

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 In Hindsight: Applying to be a Member of the UN: The Palestinian Case
- 3 Status Update since our April Forecast
- 7 Protection of Civilians
- 8 DPRK (North Korea)
- 10 Lebanon
- 12 Sudan/South Sudan
- 14 The Role of African States in Global Security and Development Challenges
- 16 Yemen
- 17 Libya
- 19 Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 20 Iraq
- 22 Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force
- 24 Syria
- 26 "Maintenance of International Peace and Security": The Role of Women and Young People
- 27 South Sudan

Overview

In May, Mozambique holds the presidency of the UN Security Council.

Mozambique is expected to convene two signature events during its presidency. One will be a debate on strengthening [the role of African states in addressing global security and development challenges](#) under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item. UN and AU representatives are the anticipated briefers.

Mozambique's second signature event for the month will be a debate on [the role of women and youth in maintaining peace and security](#), also under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item. Mozambique's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo is expected to chair the meeting. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs Felipe Paullier, a high-level representative of UN Women, and a civil society representative are expected to brief.

This month, the Security Council will hold its annual debate on the [protection of civilians](#). The expected briefers are Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, and a civil society representative.

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

African issues on the programme in May are:

- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), meeting on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and recent developments between the two countries;
- [South Sudan](#), renewal of the 2206 South Sudan

sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee;

- [Libya](#), briefing by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the court's Libya-related activities and reauthorisation of measures under resolution 2292 to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya; and
- [Sahel](#), meeting on the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel).

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments;
- [Iraq](#), meeting on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and renewal of UNAMI's mandate;
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559; and
- ["The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question"](#), the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments in Gaza and Israel.

Regarding European issues, the semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) is expected to take place in May. As in previous months, there may also be one or more meetings on Ukraine in May.

In terms of Asian issues, Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the work of the 1718 [Democratic People's Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) Sanctions Committee.

Other issues could also be raised during the month, depending on developments.

1 May 2024

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In Hindsight: Applying to be a Member of the UN: The Palestinian Case

On 18 April, the US vetoed a draft Security Council resolution that would have recommended that “the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the United Nations”. Twelve Council members voted in favour of the draft resolution, while two abstained (Switzerland and the UK). The last veto on a membership application was on 15 November 1976, when the US vetoed the application of the newly established Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

On 3 April, the Secretary-General conveyed to the Security Council a letter from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine that sought renewed consideration of its 23 September 2011 application in the month of April. There were times in the last 13 years when it appeared that the State of Palestine might revive its membership bid, which the Council had failed to agree on, but no further action was taken. At the time of the 2011 application, the political situation was very different, with diplomatic activity focused on getting the parties to resume direct negotiations. The April request came at one of the most volatile periods in the region following the 7 October 2023 large-scale attacks against Israel led by Hamas, and the ensuing massive airstrikes and ground operation carried out by Israel on the Gaza Strip.

In this *In Hindsight*, we reflect on how the membership process unfolded in accordance with the UN Charter and other guiding procedural documents, its broader historical context, and possible next steps.

Procedure and Process: The Application of the State of Palestine

Becoming a member of the UN is a multi-step process involving the Secretary-General, the Council, and the General Assembly. Article 4(1) of the UN Charter, rule 60 of the Security Council’s provisional rules of procedure, and rule 136 of the General Assembly’s rules of procedure lay out the UN membership criteria: it is open to states that are “peace-loving”, accept the obligations in the Charter, and are able and willing to carry them out. Article 4(2) of the Charter notes that admission of “any such state to membership” will be “effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council”.

Rule 58 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure states that applications for UN membership are submitted to the Secretary-General and should include a declaration made in a formal instrument accepting the obligations of the UN Charter. On 2 April, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine submitted a letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres requesting the Security Council’s renewed consideration of its September 2011 application for membership to the UN, in accordance with rule 58. (The September 2011 application was initiated after the US vetoed a draft resolution (S/2011/24) in February 2011 reaffirming that “Israeli settlements established in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, are illegal and constitute a major obstacle to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace”).

Rule 59 of the Council’s provisional rules directs the Secretary-General to transmit the application to the Security Council, which will then normally refer it to a committee. The Committee on the Admission of New Members, a subsidiary body comprising all 15 Council members, is tasked with examining “any application referred to it” and reporting its conclusions to the Council.

Five days after the Secretary-General submitted the State of Palestine’s application to the Council (S/2024/286), its president,

Ambassador Vanessa Frazier of Malta, convened a public meeting on 8 April, following consultations earlier that morning, and announced that she was referring the application to the committee on the Admission of New Members. The Council’s practice in this regard has varied: since 1969, applications were generally referred to the committee, whereas the Council chose to deal with all applications itself between 1952 and 1968.

The committee met on 8 and 11 April, and on 16 April its chair wrote to the president of the Council transmitting the committee’s report. The report stated that the committee had concluded its consideration of the application and “was unable to make a unanimous recommendation to the Security Council” regarding “whether the application met all the criteria for membership set out in Article 4 of the Charter”. This is the same conclusion it reached in 2011.

On the same day that the committee submitted its report, Algeria circulated a draft resolution recommending to the General Assembly that the State of Palestine be granted UN membership (S/2024/312). In 2011, following the committee’s inability to reach agreement, no member had taken this step. At that time, it seems there was concern that a draft resolution might not garner the necessary nine votes in favour, while on the other hand, if nine affirmative votes were found, there was little appetite for forcing a US veto. In 2024, with the crisis in Gaza dominating the agenda, support from more Council members seemed likely.

Speaking at the 18 April meeting, Council members—as well as the State of Palestine and Israel—gave their views on whether the State of Palestine met the criteria for UN membership as outlined in Article 4 of the UN Charter, including contrasting perspectives as to whether it qualifies as a “state” and is “peace-loving” (S/PV.9609).

Several members—including Algeria, China, France, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia—argued that granting the State of Palestine member state status at the UN would advance the two-state solution (that is, two sovereign states peacefully co-existing side by side). Three others maintained that membership would be premature, with the UK and the US calling for reforms to be made by the Palestinians and Switzerland stating that membership at present “is not conducive to easing the situation and finding a peaceful solution, given the great instability and the conflict on the ground”.

In casting its veto, the US said that “Palestinian statehood... will only come from direct negotiations between the parties”, a perspective that contrasted sharply with the views of some other Council members. Guyana stated that the criteria set out in Article 4 “are the only ones to be taken into consideration” for the admission of members to the UN. China argued that making negotiations a precondition for Palestinian statehood was “putting the cart before the horse”, while Slovenia said that UN membership is “not an alternative to negotiations, but complementary to them”. Some members underlined that they expect efforts to continue. Algeria stated that its “efforts will not cease until the State of Palestine becomes a full Member of the United Nations”. Ecuador expressed its hope that soon “conditions will be in place that will allow the Council, unanimously, to recommend the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations”. And Sierra Leone maintained that, as a matter of justice, UN membership for the State of Palestine “cannot be denied”.

If the Algerian draft resolution had been adopted, constituting a positive recommendation from the Council, the General Assembly

In Hindsight: Applying to be a Member of the UN: The Palestinian Case

would have been required to vote on the Palestinian membership application. Since the admission of any new member is an “important question”, a two-thirds majority of members present and voting is needed to approve an application, under rule 136 of the General Assembly’s rules of procedure.

What’s Next?

When the Council cannot agree to recommend a new member for admission (as in the current case of the State of Palestine) or postpones consideration of an application, it has to submit “a special report to the General Assembly with a complete record of the discussion”, as described in rule 60 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. The president of the Council sent this report to the General Assembly on 23 April 2024.

Vetoes of membership applications were common during the Cold War, blocking the admission of new members 59 times. The USSR cast 51 vetoes on membership applications, the US six. There was one membership veto apiece during this era by the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China.¹

A new element is the “veto initiative”, namely General Assembly resolution 76/262 of 26 April 2022, which requires the General Assembly to meet within ten days whenever a veto is cast and for the Council to submit a special report on each use of the veto to the General Assembly. However, according to this resolution, the “veto initiative” is not triggered if the General Assembly is meeting in “an emergency special session on the same situation”. Members therefore had the option of resuming the Tenth Emergency Special Session (ESS) on “Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, which was initiated in 1997, in lieu of a dedicated General Assembly meeting on the US veto on Palestinian membership.

This appeared the most likely scenario on 24 April, when the chairs of the Arab Group, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and the Non-Aligned Movement wrote to the president of the General Assembly, citing the US veto and requesting the resumption of the Tenth Emergency Special Session (ESS). However, it seems that the ESS could not meet within the ten-day period after the veto and is expected to do so on 10 May. In light of this, the president of the General Assembly wrote to all member states on 26 April informing them that he would convene a General Assembly meeting under the agenda item “use of the veto”, as well as an ESS.

The Arab Group is expected to present a draft resolution at the ESS. In accordance with rule 137 of the General Assembly’s rules of procedure, the resolution could request the Council to reconsider the application of the State of Palestine. This was done in the case of Viet Nam on 26 November 1976, when the General Assembly adopted a resolution expressing “deep regret and concern” that “one negative vote by a permanent member of the Security Council prevented the adoption of the draft resolution supported by 14 members” and asked the Council to reconsider the matter favourably and in accordance with Article 4 of the Charter.²

The General Assembly could also recommend that permanent members of the Council consult to reach agreement, as was the case in 1947 with the applications of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Mongolia [resolution 113 (II) A].

But the Council can choose to postpone indefinitely the reconsideration of an application when it comes back from the General Assembly, as it did with 14 states between 1947 and 1950, in a number of cases citing the need for consultations among permanent members.

As well, the General Assembly could consider adopting a resolution according additional rights to the State of Palestine, which would also require a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. In response to the deadlock in the Council on Palestinian membership in 2011, the General Assembly in 2012 adopted a draft resolution according the State of Palestine “non-member observer State status”. It had previously been an “observer entity”. This has given it the right to participate in all UN proceedings, but not to vote on draft resolutions and decisions in its main organs and bodies. In 2019, when the State of Palestine served as chair of the Group of 77 developing countries and China (G77), the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/73/5 according the State of Palestine additional rights for a year. These rights included being able to submit proposals and amendments and introduce them, to exercise a right of reply and raise procedural motions, including points of order and requests to put proposals to a vote.³

If the General Assembly requests the Council to reconsider the application, it is likely that the Council will take up this matter again in the coming months. Council members, however, do not foresee any change in the positions taken during the vote in April. The General Assembly is unlikely to let the matter end here, and all eyes are now on possible action in that organ.

Status Update since our April Forecast

Children and Armed Conflict

On 3 April, the Security Council held a briefing on children and armed conflict (S/PV.9594), titled “addressing the consequences of the denial of humanitarian access for children”. Malta, the chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, convened the meeting as one of the signature events of its April Council presidency. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and

Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba and UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations Edward “Ted” Chaiban briefed. The Council was also briefed by Atim Niger-Thomas, Executive Director of Authentique Memorial Empowerment Foundation, a Cameroon-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) that seeks to protect the rights of children and other vulnerable groups.

¹ In October 1971, the People’s Republic of China assumed the seat previously held by the Republic of China in the General Assembly and the Security Council.

² A/RES/31/21

³ <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/palestines-status-at-the-un-explained-news-item/>. Also see SCR Procedure 7 April 2024 article on “Palestine’s request for reconsideration of its 2011 application for UN memberships raises several procedural issues”.

Status Update since our April Forecast

Arria-formula Meeting on Cybersecurity

On 4 April, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting titled “Evolving Cyber Threat Landscape and its Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. The meeting was organised by the Republic of Korea and co-hosted by Japan and the US. The briefers were Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo; Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research Robin Geiss; and Valerie Kennedy, Director of Intelligence Solutions for Investigations and Special Programmes at Chainalysis, a blockchain analysis firm.

Myanmar

On 4 April, the Council convened for an open briefing on Myanmar (S/PV.9595). The briefers were: Khaled Khiari, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations; and Lisa Doughten, the Director of the Financing and Partnerships Division of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. The meeting marked the first occasion that the Council has held an open briefing on Myanmar since February 2019.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 5 April, the Security Council held a briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9596). Algeria, Guyana, and Slovenia requested the meeting to discuss the risk of famine and attacks against humanitarian workers in Gaza following the killing on 1 April of seven members of the NGO World Central Kitchen in an Israeli airstrike. OCHA Head in Geneva and Director of the Coordination Division Ramesh Rajasingham and President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US Janti Soeripto briefed.

On 8 April, Security Council members held closed consultations, followed by an open meeting, to discuss the Palestinian request, conveyed in a 2 April letter to the Secretary-General, for renewed consideration of its 23 September 2011 application for UN membership. The meeting was held under the “Admission of new members” agenda item (S/PV.9597). The Secretary-General transmitted the request to the Security Council by letter of 3 April (S/2024/286).

At the 8 April meeting, Malta, as the Council’s president for the month of April, referred the issue of the application to the Security Council’s standing Committee on the Admission of New Members. The Committee met on 8 and 11 April to deliberate on the Palestinian request. On 16 April, the Committee transmitted a final copy of its report to the Security Council, stating that it had concluded its work but had been unable to reach a unanimous recommendation on the Palestinian application.

On 17 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9607). Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini briefed. The meeting was scheduled after Jordan requested that a ministerial-level Council meeting be convened on the challenges faced by UNRWA in a 1 April letter to the president of the Security Council.

On 18 April, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9608). The debate was resumed and completed on 18 and 25 April (S/PV.9608 Resumption 1 and Resumption 2). Maltese Foreign Minister Ian Borg chaired the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres briefed. In the evening, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution authored by Algeria recommending the admission to the UN of the State of Palestine (S/PV.9609). The draft text failed to be adopted owing to a veto by the US. All other members—except the UK and Switzerland, which abstained—voted in favour of the text.

On 24 April, the Security Council held a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9617). Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator (SHRC) for Gaza Sigrid Kaag briefed. This was the first time that Kaag briefed the Council in the open chamber. Previously, she briefed in closed consultations on 30 January and 7 March. The meeting was held in accordance with Security Council resolution 2720. Adopted on 22 December 2023, resolution 2720 requested the SHRC to provide an initial report on her work to the Security Council within 20 days and thereafter every 90 days until 30 September.

Colombia

On 9 April, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Colombia (S/PV.9598). 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/2024/267). The Council also received a briefing from Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, director of Colombia Diversa, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that promotes and defends the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex (LGBTI) persons. Colombia, represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs ad interim Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia, participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

On 15 April, Council members issued a press statement reiterating their full support for the peace process in Colombia and stressing the importance of ensuring the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) (SC/15663). They further encouraged the prompt translation of plans and policies for the promotion of the 2016 agreement into implementation on the ground in conflict-affected areas. Among other issues, the statement emphasised the need to promote implementation of the peace agreement’s ethnic chapter and encouraged state institutions to reinvigorate efforts to “protect former combatants, social leaders and people in all their diversity, fight impunity for crimes against them and combat the criminal structures responsible for violence”.

