's military leader and chairperson of the Transitional Sovereign Council, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemedti). The fighting, which was initially centred around Khartoum, has steadily engulfed several parts of the country.

Since the outset of the conflict in Sudan, several regional and international stakeholders have initiated mediation efforts aimed at resolving the crisis, but these efforts have not yet achieved any breakthrough. On 16 October, a joint delegation of the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) met with Sudanese civilian political actors in Cairo, Egypt. The following day, the delegation met with representatives of the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a Sudanese political coalition. The discussions reportedly focused on initiating a political process aimed at ending the ongoing conflict and establishing new constitutional

arrangements to reinstate civilian governance. In a statement released following the meeting, the FFC emphasised that the political process should address the root causes of the war and develop lasting solutions to prevent the recurrence of armed conflict in Sudan.

From 23 to 26 October, a wide range of Sudanese stakeholders, including civilian political actors, the FFC, former Sudanese Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok, civil society groups, and resistance committees, met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The consultations aimed at organising a common civilian front against the war and outlining a shared political vision. According to media reports, the meeting concluded with an agreement to establish a leadership body, titled "Coordination of Civil Democratic Forces", headed by Hamdok, which will be responsible to "carry out oversight and supervisory tasks, and follow up on the preparation for the founding conference". This conference is expected to bring together a larger gathering of Sudanese society with more diverse representation, in ensuing months, to address the political, humanitarian, and economic consequences of the ongoing conflict, among other things.

In response to the escalating violence in and around Nyala and Omdurman, the US State Department noted in an 18 October press statement that the US was aware of reports that the RSF may have encircled Nyala in preparation for an assault, potentially making it impossible for civilians to flee to safety. The statement expressed concern about reports that the RSF was shelling and blocking access into the Hasahisa Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in central Darfur. It called on the RSF to immediately cease shelling

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2685 (2 June 2023) renewed the mandate of UNITAMS for six months until 3 December 2023. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9417](#) (13 September 2023) was the open briefing on Sudan.

Sudan

civilian neighbourhoods and to protect civilians in Nyala, Omdurman, and throughout Sudan. The statement further called on the warring parties to abide by their commitments under the 11 May “Declaration of Principles to Protect the Civilians of Sudan”, signed in Jeddah with the facilitation of Saudi Arabia and the US.

Despite several calls for a ceasefire from regional stakeholders and the broader international community, the humanitarian crisis in Sudan continues to deepen. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths issued a statement on 15 October, stating that 9,000 people have reportedly been killed in the conflict and that 25 million people remain in need of aid in Sudan. At least 45 aid workers have been killed or detained, he added. Griffiths called on the warring parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law and recommit to dialogue at the highest levels to end the conflict.

Sudan’s humanitarian needs are significant and have been evolving rapidly. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase (IPC) projections, around 15 million people, representing approximately 31 percent of the country’s population, are expected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity between October and February 2024, which is reportedly the highest recorded figure to coincide with Sudan’s harvest season.

An outbreak of cholera has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation. According to a 19 October OCHA situation report, at least 1,457 suspected cases, including 64 deaths, have been reported from Gedaref, South Kordofan, and Khartoum states as at 26 October. In addition, other diseases such as measles, malaria, and dengue are also having an adverse impact on the population. A 25 October OCHA press release said that 70 percent of hospitals in conflict-affected states are not functional, while facilities in states not affected by the conflict have been overwhelmed by an influx of people displaced by the fighting.

According to UNHCR data, approximately 4.6 million people have been displaced internally across Sudan’s 18 states since the conflict began. At the same time, more than 1.1 million people have sought refuge in Sudan’s neighbouring countries, including the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. In recent months, securing funding for the country’s myriad new and ongoing humanitarian challenges has continued to be difficult. At the time of writing, the humanitarian response plan for 2023 (\$2.57 billion) was only 33.6 percent funded.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 16 October statement, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally expressed concern about the increased risk of recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups since the onset of conflict in Sudan.

On 11 October, during its 54th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution establishing an independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan, comprising three members, with a mandate to investigate and establish the facts, circumstances and root causes of all alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including those committed against refugees, and related crimes in the context of the conflict that started on 15 April. The mission is further mandated to collect, consolidate and analyse evidence of such violations and abuses and make recommendations, in particular on accountability measures. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 19 in favour, 16 against and 12 abstentions. Among Security Council members, the P3 (France, the UK and the US) voted in favour of the HRC resolution,

while China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) voted against, and Gabon abstained.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is the future of UNITAMS. The mission has found it increasingly difficult to operate and carry out its mandate in the current security environment. According to the Secretary-General’s 31 August report, the mission has established a temporary office in Nairobi, as a result of the continued fighting in Sudan and the security risks in Khartoum and other mission locations. Former Special Representative and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes resigned in September amidst deteriorating relations between Sudan and UNITAMS, and the Secretary-General has yet to appoint his successor. The mission’s presence in Sudan is currently led by Deputy Special Representative for Sudan and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami, who is based in Port Sudan and is supported by a limited number of personnel.

Some Council members may support a technical rollover of the mission and possibly request the Secretary-General to present recommendations on the necessary conditions for UNITAMS to continue operating and deliver on its mandated tasks.

Against the backdrop of strained relations between Sudan and the mission, Sudan may push the Council to terminate its mandate and request the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy. Some Council members are likely to support this view.

Also a key issue for the Security Council is how to stop the fighting in Sudan, including the high levels of intercommunal violence and insecurity in Darfur and other parts of the country. Council members could hold a private meeting with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and member states with influence over the warring parties in Sudan to discuss the search for a mediated solution to the crisis. (A private meeting is a closed, formal meeting format; unlike closed consultations, non-Council member states are allowed to participate in this format.)

In the upcoming Council meeting on the situation in Sudan, several Council members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and like-minded members, may welcome the establishment of the independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan.

Another issue for the Security Council is the humanitarian crisis and how to ensure continuous and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and, at the same time, secure the safety and security of UN officials and other humanitarian actors. Periodic briefings by OCHA could help keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Soon after the conflict broke out in April, Council discussions on Sudan became polarised over the Council’s engagement in response to the escalating violence. Following the Sudanese government’s 8 June decision to declare Volker Perthes persona non grata, differences among Council members widened, particularly in regard to the role of UNITAMS. While the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and like-minded members supported Perthes’ efforts, Russia maintained that Perthes had lost the confidence of the Sudanese people.

In an 8 September letter to the Security Council, Sudan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Al-Harith Idriss al-Harith Mohamed,

Sudan

said that Sudan would distance itself and not take part in the 13 September Council meeting if Perthes briefed. The letter added that “[a]s Sudan considers [Perthes’] participation in the meeting as a deliberate provocation and an insult to its sovereignty, Sudan would review its position regarding UNITAMS and would regret that it is the only last resort option left to redress the unprecedented and unfair situation which is prevalent at present”.

During the Council’s 13 September briefing, China and Russia supported the position of the Sudanese government. In its remarks, China said that the Council “should fully take into account the views of Sudan, determine the course of cooperation between the [UN] and Sudan vis-à-vis the country’s concerns and needs and help it to rebuild peace and stability”. At the same time, several other Council members, including Albania, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UAE, and the US, expressed support for the work of UNITAMS.

In its remarks, France said that “UNITAMS has a role to play in strengthening all diplomatic efforts, as well as those of civil society, and in continuing to determine the facts when human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law are observed”.

The upcoming negotiations on UNITAMS are expected to be difficult. During the mission’s most recent mandate renewal negotiations in June, the UK (the penholder on the Sudan file) sought to add language reflecting recent developments in Sudan and calling on the parties to cease hostilities immediately and agree to permanent ceasefire arrangements, among other things. Apparently, the A3 members, China, and Russia supported Sudan’s call to oppose the addition of new language to the draft resolution concerning the humanitarian, political, or security situation in Sudan. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 2 June.)

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In November, 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 the southern Kherson and 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. They have also made advances around the city of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region after Russia redeployed some of its most seasoned troops to the Zaporizhzhia region. In an 8 October intelligence update, the UK’s Ministry of Defence highlighted that Ukraine had “almost certainly” reclaimed at least 125 square kilometres of land over the summer.

Concurrently, Ukrainian troops are defending against Russian offensives in the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions, with heavy fighting reported near the village of Avdiivka. Hostilities also continue near the cities of Kupiansk and Lyman in the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, respectively.

Meanwhile, Russia and Ukraine have continued their air, missile, and drone attacks against each other. On 5 October, a Russian missile struck a shop and café in the village of Hroza, located in the northeastern Kharkiv region. Over 52 people—nearly one-sixth of Hroza’s population—were reportedly killed in the attack. The Security Council held a briefing on 9 October at Ukraine’s request, supported by Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. At the briefing, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo emphasised that “[a] just solution to the war lies in adhering...with deeds, not just with words” to the principles of the UN Charter, including

“respect for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all member states”. Council members also convened on 31 October for a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, at the request of Ecuador and France.

For its part, Russia called for two Council meetings to discuss the issue of Western weapons supplies to Ukraine, which took place on 13 and 27 October. The latter followed reports that Ukraine had deployed US-supplied long-range tactical missile systems (ATACMS) to strike airfields in Russian-held territories in eastern and southern Ukraine on 17 October. The attacks resulted in the destruction of helicopters, the neutralisation of a Russian air defence missile launcher, and damage to runways.

During these meetings, Russia criticised Western countries for hypocritically calling for an end to the conflict while “pumping Ukraine full of weapons and talking the Kiev regime out of adopting realistic scenarios of resolving this crisis”. In response, several Council members defended the arms supplies to Ukraine, citing the country’s fundamental right to self-defence as enshrined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. Some members also criticised Russia for allegedly sourcing armed drones from Iran and procuring arms from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), actions they claimed contravene multiple Security Council resolutions. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* stories of 12 October and 30 October.)

On 12 October, US military officials reportedly presented to UN member states what they claimed to be fragments of Iranian drones found in Ukraine. Tehran has rejected Western claims that it is providing Russia with significant numbers of uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) for use in Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine.

On 13 October, the US alleged that the DPRK had supplied Russia with over 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions for the war in Ukraine, citing a series of satellite images as evidence. US-based analysts observed a significant surge in train traffic between the DPRK and Russia, particularly after Russian

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9464 (31 October) was a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, requested by Ecuador and France. S/FPV.9457 (27 October) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia. S/PV.9436 (13 October) was a briefing on Ukraine, requested by Russia. S/PV.9431 (9 October 2023) was a briefing requested by Ukraine, with support from several Council members, including Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UK, and the US.

