

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 Security Council Elections 2024
- 4 Status Update since our May Forecast
- 6 Cybersecurity
- 8 Children and Armed Conflict
- 10 Iraq (UNITAD)
- 12 Counter-Terrorism
- 13 UNOCA (Central Africa)
- 15 International Criminal Tribunals
- 16 Syria
- 18 Yemen
- 20 UNDOF (Golan)
- 21 Sudan
- 23 Libya
- 25 Afghanistan
- 26 Somalia
- 28 Iran
- 31 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 32 Central African Republic

Overview

In June, the Republic of Korea (ROK) holds the presidency of the Security Council.

The ROK has chosen to convene one signature event during its presidency, a high-level open debate on cybersecurity. The ROK's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cho Tae-yul, is expected to chair the meeting, at which Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief.

The annual open debate on children and armed conflict will also take place in June. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba, Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of the Elders Ban Ki-moon, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

In June, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2686 of 14 June 2023 on tolerance and international peace and security, which requested an oral briefing from the Secretary-General within a year of the resolution's adoption.

The Security Council is also scheduled to vote on a draft resolution on the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime. The draft resolution will include provisions extending the mandates of the 1267/1988 Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and the Office of the Ombudsperson, both of which expire in June.

The Security Council is expected to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). A resolution on the IRMCT is also scheduled for adoption in June. The first draft of this resolution was circulated to Council members in late May.

Several African issues are on the programme in June:

- Libya, briefing and consultations on the work of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and briefing by the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;
- UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)/Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), meeting on developments;
- Sudan, briefing about the "UN's efforts to support Sudan on its path towards peace and stability" pursuant to resolution 2715 of 1

December 2023 and briefing by the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee;

- Somalia, briefing and consultations on the situation in Somalia and reauthorisation of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS);
- Central African Republic (CAR), meeting on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), vote on a resolution renewing the mandate of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme this month are:

- Iraq, briefing on the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD);
- Golan, meeting with troop-contributing countries of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), consultations on UNDOF, and renewal of the mission's mandate;
- Yemen, the monthly briefing and consultations;
- Iran, briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme;
- "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; and
- Syria, the monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments as well as on the chemical weapons track.

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

As in previous months, there may be one or more meetings on Ukraine in June. Other issues could also be raised during the month, depending on developments.

The General Assembly is scheduled to vote on 6 June to elect five new members to the Security Council. Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia are running unopposed for the five available seats.

3 June 2024

This report is available online at securitycouncilreport.org.

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

Security Council Elections 2024

On 6 June, the 78th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections for membership of the Security Council. The five seats available for election in 2024, according to the regular distribution among regions, will be as follows:

- one seat for the African Group (currently held by Mozambique);
- one seat for the Asia-Pacific Group (currently held by Japan);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC, currently held by Ecuador); and
- two seats for the Western European and Others Group (WEOG, currently held by Malta and Switzerland).

The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2025 and will serve until 31 December 2026.

The 2024 Candidates

Five member states—Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia—are currently running for the five available seats. All five candidates have served on the Council previously: Pakistan seven times, Panama five times, Denmark four times, Greece twice, and Somalia once. All the regional groups are running uncontested elections this year, known as a “clean slate”.

The table below shows the number of seats available by region in the 2024 election, the declared candidate(s), and their prior term(s) on the Council.

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2024	CANDIDATES AND PRIOR COUNCIL TERMS
Africa	1	Somalia (1971-1972)
Asia-Pacific¹	1	Pakistan (1952-1953, 1968-1969, 1976-1977, 1983-1984, 1993-1994, 2003-2004, 2012-2013)
Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)	1	Panama (1958-1959, 1972-1973, 1976-1977, 1981-1982, 2007-2008)
Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG)	2	Denmark (1953-1954, 1967-1968, 1985-1986, 2005-2006) Greece (1952-1953, 2005-2006)

Potential Council Dynamics in 2025

Political polarisation in the Council is expected to persist and is likely to shape Council dynamics in 2025. While several agenda items remain contentious—ranging from thematic issues such as non-proliferation and sanctions to country situations like DPRK, Myanmar, and Syria—Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war have sharply raised tensions among Council members over the past two and a half years.