In April, a report on the Security Council’s 7-11 February visiting mission to Colombia was published (S/2024/258).

Territorial Dispute between Guyana and Venezuela

On 9 April, at Guyana’s request, the Security Council convened for a

Status Update since our April Forecast

private meeting under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item to discuss recent developments regarding the territorial dispute between Guyana and Venezuela over the Essequibo region in Guyana (S/PV.9599). Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed the Council. Venezuela, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Haiti, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

On 15 April, Council members issued a press statement expressing their concern about the possible escalation of tensions between Guyana and Venezuela, urging the parties to exercise “maximum restraint”, and reminding them of their obligations to comply with the Order of Provisional Measures issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 1 December 2023 (SC/15665).

Ukraine

On 11 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine at the request of Ecuador and France (S/PV.9600). Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča and OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Edem Wosornu briefed at the meeting.

On 12 April, the Council convened for an open briefing under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9601). Russia requested the meeting to discuss the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch at the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Ivor Fung and activist and political commentator Karen Kwiatkowski briefed.

On 15 April, the Security Council convened for an open briefing under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9604). Slovenia and the US—the co-penholders on political issues in Ukraine—supported by France, requested the meeting, which focused on the safety and security of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP) in the city of Enerhodar. It appears that Russia expressed approval for holding the meeting, noting the alarming nature of the situation at the nuclear power plant. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi briefed the Council. Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

Iran-Israel

On 14 April, the Security Council convened an emergency meeting on the airborne attack that Iran launched against Israel on 13 April (S/PV.9602). Israel requested the meeting, which was held under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East”. Secretary-General António Guterres briefed Council members. Israel, Iran, and Syria participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. Following the meeting, the US proposed a draft press statement, but it was not issued due to a lack of consensus among Council members.

Western Sahara

On 16 April, Council members received a briefing in closed consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Secretary-General’s Personal Envoy to Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura and Special Representative and Head

of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) Alexander Ivanko briefed.

“The Role of Young Persons in Addressing Security Challenges in the Mediterranean”

On 17 April, the Security Council held a ministerial-level debate on “The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9606). The debate was resumed and completed on 22 and 26 April (S/PV.9606 Resumption 1 and Resumption 2). Ian Borg, Malta’s Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Malta’s April Council presidency. The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Secretary General of the Union for the Mediterranean Nasser Kamel, and the regional lead of the Middle East and North Africa coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, Sarra Messaoudi.

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

On 19 April, Security Council members held a briefing on the activities of the OSCE (S/PV.9610). Ian Borg, Malta’s Minister for Foreign, Trade and European Affairs, briefed in his capacity as the current Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) of the OSCE, outlining the OSCE’s priorities for 2023. At the meeting, several Council members expressed support for the OSCE’s activities and contributions to regional stability.

Sudan

On 19 April, the Security Council convened for an open briefing to discuss the situation in Sudan, at the request of the UK, the penholder on the file (S/PV.9611). The briefers were: Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Director of OCHA’s Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu, and Chair of the AU High-Level Panel on Sudan Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

On 27 April, Council members issued a press statement expressing concern about the escalating tensions and military operations around El-Fasher, the capital city of North Darfur state. Members called on the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces to end the build-up of military forces, take steps to de-escalate the situation, and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. They reiterated their call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, leading to a sustainable ceasefire. In addition, they urged all member states to “refrain from external interference which seeks to foment conflict and instability and instead to support efforts for a durable peace” and reminded the Sudanese warring parties and all member states to comply with the arms embargo obligations, imposed by resolution 1556 of 30 July 2004 and most recently renewed by resolution 2676 of 8 March 2023.

Kosovo

On 22 April, the Council held its first regular briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.9612). Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Status Update since our April Forecast

Caroline Ziadeh briefed on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2024/282). Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and President Vjosa Osmani of Kosovo participated under rules 37 and 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, respectively.

At the meeting, Russia raised a point of order concerning the status of Osmani's participation under rule 39. Russia argued that Osmani incorrectly referred to the individuals accompanying her as members of her delegation, stating that her participation as a briefer did not entail having a delegation. Russia emphasised that these individuals should not be seated behind her but in the side seats of the chamber, asserting that Osmani's presentation of these individuals as part of a delegation was a violation of the Council's procedural rules. Malta responded that members of civil society who participate under rule 39 are allowed to bring a delegation, as this is the procedure under which they were accredited by the UN Protocol and Liaison Service.

Haiti

On 22 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on Haiti (S/PV.9613). Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador briefed on recent developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest quarterly report on BINUH. UNICEF Executive Director and Principal Advocate on Haiti for the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Catherine Russell and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Ghada Fathi Waly also briefed. The Dominican Republic, represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs Roberto Alvarez Gil, and Haiti participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Women, Peace and Security

On 23 April, the Security Council convened for its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, which this year was titled "Preventing conflict-related sexual violence through demilitarization and gender-responsive arms control" (S/PV.9614). The meeting was chaired by Maltese Deputy Prime Minister Christopher Fearn. Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Danai Gurira, and President and Founder of the Darfur Women Action Group Niemat Ahmadi briefed.

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

On 24 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the Great Lakes region (S/PV.9615). The meeting had a particular focus on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, highlighting the role of women in peace processes. 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/2024/278). Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian

Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya also briefed the Council, focusing on the humanitarian situation in the region, particularly in eastern DRC. Additionally, a woman civil society representative from the DRC briefed the Council describing the impact of the conflict in eastern DRC on women who, she said, have become "objects of unspeakable suffering, targeted with mutilation, rape and other forms of unimaginable violence, often perpetrated in front of their families". The representatives of Angola, DRC and Rwanda participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Non-Proliferation

On 24 April, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction in outer space (S/2024/302), which was prepared by Japan and the US (S/PV.9616). The draft resolution affirmed the obligation of all states parties to fully comply with the Outer Space Treaty, including not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), install such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. It also called on member states not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of WMD specifically designed to be placed in orbit around the Earth.

Prior to the vote on the draft resolution, the Council voted on an amendment to the text proposed by China and Russia. The amendment called on member states to take measures to prevent the placement of weapons of any kind in outer space and to seek through negotiations the early elaboration of a legally binding multilateral agreement on the matter.

The draft amendment failed to be adopted because it did not garner the requisite support. It received seven votes in favour (Algeria, China, Ecuador, Guyana, Mozambique, Russia, and Sierra Leone), seven votes against (France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, the UK, and the US), and one abstention (Switzerland).

The draft resolution (S/2024/302) failed to be adopted owing to a veto cast by Russia. All other members—except China, which abstained—voted in favour of the text. The draft resolution was co-sponsored by 65 UN member states.

Following the vote, Russia announced its intention to put forward a draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

The Nord Stream Incident

On 26 April, the Council convened for an open briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.9619). Russia requested the meeting to discuss the 26 September 2022 explosions that caused physical damage to the Nord Stream pipelines in the Baltic Sea. The briefers were Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča, Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General of Counter-Terrorism Oguljeren Niyazberdiyeva, and political commentator Larry C. Johnson.

Protection of Civilians

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will receive the Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict and hold its annual open debate on the topic. The expected briefers for the debate are Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths and ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. Mozambique, the Council president in May, is also expected to invite a civil society representative.

Background and Key Recent Developments

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the 25th anniversary of resolution 1265, which introduced PoC as an item on the Council's agenda. While it has been customary in recent years for the Secretary-General's report and the Council's open debate to focus on a specific sub-topic—such as conflict and hunger, humanitarian access, or the protection of healthcare workers and facilities—this year is expected to survey PoC-related progress and challenges more broadly.

For the 20th anniversary of the PoC agenda in 2019, OCHA published an occasional policy paper reviewing the evolution of the Council's protection practices. The paper reaffirmed the enduring relevance of resolution 1265's main provisions, which remained the agenda's "building blocks": enhancing compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL), facilitating access to humanitarian assistance, protecting forcibly displaced persons, providing protection through UN peace operations, and responding to violations through targeted measures and the promotion of accountability. According to the paper, the Council's subsequent engagement with the PoC agenda centred on strengthening its architecture through the adoption of thematic resolutions on relevant sub-topics, integrating and addressing protection concerns in country-specific resolutions and actions, and developing monitoring and accountability tools that seek to ensure the effective protection of civilians on the ground. In 2015 and 2018, the Council issued presidential statements describing PoC as one of the "core issues on the Council agenda".

In April, OCHA published a follow-up policy brief that reviewed developments over the past five years. The brief described increasingly detailed and specific PoC-related language in Council resolutions, notably with regard to the actors bound by IHL; prohibited conduct; and protected persons and objects. It also noted the further development of monitoring mechanisms to track progress on the ground, including dedicated reporting mechanisms on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and children in armed conflict (CAAC). Additionally, the brief observed, special attention has been given to specific vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, missing persons, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, while there has been a call for increased involvement of women, youth, and internally displaced persons in peace processes. The Council has also increasingly used UN sanctions regimes as vehicles to protect civilians by establishing designation criteria related to IHL and human rights violations, and it has sought to address the potential negative

impact of sanctions on humanitarian assistance, notably through resolution 2664 of 2022, which established a cross-cutting humanitarian exception to UN sanctions.

Notwithstanding this progress, the brief also described new and emerging challenges to the PoC agenda. It highlighted increasing political pushback from countries hosting peace operations with PoC mandates, resulting in the closure or transition of some operations despite continued threats to civilians in these contexts. In June 2023, for instance, the Council terminated the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) after the country's transitional government withdrew its consent for the mission. Similarly, in December 2023, at the host government's request, the Council ended the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), a special political mission that was mandated to support national and local authorities in protecting civilians in conflict-affected areas. Multidimensional peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan are also engaged in various stages of transition planning despite continued protection concerns.

OCHA also identified non-compliance with IHL as another growing challenge to the PoC agenda, exacerbated by a lack of stronger accountability mechanisms. In this context, the brief noted that the gap between the agenda's expanding normative framework and the realities experienced by civilians on the ground has "remained, if not widened," over the past five years.

The Secretary-General's report is expected to focus more narrowly on developments in 2023. It will describe the general state of the PoC agenda during the reporting period and give an overview of identified trends, including specific harms to civilians in armed conflict and relevant country-specific situations. Harms it is likely to highlight include civilian deaths, attacks on civilian infrastructure, conflict-induced hunger, explosive weapons in populated areas, and CRSV. It will draw examples from a variety of conflict situations around the world, which may include Burkina Faso, Colombia, Gaza, Myanmar, Nagorno-Karabakh, Niger, Sudan, and Ukraine, among others. The report is expected to provide recommendations to address relevant protection concerns, including stronger efforts to ensure compliance with IHL, as well as other actions that go beyond minimum compliance with legal frameworks. As in previous years, the report may include an annex detailing constraints to humanitarian access, such as bureaucratic impediments, attacks on humanitarian personnel, and insecurity in conflict zones.

In February, OCHA, with the support of Switzerland, released an updated version of its aide memoire for PoC, which is a consolidated database of Council resolutions and presidential statements that records agreed PoC language and identifies key themes and sub-topics. OCHA compiled the first aide memoire in 2002 upon request from the Security Council in a letter to the Secretary-General and has regularly updated it since then. This year's edition is the first revision since 2018.

On 25 March, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq announced that Griffiths would step down from his

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS [Security Council Resolution S/RES/1265](#) (17 September 1999) was the Council's first thematic resolution on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, condemning targeting of civilians; calling for respect for international humanitarian, refugee, and human rights law; and expressing the willingness to take measures to ensure compliance and to consider how peacekeeping mandates might better address the negative impact of conflict on civilians. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2018/18](#) (21 September 2018) requested the Secretary-General to submit annual reports on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, to be formally considered by the Security Council each year within the same General Assembly session. [S/PRST/2015/23](#) (25 November 2015) expressed the Council's intention to continue addressing the protection of civilians, both in country-specific considerations and as a thematic agenda item, and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to the full implementation of all its resolutions on civilian protection. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/345](#) (12 May 2023) was the annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Protection of Civilians

position at the end of June because of health issues. Secretary-General António Guterres appointed him in July 2021.

Key Issues and Options

While the Council has engaged extensively on the protection of civilians at both the thematic and country-specific levels over the past 25 years, an overarching issue remains how to ensure a more consistent implementation of this agenda on the ground.

Securing compliance with IHL is one key task in this regard, including by strengthening accountability mechanisms, and humanitarian actors have also emphasised the importance of taking action beyond legal remedies to promote PoC as a political and strategic priority across international and national decision-making bodies. To further stimulate such discussion after the open debate, Mozambique could decide to produce a chair's summary, capturing the main proposals made during the meeting.

One specific PoC issue concerns attacks on humanitarian and UN personnel in conflict situations. It appears that Switzerland has proposed a draft resolution on this topic that Council members are currently negotiating. They may adopt the draft resolution in May.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Member states generally agree that the protection of civilians remains a core issue on the Council's agenda and that of the broader UN.

Views diverge, however, regarding the applicability of different frameworks for the provision of humanitarian assistance. While Western members typically emphasise the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, other members—particularly China and Russia—have in recent years emphasised the UN guiding principles for humanitarian assistance adopted

by the General Assembly in 1991, which stress state sovereignty and consent of the concerned member state.

This discussion has notably played out in the context of peace-keeping. In mandate negotiations, China, Russia, and African members tend to highlight the primary responsibility of the host state to protect civilians within its territory, while other members underscore the international community's obligation to secure a protective environment in contexts lacking capable state authority.

Given the broad nature of this month's open debate, members are likely to highlight a variety of other issues and contexts depending on their priorities. While many members have welcomed the emergence of various sub-themes within the PoC agenda as a means by which to shed light on otherwise neglected threats and populations, some have also expressed reservations about the possible fragmentation of the agenda in a way that undermines holistic protection efforts or creates different categories of civilians receiving unequal levels of attention—a concern that some humanitarian actors have also voiced. Moreover, within the Council, several countries—including China and Russia and former members Brazil and India—have cautioned against linking PoC to other agendas, such as climate security, which they consider to be beyond the Council's purview.

Finally, protection concerns have been subject to rising geopolitical tensions within certain country-specific situations. Western countries have condemned alleged IHL violations by Russia in Ukraine, while Russia and many Arab countries have condemned alleged violations by Israel in Gaza and criticised Western countries for supporting Israel's war effort. This has led to accusations of hypocrisy and double standards from both sides.

The UK is the Council's penholder on protection of civilians in armed conflict.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In May, 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

On 28 March, Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee for another year, until 30 April 2025. The remaining Council members—apart from China, which abstained—voted in favour of the text. The Panel's mandate expired on 30 April. (For more information on the negotiations, see our 22 March *What's in Blue* story.)