Ukraine

President Vladimir Putin hosted DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Moscow in mid-September. US National Security Council Coordinator for Strategic Communications John Kirby voiced concerns on 13 October that Kim Jong-un might be procuring advanced Russian weapon technologies in exchange for munitions. To address these developments, officials from the US, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Japan convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 17 October to discuss the DPRK's increasing ties with Russia. In a related event, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov travelled to the DPRK on 18 October for a two-day trip.

On 25 October, the Russian parliament passed a bill withdrawing its ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), albeit maintaining its cooperation with the treaty's verification system. The CTBT, adopted in 1996, prohibits states parties from conducting "any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion". Despite being nearly universally recognised, the treaty has not yet entered into force. To date, 187 states have signed the treaty, and 178 have ratified it. Russia ratified the CTBT in June 2000. China and the US have signed but not ratified the treaty.)

On 28 and 29 October, Malta hosted the third round of talks on Zelenskyy's peace formula. This followed earlier meetings held on 24 June in Copenhagen, Denmark, and on 5 and 6 August in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The gathering in Malta saw the participation of 66 countries, including several that have not condemned the Russian aggression. Russia was not invited. Zelenskyy described the turnout as "a good result". Notable absences included China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), both of which participated in the Jeddah meeting. During the meeting in Malta, Canada proposed to create an international coalition of countries aimed at "facilitating the return of Ukrainian children who have been deported or forcibly displaced by Russia from the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine". Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova dismissed the meeting in Malta as "futile and counterproductive" to a settlement of the conflict, describing it as "a purely biased, openly anti-Russia event".

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 19 October, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Ukraine submitted its report to the General Assembly pursuant to resolution A/HRC/RES/52/32 of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The report provided additional evidence documenting that Russian authorities have committed "indiscriminate attacks and the war crimes of torture, rape and other sexual violence, and deportation of children to the Russian Federation". The COI reiterated that additional investigations confirmed its previous findings that Russian authorities had used torture in a "widespread and systematic way". The report noted three cases in which the COI's investigations have documented human rights violations committed by Ukrainian authorities against persons accused of collaboration with the Russian authorities.

In a 13 October statement, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed deep concern about Russia's issuance of arrest warrants against senior judges of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The statement called these actions "unacceptable" and urged Russia to withdraw them.

On 9 October, the HRC held an interactive dialogue during its 54th session on the oral update of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the findings of OHCHR's periodic report on the situation of human rights in Ukraine. In her statement, Deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif said that 18 months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the world continued to witness "blatant and unabated violations of human rights". The report documented abuses ranging from "widespread torture and arbitrary detention to conflict-related sexual violence and

denial of the right to an adequate standard of living". Al-Nashif noted that in the territories reclaimed by Ukraine, the Ukrainian authorities have opened roughly 6,000 criminal cases concerning "collaboration activities" and continued "render[ing] a high number of guilty verdicts".

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 emphasised de-escalation and diplomacy, with some calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities without any preconditions, a move that could freeze the front lines of the conflict, leaving Russia in control of a significant amount of territory in eastern and southern Ukraine. Most members continue to express concern over the mounting toll of the conflict on civilians and civilian infrastructure and the conflict's global repercussions.

The past month saw growing worries in Kyiv regarding the possibility of diminishing Western support for Ukraine, in light of disagreements within the US House of Representatives over US spending on Ukraine. A temporary spending bill approved by the US government on 30 September did not include additional aid for Ukraine because of opposition from members of the Republican party. US President Joe Biden denounced the move, stressing that "[w]e cannot under any circumstance allow America's support for Ukraine to be interrupted".

On 20 October, Biden appealed to Congress to endorse a \$106 billion emergency aid package to Israel, Ukraine, and the southern US border. This includes \$61.4 billion earmarked for Ukraine, with \$44.4 billion intended for defence equipment provision. However, on 26 October, the newly elected House Speaker, Mike Johnson, stated that the consensus among the Republican majority in the US House of Representatives is that funding requests for Ukraine and Israel should be addressed separately. In a 30 October interview, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba acknowledged the "considerable political resistance" within the US House of Representatives, but said he was confident the request for aid to Ukraine would be approved by Congress.

The escalating situation in the Middle East, following the 7 October large-scale attack by Palestinian armed group Hamas on Israel, has also raised doubts regarding Western countries' ability to sustain the level of their commitment to Ukraine. Some experts believe that the urgent circumstances in Israel might redirect both resources and focus away from Ukraine. Additionally, there are arguments suggesting that the US' backing of Israel might impede its efforts to maintain political support for Ukraine within the UN. On 18 October, the US vetoed a Brazilian draft humanitarian resolution on the recent

Ukraine

escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza and the ensuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 16 October.) Some analysts have argued that for many countries in the Global South, the situation in the Middle East exposes perceived Western double standards: while Western countries have been urging

member states for months to condemn Russian actions in Ukraine, they have concurrently expressed steadfast support for Israel, despite the significant civilian casualties and the extensive airstrikes on the Gaza Strip carried out by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The Council also expects to vote on the reauthorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) prior to its 2 November expiration.

Background

The 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement, created two entities within BiH: the predominantly Bosniak and Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska (RS). The two entities are linked by a rotating tripartite inter-ethnic presidency and a two-chamber legislative branch with equal representation by the three major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs). Both entities also have their own executive and legislative branches.

The Dayton Peace Agreement also established the Office of the High Representative (OHR) and the NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) to oversee implementation of the agreement's civilian and military aspects, respectively. In 1996, IFOR was replaced by the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR), which in turn was replaced in 2004 by the EU-led multidimensional stabilisation force (EUFOR).

In December 1995, the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) was established to garner international support for the Dayton Agreement. The PIC Steering Board (SB), which serves as the executive arm of the PIC and provides the High Representative with political guidance, consists of representatives from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK, the US, the Presidency of the EU, the European Commission, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is represented by Türkiye. In 1997, the PIC agreed to grant significant legislative powers to the High Representative. Known collectively as the “Bonn Powers”, these include the ability to take binding decisions and unseat elected officials who are found to be in violation of legal commitments made under the Dayton Agreement or the terms of its implementation.

The RS and Security Council members China and Russia do not recognise Christian Schmidt's legitimacy as High Representative of BiH. Russia maintains that appointments to the position must be formally endorsed by a Security Council resolution, a position with which several other Council members disagree. (Of the seven High Representatives preceding Schmidt, only one was not endorsed by a Security Council resolution: Christian Schwarz-Schilling. On 30 January 2006, then-Council president Tanzania issued a letter (S/2006/61) welcoming the decision of the PIC to nominate Schwarz-Schilling as High Representative.)

On 22 July 2021, the Council voted on a draft resolution on BiH proposed by China and Russia. The draft text welcomed the designation of Christian Schmidt as High Representative and supported the appointment of the High Representative until 31 July 2022, with the subsequent “closure of the OHR”. With a vote of two in favour (China and Russia) and 13 abstentions, the draft resolution failed to be adopted. Following the vote, China argued that the outcome suggested that the Council did not support Schmidt's appointment. Russia echoed this view, adding that the post therefore remained vacant. On 28 July 2021, Russia announced that it would no longer participate in meetings of the PIC SB and on 17 February 2022, said it would suspend its financial contributions to the OHR.

The US and European Council members believe that decisions made by the PIC SB on the appointment of High Representatives do not require the Security Council's approval.

Key Recent Developments

On 21 June, the National Assembly of RS (NARS) adopted amendments to the Act on the Publication of Laws and Other Regulations in an attempt to absolve itself of the responsibility to publish the High Representative's decisions in its official gazette. The amended law sought to render the High Representative's decisions invalid in the RS. Two days earlier, on 19 June, the OHR had noted in a statement that “no political rhetoric or amendment to law can relieve institutions and those who work in them” of the obligation to cooperate fully with the High Representative. The statement underscored that the High Representative's decisions “have the same status as laws enacted by domestic parliaments and carry the same constitutional necessity for publication, regardless of any subordinate law or regulation” and warned that by pursuing the amendments, RS would be “sailing in heavy waters”.

In June, tensions escalated further after the NARS adopted legislation opposing BiH's Constitutional Court. The court comprises nine judges: four selected by the FBiH, two by the NARS, and three by the President of the European Court of Human Rights, in consultation with the BiH Presidency. RS President Milorad Dodik has consistently criticised the court, accusing it of bias against Bosnian Serbs. A prominent issue has been the inclusion of foreign judges, with many RS officials pushing for their removal from the court.

The court has accused the NARS of attempting to disrupt its work, noting that it failed to put forth a successor to one of its judges, Miodrag Simović, who retired earlier this year, and that it had called for the resignation of the other NARS-appointed judge, Zlatko Knežević.

In a 19 June statement, the court condemned “all political

Bosnia and Herzegovina

pressure” directed at Knežević and appealed to all parties to abstain from such actions. Additionally, the statement unveiled a modification to the court’s quorum rules, enabling decisions to be passed by a majority of all court members, or five judges. Previously, the court was unable to make decisions if judges from RS were not present. The change, therefore, enables the court to convene sessions and pass rulings even in the absence of RS judges. In a 20 June post on X (formerly Twitter), Dodik labelled this move as “anti-Serb, anti-constitutional and anti-Dayton”.

On 27 June, the NARS passed a law declaring rulings of BiH’s Constitutional Court non-applicable in the RS. This move sparked broad condemnation, with many fearing it signalled RS’s intention to secede. On 29 June, the US described the law’s adoption as representing “a dangerous escalation in secessionist threats”. Similarly, on 29 June, France condemned NARS’ decision, saying it contradicted BiH’s EU aspirations and had “no legal effect”. On 31 July, the US imposed sanctions on four Bosnian Serb officials for being responsible for or complicit in passing the law.

On 1 July, Schmidt issued several decrees to block NARS’ 21 June and 27 June decisions from taking effect. Notably, one decree modified BiH’s criminal code, allowing for the criminal prosecution of authorities or officials who fail to “apply, implement, enforce or otherwise comply with a decision of the High Representative”. Additionally, those who obstruct the decrees’ application, implementation, or enforcement can also face prosecution and could be subject to a prison sentence of up to five years.

On 7 July, Council members convened at Russia’s request for a meeting on the situation in BiH under “any other business”. Russia requested the meeting in response to what it described as “provocative changes” made to the Constitutional Court’s quorum rules, which Russia perceives as setting BiH on “the path to the destruction of the Dayton structure”. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed Council members.

On 11 September, a BiH court confirmed an indictment against Dodik on charges of failing to implement the High Representative’s decisions. This indictment was preceded by charges lodged against Dodik by the Prosecutor’s Office of BiH in August. Dodik dismissed the indictment, reiterating on 13 September that Schmidt is not a legitimate High Representative. At the initial hearing on 16 October, Dodik refused to enter a plea, saying that, despite his request for the indictment to be drafted in the Serbian Cyrillic script, it was provided in Latin instead.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 27 September statement, the PIC SB said that, since 2013, the RS government has sought to introduce legislation that would “place civil society organizations under the government’s close scrutiny and restrict their ability to exercise their democratic rights”. The proposed Draft Law on Special Register and Transparency of Work on Non-profit Organisations would pose a “significant threat to the overall state of human rights and democracy in [BiH]”. The statement called on RS lawmakers to vote against the draft law, noting that it would “go against the very notion of democracy”.

On 25 July, a group of UN experts issued a statement expressing concern at the adoption of an amendment to the RS criminal code that recriminalises defamation. The statement emphasised that “recriminalisation of defamation is a setback to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression, not only in the [RS] entity but throughout the country”. The RS approved these amendments despite strong opposition from various actors, including journalists, civil society groups, and international human rights organisations and mechanisms, who clearly noted that this move was “retrogressive”.

On 21 July, the Office of the High Representative issued a statement underscoring that the recriminalisation of defamation is an “attack on civil liberties characteristic of authoritarian regimes”. The statement also emphasised that this approach would enable the authorities to drastically limit and censor freedom of speech and “silence dissenting voices”.

Key Issues and Options

OHR’s role remains a key issue for the Council. Neither China nor Russia recognise Schmidt’s authority as High Representative and may call for the early closure of the OHR. One option for the Council is to consider a presidential statement requesting the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the procedures and modalities for appointing High Representatives of BiH under the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Another important issue is the need to address the increasing separatist actions and rhetoric in BiH. Council members may consider issuing a presidential statement reaffirming the continued relevance of the Dayton Agreement and urging all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric and actions.

Council Dynamics

Deep divisions related to BiH’s Euro-Atlantic integration and possible accession to the EU and NATO—particularly between Russia on the one hand and the US and European Council members on the other—colour Council dynamics on BiH. The situation in Ukraine is likely to continue to permeate the Council’s engagement on BiH and contribute to further division between these two camps.

Despite differing opinions on the role of the OHR and the legitimacy of High Representative Christian Schmidt, Council members appear to agree on the need to renew the authorisation of EUFOR-ALTHEA.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), circulated to Council members on 16 October.

The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of UNISFA and extend the mission's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), established in 2011 to conduct monitoring and verification activities along the Sudan-South Sudan border, before their expiration on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

According to the Secretary-General's UNISFA report, which covered developments from 19 April to 3 October, no progress was made in resolving the final status of Abyei, the disputed area along the Sudan-South Sudan border, amidst the fighting in Sudan that erupted on 15 April between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group. The report added that security forces from both countries continued to be present inside Abyei, including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and the South Sudan National Police Service in the southern part of Abyei and the Diffra oil police in the north. The presence of these forces violates the 2011 Agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, as well as the mandate of UNISFA.

The fighting in Sudan has also contributed significantly to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Abyei region because of the influx of South Sudanese returnees, displaced Sudanese and third-country nationals fleeing the crisis in the Sudan. The Secretary-General's report noted that as at 19 September, 9,331 individuals had entered Abyei from Sudan since the onset of the conflict. The report further said that the disruption of economic activities in Sudan—the source of many basic goods and commodities in Abyei—posed a serious challenge.

The Secretary-General's report also noted that the implementation of the JBVMM's mandate was significantly affected by the outbreak of conflict in Sudan with the closure of Sudanese airspace, making aerial patrols impossible for the JBVMM bases in Sudan. It further noted that the security situation in Kadugli, the capital city of South Kordofan state, had worsened primarily because of clashes between the SAF and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N Abdelaziz al-Hilu). On 7 June, UNISFA evacuated all internationally recruited UN staff from Kadugli to Abyei town and Entebbe, Uganda, apart from some peacekeepers, military staff officers and military observers. The report added that, as at 19 September, "armed actors" around Kadugli had blocked the routes out of the city southwards and northwards, which created food, fuel, and other supply shortages and disrupted the electricity supply.

According to the Secretary-General's report, the UNISFA leadership travelled to Juba from 15 to 18 May for meetings with acting South Sudanese Foreign Minister Deng Dau Deng Malek and the leadership of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) as well as South Sudan's UN country team. The discussions were focused

on the possible opening of resupply and rotation routes through South Sudan, as UNISFA's main supply routes from Port Sudan and Khartoum remained closed because of the ongoing fighting, and on efforts to meet the humanitarian needs of people arriving in Abyei from Sudan.

The Secretary-General's report further noted that the security situation in the Abyei region remained tense despite reductions in intercommunal armed clashes. During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, the major threats to security were related to intercommunal violence, the proliferation of arms and ammunition, and robberies along the main supply route between Sudan and South Sudan. During this period, 62 arms-related incidents were reported, resulting in 204 casualties, including 82 deaths.

On 29 September, several armed individuals attacked Ngok Dinka community members in Abyei, killing 11 civilians and injuring 16 others. In a 3 October press release, UNISFA strongly condemned the incident and said that a fact-finding committee had been convened to investigate it. The press release also implored all parties to desist from the spread of misinformation and disinformation to avoid further escalating tensions.

As part of the UNISFA reconfiguration into a multinational force, several UNISFA troop contingents—Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Viet Nam, and the Chinese medium utility helicopter unit—reached their full operational capacity during the reporting period. However, the final step towards full deployment of troops and contingent-owned equipment, which had been planned for completion by the end of May, was delayed because of the conflict in Sudan.

UNISFA continued its engagement with stakeholders to build confidence and address threats to social cohesion. The Secretary-General's report noted that on 9 August UNISFA facilitated the convening of an emergency crisis-management mission by the Ngok Dinka paramount chief and Nuer leaders. Tensions had been escalating between the Nuer, Rueng, and Ngok Dinka communities following an attack on Rumamier village in January, perpetrated by an armed group consisting of individuals from the Twic Dinka and Nuer communities.

From 7 to 9 August, UNISFA facilitated the travel of members of the Juba-appointed Abyei administration to Wau, South Sudan, to attend reconciliation talks between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities. The talks concluded with an agreement on a ceasefire, disengagement of armed Nuer members, and freedom of movement between the areas affected by the tensions. From 11 to 16 August, the South Sudanese Minister of East African Affairs, Deng Alor Kuol, visited Abyei, where he met with Juba-appointed Chief Administrator in Abyei Chol Deng Alak and discussed efforts to strengthen local support for the agreements reached in Wau.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in November is UNISFA's mandate renewal. A likely option for Council members is to adopt a resolution renewing the mission's mandate for one year.

Another important issue for Council members is the effects of the conflict in Sudan on the security and humanitarian situation in Abyei and its possible implications for the Abyei political process. The Secretary-General's report noted that the conflict in Sudan continues to block political progress towards resolution of the final

Sudan/South Sudan

status of Abyei and border issues and has the potential to exacerbate intercommunal tensions in Abyei. In the upcoming UNISFA mandate renewal, Council members may wish to express concerns about these effects and express their support for the ongoing international and regional efforts to resolve the conflict in Sudan.

A related issue is ensuring the resupply and freedom of movement for the JBVMM headquarters in Kadugli and two team sites, including safe passage for JBVMM and UNISFA personnel as they rotate in and out of the area.

Another important issue for the Council members is the continued presence of South Sudanese and Sudanese security forces in Abyei, in violation of the area's demilitarised status. The proliferation of arms in Abyei is also a critical issue.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree on the important roles that UNISFA and the JBVMM play in supporting peace, security and stability in Abyei and the broader region. Many members remain critical of the lack of progress by Sudan and South Sudan in resolving the final status of Abyei.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2660 demonstrated that the Council remains unified in its view that UNISFA plays an important role in promoting regional stability and advancing efforts toward the political settlement of the Abyei question.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to renew the Yemen financial and travel ban sanctions measures, which expire on 15 November, and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts, which expires on 15 December. (The targeted arms embargo established by resolution 2216 in April 2015 on the Houthi rebel group is open-ended.)

The Council will also hold its monthly meeting on Yemen, with UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA expected to brief. The chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania) may also brief. The head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Beary, is expected to brief during consultations.

Key Recent Developments

From 14 to 19 September, a delegation of the Houthi rebel group visited Riyadh for a new round of peace talks with Saudi Arabia, renewing expectations that the two sides could be nearing an agreement. Saudi Arabia leads a military coalition that has supported Yemen's internationally recognised government during the more than eight-year-long war in Yemen. The Saudi foreign ministry welcomed the talks' "positive results". Days later, however, a Houthi drone attack on 25 September killed four Bahraini soldiers serving in the coalition along the Saudi-Yemen border. Coalition spokesperson Brigadier General Turki al-Maliki described the attack as having been carried out by "some Houthi elements".

Grundberg condemned the attack, warning that "any renewal of offensive military escalation risks plunging Yemen back into a cycle of violence and undermines ongoing peace efforts". Council members also condemned "the egregious and escalatory" attack in a 29 September press statement. The Council press statement reiterated the need for "decisive steps" towards a sustainable ceasefire and underlined members' "strong support for efforts towards a political settlement".

On 12 October, Council members held their monthly briefing on Yemen in closed consultations. Grundberg, Beary, and the director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division, Edem Wosornu,

briefed. As part of his briefing, Grundberg raised the risk of the war between Israel and Hamas—the Palestinian armed group and de facto authority in Gaza—affecting the situation in Yemen. The animosity of the Houthis towards Israel is revealed by their slogan, adopted in 2003, which includes the words: "Death to America, Death to Israel. Curse the Jews". Also, like other anti-Israel forces in the region, the Houthis are supported by Iran. In a 10 October televised speech, Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi warned that the group would fire drones and missiles if the US directly intervenes in Gaza, along with taking other military actions. He added that the Houthis were ready to coordinate with other groups and intervene.

On 19 October, the US announced that a US naval warship in the northern Red Sea intercepted three missiles and several drones that had been launched from Yemen. (Other subsequent reporting said that the US intercepted four cruise missiles and 15 drones.) According to the US, the missiles and drones were heading north along the Red Sea, potentially towards targets in Israel.