On 11 April, at the General Assembly debate on Russia's veto, Russia announced that it planned to pursue a draft resolution that would extend the Panel's mandate for one year and include “a clear determination of the imperative for the Council to take a decision

on updating the parameters” of the 1718 sanctions regime. Russia circulated the first draft of this resolution to all Council members on 12 April. It seems that Russia appeared to pause the negotiations on this draft on 30 April.

During a visit to Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) from 14 to 20 April, US Permanent Representative to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield noted that the US was considering alternatives for monitoring the implementation of the 1718 sanctions regime, reportedly saying, “we're working to do something in the General Assembly. We are pushing the Secretariat through the Secretary-General to do something out of his office, but we are also looking at options outside of the UN”.

The final report of the Panel was issued on 7 March. The report notes that the Panel is investigating reports of arms transfers from the DPRK to other member states, including Russia, and says that the DPRK has continued to flout the 1718 sanctions regime, including by further developing nuclear weapons, producing nuclear fissile materials, importing refined petroleum products, and receiving

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Resolution S/RES/2680 (23 March 2023) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee **Sanctions Committee Document S/2024/215** (7 March 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9591** (28 March 2024) is a record of the meeting at which Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee

DPRK (North Korea)

income from DPRK nationals working overseas. In relation to the DPRK's cyber activities, the report observes that the Panel is investigating 58 cyberattacks on cryptocurrency-related companies, valued at approximately \$3 billion, and notes that these attacks have reportedly funded the DPRK's weapons programmes.

Since the publication of the report, several civil society organisations have documented instances of possible sanctions evasion, including one example where a Russian cargo ship believed to be carrying munitions from the DPRK allegedly moored in China and another where DPRK workers appeared to be working on overseas animation projects. On 26 March, the ROK and the US announced the launch of the Enhanced Disruption Task Force, a joint effort between the two countries established to counter the DPRK's efforts to "circumvent sanctions concerning the procurement of refined petroleum."

On 29 April, Reuters reported that three members of the Panel had travelled to Ukraine during April. In a report to the 1718 Sanctions Committee regarding their visit, the three experts reportedly concluded that debris recovered from a missile that landed in Kharkiv in January "derives from a DPRK Hwasong-11 series missile". The experts also observed that the missile appeared to have been procured by Russian nationals and noted that this would be a violation of the arms embargo against the DPRK.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have shown few signs of receding in 2024. The DPRK continued to trial its weapons systems throughout March and April, including by launching different types of ballistic and cruise missiles, testing a solid fuel engine for a hypersonic weapon and a nuclear weapons command-and-control system, and firing rocket launchers and anti-aircraft missiles. Several of these tests violated multiple Council resolutions. The DPRK has also continued to ramp up its military rhetoric. On 7 March, state media reported that the DPRK's leader, Kim Jong Un, had instructed military officials to intensify "war preparations in line with the requirements of the prevailing situation".

The US and its allies have carried out military drills in the region in recent months. On 12 April, a US carrier strike group began a two-day joint exercise with Japan and the ROK in the East China Sea. On 4 March, the ROK and the US commenced their annual "Freedom Shield" exercise, which included an emphasis on "counter nuclear operations" involving land, sea, air, cyber, and space assets. Several weeks later, Japan, the ROK, and the US conducted a trilateral aerial exercise for the third time. The historic drills began after Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol, and US President Joe Biden attended a summit at Camp David in August 2023, where they agreed to coordinate responses to regional challenges, conduct annual trilateral military exercises, and exchange real-time missile warning data, among other matters.

The DPRK has also engaged in a flurry of diplomatic activity in 2024, both in its immediate region and beyond. On 24 April Ri Chol-man, head of the DPRK's state agriculture commission, met with Russian Agriculture Minister Dmitry Patrushev in Moscow, where they reportedly agreed to sign a series of agreements boosting agricultural cooperation between the two countries. DPRK officials also travelled to Iran in late April in an apparent effort to increase ties. In late March, a DPRK delegation travelled to China, Laos, and Viet Nam for a series of meetings with representatives of each country.

Several weeks later, Zhao Leji, the chairman of the China National People's Congress and a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo Standing Committee, met his DPRK counterpart Choe Ryong Hae in Pyongyang. According to media reports, the meeting marked the first occasion in approximately five years that China and the DPRK have met at this level.

The day before this meeting took place, President Biden hosted Kishida and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. at the White House. In remarks delivered after the meeting, which was the first leaders' summit among the three countries, Biden said that Japan, the Philippines, and the US were "deepening our maritime and security ties" and described the US' defence commitments to Japan and the Philippines as "ironclad".

In late March, several media outlets reported that Kishida had offered to meet with Kim Jong Un. Japan subsequently acknowledged that the offer for a meeting had been made, but said that the DPRK had sought to impose unacceptable preconditions on possible talks.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 April, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK for one year (A/HRC/55/L.19). The resolution also requested the High Commissioner to submit a comprehensive report containing an update on the human rights situation in the DPRK since 2014. This report will also take stock of the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the 2014 report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (A/HRC/25/63).

The Special Rapporteur's latest report was issued on 26 March (A/HRC/55/63). The report highlighted that international staff of the UN and humanitarian agencies have not been able to return to the DPRK despite the country partially reopening its border in August 2023. In addition, the report noted there is a lack of up-to-date information on the human rights situation and stated that the intense focus on security and regular security-related information from the government in the media has diverted attention from the worsening human rights conditions. The report also reiterated that the Special Rapporteur is concerned that escapees from the DPRK had been forcibly repatriated from China despite repeated appeals by multiple international human rights bodies for a halt to such repatriations.

On 20 March, during an oral update to the HRC, Deputy High Commissioner Nada Al-Nashif said there continues to be impunity for human rights violations perpetrated in the DPRK. She argued that accountability should be pursued outside of the DPRK and suggested that this could be achieved through referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or national level prosecutions "in accordance with international standards under accepted principles of extraterritorial and universal jurisdiction".

Key Issues and Options

The expiration of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee has created a major issue for Council members. Although the Panel's mandate has expired, the Council could choose to adopt a resolution requesting that the Secretary-General reconstitute the Panel for a short period of time.

Should the Council prove unable to reach agreement on this issue, Council members who favour extending the Panel's mandate could push for the General Assembly to establish a mechanism charged with monitoring the implementation of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime. Such a mechanism could be tasked with performing functions similar to those assigned to the Panel, including analysing information regarding the implementation of the 1718 sanctions regime and making appropriate recommendations. The mechanism could report to the Secretary-General, who could then communicate its

DPRK (North Korea)

reports to the 1718 Sanctions Committee or the President of the Council. Interested member states could also send the reports to the Chair of the 1718 Sanctions Committee.

Although Article 12 of the UN Charter provides that the General Assembly “shall not make any recommendation” regarding a dispute or situation while the Council is exercising its functions under the Charter in respect of that dispute or situation, the General Assembly has nonetheless dealt with matters while they were on the agenda of the Council on several occasions. In December 2016, for example, the General Assembly established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes Under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic Since March 2011 (IIIM). The IIIM was created after China and Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have referred the situation in Syria to the ICC in May 2014. Article 12 was discussed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the 2004 “Wall Case”, where the Court noted “the increasing tendency over time for the General Assembly and the Security Council to deal in parallel with the same matter concerning the maintenance of international peace and security” and observed that “the accepted practice of the General Assembly, as it has evolved, is consistent with Article 12(1) of the Charter.”

Council Dynamics

The Council is deeply divided over the DPRK. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded countries, including Japan and the ROK, support using sanctions to manage the threat posed by the DPRK and often call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the DPRK 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.

The divisions between Council members were evident during the negotiations of the US draft resolution on the Panel’s mandate. In a statement delivered before the vote on this draft, Russia claimed that the Panel has ceased to carry out its obligations and said that the sanctions regime no longer reflects realities on the ground, imposes a heavy burden on the population of the DPRK, and has failed to achieve the international community’s stated aims. It further argued that a provision requiring an annual review of the regime was needed to address these issues. China expressed support for an annual review of the regime and called on the Council to consider the draft resolution it circulated in October 2021 on the humanitarian situation in the DPRK, which would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK if adopted.

Other Council members strongly criticised Russia’s veto, arguing that it undermines the global non-proliferation regime and emboldens the DPRK in its attempts to evade sanctions. Several members—including France, Japan, the ROK, the UK, and the US—linked the veto to Russia’s alleged purchase of arms from the DPRK. Some of these members emphasised that the 1718 regime remained in place and said that they would continue efforts to monitor and enforce its provisions.

Some members appear to be considering whether to ask the General Assembly to establish a mechanism to monitor the 1718 sanctions regime. During the General Assembly debate on Russia’s veto, for example, Switzerland said that the Council must look for alternatives to respond to the possible lack of analysis and noted that it remains open to exploring solutions, including in the General Assembly. Members are also concerned, however, about possible unforeseen implications and the precedent that could be established, and some would prefer having the Council continue to manage this issue.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Following the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas on 7 October 2023, near-daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line between Israel and Hezbollah and other armed groups in Lebanon

continue to give rise to serious concerns about a major escalation of violence in southern Lebanon. (For background on the war in Gaza, see the “The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” brief in our April *Monthly Forecast*. 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.)

The intensification and the geographical reach of the strikes and statements by Israeli and Hezbollah officials raise the prospect that brinkmanship may give way to open conflict. Briefing at the 18 April Security Council open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Secretary-General António

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

Guterres called for maximum restraint, noting that the exchanges of fire across the Blue Line “could take on a momentum of their own” and “[s]trikes deep into the territories of Lebanon and Israel could ignite an even more serious confrontation”.

The exchanges of fire have resulted in casualties among both combatants and civilians on both sides of the Blue Line. As at 18 April, 370 people have been killed in Lebanon since the escalation, including at least 70 civilians, while 18 people have been killed in Israel, including eight civilians, according to data cited by the Agence France Presse wire service. Tens of thousands of people have been internally displaced in southern Lebanon and northern Israel, according to the latest Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701, which was adopted in 2006 and called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. The report, which was issued on 8 March and covers the period from 21 October 2023 to 20 February, also said that these exchanges had “created new areas of unexploded ordnance contamination”, posing a threat to civilians on both sides of the Blue Line and to UN and humanitarian personnel.

Against this backdrop, the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has continued to work to implement its mandate, including through vehicular and counter-rocket-launching patrols in its area of operations. At the time of writing, no fatalities among UNIFIL peacekeepers have been reported since the start of the escalation. Some peacekeepers have been wounded, however, and several of the mission’s positions have been hit. On 30 March, three military observers of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) serving in the Observer Group Lebanon and a language assistant were injured during a patrol along the Blue Line as a result of an explosion. While at the time of writing a UNIFIL investigation into the incident was ongoing, media reports citing declarations by a Lebanese official have attributed the incident to a landmine. The Secretary-General’s report on resolution 1701 said that “[o]n several occasions, individuals carried out attacks against Israel from the vicinity of UNIFIL positions, drawing return fire by the Israel Defense Forces” (IDF). In response, UNIFIL protested that the actions endangered peacekeepers and UNIFIL premises, and initiated patrols around its positions “to prevent hostile activity”. The Secretary-General’s report also noted three incidents in which “UNIFIL positions were directly hit, including by white phosphorous ammunition”.

The Secretary-General’s report said that UNIFIL facilitated numerous civilian and humanitarian activities in areas near the Blue Line, but “[f]oot patrols, market walks, temporary checkpoints and air operations remained suspended, except for a limited resumption of foot patrols in areas sufficiently distant from the Blue Line”. While UNIFIL liaison and coordination mechanisms continue to be used, it seems that no meeting of the tripartite mechanism—which consists of representatives of UNIFIL, the IDF and the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF)—has taken place since September 2023.

Messaging on the exchanges of fire across the Blue Line from senior UN officials in Lebanon has focused on the importance of de-escalation and the need for the parties to recommit to a cessation of hostilities under the framework of resolution 1701. Key messages have also included the importance of a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution to the conflict between Lebanon and Israel

through a political process, and of preserving unity among Security Council members behind “efforts to maintain Lebanon’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and political stability”.

In his latest report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559, which covers the period from 20 September 2023 to 22 March, the Secretary-General observed that the maintenance and use by Hezbollah of military capabilities “remains a matter of grave concern”, adding that the widespread presence of weapons outside of the state’s control and “the activity of several armed Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to undermine security and stability in Lebanon”. He urged the Lebanese government and the LAF to “take all measures necessary” to prohibit Hezbollah and other groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the state’s authority. In the report, Guterres also condemned “all violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon” and noted that the IDF’s strikes in Lebanese territory “undermine security and exacerbate the tensions”. He called on Israel to abide by its international law obligations and relevant Security Council resolutions, including “to immediately cease its flights over Lebanese airspace”.

Diplomatic initiatives by France and the US focusing on de-escalation and on bringing the parties to a negotiation process over disputed areas along the Blue Line have continued. However, these efforts have yet to bear fruit. Hezbollah has said on several occasions that until the war in Gaza ends, it will not take part in any negotiations and the Lebanese front “will remain active”.

Lebanon has been without a president for one and a half years since Michel Aoun’s term ended on 31 October 2022, with opposing politico-sectarian blocks unable to agree on a candidate. An informal group of five states (Egypt, France, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the US), often referred to as “the Quintet”, has held several meetings with Lebanese political leaders in an attempt to mobilise agreement on the presidential file, thus far to no avail. The presidential vacuum is compounded by the fact that, almost two years since the 15 May 2022 legislative elections, Lebanon’s government remains in caretaker status. On 25 April, the Lebanese parliament voted to extend the term of local government officials until 31 May 2025, paving the way for a postponement of the elections for up to a year. This marked the third time that local elections, originally planned for May 2022, have been postponed.

Anti-refugee sentiment, measures, and incidents continue to be a source of concern in Lebanon, which hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. In a 25 April statement, Human Rights Watch stressed that “Lebanese authorities have arbitrarily detained, tortured, and forcibly returned Syrians to Syria in recent months, including opposition activists and army defectors”. In 2023, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees registered about 300 incidents during which over 13,700 individuals were deported from Lebanon or “pushed back at the border” with Syria.

More than two years since the April 2022 Staff Level Agreement between Lebanon and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Lebanon does not appear to be close to satisfying the preconditions set by the IMF to support the country with around \$3 billion.

The investigation into responsibility for the 4 August 2020 Beirut port explosion remains stalled.

Lebanon

Key Issues and Options

The non-implementation of key aspects of resolution 1559 and 1701 remains a key concern. The continuing exchanges of fire across the Blue Line and the risk of a major escalation of violence in Lebanon are also key issues for Council members. Open war in southern Lebanon would have potentially catastrophic effects on the country, where the inability of politicians to agree on a presidential candidate is normalising the paralysis of key Lebanese institutions and, in turn, decreasing the chances of effectively addressing the country's socio-economic challenges and catalysing recovery.