Yemenia Airways resumed the only international commercial flights from Sana'a airport on 17 October. The airport, which had been closed to commercial flights for most of the war, was opened last year as part of Yemen's April 2022 truce agreement and continued to operate passenger flights after the truce expired in October 2022. Yemenia Airways had however suspended operations on 30 September after the Houthis reportedly blocked the carrier from withdrawing its funds (\$80 million) from Sana'a banks. At the time of writing, it was unclear whether or not the dispute over the funds had been resolved.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 October, during its 54th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted without a vote resolution A/HRC/RES/54/29 on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights. In the resolution, the HRC called on all parties to immediately implement all of the truce provisions and called for the removal of the Houthi-imposed blockade on Ta'izz. The HRC emphasised the need to immediately implement the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement in order to begin negotiations to reach a "comprehensive and inclusive political solution" and called on the Houthis to release kidnapped humanitarian workers. The resolution requested

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2675 (15 February 2023) extended the Yemen assets freeze and travel ban sanctions measures for nine months until 15 November and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts until 15 December. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15430** (29 September 2023) condemned the "egregious and escalatory" drone attack, attributed to the Houthis, on Bahraini forces serving in the Saudi Arabia-led coalition on the southern Saudi border.

Yemen

the High Commissioner for Human Rights to present a report on the implementation of technical assistance to the HRC at its 57th session and the National Commission of Inquiry to submit a report on all human rights violations in all parts of Yemen as soon as possible.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how the Council can support ongoing peace talks and efforts to establish a formal ceasefire and an inter-Yemeni political process under UN auspices. One of the unresolved issues in the Houthi-Saudi talks has been the use of Yemen's resources and associated revenues to pay the salaries of public employees in Houthi-held territory. Other key issues related to the political process are the fragile relations between the various factions that form the Yemeni government's Presidential Leadership Council and the importance of their adopting a common negotiating position.

A related key issue for the Council is how to renew the sanctions in support of ongoing political efforts. Other key issues for the Council when considering the Yemen sanctions are the implementation of the assets freeze on designated individuals and the arms embargo on the Houthis, as well as assessing obstructions on humanitarian assistance and violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

One option for the Council is to renew the sanctions regime without making significant changes to the mandate, as it waits for the outcome of the Houthi-Saudi talks.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen remains a key issue. This includes a funding shortage for relief efforts, which is forcing humanitarian agencies to scale back programmes. As at 18 October, the 2023 Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, which calls for \$4.344 billion, was only 33.3 percent funded. Access constraints also undermine relief efforts; in October major donors, such as the US, were reportedly halting assistance because of Houthi interference in the delivery of aid. Moreover, difficult economic conditions in Yemen are exacerbating the humanitarian situation.

Members may 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. They could also 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 it from providing services.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are united in their support of the different mediation efforts. Members have 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.

Despite this unity in support of the mediation tracks, members still have differences that become visible during negotiations on statements or resolutions. The United Arab Emirates 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. Regarding the Yemen sanctions, Council members agreed this past February to a technical rollover of the sanctions regime, which it seems was also the preference of Saudi Arabia, to give space for the Houthi-Saudi peace talks and avoid disrupting this process.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania) chairs the 2140 Sanctions Committee. The committee most recently met on 27 October to consider the final report of the Yemen Panel of Experts.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will receive the biannual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, on the ICC's Libya-related activities.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Libya is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Security Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through the unanimous adoption of resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011, which invited the ICC Prosecutor to update the Council every six months. The ICC has jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed on Libya's territory or by its nationals from 15 February 2011 onwards. The ICC opened investigations in March 2011 related to alleged crimes against humanity (including murder, imprisonment, torture, persecution, and other inhumane acts) and

war crimes (including murder, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity).

There is currently one open case before the court, centred on Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. On 27 June 2011, the court charged Qaddafi with two counts of alleged crimes against humanity and issued a warrant for his arrest. In November 2021, Qaddafi, who remains at large, announced that he would be a candidate in the Libyan presidential elections that were scheduled for December 2021 but subsequently postponed. In January, Qaddafi's legal team reiterated his intention to run for election. The Panel of Experts supporting the 1970 Sanctions Committee on Libya said in its final report, submitted to the committee on 7 August, that it had identified an "emerging pattern of attacks" against persons perceived as supporters of or associated with Qaddafi, including the "organized" abduction of individuals by armed groups.

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2656 (28 October 2022) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2023. S/RES/1970 (26 February 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (assets freeze and travel ban), and established a sanctions committee. **Secretary-General's Report S/2023/589** (8 August 2023) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9320** (11 May 2023) was the biannual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor on the ICC's Libya-related activities.

Libya

Khan last briefed the Council on the court's work in Libya on 11 May. He announced that ICC judges had issued four new arrest warrants during the previous six-month reporting period, which Khan's office had applied to unseal. His office had also submitted applications for two additional arrest warrants that judges were still considering. Khan reiterated his commitment to the court's "renewed investigative strategy"—first announced at his April 2022 Council briefing—involving the allocation of additional resources, increased engagement with those affected by alleged crimes in Libya, and more effective cooperation with Libyan authorities. Khan said "significant progress" had been made "as a result of more dynamic and field-focused investigations" over the preceding six months, during which time his office had conducted 20 field missions and collected over 500 pieces of evidence. He also described close cooperation between his office and the UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Libya, which was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2020 and published its final report on 3 March, after which its mandate ended.

Regarding the broader political situation in Libya, the impasse 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 the 2021 elections—is a root cause of Libya's political, security, and economic instability.

In this context, 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 committee announced that it had reached agreement on draft legislation, which the HoR and HSC subsequently approved.

The proposed legislation proved controversial, however, with various political factions contesting several of its provisions and calling for revisions. On 29 September, the 6+6 committee submitted to the HoR an amended version of the draft legislation, which the HoR approved on 2 October. On 6 October, however, HSC President Mohamed Takala said that the HSC had rejected the amended legislation and withdrawn from the 6+6 committee—although this assertion was reportedly denied by other HSC members.

In a 12 October statement, the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) said that it had completed a "technical review" of the amended legislation, which it described as a "working basis" for holding elections, while finding that it still contained "[c]ontentious issues that need to be addressed and resolved through a political settlement". At the Council's 16 October briefing on Libya, Special Representative and head of UNSMIL Abdoulaye Bathily highlighted three provisions that remain disputed:

- mandating a second round of the presidential elections, even if one candidate receives a majority of the votes in the first round;
- making the holding of parliamentary elections contingent on the

success of the presidential elections; and

- establishing a unified interim government to organise elections, which Bathily said is necessary for "creating a level playing field for all candidates" but must be the consensual outcome of "political negotiations amongst major players".

In a 17 October joint statement, the embassies of France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the US in Libya expressed strong support for Bathily's call on Libya's leaders to "work together toward a binding political settlement that paves the way for national elections and a unified government". At the time of writing, the status of the amended electoral legislation remained unclear and subject to dispute between the rival governments.

On 19 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2701, renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and the authorisation of measures contained in resolution 2146 of 19 March 2014 related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. On 30 October, the Council adopted resolution 2702, renewing UNSMIL's mandate for one year.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to promote justice and accountability for atrocities committed in Libya. In addition to receiving Khan's briefing, Council members that are party to the ICC may continue the practice of holding a joint press stakeout in connection with the meeting. To ensure continued and coordinated international support for accountability efforts following the closure of the FFM, members may also encourage greater cooperation between the ICC and other UN entities, such as UNSMIL and the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts.

More broadly, a key underlying issue for the Council continues to be the precarious security and political situations hanging over Libya's uncertain electoral path. A related concern for the Council is how to foster common political ground between the country's rival governments so they can agree on a constitutional framework to pave the way for Libya's long-delayed elections. In this context, Council members may welcome continued progress toward the finalisation of electoral legislation while calling on stakeholders to engage in good-faith negotiations to address outstanding political issues through consensus.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country. Members are divided, however, on the work of the ICC. Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Ghana, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, and the UK are states parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC while China, Mozambique, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and the US are not. These distinctions largely reflect how members view the court's work on Libya with the notable exception of the US, which is supportive of the ICC's efforts regarding the country despite not being a party to the Rome Statute. Among the wider UN membership, African countries have long expressed concerns about the court's disproportionate focus on Africa.

Libya

At the Council's May briefing, Russia raised a point of order objecting to Khan's participation, claiming that the ICC "has become a very obedient puppet of Western countries and is acting on the orders and in the political interests of Western countries, while not implementing either resolution 1970 or the Council's requests". This statement followed the ICC's announcement on 17 March that it had issued arrest

warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for allegedly committing the war crime of "unlawful deportation" and "unlawful transfer" of children from Ukraine to Russia. At the November briefing, Russia may reiterate its objection to Khan's participation.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold its annual briefing with the heads of police components of UN peace operations. The anticipated briefers are: Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Christophe Bizimungu, the Police Commissioner of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); Christine Fossen, the Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in the South Sudan (UNMISS); Faisal Shahkar, the UN Police Adviser; and Karin Landgren, the Executive Director of Security Council Report.

Key Recent Developments

Annual briefings with the heads of police components of UN peace operations began in 2014. Last year, the focus of the briefing was on how to strengthen the contribution of the UN Police (UNPOL) in implementing the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+) initiative, a set of priorities being implemented in 2021-2023 to accelerate peacekeeping reform. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Police Commissioner Christine Fossen; the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Police Commissioner Mody Berethe; and Emma Birikorang, deputy director at the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), briefed the Council.

Lacroix explained the role of UNPOL in advancing A4P+ and in strengthening the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. He mentioned the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Policing, which was established in 2021 to facilitate greater coherence between UNPOL and other UN entities involved in aspects of policing and law enforcement, including the UN Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC). Lacroix highlighted the UNPOL's efforts to enhance strategic communications through social media platforms as well as community-oriented policing and awareness-raising activities. He also referred to gender-responsive policing efforts through a network of gender advisers and police gender focal points.

Fossen spoke about the role of UNPOL in the protection of civilians in the context of UNMISS' work. Among other matters, Fossen mentioned the outreach activities that UNPOL was conducting in collaboration with the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) to help improve the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the people they serve, especially women and children, youth, and community leaders. She also spoke about the establishment of

police-community relations committees in and around internally displaced camps to address concerns about sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.

Berethe focused his briefing on police personnel performance in MONUSCO. He described the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System being used to measure the effectiveness of UNPOL on the ground. He described the operational strategy to combat insecurity, a tool used to measure performance in combating crime in urban areas. He also mentioned the training provided to the Congolese National Police in intelligence and investigation techniques on serious organised crime, such as kidnapping for ransom and illicit trafficking in minerals, and various other types of crime.

Birikorang stressed the pre- to post-deployment phases of the UN peacekeeping cycle as an important component of A4P+. She also highlighted the valuable role of UNPOL in strengthening the police services of contributing countries, particularly those undergoing security sector reform, through the diffusion of practical lessons and experiences, and the promotion of institutional norms and standards.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members will be how to continue strengthening the contribution of UNPOL to realising A4P+ priorities.

Considering the complex challenges facing UN peacekeeping operations, the Chinese presidency may wish to have a broader discussion about this issue. With some of the bigger multidimensional peacekeeping operations undergoing transitions, the role of UNPOL in protecting civilians and building the policing capacity of host countries has become increasingly important.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is general agreement among Council members about the importance of UNPOL in helping to maintain public order, protect civilians, and assist host states in building their law enforcement capacities. Council members also recognise the critical role UNPOL plays in countries undergoing transition.

At last year's briefing, some Council members stressed the need for UNPOL to build trust with local populations, welcomed the establishment of the inter-agency task force on policing, and commended UNPOL's efforts to achieve the Secretary-General's Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy. They also stressed the need to implement a holistic approach to policing that addresses the nexus of terrorism, violent extremism, and transnational organised crime. Some Council members underscored the need for UNPOL to

UN Peacekeeping

enhance its cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations with regard to training, sharing experiences, and exchanging information about policing.

At last year's UN Chiefs of Police Summit, the United Arab Emirates offered to provide financial support to organise the next UN Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS) meeting in New York in 2024.

Ghana will host the 2023 peacekeeping ministerial on 5-6 December, which will provide an opportunity for member states to make pledges to support UNPOL, including through the deployment of formed police units and individual police officers and by providing training and technology.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to renew the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime set to expire on 15 November, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, which expires on 15 December.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 and 27 August, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud convened the seventh meeting of the National Consultative Council (NCC)—which brings together the leaders of the federal government and the federal member states—to advance the Somali government's priorities. In a communiqué adopted following the meeting, the NCC decided to unify their military operations against Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida, under joint leadership and to accelerate preparations for the second phase of the offensive against Al-Shabaab in Jubaland, Hirshabelle, and South West states. It also directed the Somali government and federal member state agencies to harmonise stabilisation activities and accelerate reconciliation efforts.

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 AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) personnel, as set out in resolution 2687 of 27 June, which most recently renewed ATMIS' authorisation. The letter said that, following the 26 August attack by Al-Shabaab in the Galguduud region, Somali forces suffered significant setbacks, and retreated 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. (For more, see our October *Monthly Forecast*.)

In a 30 September communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) supported the Somali government's request regarding the three-month technical pause in the drawdown of the 3,000 ATMIS personnel. It also took note of financial shortfalls that could impede the operationalisation of such a pause. The communiqué directed the AU Commission (the organisation's secretariat) to consider several options to mobilise resources for the extension, including engaging with the Somali government to mobilise its internal resources, as well as with bilateral and multilateral partners and the private sector for voluntary contributions. At the time of writing, Council members are negotiating a draft resolution authorising the Somali government's request for the three-month pause in the drawdown.

At the 17th annual joint consultative meeting of the AUPSC and the Security Council, held on 6 October, members of both Councils discussed Somalia and the activities of ATMIS. In a joint communiqué adopted following the meeting, the two Councils underlined the importance of consolidating the peace and security gains in Somalia and ensuring that the ATMIS drawdown is carried out in a manner that minimises the potential for exploitation by Al-Shabaab. The communiqué further encouraged the Somali government to consider “multidimensional approaches” for addressing the structural root causes and drivers of instability in the country. In addition, the two Councils requested the Somali government to provide regular updates on the progress in implementing its National Security Architecture and force generation and integration in line with the Somalia Transition Plan.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains an issue of concern. The Secretary-General's 13 October report on the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) indicated that humanitarian needs in Somalia remain high due to persistent climatic and environmental shocks, conflict, population displacement, widespread poverty, disease outbreaks, and other compounding factors. According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projections, around 4.3 million people are expected to experience high levels of acute food insecurity between October and December. A 9 October OCHA press release noted that at least 1.2 million people are likely to be affected by projected heavy rains and flooding through December. In this regard, the UN's Somalia Humanitarian Fund has allocated \$15 million for flood response, targeting high-risk areas in Hirshabelle and Jubaland states.

On 6 October, the Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security—which is currently chaired jointly by Mozambique, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—met to discuss the situation in Somalia with a particular focus on improving the flow of information and analysis with respect to the peace and security implications of climate change.

On 19 October, the Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in Somalia. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and head of UNSOM Catriona Laing and Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) for Somalia and head of ATMIS Mohamed El-Amine Souef briefed. In her remarks, Laing said that political debate in the country continues to be dominated by proposals related to the presidential system, the two-party system, the use of

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2662](#) (17 November 2022) renewed the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime for one year. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/758](#) (13 October 2023) was on UNSOM. [S/2023/676](#) (15 September 2023) was the progress report on the benchmarks contained in the technical assessment report, dated 15 November 2022. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9446](#) (19 October 2023) was a briefing on Somalia.

Somalia

one-person-one-vote throughout the country, dates for local council elections, and the alignment of federal member states' terms of office, as set out in the 27 May NCC communiqué. She also expressed concern over Puntland's absence from the NCC meetings since January. In this regard, she urged the Puntland state government and the Somali government to pursue dialogue to enable the constitutional process to move ahead. She further noted that the UN continues to assess the ATMIS drawdown and its possible implications, including on its operations and ability to carry out its mandate. In his remarks, Souef called for the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia. He added that Somali security forces should be provided with "necessary firepower to take over security responsibilities while also undertaking offensive [operations] against Al-Shabaab".

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 October, during its 54th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution titled "Assistance to Somalia in the field of human rights", without a vote. The resolution renewed the mandate of the independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia for a period of one year, to assess, monitor and report on the situation of human rights in Somalia with a view to "making recommendations on technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights".

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee held informal consultations on 29 September to receive a briefing from the Panel of Experts on its final report, dated 2 October. The final report noted that Al-Shabaab remains the most immediate threat to the peace, security and stability of Somalia and that its ability to carry out complex, asymmetrical attacks in Somalia remains undiminished. The report further noted that the prolonged fighting in Las Anod, a disputed area between Puntland and the self-proclaimed region of Somaliland, is having a destabilising impact on the security and stability of Somalia and may provide opportunities for Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)-Somalia to take advantage of the situation.

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, which renewed the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime for one year.

In resolution 2662, the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide an update on progress against each indicator set out in the benchmarks contained in his

15 September 2022 technical assessment report on Somalia's weapons and ammunition management capacity. The progress report, which was released on 15 September, said that there have been notable achievements in weapons marking and registration. It noted that acute challenges remain, however, including in extending weapons and ammunition management to the federal member states level. It added that countering the illicit flow of arms and ammunition into Somalia also remains a critical issue.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in November is the extension of the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime and the mandate renewal of the Panel of Experts. Members may draw on the findings of the 15 September progress report and the recommendations contained in the panel's final report.

A likely option for the Council is to extend the sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts by one year. In doing so, they may consider how they can support ongoing efforts to fight Al-Shabaab by tightening the sanctions measures to disrupt its financing. They are also likely to review the exemption provisions, as resolution 2662 confirmed that the Council would keep all required notification processes and exemptions under review. In this regard, in the upcoming renewal of the sanctions regime, the penholder (the UK) may propose the lifting of the notification requirements under the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime regarding the delivery of items intended for the development of Somali security institutions.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Somalia has long called for lifting the arms embargo, and the government most recently reiterated this position during the 19 October Council meeting on Somalia. The African members (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique), China, Russia and the UAE also voiced their support for Somalia's position.

In light of the ongoing military operations against Al-Shabaab, some Council members could call for tightening the sanctions measures against the group.

Last year, the Council extended the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime through resolution 2662, which received 12 affirmative votes and four abstentions—China, Gabon, Ghana, and Russia.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council will renew the mandate of MINUSCA which expires on 15 November. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2024, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 October, Rugwabiza briefed the Council on efforts to advance the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. She referred to the strategic review meeting held in Bangui on 23 October to assess the progress in the peace process which noted the dissolution of 9 armed groups that are signatories to the agreement, the progress in the disarmament,

demobilisation, and reintegration of former combatants, the implementation of security sector reform, and the restoration of the authority of the State. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 25 October.)

On 30 July, CAR conducted a referendum on a new constitution, which passed and was formally promulgated on 30 August. However, the political opposition, some civil society and religious organisations, and armed groups contested the result announced by the constitutional court that 95.03 percent of the votes cast were in favour of the new constitution. According to the Secretary-General's latest report, the new constitution extends the terms of the president and parliamentarians from five to seven years, removes term limits, abolishes certain checks on executive power, and eases the requirements for amending the constitution. The Secretary-General's report says that

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2693 (27 July 2023) extended the 2127 CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2024 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2024. S/RES/2659 (14 November 2022) renewed MINUSCA's mandate for one year until 15 November 2023. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/769](#) (14 October 2023) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in the CAR. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9454](#) (26 October 2023) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

MINUSCA did not provide support for holding the referendum because that was not part of its mandate.

MINUSCA is to provide assistance to the CAR authorities in organising local elections, pursuant to resolution 2659 of 14 November 2022, which renewed the mandate of MINUSCA. The government, which had put on hold preparations for local elections because of the constitutional referendum, resumed electoral preparations in September, with the first round of local elections now scheduled for 13 October 2024 and the second round for 26 January 2025. The budget shortfall in organising local elections remains a challenge, although the CAR government has committed to providing some money for local elections and is mobilising resources in this regard. Bilateral and international partners had apparently been reluctant to provide funding because of concerns that the money might be put towards the constitutional referendum.

The security situation remained volatile, according to the Secretary-General's report, particularly in the east, where there is a limited government security presence and armed groups target minority communities, causing massive displacement. The situation has been complicated by the launching of operations by "other security personnel"—a phrase the UN uses to refer to the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company, and their proxies against the main armed groups affiliated with the leading rebel coalition known as Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC). MINUSCA continues to provide support to the CAR armed forces (FACA) in protecting civilians. In line with its mandate, the mission is also assisting the CAR government in expanding state authority and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The influx of refugees and returnees to the CAR from Chad and Sudan has exacerbated the humanitarian situation. According to OCHA, more than 37,000 people from Chad and more than 19,000 people from Sudan, mostly women and children, crossed into CAR recently.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 24 August, the UN Independent Expert on the Central African Republic, Yao Agetse, concluded a 10-day visit to the country. At the end of his visit, he issued a statement expressing "grave concern" regarding the human rights situation in the CAR. Agetse emphasised that the CAR authorities "urgently need" to involve all stakeholders in "genuine political dialogue aimed at de-escalating the situation" and pressed the authorities to relaunch the implementation of the Khartoum Agreement. He also noted that a growing number of assaults by armed groups are "creating a climate of insecurity" and that these assaults significantly affect CAR's economic operations and result in severe human rights violations.