Council members are likely to closely monitor developments in Lebanon and across the Blue Line and may consider stepping up diplomatic efforts to emphasise to all actors involved that brinkmanship is likely to have disastrous consequences. Council members may consider issuing a press statement calling on all relevant parties to cease fire and implement Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701. The press statement could also emphasise the importance of respecting international law and stress that civilians and civilian objects must never be targeted. It could also underscore the importance of reforms to promote socioeconomic stability and of respecting the principle of non-refoulement.

Though not addressing the causes of the long-standing hostility between Israel and Hezbollah, a ceasefire in Gaza would likely contribute to quietening the situation along the Blue Line, possibly opening space for indirect talks between Lebanon and Israel. While

the Palestinian question remains unresolved, however, the risk of a regional conflagration connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and involving Lebanon is likely to persist even after the end of the war between Israel and Hamas. The resumption of a political process between Israelis and Palestinians to move towards a resolution of the conflict and achieve a two-state solution would have beneficial effects for the whole region, however remote the possibility currently appears. A key issue for Council members and UN member states would be to build effectively on any political momentum in the region to better support Lebanon to overcome its own multi-layered crises.

Council Dynamics

There continues to be broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. They also agree that a full-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah must be avoided. However, differences among Council members persist over 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, have listed Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. In contrast, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), due by 1 May, as requested in resolution 2708 of 14 November 2023. Consultations will follow the briefing.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support for the Joint-Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) expire on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

The outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan's military leader, and the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedi), continue to exacerbate the already dire humanitarian, political, and security situation in the Abyei region, the disputed area along the Sudan-South Sudan border. The Council was last briefed on Abyei on 6 November 2023 by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh.

Lacroix said that the conflict in Sudan had "effectively put on hold the political process with regard to the final status of Abyei and

border issues". He noted that the mission had witnessed an increased circulation of weapons in Abyei, pointing out that this might be attributed to the situation in Sudan. He added that the conflict had also created economic hardship for the population of Abyei because of the disruption in the flow of basic goods and commodities from Sudan. Highlighting the challenges faced by UNISFA, he pointed out that fighting in South Kordofan and the JBVMM's area of operations placed restrictions on air movements that hampered safe resupply and the continued implementation of the mechanism's mandate. He noted that UNISFA had adjusted its deployment routes and supply arrangements. In her remarks during the meeting, Tetteh warned that military developments in Sudan are likely to have adverse consequences on Abyei's "social fabric and the already fragile coexistence between the Misserya and the Ngok Dinka [communities]".

The security situation in the area remains tense, with continuing inter-communal violence. The Secretary-General's most recent report on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), dated 26 February and covering developments between 1 December 2023 and 15 February, said that inter-communal violence between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities persisted in the contested areas along the border between the Abyei area and Warrap state in South Sudan. In a 31 December 2023 press release, UNISFA condemned the killing of the Juba-appointed deputy chief administrator

Sudan/South Sudan

in the southern Abyei area, Noon Deng Nyok, and five other people in an ambush by an “armed group” in Wunpeth, near Agok town. This incident, the press release said, “risk[ed] the gains that have been made towards resolving the difficult situation in [s]outhern Abyei”. It called on all parties to exercise restraint and collaborate in bringing the perpetrators of the crime to justice and further reaffirmed UNISFA’s commitment to supporting local authorities in their efforts to promote reconciliation, stability, and the rule of law.

In a 27 January press release, UNISFA condemned the armed attacks that had taken place earlier that day in the Nyinkuac, Majbong and Khadian areas of Abyei. It said that an armed group also attacked UNISFA’s base in Agok, during which a peacekeeper from Ghana was killed. The mission evacuated civilians in imminent threat of danger to UNISFA bases. The next day (28 January), a peacekeeper from Pakistan was killed and four other uniformed personnel were injured when they came under heavy fire while transporting injured civilians from a UNISFA base to a hospital.

Clashes broke out again on 3-4 February in the southern part of Abyei, which included the use of heavy weapons, such as rocket-propelled grenades and mortars, according to a 5 February UNISFA press release. UNISFA peacekeepers were targeted when an armoured personnel carrier came under heavy fire in an ambush. Peacekeepers from Ghana also came under attack at a base in Marial Achak. The mission intensified its patrols by land and air to deter further violence and protect civilians. The press release called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, respect for international humanitarian law, and protection of civilians—urging all stakeholders to cooperate in holding perpetrators accountable and ensuring the restoration of peace in Abyei.

The Secretary-General’s UNMISS report said that the 27-28 January and 3-4 February attacks resulted in the deaths of 83 people, including four humanitarian workers, and injured several others. During the period covered by the report, more than 2,200 people were displaced in Abyei, most of whom were children and women who sought refuge in the UNISFA compound in Rumajak, near Abyei town. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), a non-governmental organisation that collects conflict-related data, attributed responsibility for these attacks, including the killing of Deng Nyok, to elements of Twic Dinka community (also known as Titweng) and forces of Gai Machiek, a spiritual leader from the Nuer ethnic community and a leader of the South Sudan People’s Movement/Army—an allegation denied by Machiek and leaders of the Twic community.

In an 8 February press statement, Council members condemned the attacks that resulted in the deaths of two peacekeepers and numerous civilian casualties on 27-28 January and expressed concerns about the escalation of violence in recent months. Members called on the governments of Sudan and South Sudan to address the ongoing violence and take necessary steps to de-escalate tensions between affected communities and protect civilians. They denounced the targeting of peacekeepers and provocations against UNISFA and called for those responsible to be held accountable. Members stressed the need for relevant legal authorities to investigate and engage communities involved, as appropriate.

From 19 to 23 February, Lacroix and Tetteh undertook a visit to

South Sudan and travelled to Abyei for two days. During the visit, they held discussions with the South Sudanese leadership, including President Salva Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar, local communities and civil society in Abyei, and officials from the UN missions in Abyei and South Sudan, among others. At a press conference in Juba at the end of the visit, Lacroix indicated that the discussions were focused on the recent incidents of inter-communal violence, the need to de-escalate the tensions and rebuild trust with the local communities, and the final status of Abyei area. While tensions between the communities remained high, he acknowledged the ongoing engagements seeking to ease them at all levels, including in Juba and Abyei. Giving the UN’s assessment of the current situation, Tetteh said “our understanding of the basis for the current conflict boils down to a land dispute between two subgroups of the Dinka ethnic group—the Ngok and the Twic”. Regarding the final status of Abyei, she noted that current circumstances did not present an opportunity to hold such discussions, pointing out the lack of representation on the Sudanese side and guarantees for implementation. (Prior to the conflict, Hemeti participated in the discussions as the head of Sudan’s Abyei Committee.)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to reinvigorate the political process to address the final status of Abyei and Sudan-South Sudan border issues amid the war in Sudan, which has virtually put the process on hold. A step in this regard could be to secure a ceasefire in Sudan. Mitigating the effects of Sudan’s conflict on the security and humanitarian situation in Abyei also remains a critical issue.

A related issue is the operational difficulties that UNISFA and the JBVMM face because of the conflict in Sudan, including restrictions on freedom of movement.

Another significant issue for the Council is the rising levels of inter-communal violence and the resulting insecurity in the area.

Also an important issue for the Council 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.

During the upcoming meeting in May, Council members could encourage UNISFA and the authorities in Sudan and South Sudan to engage with the communities, de-escalate tensions, and support local mediation and reconciliation efforts. Members may also express grave concern about the attacks on peacekeepers and call on the relevant authorities to ensure accountability and justice. The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement delivering these messages.

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. Members share concerns about the rising incidents of inter-communal violence, attacks on peacekeepers and the compounding effects of Sudan’s conflict on the political, humanitarian and security situation in the Abyei area.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2708, which last renewed UNISFA’s mandate, demonstrated that the Council remains unified

Sudan/South Sudan

in its view that the mission plays an important role in promoting regional stability, protecting civilians, and advancing efforts towards

a political settlement.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

The Role of African States in Global Security and Development Challenges

Expected Council Action

Mozambique will convene a debate on strengthening the role of African states in addressing global security and development challenges as a signature event of its May Council presidency.

Background and Key Recent Developments

For many years, African states have underscored that they are working to address peace and security challenges on their continent through “African solutions to African problems”. On the 50th anniversary of the Organization of African Unity—the AU’s predecessor—in May 2013, African leaders committed themselves to ending violent conflicts in Africa by “silencing the guns” by 2023. This initiative has driven the AU’s efforts to promote peace and security on the continent, but the timeline has now been extended to 2030. In February 2019, the Security Council adopted resolution 2457, endorsing the AU’s “silencing the guns” initiative and expressing its readiness to support these efforts.

The Secretary-General has been updating the Council on the UN’s support for “silencing the guns” as part of his 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 UN Office to the AU (UNOAU).

In March 2023, Mozambique convened an open debate in the Council on the impact of development policies in the implementation of the “silencing the guns” initiative. Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Africa Cristina Duarte, AU High Representative for the Silencing the Guns Initiative Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Mozambique Mirko Manzoni briefed. (For background, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 29 March 2023.)

The African peace and security architecture established by the AU in 2002 has been instrumental in responding to conflicts and crises in Africa. The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), officially launched in 2004, is at the core of this architecture, with a mandate to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts on the continent. The AUPSC marks its 20th anniversary this year, and a colloquium is expected to be held in Addis Ababa on 25 May to take stock of its success and challenges over the past two decades.

In recent years, the peace and security of several African states has been complicated by governance challenges and socioeconomic difficulties. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government is testing the principles and values underpinning the African peace and security architecture. Terrorism and other transnational

security threats are also posing serious challenges to security and stability in several parts of the continent. Additionally, the peace and security situation in Africa has been further complicated by geopolitical rivalry among major and emerging powers vying for influence on the continent.

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, African states tried to draw attention to its economic impact on Africa, particularly regarding access to grain and fertiliser, and how it exacerbated food insecurity across the continent. Former AU Chairperson and President of Senegal Macky Sall visited Russia, accompanied by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, in June 2022 to discuss the situation with President Vladimir Putin. Several African leaders also visited Ukraine and Russia in June 2023, presenting a ten-point peace plan to the leadership of the two countries. It seems the plan did not get much traction.

The AU became the second regional bloc after the EU to secure a permanent seat within the G20 group of major and emerging economies working to address global economic issues and challenges. South Africa remains the only African state member of the group, while other African states and the AU participated in past G20 summits as guests. The Indian presidency of the G20 proposed to make the AU a full member of the group in June 2023; that proposal was endorsed by the G20 summit in New Delhi on 9 September 2023. This decision was welcomed as a milestone for Africa in enhancing its representation and voice on the international stage. The G20 declaration recognised Africa’s important role in the global economy and expressed support for the realisation of the aspirations under Agenda 2063—the AU’s blueprint for Africa’s economic transformation. In February, the AU adopted a decision on the modalities of its participation in the G20 and the priorities it will pursue at the G20 summit to be held in November in Brazil, principally social inclusion, the fight against hunger and poverty, the energy transition, the promotion of sustainable development, and the reform of global governance institutions.

In January, two African states, Egypt and Ethiopia, joined the BRICS, a group of emerging economies established in 2006 to counter the geopolitical and economic dominance of the G7 group of wealthier, advanced nations. The decision to invite these two African states was made at the BRICS summit in South Africa in August 2023 as part of efforts to expand the group’s membership to other developing and emerging economies. Until January, South Africa was the only African member; it joined the group in 2010.

Regarding the UN Summit of the Future to be held in September, the AU has submitted its inputs to the draft Pact for the Future—an

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFRICA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2719 (21 December 2023) was on the financing of AU-led peace support operations. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9299** (30 March 2023) was on the impact of development policies on the implementation of the “silencing the guns” initiative in Africa.

The Role of African States in Global Security and Development Challenges

outcome document to be adopted at the summit, which is being negotiated by UN member states. The AU has outlined several priorities for the reform of the multilateral system, among other things reiterating Africa's long-standing quest for two permanent and five non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council as encapsulated in the Ezilwini Consensus—the common African position on Security Council reform. The AU underscores the need for a robust counterterrorism approach that requires a new peace operations doctrine focused on peace enforcement. It also calls for adequate, flexible, predictable, and sustainable financing of continental and regional peace operations through access to the UN-assessed contributions, and welcomes the adoption of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led peace support operations.

The AU further highlights the need to implement the peace, security, and development nexus to address the structural and institutional deficiencies faced by several African states. Additionally, it underscores the need for reform of the global financial architecture and calls for a just climate change agenda that meets Africa's needs for climate financing, capacity-building, and technology transfer to mitigate the impact of climate change and promote sustainable development.

In January, Uganda assumed the chairmanship for 2024 to 2027 of the Non-Aligned Movement, a forum of 120 countries that are not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. Uganda also took over the 2024 chairmanship of the Group of Seventy-Seven and China (G77+China), a coalition of developing countries promoting the collective economic interests of its members and enhancing their joint negotiating capacity at the UN.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue at the May debate will be how to support African states in enhancing their role in addressing global security and development challenges.

The adoption of resolution 2719, spearheaded by the A3, is considered a landmark achievement that will shape the future of UN-AU cooperation and partnership. Its implementation will be another key issue, with discussions on test cases to be considered by the Council under resolution 2719 likely to pick up over the coming months. In its capacity as the chair of the Security Council Ad-Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, Mozambique convened a meeting on 30 April to facilitate a discussion about the implementation of the resolution and the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Also a major issue is how to address the root causes of the most intractable conflicts on the continent, which stem from underlying governance, peace and security, and development challenges. In this

context, Mozambique may underscore the need to apply a nexus approach in tackling these complex and interlinked challenges.

Council and Broader Dynamics

In recent years, the A3 has increasingly become a cohesive bloc, delivering joint statements, negotiating as a group to influence Council decisions on African issues, and proposing Council products to advance African priorities. The A3 is closely consulted by penholders on African files when they intend to call for meetings and facilitate negotiations on peacekeeping mandate renewals and extensions of sanctions regimes. In 2023, African issues constituted 38.24 percent of the Council's meetings and 51.02 percent of the Council's decisions. Africa hosts five UN peacekeeping operations and eight special political missions. UN peace operations in Africa have faced particular challenges from host governments and communities, resulting in the closure of the peacekeeping mission in Mali and the special political mission in Sudan last year.

It seems that Mozambique intends to promote a positive African narrative at the debate, arguing for the readiness of African states to play an active role in global affairs and influence global policy on climate change, energy, and reform of multilateral bodies. It may emphasise that the magnitude of contemporary challenges requires a robust African voice in global economic and political governance.