PBC-Related Developments

On 12 September, the PBC's CAR country configuration convened an expert-level meeting on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration in the CAR. In late September, Albania, as Security Council president that month, sent a letter to the CAR configuration requesting the Commission's advice for the upcoming mandate renewal of MINUSCA. In November, the configuration chair, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), is expected to visit the country.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 27 July, the Security Council adopted resolution 2693, extending the sanctions measures on the CAR until 31 July 2024 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2024. There were 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). The resolution lifted the notification requirement on the supply, sale, or transfer of arms and related materiel and the provision of assistance, advice, and training to the CAR security forces under the 2127

CAR sanctions regime. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 28 July.)

Russia has apparently put a hold on the appointment of members of the panel of experts, whose most recent final report, submitted on 18 May, stated, among other things, that the CAR authorities did not provide clarity on weapons and aircraft that were transferred from Russia without advance notification to the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Women, Peace and Security

As the Council's president in June, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) chose to include a focus on women, peace and security (WPS) at the 20 June open briefing on the CAR. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous briefed. Among other issues, she highlighted women's marginalisation in decision-making processes in the CAR. For instance, Bahous reported that when the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR was signed, "only eight of the 78 delegates representing the different parties were women, and only one of the 14 signatories". She recalled that several women civil society representatives who briefed the Council on the CAR reported that "women are often engaged only in consultations in the margins" and that "initiatives targeting women rarely feed into the formal peace process". Addressing the under-representation of women in the National Assembly, Bahous referred to a recent UN Women study that found that 43 percent of women candidates at the 2021 legislative elections faced physical violence during their campaigns.

Prior to the meeting, the Council members that signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS—Albania, Brazil, Ecuador, France, Gabon, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UAE, and the UK—delivered a WPS-focused statement to the press. (The US joined the Joint Statement of Shared Commitments in July.) Among other matters, the statement encouraged all efforts for the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women in decision-making, leadership, and electoral positions.

Key Issues and Options

MINUSCA's mandate renewal will be a key issue for Council members in November. The most likely option for Council members is to extend the mission's mandate for one year, maintaining its mandate, priorities, and current authorised strength.

Council members expect a straightforward mandate renewal process, but there could be discussions about the sequencing of the mission's priority tasks. The CAR government may give priority, for example, to MINUSCA's support for the expansion of state authority and reiterate its request for a strategic review of the mission. Last year, the Council expressed its intention to request an independent strategic review of MINUSCA to assess the challenges to peace and security in the CAR and the constraints facing the mission's operations. It has yet to make this request, however. (Five years have passed since the last strategic review of MINUSCA.)

The upcoming negotiations could also be complicated by the discussions on the 2127 CAR sanctions regime. With the support of the CAR government, Russia may raise concerns about the Panel of Experts' mandate, but other Council members may argue that this issue should be raised in July 2024 when the panel's mandate is up for renewal, rather than during negotiations on MINUSCA.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members support the work of MINUSCA and appreciate its efforts to establish good relations with the host government. They commend the role of regional and sub-regional organisations supporting the implementation of the 2015 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR and welcome the decision of some signatory armed groups to disarm. They also remain concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the CAR.

Council members did not strongly criticise the constitutional

Central African Republic

referendum, which allowed President Faustin-Archange Touadéra to extend his term. They may, however, call on the president to engage in dialogue with opposition political parties and civil society representatives to address their concerns and build the necessary trust for holding local elections next year.

Some Council members continue to raise serious concerns about human rights abuses committed by armed groups, the FACA, and the Wagner Group. At the same time, they may also commend the national human rights policy the CAR government presented on 10 October in Geneva as a positive step.

Several Council members also consider accountability and justice issues as critical. Reports of the recent decision by the ICC to drop

charges against former CAR government minister Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, citing a lack of evidence and available witnesses, may draw the attention of these members. Gawaka was accused of coordinating operations of the anti-Balaka, a mainly Christian group that fought against the predominantly Muslim Seleka rebel group during the CAR civil war.

Furthermore, several Council members remain concerned about the illegal exploitation of natural resources which continues to fuel the conflict in the CAR.

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

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to hold its bi-annual briefing and consultations on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel (FC-G5S) that Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger (G5 Sahel) established in 2017 to fight terrorism and transnational organised crime.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 July, soldiers from Niger's Presidential Guard detained President Mohamed Bazoum. It marked the fourth G5 Sahel country to come under military rule since 2020. Mali experienced two coups d'état in 2020 and 2021 and Burkina Faso had two coups during 2022. In Chad, the military took power unconstitutionally in 2021 after long-serving president Idris Déby was killed in fighting with rebels.

Coup perpetrators in Niger, who formed the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland (CNSP), declared that they had overthrown Bazoum because of the "continuing degradation of the security situation and poor economic and social governance". General Abdourahmane Tchiani of the presidential guard was soon announced as the leader of the CNSP. Unlike neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso, which saw years of worsening terrorist violence precede their coups, the situation in Niger had appeared to be improving. According to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), a U.S.-based crisis-monitoring group, fatalities from violence in Niger, including civilians and combatants, dropped by a third between 2021 and 2022, to just below 1,000, and were fewer than 450 in the first six months of 2023. Some reports suggested that Bazoum had been planning to dismiss Tchiani ahead of the coup.

On 30 July, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Monetary and Economic Union imposed sanctions on Niger, and ECOWAS threatened the use of force if Bazoum was not restored to office within a week. Sanctions included closing all land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Niger; suspending commercial and financial transactions with Niger; and freezing Nigerien state assets. At a summit on 10 August, ECOWAS announced the decision of West African states to immediately activate the ECOWAS Standby Force to restore constitutional order in Niger.

Mali and Burkina Faso claimed that an ECOWAS intervention in Niger would be "a declaration of war against Burkina Faso and Mali", warning against the use of force in a 1 August statement. The AU Peace and Security Council failed to endorse an ECOWAS military intervention, and amid diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis, an intervention to oust the junta appeared increasingly unlikely. France decided on 24 September to withdraw its approximately 1,500 troops based in Niger by the end of the year following protests in Niamey against the French presence. On 19 October, Niger announced that Bazoum, who has refused to resign from the presidency, had attempted to escape his house arrest, although his lawyers denied this allegation. At the time of writing, Bazoum's whereabouts and that of his wife and son were unknown.

On 16 September, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger signed the Liptako-Gourma Charter, creating the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) as an architecture of collective defence and mutual assistance. The three countries committed to combatting all forms of terrorism and organised crime in their common area, as well as armed rebellion or other threats to their territorial integrity and sovereignty. According to the charter, any violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one AES member shall be considered an act of aggression against all members, who are obligated to assist one another. The AES will be self-funded and is open to other Sahel states joining.

In Mali, the security situation has significantly deteriorated since the Council decided on 30 June to end the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with the objective of withdrawing the mission by the end of the year. The Council's decision followed Mali transitional authorities' request for MINUSMA's immediate departure. There has been intense fighting since August between Malian forces and former separatist groups in the north, as they compete to take control of bases that MINUSMA is vacating, seriously threatening the viability of the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. Al-Qaida-affiliated Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) has sought to oppose the Malian army's deployment in the north, imposing a blockade on the Timbuktu region. On 2 October, the transitional authorities launched an operation to take control of MINUSMA bases in the Kidal region, which

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

is the stronghold of the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA), one of the signatory movements of the 2015 peace agreement.

MINUSMA has been caught in the middle of hostilities. Four peacekeepers were injured in the Timbuktu region in August when they came under fire after vacating their base in Ber. Moreover, restrictions by transitional authorities on MINUSMA are imperiling the mission's safe and orderly withdrawal. In a 22 October note to correspondents, the UN announced that it had had to destroy equipment, such as vehicles, ammunition, generators, and other assets, before vacating the Tessalit base in Kidal region because Malian authorities had since 24 September prevented UN convoys from travelling to the base to remove the equipment. On 19 October, Under-Secretary for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare briefed Council members in closed consultations on MINUSMA's withdrawal. Discussion largely focused on the Malian authorities' lack of cooperation.

Meanwhile, Mali announced on 25 September that elections planned for February 2024 to restore constitutional order would be delayed for "technical reasons". On 27 September, transitional authorities in Burkina Faso, where the security situation remains dire, announced that they had thwarted an attempted coup to overthrow the country's military leaders.

Peacebuilding Commission Developments

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) sent the Council written advice ahead of the Council's last briefing on the FC-G5S on 16 May. In a 15 May letter, the PBC, among other things, encouraged the Council to continue to underscore the urgent need to address the root causes of conflicts and drivers of instability in the region, and ensure good governance, rule of law, respect for human rights, gender equality and sustainable development.

On 23 June, the PBC convened a meeting on transnational organised crime, terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel and the efforts necessary to address their root causes. The meeting's briefers included the Regional Representative for West and Central Africa of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Amado de Andres; the Chief of Policy, Knowledge Management and Coordination of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, Muhammad Rafiuddin Shah; and the Vice-President of Association des Femmes Cheffes de famille, Ba Aminata Couro Ly.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues for Council members in November include the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel. The future of the G5 Sahel, which is headquartered in Mauritania, and the FC-G5S, is a related key issue. The viability of the FC-G5S was already undermined after Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel in June 2022. Now, the formation of the AES may lead to the end of the G5 Sahel. It has also weakened ECOWAS, as the regional bloc finds itself in confrontation with the military juntas of the AES and Guinea, itself under military rule after a coup d'état in 2021. The Wagner Group, a Russian security company, has become a key military partner of Mali, while France has now ended its counter-terrorism operations in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The evolving situation has given greater prominence to other security mechanisms, such as the Accra Initiative, comprising

several West African countries to combat the expansion of terrorist groups into coastal West African states.

Restoring constitutional order and civilian rule in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, and Niger also remain key issues. ECOWAS has led international efforts to have Burkina Faso and Mali adhere to political transition plans. In the case of Niger, Algeria has offered to mediate a solution to the political crisis, though on 10 October it said it was "suspending" its proposed mediation.

Tackling structural conflict drivers in the Sahel, such as weak governance, under-development, and climate change, remains a key issue. Strategies to address these problems include the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel and the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Plan.

The humanitarian situation is another critical issue. Insecurity in the region, according to an OCHA humanitarian snapshot dated 16 October, has created 2.7 million internally displaced people in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger—78 percent of whom are in Burkina Faso—in addition to over 188,000 refugees. The UN has raised concerns about the impact of sanctions on Niger, as humanitarian supplies have been held up in neighbouring ECOWAS countries. Transitional authorities have expelled UN resident coordinators in Burkina Faso (December 2022) and Niger (October 2023).