Mozambique may spotlight the role of the three African members (known as the A3) in advancing African issues and priorities in the Security Council as a positive development, giving Africa a permanent voice in the absence of a permanent seat. In the development realm, Mozambique may also draw attention to the rapid expansion of mobile technology and the transition to renewable energy in Africa, which present significant opportunities for economic growth and development.

In the context of the broader global geopolitical dynamics, former colonial powers are losing influence in Africa while other major and emerging powers are gaining ground. China has built strong political, economic, trade, and other ties with Africa over the past 25 years. Russia has also dramatically gained influence in recent years by leveraging military cooperation with African countries, including through the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company that was renamed Africa Corps after the death of its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, last year.

The US and its allies are working to counter the growing influence of China and Russia in Africa. In the face of technological advances, securing critical minerals has also emerged as a major issue in big power rivalry across the continent.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meeting on Yemen. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA are expected to brief. Head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) Major General Michael Beary will brief in consultations.

Key Recent Developments

Attacks by the Houthi rebel group on commercial shipping since the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas in October 2023 have persisted, significantly disrupting trade routes through the Red Sea, and prompting military strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen by the UK and the US since 11 January. The situation has frozen, and risks upending, peace talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia and deliberations on a UN roadmap for an inter-Yemeni political process.

On 13 April, the Houthis joined Iran and its proxy groups—militias in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon—in launching missiles and drones at Israel in retaliation for Israel's 1 April attack against an Iranian consular facility in Damascus. The attack on the facility killed several senior commanders of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). According to the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), Israel and its "international partners" intercepted 99 percent of the approximately 300 unmanned aerial vehicles, ballistic missiles, and cruise missiles launched. US Central Command, in a statement noting that it had intercepted more than 80 one-way drones and at least six ballistic missiles from Iran and Yemen, highlighted that it had destroyed a ballistic missile on its launcher vehicle and seven drones in Yemen prior to their being fired.

On 18 April, Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi said in a televised speech that the group would continue its attacks against maritime shipping until Israel halts its military offensive against Hamas in Gaza, which it launched following the Palestinian militant group's attack on Israel on 7 October 2023. "The solution in everyone's interest is to stop the [Israeli] aggression, end the siege in Gaza, and provide food and medicine [to the Gaza Strip]," he said.

The Security Council held its monthly briefing on Yemen on 15 April, followed by closed consultations. Grundberg reiterated that regional events have "significantly complicated the mediation space" to establish a nationwide ceasefire in Yemen and an intra-Yemeni political process. He added: "In the absence of a ceasefire in Gaza and a complete termination of attacks in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, the threat of further escalation persists. The recent developments involving Iran and Israel underscore the urgency of this matter." OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Edem Wosornu highlighted at the session that there had been a rapid spread since March of cholera in Houthi-controlled areas. As at 7 April, more than 11,000 suspected cases had been reported in these areas, with 75 associated deaths. Approximately 3,200 suspected cases have been reported in government-controlled areas since October 2023.

Civil society representative Wameedh Shakir, Founder and Chairwoman of Itar Foundation for Social Development, also briefed. Shakir highlighted the effect of climate change in Yemen, which she said causes food insecurity, water scarcity, and displacement. Shakir called for the Council to urge the conflict parties in Yemen to

address the climate crisis by enhancing good governance, building institutional capacity, and empowering civil society participation. Before the meeting, Council members that have signed on to the "Statement of joint pledges related to climate, peace and security"—France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US—held a stakeout to present a statement on climate, peace and security issues facing Yemen.

Women, Peace and Security

During her Council briefing, Shakir said Yemen's climate crisis disproportionately affects women and girls, "who often play a crucial role in food production and household water collection and management". She noted that "authorities do not consider climate change a priority" and that existing climate change adaptation plans lack "gender and youth-responsive implementation mechanisms". Shakir stressed that "renewed efforts towards peacebuilding are crucial, with civil society and women's rights organizations at the forefront". Among her recommendations, she urged the Council to call on all parties to respect and protect the human rights of all Yemenis, including women and girls, and urge the parties in Yemen to "lift all restrictions on the movement of Yemeni women, and humanitarian and peacebuilding workers".

Key Issues and Options

The Houthi threat to commercial shipping and the continued exchange of attacks by the Houthis on vessels and by US-led forces on Houthi targets is a key issue. Preserving the progress made prior to the crisis in the now-stalled Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia to reach a peace agreement and Grundberg's efforts to develop a road map for an inter-Yemeni political process is another key issue. Fragile relations among the factions that form the Yemeni government's Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) and some PLC members' calls for a separate southern Yemeni state remain additional concerns related to political efforts.

Members are likely to monitor developments in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and encourage the parties to engage with the Special Envoy and preserve the progress to date in peace talks. They may use opportunities, such as a ceasefire in Gaza or a lull in Red Sea attacks, to issue a press statement that expresses support for Yemen's peace process and encourages the parties to reach agreement on the Special Envoy's roadmap for a ceasefire and an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process.

Council members may also call on donors to increase their funding to the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and for actions to support economic stability, as the humanitarian situation remains a key issue. OCHA's 2024 HRP, released in January, was only 15.2 percent funded as at 25 April. It projects that 18.2 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2024. The main drivers of need remain Yemen's deteriorated economy, lack of public services and protracted conflict-induced displacement. In addition to cholera, recent months have seen a rise in food insecurity. A funding crisis for the work of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Yemen threatens to undermine the response. Insecurity and access restraints are also key issues impeding relief efforts. While the UN still reports that it has not seen major implications from the Red Sea crisis on the humanitarian situation, the risk that this could exacerbate needs is also a key issue.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2722](#) (10 January 2024) demanded that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and took note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks. [Security Council Letter S/2024/303](#) (8 April 2024) was a Secretary-General's letter containing a report, in accordance with resolution 2722, on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea covering the period 10 January to 8 April 2024. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9603](#) (15 April 2024) was a briefing on Yemen.

Yemen

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the various mediation efforts. They have welcomed the Houthi-Saudi talks and stress the ultimate need for an inclusive Yemeni political process under UN auspices to achieve a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Members have also condemned the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and are concerned about the consequences for maritime security, freedom of navigation, and Yemen's peace process.

Nonetheless, the Red Sea crisis has created some divisions on the Yemen file. On 10 January, the Council adopted resolution 2722, which took note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks. Algeria, Mozambique, Russia, and China abstained on the vote, however, and China and Russia have criticised the US and UK for strikes in Yemen without Council authorisation. The US and UK assert that their strikes are undertaken in self-defence under Article 51 of the

UN Charter. The US and Japan co-authored resolution 2722, as well as press statements on the crisis issued on 1 December 2023 and 18 March. The Houthis have held the Japanese-operated cargo ship *Galaxy Leader* and its crew since capturing the vessel, linked to an Israeli businessman, in November 2023.

Russia, China, and the African Council members (Algeria, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone) and Guyana, known as the "A3 plus one", also highlight the importance of a Gaza ceasefire to end the Red Sea crisis; in Council negotiations on products on the Houthi attacks they have argued for explicitly recognising the link between the two crises. A long-standing red line for Russia in the Council's Yemen products is identifying Iran as supplying the Houthis with arms.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea) chairs the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution renewing for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. The current authorisation expires on 2 June.

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

The authorisation for maritime inspections was last renewed by resolution 2684 of 2 June 2023, which requested the Secretary-General to submit reports on the implementation of the measures within six months and 11 months of the resolution's adoption. The first report, which covered the period from 15 April to 31

October 2023, referred to Libya's divided government and tense security situation and reaffirmed that the arms embargo, when properly implemented, could continue to play an important role in maintaining conditions conducive to advancing the political process, assisting Libyan authorities in ensuring security, and preventing the proliferation of arms in Libya and the region. The report said that it therefore remained "essential" that the embargo, combined with the inspection authorisation, be strictly implemented in a comprehensive manner to prevent illicit transfers by air, land, and sea. The report also referenced the final report of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts, covering the period from 25 April 2022 to 17 July 2023, which identified new violations of the arms embargo and provided a summary illustrating the variety and technical complexity of the arms that have been transferred into the country since the establishment of the arms embargo in 2011.

According to the Secretary-General's report, the EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med IRINI (Operation IRINI) remained the only regional organisation to inspect vessels under the authorisation. Between 15 April and 31 October 2023, it conducted 3,049 hailings (making contact with other vessels), 128 friendly approaches (consensual visits to vessels that can be carried out without flag state approval and without the use of enforcement measures), and one vessel inspection. It attempted one additional inspection but did not carry it out because of an explicit refusal of consent by the vessel's flag state. (The authorisation requires good-faith efforts to first obtain the consent of the vessel's flag state prior to any inspections.) No cargo seizures were reported.

In addition to renewing the maritime inspection authorisation, the Council is scheduled to receive a briefing this month from Khan on the ICC's Libya-related activities. The Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC in resolution 1970, which invited the ICC

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2702 (30 October 2023) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2024. S/RES/2684 (2 June 2023) renewed for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. 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 Reports S/2024/301 (9 April 2024) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. S/2023/936 (30 November 2023) was the six-month report on the authorisations in relation to the inspection of vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, requested by resolution 2684 to support the implementation of the arms embargo established in resolution 1970. Security Council Letter S/2023/673 (14 September 2023) transmitted the final report of the Panel of Experts on Libya, established pursuant to resolution 1973 of 17 March 2011.

Libya

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. He remains at large.

In his previous biannual report to the Council, dated 8 November 2023, Khan said that his office had continued its renewed investigative strategy for Libya—first announced in April 2022—which involves the allocation of additional resources, increased engagement with those affected by alleged crimes in Libya, and more effective cooperation with Libyan authorities. Khan reported “significant progress” across the four key lines of inquiry established under the strategy, particularly on the track related to military operations conducted between 2014 and 2020, for which investigative activities were nearly complete. Based on this progress, Khan anticipated that his next report to the Council could outline a “potential roadmap” for the conclusion of the ICC's activities in Libya pursuant to resolution 1970.

Regarding the broader political situation in Libya, the impasse continues between the UN-recognised 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 stalemate between the rival governments has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the Libyan national elections that were planned for December 2021. In this context, both the UN and national actors have concentrated efforts on facilitating agreement on a new roadmap for national elections to unify the country's divided government. (For more background and information on the political situation, see the brief on Libya in our April 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

In his 16 April briefing to the Council, Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Abdoulaye Bathily said that Libyan leaders had continued to respond to his mediation efforts with “stubborn resistance, unreasonable expectations, and indifference to the interests of the Libyan people”. He described competing initiatives outside the UN track as counterproductive and called for an end to the “selfish resolve of current leaders to maintain the status quo through delaying tactics and manoeuvres”. At a press conference following the briefing, Bathily confirmed that he had submitted his resignation to Secretary-General António Guterres, adding that “there is no way the UN can operate successfully” in Libya under the current circumstances. At the time of writing, it was unclear when he would step down.

On 1 March, Guterres announced the appointment of Stephanie Koury (US) as UNSMIL's Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs.

Women, Peace and Security

The annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which was issued on 4 April, says that factors including clashes between armed groups and illicit arms proliferation created an environment in which CRSV was perpetrated with impunity in Libya in 2023, with UNSMIL verifying five CRSV cases during the year. The report says that sexual violence was used by both state and non-state actors “as a tactic to silence journalists, detainees, migrants and women” and that it “persisted in detention centres, to which humanitarian access remained severely restricted”. The report further notes that LGBTQI persons “were targeted with sexual violence including in detention” and that “[t]raffickers, smugglers and armed men” continued to perpetrate CRSV against migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, and displaced persons, with state actors also being implicated. In his report, the Secretary-General called on the Libyan authorities and non-state actors to grant the UN “unrestricted humanitarian access to prisons, detention centres and migrant and refugee disembarkation points”. He also called for accountability and for the adoption of legislation targeting trafficking and on “the protection of women and children from violence”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in May is to renew the authorisation for maritime inspections off the coast of Libya. Since the adoption of resolution 2292 in 2016, the Council has renewed the authorisation annually through straightforward rollovers. France and Malta, co-penholders for the authorisation, are expected to seek a similar extension this year.

Council members may also continue the regular practice of convening an informal interactive dialogue (IID) ahead of the authorisation's renewal to discuss its implementation with an EU representative.

In the longer term, the main objective for the Council is to help foster common ground between Libya's rival legislatures to agree on electoral laws to unify the country's divided governments—a goal that Bathily has repeatedly urged Council members to support by wielding their influence on national stakeholders.

Council Dynamics

Until 2022, the Council unanimously renewed the maritime inspection authorisation every year. Since then, Russia has abstained on the vote, questioning the viability of the authorisation, noting that Operation IRINI has failed to uncover significant arms supply channels, and alleging that it conducts its inspections in a selective and non-transparent manner. The Russian representative reiterated these points at the Council's 16 April briefing on Libya, adding with regard to the upcoming renewal of the authorisation that Russia would “act in keeping with” its expressed concerns. At the same briefing, the UK and US expressed concern about recent reports of Russian arms shipments to eastern Libya.

Russia has also criticised the work of the ICC. Prior to Khan's May 2023 Council briefing—which took place following the ICC's March 2023 announcement that it had issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova—the country raised a point of order to object to Khan's participation, claiming that the ICC had become a “puppet of Western countries” and was acting on their orders and in their political interests. Russia reiterated this view at Khan's November 2023 briefing, urging the Council to “consider recalling” from the ICC the situations on Libya and Sudan that had previously been referred to it.

Although less forceful in their criticisms, some other Council

Libya

members have also expressed reservations about the court's work. China has described it as a violation of the principle of national sovereignty, while African members have long expressed concerns about the court's perceived disproportionate focus on their continent. Those Council members that are state parties to the Rome

Statute of the ICC—currently Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK—are generally supportive of the court's work. The position of the US, which is not a party to the Rome Statute, has varied depending on the sitting administration.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The current authorisation for the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) expires on 2 November.

Background

The 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace, also known as the Dayton 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.

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.

Key Recent Developments

BiH continues to experience political instability and separatist rhetoric and actions. On 26 March, High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt issued a decree to amend the Election Law of BiH. The decree introduced measures aimed at bolstering election integrity in BiH, including increased security for election materials, electronic voter identification, video surveillance, and electronic ballot counting for improved transparency and security. The decree also specifies procedures for handling complaints and sanctions, enhances gender equality, and imposes stricter controls on early political campaigning and fake news to prevent voter manipulation.

In response, on 28 March, RS President Milorad Dodik threatened to disrupt governance in BiH unless Schmidt's decree was

annulled within seven days. Dodik proposed a series of measures declaring Schmidt's decrees illegal, disempowering the Central Election Commission, and declaring key international ambassadors—from Germany, the UK, and the US—as “enemies of BiH” to be expelled. Dodik also threatened that RS could withdraw from key state institutions if these demands are not met.

On 29 March, the National Assembly of the RS (NARS) adopted its own draft legislation on elections, which proposed the establishment of a separate commission to oversee elections in RS. That same day, the US Embassy in Sarajevo issued a press statement condemning the move and describing Dodik's threats as “a direct attack on the state structure of [BiH] and the Dayton Peace Agreement”. Prior to the draft law entering into force, the US Embassy in Sarajevo issued a post on X (formerly Twitter) emphasising that “the creation of a parallel electoral system by [RS] government would be unconstitutional and anti-Dayton”, adding that any election conducted under such a system would have no legitimacy.

In April, Germany and Rwanda circulated a General Assembly draft resolution that, if adopted, would designate 11 July as the “International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica”. During BiH's 1992-1995 war, Srebrenica was designated by the Security Council as a “safe area”, coming under the protection of UN peacekeepers in April 1993. Starting on 6 July 1995, Bosnian Serb forces launched an offensive against the enclave, entering Srebrenica on 11 July. In the ensuing days, over 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and teenage boys were killed in mass executions by Bosnian Serb forces. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) later determined that the mass murder amounted to an act of genocide.

The draft text, co-sponsored by a cross-regional group of countries—including BiH and Council members France, Slovenia, and the US—condemns “any denial of the Srebrenica genocide” and the glorification of individuals convicted by the ICTY of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The negotiations on the draft text are ongoing and appear to have been contentious. The vote at the General Assembly, originally scheduled for 2 May, has been postponed to a later date.

In a series of posts on X on 9 April, RS President Milorad Dodik argued that the events in Srebrenica “cannot be characterised as genocide under international law” and criticised the draft General Assembly resolution as “directed against Srpska and the Serbian

UN DOCUMENTS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9466 (2 November 2023) was the semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina. Selected Other Documents S/2015/508 (8 July 2015) was a draft Security Council resolution prepared by the UK on the Srebrenica Genocide. A/54/549 (15 November 1999) was a UN report that assessed the events dating from the establishment of the safe area of Srebrenica.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

people as a whole”. He further claimed that the killing of 3,500 Serbs in the same area is “dismissed”, while “only the suffering of the Bosniaks is mentioned”. In a 24 April interview, German Special Representative for the Countries of the Western Balkans Manuel Sarrazin countered that the draft resolution “is not against Serbia, Republika Srpska or any other state, entity or group”.

On 18 April, the NARS adopted a 2021 report of the “International Commission for Srebrenica”, a body set up by the RS government in 2019. The report said that the crimes that took place in Srebrenica did not constitute genocide. After the NARS vote, thousands of Bosnian Serbs reportedly attended a rally in the northwestern town of Banja Luka to call for the withdrawal of the draft General Assembly resolution. On 22 April, Dodik said that adopting the draft resolution “is incompatible with the continued existence of BiH”.

At a 22 April press stakeout, Russian Permanent Representative to the UN Vassily Nebenzia said that Russia would “never support” such a resolution. Arguing that the draft text is incompatible with the Dayton Agreement, since one of the entities comprising the state of BiH “never gave its consent”, Nebenzia emphasised that the draft General Assembly resolution could destabilise BiH. This stance is consistent with Russia’s previous actions; in July 2015, it vetoed a UK-proposed Security Council draft resolution that condemned “the crime of genocide at Srebrenica as established by judgments of the ICTY and ICJ and all other proven war crimes and crimes against humanity” committed during the conflict in BiH. The draft also determined that acknowledging the events in Srebrenica as genocide was essential for reconciliation. (For more information, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 6 July 2015.)

On 30 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the situation in BiH, at Russia’s request. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča and High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt briefed the Council. The Serb member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic Presidency of BiH, Željka Cvijanović, participated under rule 39 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, while BiH, Croatia, and Serbia

participated under rule 37. (For more information, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 29 April.)

Human-Rights Related Developments

On 22 April, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clément Nyaletsossi Voule called for immediate action to reverse the deterioration of civic space and social cohesion, and the weakening of democratic institutions in BiH. He stressed that “while meaningful progress has been made in transitioning to a peaceful society”, BiH still endures the legacy of “the deeply ethnically divisive armed conflict, marred by war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”. He expressed concerns about the proliferation of restrictive laws and bills in RS related to freedom of association, opinion and expression, and peaceful assembly, as well as the re-criminalisation of defamation and the Draft law on the Special Registry and Transparency of the Work of Non-Profit Organisations. Voule called on BiH authorities to overcome their differences to protect the rights of everyone across the country. This statement was made at the end of his 14-22 April visit to the country. Voule will submit the report on his visit to the Human Rights Council in June 2025.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is the need to address the separatist rhetoric and actions of RS authorities. One option is for the Council to issue a presidential statement endorsing the continued relevance of the Dayton Agreement and urging all parties to refrain from divisive rhetoric and actions.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Deep divisions related to BiH’s Euro-Atlantic integration and possible accession to NATO—particularly between Russia on the one hand and the US and European Council members on the other—colour Council dynamics on BiH. The European Council agreed to open accession talks with BiH on 21 March after having unanimously voted to grant BiH candidate status in December 2022.

Overall, Council members have similar concerns about BiH’s divisive ethnic politics. Most members are also critical of Dodik’s rhetoric and his recent threats of dissolution, which they view as challenging BiH’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, however, tends to be supportive of Dodik’s positions.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), which expires on 31 May. Outgoing Special Representative and Head of UNAMI Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert is also scheduled to brief the Council on recent developments in Iraq and the Secretary-General’s upcoming reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in Iraq remains tense amidst regional fallout

from the Israel-Hamas war. Following the outbreak of the conflict, Iraqi militia groups—considered Iranian proxies forming part of the country’s “axis of resistance” across the region—launched dozens of attacks on US military assets in Iraq and Syria, as well as a 28 January drone strike against a US military outpost in north-eastern Jordan in which three people were killed. On 2 February, the US launched retaliatory airstrikes against 85 militia targets in western Iraq and eastern Syria, reportedly killing 16 people and wounding 25 in Iraq. On 7 February, the US conducted a drone strike in Baghdad that killed a senior leader of the Kata’ib Hezbollah militia group who was allegedly responsible for the 28 January strike. Since then,

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2697](#) (15 September 2023) extended UNITAD’s mandate for a final one-year non-extendable term, until 17 September 2024. [S/RES/2682](#) (30 May 2023) extended UNAMI’s mandate until 31 May 2024. [Secretary-General’s Reports S/2024/96](#) (25 January 2024) was the 120-day report on UNAMI, which covered developments from September 2023 to February 2024. [S/2024/95](#) (25 January 2024) was the report on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. [S/2024/20](#) (15 January 2024) contained recommendations on ways for UNITAD to share its collected evidence with Iraqi authorities, which was requested by resolution 2697 of 15 September 2023. [Security Council Letters S/2024/270](#) (26 March 2024) transmitted to the Council the strategic independent review of UNAMI, prepared by Volker Perthes, pursuant to resolution 2682 of 30 May 2023. [S/2024/238](#) (14 March 2024) transmitted to the Council a road map for the completion of UNITAD’s mandate and necessary steps for its closure, requested by resolution 2697 of 15 September 2023.

the militias do not appear to have attacked US assets in the region.

The hostilities raised tensions between the US and Iraqi governments. Iraq condemned the US strikes as violations of Iraqi sovereignty, and some officials called for the withdrawal of the 2,500 US military advisers stationed in the country as part of the international coalition combatting the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). In a 25 January statement, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced that the US-Iraq Higher Military Commission—established in August 2023 to begin phasing down the US-led military coalition—would start holding working group meetings to “enable the transition to an enduring bilateral security partnership” between the countries. The commission’s three working groups have subsequently met in Baghdad to assess the continued threat from ISIL/Da'esh, the operational environment, and the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces, respectively. In a joint statement issued after a 15 April meeting between Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia'a al-Sudani and US President Joe Biden in Washington, DC, the two leaders affirmed that they would continue to review these three factors to determine “when and how” the anti-ISIL/Da'esh coalition in Iraq would end and transition to bilateral security partnerships.

Iraq has also been implicated in the rising tensions between Iran and Israel. On 12 April, Iran launched an airborne attack against Israel comprising approximately 300 uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs), cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles. In a 14 April press statement, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the strikes were “supplemented” by additional attacks by militias in Iraq, as well as the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Al-Sudani denied that strikes on Israel were launched from Iraqi territory.

On the political track, the Iraqi Federal Court, in a 20 February ruling, struck down an election law in the semi-autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) that reserved 11 seats in the regional parliament for ethnic and religious minorities. The ruling also transferred authority to oversee regional elections from the KRI's electoral commission to the federal Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission and divided the region's single-constituency system into four separate constituencies. In response, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)—the region's dominant political party—announced that it would boycott the regional parliamentary elections scheduled for 20 June.

In a 20 March statement, UNAMI took note of both decisions by the Iraqi Federal Court and the KDP and called on all parties to work together toward a solution to avoid “another prolonged impasse”, noting that it was “essential” to hold the parliamentary elections on the prescribed date. The elections had originally been scheduled for October 2022 but have been postponed several times because of political disagreements between Kurdish and federal Iraqi officials and between rival Kurdish political parties.

On 15 January, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council his report containing recommendations on ways for the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq (UNITAD) to share its collected evidence with Iraqi authorities. That report was requested by resolution 2697 of 15 September 2023, which renewed UNITAD's mandate for a final one-year term. On 14 March, Special Adviser and head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher transmitted to the Council a road map for the completion of the team's mandate and necessary steps for its closure,

also requested by resolution 2697.

On 28 March, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council the independent strategic review of UNAMI, requested by resolution 2682 of 30 May 2023, which most recently renewed the mission's mandate. According to the review, the Iraqi government has proposed that UNAMI draw down by May 2026 through a two-year transitional period that would limit the mission's mandated tasks to humanitarian and development activities during the next one-year mandate period and subsequently transfer residual mission tasks to the UN Country Team (UNCT) in the following period. The review appeared to endorse this timeline, which it said could facilitate an “orderly reconfiguration” of the UN presence in Iraq. It also recommended, however, that the timeline be combined with an indicator-based approach to reassure all Iraqi stakeholders—notably minority groups and civil society actors—of “the sustainability of the current political system and their continued safe participation in it” after UNAMI's drawdown. The proposed indicators include, among other things, the peaceful holding of parliamentary elections; the undertaking of a constitutional review; a sustainable UN human rights presence beyond UNAMI; an agreement between the federal government and the KRI on the equitable sharing of oil revenues; and continued progress in providing security in all areas of Iraq, including through the progressive transfer of security tasks from the military to the police.

Furthermore, noting a “discrepancy” between UNAMI's current mandate and what is achievable on the ground, the review recommended that the Council streamline UNAMI's mandate during the transitional period to better address present threats to Iraq's peace and security. It identified these threats as the fragility of state institutions, the proliferation of armed actors, and the possibility of a resurgence of ISIL/Da'esh or other violent extremist groups—all of which are exacerbated by uncertainty about the impact of the current regional crisis on Iraq. In this context, the review recommended focusing UNAMI's mandate on supporting Iraqi efforts to consolidate nationally owned conflict resolution, crisis management, and reconciliation mechanisms, as well as continuing to provide technical elections and human rights assistance. It also recommended that the Council reduce the frequency of the Secretary-General's reporting from three times a year to a biannual cycle to allow for better analysis of UNAMI's progress in areas that are increasingly focused on longer-term issues.

On 5 February, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members at Russia's request on the US airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. (For more information, see our *What's in Blue* story of 5 February.) The following day, on 6 February, the Council convened for its regular briefing on UNAMI. At that meeting, Hennis-Plasschaert announced her intention to step down from her position in late May. Secretary-General António Guterres appointed her in 2018.

Human-Rights Related Developments

On 9 February, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Marta Hurtado expressed great concern about proposed amendments to legislation in Iraq. Approving these amendments, she noted, would impose the death penalty or life imprisonment for engaging in consensual same-sex relations. The spokesperson

Iraq

called on the members of Iraq's parliament to ensure that any legislation is fully in line with Iraq's human rights obligations. On 15 April, Iraqi lawmakers postponed voting due to time constraints; disagreements over the amendments remained unresolved.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council in May is to renew UNAMI's mandate. The Council is expected to initiate the transition towards a recalibrated UN presence in Iraq while seeking to preserve the relative stability that the country has enjoyed since the current government came into power in October 2022.

The independent strategic review is expected to inform Council negotiations, including with regard to the transitional timeline, the substance of UNAMI's mandate during the transition, and proposed indicators to measure progress. Escalating regional and national tensions in the context of the Israel-Hamas war could also affect these discussions.

In the longer term, the Council could also consider options described in the review for supporting Iraq in strengthening effective regional cooperation on transnational issues, such as border security, energy, trade, environment, refugees, and the adverse impacts of climate change. In this regard, the review recommended that the Council establish a "dedicated capacity" to help countries in the Gulf region consolidate linkages on these issues, possibly in the form of a regional UN office to promote regional dialogue and confidence-building.

Council and Broader Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of the Iraqi government and the assistance provided by UNAMI. Last year's adoptions of

resolutions 2682 and 2697—respectively renewing the mandates of UNAMI and UNITAD—were unanimous.

Council members also largely agree that the UN's long-term configuration in Iraq should be reviewed in light of the improving political and security situations in the country, a position shared by the Iraqi government. Resolution 2682 therefore requested an independent strategic review of UNAMI's mandate.

Despite this consensus, Council members may have diverging views on the specific elements of a transition. For instance, they may debate the length and sequencing of the timeline, such as the two-year transitional period recommended by the review and the Iraqi government's proposal to limit the mission's mandate to humanitarian and development activities as of the next mandate period. Members are also likely to deliberate the review's recommendation to combine a transitional timeline with an indicator-based approach, including which indicators to employ and the extent to which the timeline should be contingent on progress on those indicators.

More broadly, the current regional situation has exacerbated geopolitical tensions, which have played out in the context of Iraq. US and Iranian military operations in the country have strained Baghdad's relations with both Washington and Tehran while stoking concerns about a direct confrontation between the US and Iran in the region. The escalation may also further inflame relations between the US and both China and Russia, which have forged close ties with Tehran. The Iraqi government routinely declares that it seeks a balanced relationship with regional and international security partners and does not wish to become a theatre for geopolitical conflicts.

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

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

Expected Council Action

During the month of May, Security Council members are scheduled to hold consultations on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S).

Key Recent Developments

On 2 December 2023, Burkina Faso and Niger announced their withdrawal from the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel). Mali had previously withdrawn from the bloc, which was established in 2014 and, in 2017, created the FC-G5S to combat terrorist groups and organised crime. In September 2023, the three countries, all governed by military juntas, formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) as an organisation of collective defence and mutual assistance against terrorism and organised crime in their common area, as well as against armed rebellion or other threats to their sovereignty and territorial integrity. On 6 December 2023, Chad and Mauritania, the remaining G5 Sahel countries, suggested that they were prepared to dissolve the G5 Sahel, which, according to its founding convention,

can be terminated at the request of at least three of its member states.