Members are likely to continue monitoring the withdrawal of MINUSMA, fighting that threatens the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, and the situation in Niger. They may reiterate calls for Malian authorities to cooperate fully with MINUSMA "to ensure the orderly and safe withdrawal of the mission", as set out in resolution 2690. They could also repeat calls for the authorities to release Bazoum, while ensuring his safety.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council discussion on the Sahel has become polarised over the past two years. The US and European countries strongly criticise the activities of the Wagner Group in the region. For its part, Russia has increased bilateral cooperation with Mali and Burkina Faso, and in August, vetoed a draft resolution to renew the Council's Mali sanctions regime, which ended the sanctions established in 2017. Russia also warned against ECOWAS' proposed military intervention in Niger. The US was active in diplomatic initiatives engaging the de facto Nigerien authorities following the 26 July coup d'état. The US has kept its approximately 1,100 military personnel in Niger and has continued drone and surveillance flights to detect terrorist threats. According to news reports, this support will continue for now despite the US' belated declaration in October that Niger had experienced a coup d'état, which under US law carries major policy implications for the continuation of economic and military aid. Ghana is a member of ECOWAS and the Accra Initiative. It champions the positions of ECOWAS, with the support of the other two African Council members (Gabon and Mozambique). France is the traditional penholder on the FC-G5S. Because of the rise in anti-French sentiment in West Africa, however, it has been cautious this year about being the driver of Council action in the region.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In November, Security Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a group Hezbollah and Israel. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix are the anticipated briefers. The Secretary-General's report, which is due on 15 November, will cover the period from 21 June to 20 October.

Key Recent Developments

October has witnessed a major escalation of violence in Israel and the Gaza Strip, raising concerns about spillover effects on Lebanon and the wider region. Following the 7 October large-scale attack against Israel led by Hamas (the Palestinian armed group and de facto authority in Gaza), the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have carried out massive airstrikes on the Gaza Strip and on 27 October announced that they were "expanding ground operations" in Gaza.

According to figures provided by Israeli authorities cited by OCHA, as at 30 October, Hamas-led attacks have resulted in the killing of approximately 1,400 Israeli and foreign nationals and the wounding of more than 5,400 others. Over 230 hostages are reported to have been taken into the Gaza Strip. Figures provided by Palestinian officials in Gaza cited by OCHA indicate that more than 8,300 Palestinians have been killed and over 21,000 wounded in connection with the airstrikes. Entire neighbourhoods have been destroyed, and as at 29 October, approximately 1,950 people "have been reported missing and may be trapped or dead under the rubble". On 9 October, the Israeli authorities ordered "a full siege" of the Gaza Strip, stopping the provision of power, food, gas, and water. Only a small fraction of the humanitarian aid needed has been allowed into Gaza via the Rafah crossing, which connects Gaza with Egypt. (For more information, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 7 October, 12 October, 23 October, and 29 October.)

The escalation in Israel and Gaza has raised serious concerns that the violence will expand to southern Lebanon, where the security situation has deteriorated markedly, with regular exchanges of fire across the Blue Line. (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 border between the two states.)

In his briefing during the 24 October quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland said that since 8 October, "Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have launched rockets and anti-tank missiles toward Israel, while [the] IDF [have] responded with artillery fire and air strikes". He also reported several attempts by "Palestinian militants from Lebanon" to infiltrate into Israel, the most significant of which took place on 9 October.

The exchanges of fire—the most intense since the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah—have resulted in casualties among

both combatants and civilians, including two journalists, on both sides of the Blue Line. Approximately 40 people have been killed in Lebanon, mostly combatants, while four people have been killed in Israel, including a civilian, according to data from AFP cited in Lebanese media on 24 October.

In a 24 October statement, UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz said that, since the start of the escalation, UNIFIL peacekeepers "have remained in their positions performing their tasks under Security Council Resolution 1701 and subsequent resolutions", including by carrying out patrols and actively engaging with authorities on both sides of the Blue Line "to de-escalate tensions and avoid misunderstandings". On 15 October, a rocket hit the UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura without resulting in casualties, but on 28 October, two peacekeepers were injured due to shelling that affected UNIFIL positions.

Since the escalation, Israeli authorities have announced plans to evacuate residents from 42 communities in northern Israel to state-funded temporary accommodation. On 27 October, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that the increase in cross-border incidents has resulted in the internal displacement of over 28,900 people in Lebanon.

Against the backdrop of escalating tensions along the Blue Line, Wronecka has held a series of meetings with key Lebanese and international interlocutors, including representatives of Lebanese institutions and political and spiritual leaders, as well as the ambassadors to Lebanon of the five permanent members of the Security Council. During these meetings, she stressed the need to restore calm along the Blue Line, abiding by resolution 1701 and shielding Lebanon from conflict at a time when the country is already facing a protracted political and socioeconomic crisis. Wronecka may reiterate similar messages during the consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701 in November.

The recent exchanges of fire across the Blue Line and the risk of the conflict expanding to southern Lebanon were a focus of the 17 October briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. It seems that during the meeting, Council members expressed support for UNIFIL's engagement with the parties to de-escalate the crisis.

Following the 7 October attacks, the US deployed two aircraft carriers to the eastern Mediterranean and increased fighter aircraft presence in the region. Washington said that these "moves are not to deter Hamas, but any country or group that may think of taking advantage of the instability and confusion", an apparent reference to Iran and Hezbollah. This move has been criticised by Russian President Vladimir Putin, who reportedly accused the US of increasing tensions through its military deployment. In a 27 October interview, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that his country does not want the conflict to spread and that it provides "only political" support for Hamas. He added, however, that his impression from recent meetings with "the leaders of the resistance in Lebanon" and Palestinian groups is that they "have their finger on the trigger", a statement which has been interpreted as meaning

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory and free and fair presidential elections.

Lebanon

that Hezbollah may escalate its involvement if Israel crosses its red lines. France and the UK have also deployed warships in the eastern Mediterranean.

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

One and a half years since 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. These preconditions include passing a capital control law, among other measures.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Over three years since the 4 August 2020 Beirut port explosion, the national inquiry into responsibility for the blast remains stalled. In August, over 300 Lebanese and international civil society groups, as well as survivors and victims' families, appealed to the Human Rights Council (HRC) to urgently establish an international fact-finding mission to investigate the causes of the blast and identify those responsible. In his address at the opening of the September session of the HRC, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that, given that "numerous concerns have been raised about interference into the investigation" against a backdrop of "weak governance" and socioeconomic crisis, it may "be time to consider an international fact-finding mission to look into human rights violations related" to the explosion.

Key Issues and Options

The continuing exchanges of fire across the Blue Line and the risk of the expansion of the conflict in Gaza and Israel to Lebanon and the wider region are major issues of concern for Council members. Open war in southern Lebanon would have potentially catastrophic effects on the country, where the inability of politicians to elect a president is normalising the paralysis of key Lebanese institutions. This, in turn, decreases the chances of addressing Lebanon's ongoing socioeconomic crisis.

In the short term, Council members may consider issuing a statement urging all relevant parties on both sides of the Blue Line to exercise maximum restraint and to adhere to resolution 1701. The statement could also stress that civilians, including UN personnel

and journalists, as well as civilian structures, must never be targeted. The statement could echo Lázaro's 24 October message urging "all parties to cease fire to prevent further harm".

In a recent update on Lebanon, the International Crisis Group argued that "the only reliable way" of stopping the conflict between Israel and Hamas from triggering a wider regional confrontation would be to step up mediation efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza and to secure the release of the "hostages and prisoners held by Hamas".

While the Palestinian question remains unresolved, the risk of a regional conflagration connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and involving Lebanon is likely to persist even after the current escalation in Israel and Gaza. As Council members struggle to overcome deep divides over how to address the current escalation, the overarching issue for the Council on that front remains determining how it can better support the resumption of a political process between Israelis and Palestinians in order to move towards a resolution of the conflict and achieve a two-state solution.

Council Dynamics

There is broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. 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. On the other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon.

Regarding the current escalation in Gaza and Israel, members agree that there is a serious risk of regional spillover, that this risk is at its highest in southern Lebanon, and that it should be avoided. Three of the four draft Security Council resolutions in October on the crisis in Gaza and Israel contained references to the risk of regional escalation. However, these draft texts failed to be adopted because of sharp divisions among members on other important aspects of the current escalation. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 16 October and 25 October.)

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to hold a meeting on the political process and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

On 19 September, humanitarian operations resumed through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing at the Syria-Türkiye border. The operations at the border crossing came to a halt following Russia's 11 July veto of a Security Council resolution that would have reauthorised this mechanism, which expired on 10 July. The mechanism allowed the delivery of humanitarian assistance into non-government-controlled parts of Syria without requiring the consent of the Syrian government. (For background, see the Syria brief in the September *Monthly Forecast* and the *In Hindsight* in the August *Monthly Forecast*.)

In a 6 August letter, addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, then-Permanent Representative of Syria to the UN Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh, 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 Syrian government had authorised these two border crossing points for the delivery of humanitarian aid from Türkiye into non-government-controlled areas of northern Syria for an initial period of three months, following the earthquakes that struck southeast Türkiye and northern Syria in February. The government's 6 August letter also approved the use of cross-line operations—that is, across domestic conflict lines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control—in the cities of Sarmada and Saraqib for a six-month period until 1 February 2024.

At the time of writing, according to OCHA data, a total of 4,127 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 (3,258 trucks), Bab al-Salam (774 trucks), and Al Ra'ee (95 trucks).

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. Pedersen said that several stakeholders had apprised him of their support for the resumption of the Constitutional Committee, including the Syrian parties, members of the Astana format (Iran, Russia, and Türkiye), 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. He further noted that he seeks to continue the consultations to resume the committee's work before the end of this year. 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. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 27 September.)

The region has witnessed a sharp rise in hostilities in recent months. On 5 October, a drone strike, reportedly conducted by

unidentified anti-government forces, hit a Syrian military academy in Homs during a graduation ceremony, killing at least 100 people, according to media reports. In a statement the same day, Pedersen expressed concern about escalating violence in Syria, in particular the drone attack in Homs, and reports of escalating “pro-government” shelling and rocket fire into Idlib in response. He appealed to all sides to exercise utmost restraint and emphasised the need to immediately de-escalate violence and adopt a cooperative approach to counter Security Council-listed terrorist groups, in line with resolution 2254 of 18 December 2015. He further noted that the status quo in Syria is unsustainable and that in the absence of a meaningful political path to implementing resolution 2254, the overall situation in Syria would continue to deteriorate. (For more, see our October *Monthly Forecast*.)

It appears that Russia proposed a draft press statement condemning the drone attack on the military academy in Homs. Apparently, it emphasised the need to hold perpetrators of acts of terrorism accountable and bring them to justice. It seems that Council members failed to adopt the statement because of a lack of consensus as to whether the attack could be considered an act of terrorism.

According to a 23 October OCHA press release, at least 59 people had been killed, more than one-third of whom were children, as a result of the recent escalation in hostilities across Idlib and western Aleppo. It added that these incidents had also affected more than two dozen health facilities. It further noted that at least six children under the age of ten were reportedly killed in airstrikes in Qarqour, Hama, on 22 October.

On 12 October, airstrikes allegedly conducted by Israel hit the airports in Aleppo and Damascus, putting them out of service, according to a Reuters article. The article added that, according to sources, the airstrikes were intended to disrupt Iranian supply lines to Syria. According to Syrian state media, the airports were targeted again by Israel on 22 October, resulting in the death of one person.

According to media reports, following the 7 October attack against Israel by the Palestinian armed group Hamas, there has been an uptick in attacks against the US forces stationed in Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based human rights monitoring organisation, said that on 19 October, Iranian-backed militias attacked the international coalition base in the Al-Tanf area and the Koniko gas field in the Deir Ezzor countryside. In a 23 October press briefing, Pentagon Press Secretary Brigadier General Pat Ryder confirmed that there had been an attempted drone strike at the Al-Tanf base in Syria earlier the same day. He added that the US is “concerned about a broader escalation of these attacks in the days ahead”.

Following Hamas' attack on Israel, the US deployed a naval strike group led by the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford in the eastern Mediterranean Sea “in order to deter any actor seeking to escalate the situation or widen this war”, according to a 10 October press release by the US Central Command.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 15 September, during its 54th session, the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights, Alena Douhan, (A/HRC/54/23/Add.1) dated 3 July. In her remarks, Douhan said that “enforcement of

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2672 (9 January 2023) extended the authorisation for the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months until 10 July 2023. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9426 (27 September 2023) was a meeting on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

Syria

unilateral sanctions and instances of over-compliance prevented countries from any possibility to exercise fully their obligations to guarantee the right to health". She added that such measures "undermined national efforts towards strong and reliable healthcare systems and constituted violations of the right to health by sanctioning States".

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 important 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 and ways to make progress on the political track.

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 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.

Following Russia's 11 July veto, Council members continue to hold differing opinions on whether the provision for the reporting requirements set out by resolution 2672, which was the final Council authorisation of the cross-border aid mechanism, remains in effect. It appears that Russia takes the position that the absence of a resolution reauthorising the cross-border aid mechanism nullifies the effect of all provisions contained in previous resolutions, including the reporting requirements. Some other Council members apparently take the view that the reporting requirements as outlined in resolution 2139 of 2013, which focused on the humanitarian situation in Syria, remain in effect; these included reporting on access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas and humanitarian access for the UN and its implementing partners across conflict lines and borders.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In August, the Chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl (Switzerland), is scheduled to brief Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report on the Committee's work.

Key Recent Developments

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in northeast Asia have continued to rise in recent months. On 24 August, DPRK state media announced that the DPRK had unsuccessfully attempted to launch a reconnaissance satellite into orbit. According to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), a DPRK state news outlet, the rocket carrying the satellite "failed due to an error in the emergency blasting system during the third-stage flight". The launch, which was the DPRK's second failed attempt to put a satellite into orbit this year, prompted Japan to issue an emergency warning to some residents in southern Okinawa, ordering them to evacuate. The Secretary-General condemned the launch in a 24 August statement.

On 25 August, the Council convened for an open briefing on the DPRK to discuss the failed satellite launch following a request from Albania, Ecuador, France, Malta, Japan, the UK, and the US. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. The DPRK and the Republic of

Korea (ROK) participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Less than a week later, on 30 August, the DPRK fired two short-range ballistic missiles into waters off its east coast. The launches took place hours after the US deployed B-1B bombers during joint drills with Japan and the ROK. The drills were part of the Ulchi Freedom Shield exercises, an 11-day training event that ran from 21 to 31 August.

The missile launches came amid growing concerns regarding possible arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia. On 30 August, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters that the US had "shared new information that arms negotiations between Russia and [the] DPRK are actively advancing" and noted that "any arms deal between the DPRK and Russia would directly violate a number of Security Council resolutions."

DPRK leader Kim Jong-un subsequently visited Russia from 12 to 17 September, where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and toured military and technology sites. While hosting Kim during a 13 September tour of a space launch facility, Putin reportedly responded to a media question regarding whether Russia would assist the DPRK in building satellites by saying: "that's why we came here. The leader of the DPRK shows great interest in rocket engineering; they are also trying to develop space." According to media

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Report S/2023/656 (12 September 2023) this is the midterm report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

reports, Putin also said that there were “possibilities” for military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, while Kim told Putin that the DPRK would offer “full and unconditional support” to Russia. During an 18 October visit to Pyongyang, which included a meeting with Kim, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reportedly thanked the DPRK for its support for Russia’s war on Ukraine, while Kim pledged to “work out a stable forward-looking, far-reaching plan for the DPRK-Russia relations in the new era by faithfully implementing the agreements” between the two countries.

Hours before the September meeting between Putin and Kim, the DPRK fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea off its east coast. The launch marked the first occasion the DPRK carried out a missile test while Kim was outside the country since he took power in 2011.

On 13 October, White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby said that the DPRK has delivered over 1,000 containers of military equipment and munitions to Russia for use in Ukraine, adding that “in return for support, we assess that Pyongyang is seeking military assistance from Russia including fighter aircraft, surface to air missiles, armoured vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment, or other materials and other advanced technologies”. The US has also released images that it claims prove the containers were shipped from the DPRK to Russia and imposed sanctions on individuals and entities for their involvement with potential arms deals between the DPRK and Russia.

Japan, the ROK, and the US have also bolstered ties amid the escalating tensions in the region. On 18 August, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol, and US President Joe Biden held a trilateral summit at Camp David. The summit was the first time that leaders from the three countries have gathered for a standalone meeting. Following the summit, Japan, the ROK, and the US issued a joint statement in which they committed to coordinate responses to regional challenges, conduct annual trilateral military exercises, exchange real-time missile warning data and establish a trilateral working group on the DPRK’s cyber activities, among other matters. On 22 October, the three countries carried out their first-ever joint aerial exercises, including drills involving a US B-52 strategic bomber, while a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier visited a ROK port on 12 October.

On 29 September, Council members convened for closed consultations 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”. Council members received a briefing from Khiari during the meeting, which was requested by Albania, France, Japan, Malta, the UK, and the US. It appears that Albania, the president of the Council in September, circulated proposed press elements to all Council members after the consultations. China and Russia opposed the proposal, apparently indicating that they could not support press elements unless they referred to US military exercises in the region, and the elements were not agreed upon.

The Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee issued its midterm report on 12 September. Among other matters, the report notes that the DPRK is “flout[ing] Security Council sanctions in many areas” while developing nuclear weapons

and producing nuclear fissile materials. The report also observes that the DPRK has “continued to successfully target cryptocurrency and other financial exchanges” after utilising cybertheft to steal an estimated \$1.7 billion in 2022.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 October, a group of UN experts issued a statement expressing alarm over reports that China has “forcibly repatriated hundreds of escapees from the [DPRK], the vast majority of whom are women, despite appeals repeatedly made by multiple international human rights bodies to refrain from doing so”. The experts emphasised that “long-standing and credible reports” demonstrate that escapees returned to the DPRK are subjected to “torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment”, among other serious human rights violations, and urged the government of China to “abide by its international legal obligations and not forcibly repatriate DPRK escapees”.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Elizabeth Salmón, conducted her second official visit to the ROK from 4 to 12 September. During a press conference that followed her visit, Salmón said that the international community “cannot work on peace and security” issues with the DPRK “without discussing human rights”. Salmón also said that human rights should be “included in every talk and process when we discuss peace and security” with the DPRK and noted that the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK sanctions committee has found that sanctions have “unintended consequences” for humanitarian relief efforts in the DPRK.

Key Issues and Options

The DPRK’s frequent weapons tests, many of which violate Council resolutions, are a major issue for the Council. Sanctions evasion is also an important issue, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have increased its nuclear arsenal since the regime was introduced in 2006 and has shown little inclination to scale back its weapons programmes. The DPRK’s ongoing refusal to engage in denuclearisation dialogue and the human rights and humanitarian situations in the country are also problems facing the Council.

In light of these issues, the Council could issue a product that condemns the recent missile tests, urges member states to comply with existing Council resolutions, and calls on the DPRK to return to the negotiating table. The Council could also consider updating and strengthening the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime to exert further pressure on the DPRK.

Council members may wish to consider convening an informal briefing by cybersecurity experts on the DPRK’s cyber activities. Such a meeting could provide an opportunity to better understand the DPRK’s cyber programmes and how they contribute to the country’s sanctions evasion efforts, while discussing whether there is anything the Council can do to address the problem.

The Council could also hold an informal interactive dialogue with humanitarian organisations focusing on the DPRK with a view to better understanding the impact that sanctions are having on the humanitarian situation in the country.

Given the allegations raised by the US regarding possible arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia, the 1718 Sanctions Committee could consider specifically requesting the Panel of Experts assisting the Committee to investigate the US’ claims and provide a standalone report outlining its findings to the Committee.

Council Dynamics

The Council remains sharply divided regarding the DPRK. The P3

DPRK (North Korea)

(France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded countries regularly condemn its ballistic missile tests and argue that they destabilise the Korean Peninsula and increase tensions throughout the region. These members generally support using sanctions to manage the threat posed by the DPRK and call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. They often urge the country to engage in dialogue and abandon its weapons programmes while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some of these members also call for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK's weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened it by blocking Council action on the file.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US for heightening tensions and accuse it of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These two members have also contended that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation and continue to express their support for a draft resolution circulated by China in October 2021 that would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK if adopted. They have also repeatedly blocked attempts to issue a Council product responding to missile launches conducted by the DPRK throughout 2022 and 2023.

Other Council members, including Brazil and Gabon, have previously expressed apparent concerns about the overall efficacy of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime. During a 13 July open briefing on the DPRK, Brazil said that “every new launch makes it clearer that a new approach is needed” and noted that Chapter VI of the UN Charter “gives the Council a wide toolbox that remains under-explored in this file”.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Erik Ramberg
Policy Analyst

Gaurav Redhal
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Communications Officer

Marlene Romulus
Bookkeeper

Mai Nguyen
Research Intern

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

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 9429
Web securitycouncilreport.org

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