Pursuant to resolution 2391 of December 2017 that authorised the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to provide logistical and operational support to the FC-G5S, the Secretary-General was mandated to submit biannual reports about the force to the Council. But even before Burkina Faso and Niger decided to leave the G5 Sahel, a Secretary-General's letter to the Council, dated 10 November 2023, recommended ending the UN's reporting obligations on the FC-G5S, with the further justification of MINUSMA's departure from Mali by 31 December 2023 and the previous termination of the EU funding that had allowed MINUSMA to provide support to the force. Council members, however, have yet to agree on a letter signalling their approval of the Secretary-General's recommendation because of differences about whether to replace UN reporting on the FC-G5S with a new reporting mechanism on the Sahel, which continues to face destabilising terrorist violence.

Meanwhile, on 28 January, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger also

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE FC-G5S AND THE SAHEL Security Council Letter S/2023/865 (10 November 2023) was from the Secretary-General recommending to the Council to terminate the Secretariat's reporting obligations on the G5 Sahel Joint Force. Security Council Press Statements SC/15607 (29 February 2024) condemned the terrorist attacks that resulted in the loss of civilian lives over recent months in Burkina Faso, including those at a church in Essakane and a mosque in Natiaboani on 25 February 2024. SC/15557 (5 January 2024) took note of the closure on 31 December 2023 of MINUSMA and paid tribute to its 311 personnel who lost their lives since 2013. SC/15372 (28 July 2023) strongly condemned the efforts to unconstitutionally change the legitimate government of Niger on 26 July and expressed support for the efforts of ECOWAS, the AU and the UN.

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

announced their withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The three countries alleged that ECOWAS had moved away from its founding principles and had become a threat to member states and their populations. They further criticised ECOWAS for not supporting their fight against terrorism while imposing what they claimed were “illegal, illegitimate, inhumane and irresponsible sanctions”. At an ECOWAS extraordinary summit in Abuja on 24 February, West African leaders eased sanctions on Mali and decided to lift “with immediate effect” sanctions that they had imposed on Niger following the 26 July 2023 coup d’état that ousted President Mohamed Bazoum. The summit communiqué urged the three countries to reconsider their decision to leave ECOWAS and said the regional community would seek to convince them to remain in the group.

In other developments, the UN announced on 30 December 2023 the completion of MINUSMA’s withdrawal from Mali. As the UN noted, it will continue to conduct a liquidation process of assets and equipment from sites in Gao and Bamako. On 25 January, Mali’s transitional government declared the “immediate termination” of the Mali 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. The announcement followed the retaking by Malian forces—supported by the Wagner Group, the Russian private security company—of the major cities and towns of northern Mali by the end of last year from Tuareg separatist groups during fighting that broke out during MINUSMA’s withdrawal. In place of the peace agreement, authorities announced an Inter-Malian Dialogue for Peace and National Reconciliation. The main armed groups, however, have remained outside this process.

On 31 March, more than 80 political parties and civil society groups called for holding elections as soon as possible after the date that transitional authorities had committed to restore constitutional order (26 March) had passed. The authorities subsequently suspended all political activities in a 10 April decree and two days later banned media coverage of political parties and activities.

Shortly after last year’s coup d’état in Niger ousting President Bazoum, the country’s new authorities called for the withdrawal of the 1,500 French troops in the country. This was completed by the end of December 2023. On 4 December 2023, the authorities ended two military cooperation agreements with the EU, including the EU Civilian Capacity-Building Mission in Niger. A week earlier, Niger had also revoked a 2015 migration law adopted as part of an agreement with the EU that criminalised the trafficking of migrants in Niger. On 16 March, Niger revoked its military cooperation agreement with the US. The US maintains over 1,000 troops in the country and operates a drone base in Agadez that it built six years ago at a cost of \$110 million to monitor terrorist groups. US officials, according to media reports on 19 April, said that they had agreed with Niger to plan an “orderly and responsible withdrawal” of forces to be completed over the coming months.

These decisions by Niger’s military junta, known as the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), came as Nigerian and Russian officials met in Niamey and Moscow in December 2023 and January, respectively, to strengthen military cooperation. On 10 April, personnel of Russia’s Africa Corps, which is the successor entity to the Wagner Group, deployed to Niger to train its

forces and, reportedly, to deliver anti-aircraft systems. Africa Corps previously deployed about 100 troops to Burkina Faso on 24 January, and news reports said it would dispatch an additional 200 personnel to the country.

Meanwhile the security situation in the Sahel remains dire. to the US-based crisis-monitoring group Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), violence in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger has worsened since the coups d’état in those countries, hitting a new high in 2023 as conflict fatalities increased by 38 percent and civilian deaths rose by 18 percent compared with the previous year. In Burkina Faso, over 8,000 people were killed, double the number in 2022. On 6 March, AES countries that they would create a joint counter-terrorism force. At an Africa counter-terrorism summit in Abuja on 22–23 April, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed said that the Sahel accounted for almost half the deaths caused by terrorism globally, and African leaders called for more regional cooperation, including the establishment of a regional standby force. A Human Rights Watch report, published on 25 April, said that Burkina Faso’s military executed at least 223 civilians, including 56 children, on 24 and 25 February from two villages whose residents were accused of cooperating with terrorists.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is whether and how to continue UN reporting on the Sahel to replace the bi-annual reports on the FC-G5S and focus Council attention on the security situation. With the end of MINUSMA and the Mali sanctions regime in 2023—and the potential termination of the reporting cycle on the FC-G5S—the Council would have only the biannual reports of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) as opportunities to consider the situation in the Sahel.

In addition to the threat posed by terrorism in the Sahel region, the ability of other counter-terrorism security mechanisms to counter this—such as the AES, the Accra Initiative, and the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin—are key issues.

Addressing structural conflict drivers in the Sahel, such as weak governance, under-development, and climate change, through the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) or other avenues, remains a key issue. Violations against civilians by Sahel countries’ militaries also remain a significant concern.

Council members could send a letter to the Secretary-General taking note of his decision to end his reporting on the FC-G5S and requesting UNOWAS or the Secretariat to provide additional reports on developments in the Sahel and relevant security initiatives and mechanisms. Another option is for members to request ad-hoc briefings when developments in the Sahel warrant Council attention.

Council Dynamics

Council discussion on the Sahel has grown polarised in recent years. As the AES states have rejected traditional security and regional partners (ECOWAS, France, the UN, and the US), Russia has strengthened its ties with military juntas in the Sahel. The US and European members have repeatedly criticised the presence of Russia’s Wagner Group in the region while Russia has become a champion of the views of the AES states.

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

This has made agreement on Council products difficult. While Western and African Council members, among others, have preferred to maintain a mechanism for Council engagement on the Sahel, Russia has to date objected to different proposals to replace the FC-G5S reporting cycle. Elected member Algeria, which brokered the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, also

known as the Algiers Accord, was seen as a potential bridge between the UN and Mali amid the tensions last year that led Mali's transitional authorities to demand MINUSMA's withdrawal. But Algeria's relations have soured with Mali, while Niger's CNSP also rebuffed Algerian efforts to mediate a political transition agreement.

France is the penholder on the FC-G5S.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold a meeting on the political process and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

Key Recent Developments

Syria remains entrenched in a devastating civil war, now in its 14th year, marked by ongoing battles on multiple fronts and a lack of progress on the political process. According to OCHA, approximately 16.7 million people—nearly 70 percent of Syria's population—remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance, with 15.4 million people facing acute food insecurity. This is the highest recorded number of people requiring humanitarian assistance at any time during Syria's civil war. Since 2011, over 14 million Syrians have been displaced, including 7.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), according to UNHCR.

On 21 March, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed the Council on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria, respectively. Msuya highlighted that funding shortages for relief efforts had significantly curtailed the ability of humanitarian organisations to provide assistance in the country. In some cases, she pointed out, these shortages had led to the scaling back of health services in several areas: in north-west Syria, for instance, over 30 outpatient therapeutic feeding programmes for malnourished children have been forced to close since October 2023, and over 75 nutrition rapid response teams—about half the total—have suspended operations. Moreover, the World Food Programme has cut back its emergency food assistance in the country owing to funding constraints, reducing aid distribution for nearly two million people per month. Syria's 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which called for \$5.41 billion, was only 38.5 percent funded (\$2.09 billion).

In a 17 April report, OCHA outlined critical funding gaps in humanitarian response in Syria from April to September. The report estimated that underfunding may threaten the well-being of over two million displaced Syrians, exacerbating humanitarian needs and protection risks amid an economic decline. It said that only 63 percent of hospitals and 52 percent of primary healthcare facilities are currently fully functional in the country, adding that hundreds of health facilities and mobile medical teams are facing the threat of immediate closure because of funding shortages. The report also stated that the humanitarian agencies require \$1.9 billion over the next six months to assist 10.8 million people in need.

In his remarks at the 21 March Council meeting, Pedersen described the intensified hostilities in the country and stressed the urgent need for de-escalation and restoration of calm leading to a nationwide ceasefire. He underscored that Syria faces a negative trajectory with respect to political, security, humanitarian, human rights, and economic conditions. Noting that the political track remains “blocked and dormant”, he urged the Syrian government to “engage in a deepened and concrete dialogue” and said that it had rejected his offer to hold the ninth round of the Syrian Constitutional Committee in Geneva at the end of April. (The Syrian opposition, represented by the Syrian Negotiations Commission, accepted Pedersen's proposal.) Expressing concern about the conflict in Gaza and its regional ramifications, Pedersen said that “de-escalation there is essential, starting with an immediate humanitarian ceasefire”. (For more information, see our *What's in Blue* story of 24 April.)

Hostilities continue across multiple frontlines in Syria. On 4 April, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had conducted an airstrike in Syria in which a senior leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) responsible for planning attacks in Europe had been killed. In a press release, the commander of CENTCOM, General Michael “Erik” Kurilla, said that ISIL/Da'esh continued to represent a threat to the region and beyond, adding that “the group remains able to conduct operations within the region with a desire to strike beyond the Middle East”.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on 7 October 2023, Israel has allegedly increased its attacks against sites in Syria that it claims are associated with Iranian forces and affiliated militants. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)—a UK-based monitoring group with a presence in the country—Israel had conducted 35 attacks in Syria since the beginning of this year, as at 19 April.

In a 1 April letter, Iran informed Council members that earlier the same day, Iran's diplomatic premises in Damascus were “intentionally targeted by missile air strikes” launched by Israel from the Golan Heights. The attack reportedly resulted in the deaths of at least four Syrian soldiers and seven Iranian personnel, including Mohamad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) Quds Force, and his deputy. While Israel claimed that the premises were being used for military purposes, Iran asserted that it maintains military advisers in the country with the consent of the Syrian government.

In a statement the next day (2 April), Spokesperson for the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. **Security Council Letter S/2024/281** (1 April 2024) was from Iran, informing Council members about the attack on its diplomatic premises in Damascus on 1 April 2024. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9583** (21 March 2024) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria.

Syria

Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said that the Secretary-General “condemn[ed] the attack on diplomatic premises of Iran in Damascus...as well as the reported casualties”. He stressed the need to respect the principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises and personnel in accordance with international law. He called on all concerned parties to exercise utmost restraint and avoid further escalation.

Also on 2 April, the Council convened a briefing to discuss Israel’s attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus. Briefing the Council at that meeting, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari expressed concern about escalating tensions and warned that any “miscalculation could lead to broader conflict in an already volatile region with devastating consequences for civilians” in Syria and the broader Middle East. Following the meeting, Russia apparently proposed a press statement condemning the Israeli attack. It seems that France, the UK, and the US rejected the draft text, citing uncertainty about the facts of the strike and the status of the Iranian facility attacked.

In response to Israel’s 1 April airstrike, Iran and its proxy groups in the region launched an attack on Israel on 13 April, consisting of 300 “aerial threats”, including approximately 170 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), 120 ballistic missiles, and 30 cruise missiles, according to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). In a letter to the Council the same day, Israel accused Iran of stoking regional instability and called on the Council to “unequivocally condemn Iran for these grave violations and immediately act to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization”. The Council convened an emergency session the next day (14 April) at the request of Israel and received a briefing from Secretary-General António Guterres. (For more background and information, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 14 April on Iran’s airborne attack.)

According to SOHR, airstrikes on 19 April allegedly conducted by Israel targeted a radar system in the eastern countryside of Dara’a in Syria. This attack took place on the same day Israel reportedly targeted the city of Isfahan in central Iran, which hosts a military air base and research facilities associated with Iran’s nuclear program, according to media reports. In a statement the same day, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that there had been no damage to Iran’s nuclear sites. The statement called on all parties to exercise restraint, noting that nuclear facilities should not be a target in military conflicts.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 April, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in Syria during its 55th session. Among other matters, the resolution extended the mandate of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) for one year. It also requested the COI to present an oral update during an interactive dialogue at its 56th session and present an updated report during an interactive dialogue at its 57th and 58th sessions. The resolution was adopted with 27 votes in favour, five against, and 15 abstentions. Security Council members France, Japan, and the US voted in favour, whereas Algeria and China voted against the resolution.

On 25 April, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk briefed the UN General Assembly on the implementation of the resolution (A/RES/77/301) establishing the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria. He informed the member states that the institution is currently working on preparing the briefing papers that will cover the core issues based on the feedback on consultations with relevant parties, including: recommendations to design and implement search plans; ensuring full

participation of victims and civil society and effective gender inclusivity; and supporting victims and survivors through referrals. He emphasised the central role of victims and survivors in the functioning of the institution, adding that search and other forms of support in coordination with families and their representatives will be the central aims of its operations. He also called on member states and parties to the conflict in Syria to cooperate fully with the institution, including by exchanging information and facilitating processes of search, identification, assistance, and support to victims.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is the ongoing hostilities in Syria. Continuing violence and the lack of accountability threaten to destabilise the country further. At the same time, ISIL/Da’esh remains one of the key security threats in Syria.

Determining how the Council can address the spillover effects of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and de-escalate rising tensions in the region, including in Syria, is another important issue for the Council.

One option would be for the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians (Switzerland and the UK) to hold a meeting on the situation in Syria to receive briefings from relevant UN entities about the impact of the conflict on civilians.

Another important issue for the Council is maintaining international attention on the situation in Syria when the focus has largely moved on other crises, such as those in Gaza and Ukraine.

As well, a key issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs throughout the country. In this regard, Council members could advocate in their national statements for enhanced financial support for the humanitarian response in Syria, including at the upcoming EU-sponsored Brussels conference, scheduled to be held at the ministerial level on 27 May. Council members could also consider adopting a press statement calling on the international community to scale up the humanitarian response in Syria, including through enhanced funding.

The need to break the underlying political impasse in Syria and support the Special Envoy’s work in this regard is another key issue. The Council could consider holding a private meeting with relevant stakeholders to discuss the impediments to the resumption of the Constitutional Committee, including the issue of venue, and support Pedersen’s efforts to reinvigorate the political process. (The Syrian Constitutional Committee has not met since June 2022 because of the opposition of Russia, a close ally of Syria, to Geneva as the venue, following Switzerland’s imposition of sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.)

Council Dynamics

Syria remains 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.

Switzerland is the penholder on the Syria humanitarian file.

Women and Young People in Maintaining Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold a debate on “The Role of Women and Young People in Maintaining Peace and Security” under the agenda item “Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. This is one of the signature events of Mozambique’s May presidency. The meeting will be chaired by the Mozambican Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Verónica Nataniel Macamo Dlhovo. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs Felipe Paulier, a high-level representative of UN Women, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

It seems that the debate intends to explore the intersection between the Security Council’s agendas on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), focusing on women and youth’s concerns about, and engagement in addressing, current peace and security challenges, with particular attention on the role of young women. It appears that the third report of the Secretary-General on YPS will be presented during the debate.

No outcome is expected.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 31 October 2000, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1325, which was the first resolution on WPS. Reaffirming women’s key role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, resolution 1325 calls for the adoption of a gender perspective in peace agreements and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence.

Since resolution 1325, the Security Council has adopted nine further resolutions under the WPS agenda item. Five of these focus on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), while the other four have a wider focus, including on issues such as women’s political participation and the integration of a gender perspective in various aspects of the work of the Security Council and the UN. The most recent resolution on WPS, resolution 2493, was adopted on 29 October 2019. It stresses the need for the full implementation of the WPS agenda and, among other provisions, strongly encourages states to “create safe and enabling environments for civil society, including formal and informal community women leaders, women peacebuilders, political actors, and those who protect and promote human rights”. Annually, the Secretary-General produces a report on WPS and one focused on CRSV.

The first resolution on YPS was unanimously adopted on 9 December 2015 as resolution 2250. It recognises the contribution of youth to the prevention and resolution of conflicts and urges states to “consider ways to increase inclusive representation of youth” in decision-making institutions and mechanisms “for the prevention and resolution of conflict, including institutions and mechanisms to counter violent extremism”.

The Council adopted two follow-up resolutions: resolution 2419 of 6 June 2018 and resolution 2535 of 14 July 2020, the latter of which included several provisions aimed at promoting and institutionalising the implementation of the YPS agenda by the Security Council, UN entities, member states and regional organisations. Among other matters, the resolution introduced regular reporting on YPS, requesting the Secretary-General to submit a biennial report

to the Security Council on the implementation of resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535.

The latest Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS, which was issued on 28 September 2023, focuses on women’s meaningful participation in peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. It stresses that nearly 25 years after the adoption of resolution 1325, negotiating parties in peace processes “continue to regularly exclude women, and impunity for atrocities against women and girls is still prevalent”. It also notes that women’s organisations have been struggling to find resources while military spending continues to increase. Among other recommendations, the Secretary-General called on member states to increase “support to elevate the voices of women from diverse backgrounds, including young women, women with disabilities, persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, Indigenous women, and others, and make accommodations, as needed, to model inclusive processes and practices across all peace and security efforts”.

The Secretary-General’s latest biennial report on YPS, which was published on 1 March, identifies challenging trends across the YPS agenda, such as youth’s “growing mistrust in governance institutions and electoral processes” and discriminatory laws and practices based on age, “which remain prevalent in many countries and hinder the meaningful participation of young people”. The report also identifies issues such as the surge in “digital threats and armed conflicts and the shrinking of civic space” as posing “serious protection concerns for young people”. Among other recommendations, it invites the Security Council to “continue to integrate and strengthen” YPS elements in mandate renewals and to “call upon missions to integrate youth in all relevant mandated areas”.

Council members have discussed the implementation of the WPS and YPS agendas on multiple occasions. The latest meeting on WPS was the annual open debate on CRSV on 23 April, while the most recent meeting with a focus on YPS was the ministerial-level debate on “The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item, which took place on 17 April.

During this meeting, Sarra Messaoudi—Regional Lead of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Coalition on YPS—highlighted several challenges faced by young people, including in the Mediterranean region, such as “systematic barriers” to meaningful participation in peace, political and security processes, and the need to address “climate-sensitive security risks”. Noting the lack of implementation of the latest Security Council resolution on the war in Gaza, resolution 2728, which on 25 March called for a ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, she said that young people are questioning the international system, international law, and the veto power, as well as “the imposition of peace agreements that we didn’t participate in shaping and that do not meet our expectations”. Among other recommendations, Messaoudi called on the Council to openly debate the Secretary-General’s YPS report every two years. She also urged Council members to integrate the YPS agenda into all areas of the Council’s work and establish an informal expert group on YPS to “support these efforts and help young people connect to the work of the Council”.

RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS ON WPS AND YPS Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2535 (14 July 2020) established a regular biennial reporting requirement on YPS by the Secretary-General. S/RES/2493 (29 October 2019) reiterated the need for the full implementation of the WPS agenda. S/RES/2250 (9 December 2015) was the first YPS resolution. It recognised the contribution of youth in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on WPS. It called for the adoption of a gender perspective in peace agreements and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence. **Secretary-General’s Reports** S/2024/207 (1 March 2024) was the Secretary-General’s latest biennial report on YPS. S/2023/725 (28 September 2023) was the latest Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS.

Women and Young People in Maintaining Peace and Security

Key Issues and Options

The implementation of its agendas on WPS and YPS and their impact on the ground are key issues for the Security Council.

As the organiser of this debate, Mozambique could prepare a chair's summary of the meeting to capture salient themes of the discussion to be circulated in a Council letter.

Council Dynamics

While notable implementation gaps persist, Council members are generally supportive of the WPS agenda. However, dynamics remain difficult, with Russia and China often challenging the inclusion of language on WPS in Security Council products. The prevalent perception, including among members supportive of the WPS agenda and several civil society actors, is that the dynamics on this file remain uncondusive to the adoption of new WPS outcomes.

Russia has regularly argued that the Security Council should focus its work on situations that pose a direct threat to international peace and security and that its engagement on WPS should be limited to the consideration of “women’s issues in a context of the maintenance of peace and security and in connection to situations that are on the Council’s agenda”, since human rights and the role of women are already discussed in other UN forums such as the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

A similar argument was put forward by China and Russia during

the negotiations on resolution 2419 in 2018 when these members apparently argued that YPS matters should be dealt with by other parts of the UN system. While it seems that China and Russia subsequently adopted a less critical view during the negotiation of resolution 2535, Russia apparently opposed the inclusion of an annual reporting requirement on YPS accompanied by a set of global indicators to track implementation. At the 17 April debate on “The role of young persons in addressing security challenges in the Mediterranean”, Russia again expressed sceptical views regarding the YPS agenda, questioning Malta’s meeting focus for “singl[ing] out” youth from the broader issue of security in the Mediterranean and arguing against the involvement of people under 18 in “political life”.

The UK is the penholder on WPS, and the US is the penholder on CRSV. Sierra Leone and Switzerland are the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on WPS. Most Council members—Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US—have signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS initiative, which was started in late 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico. (For background, see our *Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges* research report.)

The most recent resolution on YPS, resolution 2535, was penned by France along with then-Council member Dominican Republic.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution to extend the South Sudan sanctions regime (targeted sanctions and the arms embargo), which expires on 31 May, and renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, which expires on 1 July.

The mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) expires on 30 April 2025.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General’s most recent report on South Sudan, dated 26 February, noted that implementation of critical benchmarks outlined in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), necessary for holding the national elections in December, remained behind schedule. In this regard, the report stated that “an assessment as to whether a critical mass of compliance has been achieved will be made in April 2024”.

This assessment, which the Secretary-General submitted to the Council on 8 April, was aimed at determining whether the minimum political and technical preconditions for a peaceful electoral process exist and, if not, what political decisions and resources would be required to achieve that objective. It analysed the progress made on the outstanding tasks, consolidating them in three categories: technical preparations, political and security preparations, and legislative

reform. The report said that progress was made on the establishment of the necessary electoral institutions—the National Constitutional Review Commission (NCRC), the Political Parties Council (PPC), and the National Election Commission (NEC); however, funding for these institutions remains limited. It further observed that the parties to the R-ARCSS are yet to determine the type and number of elections to be conducted before the end of the transitional period. At the same time, the census and voter registration process also remain behind schedule, the report added.

Regarding the security preparations, the report said that the deployment of the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF) remained limited, with only six percent of the planned 83,000 NUF personnel deployed by the end of March. The training and deployment of the second batch of NUF had not yet commenced, and the parties had also not reached agreement on the middle command structure of the unified force. The NUF appeared ill-prepared and incapable of providing the requisite security guarantees before, during, and after the national elections. The report also expressed concerns about the widespread intercommunal violence and the presence of small arms and light weapons across the country.

The report welcomed the inter-party dialogue on the election process among South Sudanese political parties and urged the South Sudanese leaders to allocate the required resources to support the institutions necessary for democratic transition. On 9 April, Special

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2683 (30 May 2023) renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime for one year. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2024/309** (15 April 2024) was the assessment report on the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577. **S/2024/188** (26 February 2024) was the 90-day report on the UN Mission in South Sudan. **Security Council Letter S/2024/297** (8 April 2024) transmitted the assessment regarding South Sudan’s election preparedness and outstanding tasks related to the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

South Sudan

Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom briefed Council members on the 8 April assessment report under “any other business”. (For more background and information, see the brief on South Sudan in our April 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

From 16 to 18 April, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa undertook a working visit to South Sudan to discuss the implementation of the R-ARCSS ahead of the envisioned elections in December. (South Africa serves as the chair of the AU Ad Hoc High-Level Committee for South Sudan, known as the C5, that comprises Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa.) During his visit, Ramaphosa met with several high-level South Sudanese officials, including President Salva Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar. According to media reports, the meetings focused on exploring avenues for supporting the implementation of the R-ARCSS, including with regard to holding elections in December, mobilising resources to support the key electoral institutions—the NCRC, the PPC, and the NEC—and providing the necessary technical and logistical support to the relevant institutions, among other things.

The humanitarian situation in the country remains difficult, with nearly nine million people—almost 76 percent of the country’s population—in need of humanitarian assistance. At the same time, recent months have witnessed an increase in incidents that impeded humanitarian access. In a 12 April press briefing, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said that OCHA recorded 40 incidents related to humanitarian access restrictions in March, 15 of which involved violence against humanitarian personnel and assets. Meanwhile, other incidents were attributed to bureaucratic impediments and movement restrictions, mostly in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei states.

Despite the government’s assurances that the UN humanitarian, development, and peacekeeping operations would not be subject to taxes, trucks carrying fuel and other critical supplies have been held up at various depots and borders, according to a 23 April UNMISS press release. Fuel reserves of the UN and its agencies in the country are running out and further delay would “prevent the delivery of millions of dollars of aid during a severe humanitarian crisis”. It added that humanitarian airdrops had already been suspended, affecting 60,000 people in need. At the same time, the mission had been forced to review its patrols and the repair and construction of critical infrastructure and to reduce support for peace and electoral processes.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 5 April, the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee held informal consultations to discuss the final report of its panel of experts, circulated to Council members on 15 March.

On 15 April, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council an assessment report on the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577 of 28 May 2021 for modifying, suspending, or progressively lifting the arms embargo. The report found that the South Sudanese government has made some progress in the implementation of two benchmarks, namely formation of a unified command structure for the NUF and implementation of the Joint Action Plan for the Armed Forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. It added that progress on these two benchmarks needs to be enhanced without delay. However, no progress was noted on three benchmarks that relate to completion of the Strategic Defense and Security Review process contained in the R-ARCSS; the establishment and implementation

of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process; and the proper management of existing arms and ammunition stockpiles. The Secretary-General expressed concern about the continued lack of funding and political support for the DDR process, along with the lack of progress on the collection and disposal of long- and medium-range heavy weapons.

Women, Peace and Security

The annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which was issued on 4 April, said that in 2023 UNMISS documented incidents of CRSV affecting 118 women, 98 girls, four men and one boy, mostly in Central Equatoria, Jonglei, and Upper Nile states. Cases were attributed to several actors, including organised armed groups, community-based militia, government security forces, and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLM-IO). In his report, the Secretary-General called on the South Sudanese government to investigate all incidents of sexual violence and to expedite the implementation of the 2014 joint communiqué between South Sudan and the UN on the prevention of CRSV, as well as the action plans for the armed forces and the police on addressing CRSV. He also urged the government to “adopt legislation on victim and witness protection, in line with international standards”.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate key issue for the Council is the extension of the South Sudan sanctions regime (targeted sanctions and the arms embargo) and renewing the mandate of the panel of experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee. In their discussions in May, Council members are likely to be guided by the findings and the recommendations of the panel’s 15 March final report, as well as the progress made by the South Sudanese authorities against the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577.

One option for Council members is to renew the sanctions measures and the panel’s mandate for one year while retaining the benchmarks and calling for further progress in their implementation.

An ongoing concern for the Council is the significant political and security challenges in South Sudan stemming from the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to make progress towards implementing the outstanding tasks. Looking ahead to the general elections, expected to be held in December, several members may reiterate their call for completing the outstanding tasks in a timely manner to ensure peaceful, transparent, inclusive, and credible elections. They may also continue to encourage South Sudanese authorities to ensure free civic space and call upon all parties to seek dialogue and consensus to resolve any election-related disputes.

Ahead of the election period, Council members could consider a visiting mission to South Sudan to assess the situation on the ground and engage with the various parties to the R-ARCSS. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan took place in 2019.)

Council and Wider Dynamics

The discussion on sanctions imposed on South Sudan remains a divisive issue in the Council. When the Council last renewed the sanctions regime in May 2023 through resolution 2683, five Council members abstained—China, Mozambique, Russia, and then-Council members Gabon and Ghana.

Several Council members, including France, the UK, and the US, believe that sanctions are a useful tool to maintain pressure on the parties to implement the R-ARCSS. These members argue that the arms embargo, initially imposed in July 2018 with the adoption

South Sudan

of resolution 2428, has contributed to the reduction of violence by curtailing the flow of weapons to South Sudan, and express concern that the lifting of the arms embargo would negatively affect the security situation.

On the other hand, China and Russia have long opposed the South Sudan sanctions regime. African members of the Council have also expressed concerns about maintaining the sanctions regime, which in their view undermines progress in the political and security spheres.

The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have repeatedly called for lifting the arms embargo on South Sudan, and several regional states have also expressed opposition to the arms embargo. In a 7 March communiqué, the AUPSC called on the international community to lift the arms embargo and other sanctions imposed on South Sudan.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan, and Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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