The Israel-Hamas war and the wider regional crisis it precipitated in the Middle East have been highly divisive issues for the Council. As Israel’s closest ally, the US has consistently emphasised the country’s right to self-defence in the wake of Hamas’ 7 October

2023 terrorist attack, while most other Council members have criticised Israel for its alleged violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire. Of the 11 draft resolutions concerning the situation that the Council has voted on since the outbreak of hostilities, it had adopted three at the time of writing (resolution 2712 of 15 November 2023, resolution 2720 of 22 December 2023, and resolution 2728 of 25 March). The regional fallout from the war has also heightened tensions in other situations on the Council’s agenda, including Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

Tensions in the Middle East may continue to feature prominently on the Council’s agenda in 2025, depending on the course of the war in Gaza and its aftermath. Among the current cohort of candidates, Denmark, Greece, and Panama all enjoy strong relations with Israel and abstained on the 27 October 2023 General Assembly resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in Gaza. However, while Panama also abstained on the 12 December 2023 General Assembly resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, Denmark and Greece voted in favour of this resolution, indicating evolving positions on the conflict as humanitarian conditions in Gaza deteriorated. Pakistan and Somalia—both members of the OIC—voted in favour of both resolutions and have criticised Israel’s conduct of the war. Most recently, all five candidate countries voted in favour of the 10 May General Assembly resolution granting new “rights and privileges” to the State of Palestine and calling on the Security Council to reconsider the Palestinian request to become a UN member state.

If the war in Ukraine continues, it will remain an important issue on the Council’s agenda next year. Russia continues to justify its invasion, which it refers to as a “special military operation”, while several Council members—including France, Japan, Malta, ROK, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US—condemn Russia for what they consider to be an act of aggression.

Among the incoming members, Denmark, Greece, and Panama are expected to strongly support Ukraine, having voted in favour of all four General Assembly resolutions concerning the war (respectively, demanding that Russia withdraw its military forces from Ukraine; recognising the humanitarian consequences of the aggression against the country; suspending Russia from the UN Human Rights Council; and condemning Russia’s purported annexation of occupied territories). Pakistan abstained on all four resolutions, while Somalia voted in favour of the first and fourth and was absent from the second and third votes. On the Council, these two countries may seek a bridge-building role between Russia and Western members.

Several incoming members have a direct interest in items on the Council’s agenda. Greece is a key stakeholder in relation to the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which patrols the UN buffer zone between the Greek-majority Republic of Cyprus and the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The country is also the flag state of several vessels that have been targeted by the Houthis in the Red Sea. Pakistan is likely to engage actively on Afghanistan, where the Pakistani Taliban—a terrorist group designated under the Council’s 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime—has staged cross-border attacks against Pakistan. Somalia hosts the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the AU Transition

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

Security Council Elections 2024

Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and is engaged in a military campaign against Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group designated under the Council's 2713 sanctions regime. In addition, rising tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia regarding Somaliland—a self-proclaimed republic in the country's northern region—were the subject of closed consultations of Council members in January.

Peacekeeping is another priority for several candidates. Pakistan is one of the UN's largest troop-contributing countries and is likely to take an active role on the issue as a Council member. Somalia also has a stake in the issue both as a host country and a proponent of UN funding for AU-led peace support missions, pursuant to resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023. Denmark may similarly engage strongly on the topic, having identified innovative responses to the evolving security landscape as one of its Council priorities. Greece has a particular interest in UNFICYP, as described above.

Some of the candidates have emphasised the importance of addressing terrorism and violent extremism. Somalia has expressed an interest in sharing its national counterterrorism experience and may also draw the Council's attention to terrorism and violent extremism in Africa more broadly, including in the Sahel. Pakistan has likewise emphasised its national counterterrorism efforts and may focus the Council's attention on the threats posed by groups operating in its region.

In 2025, disarmament and non-proliferation issues will likely continue to garner attention in the Council. Current members ROK and Japan, whose current Council term ends this year, both have a particular interest in non-proliferation issues, especially vis-à-vis the situation on the Korean peninsula. Taking over Japan's seat, Pakistan is likely to maintain a focus on this issue, although its regional emphasis is expected to shift to the Indian subcontinent. The country may also highlight the threat posed by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by non-state actors and assiduously promote the work of the Council's 1540 Sanctions Committee on this issue.

Most candidate countries have stressed the importance of addressing emerging threats to international peace and security. Among such issues, Denmark, Greece, and Panama have highlighted climate, peace, and security as a thematic priority for their Council terms. These countries are likely to face continued pushback from other members, such as China and Russia, which have long argued that the Council is not the appropriate forum for climate-related discussions.

Other emerging issues pertain to new technologies. One of Panama's stated Council priorities is the misuse of digital technologies for criminal purposes, which is a concern that Pakistan and Somalia may share in the context of counterterrorism. Relatedly, Council members may continue to discuss potential threats posed by AI, building on the December 2023 Arria-formula meeting on the topic convened by then-member Albania and the July 2023 high-level briefing convened by the UK. (In March, the General Assembly adopted US-facilitated resolution 78/265 on the promotion of "safe, secure and trustworthy" AI systems, which Denmark, Greece, and Pakistan co-sponsored.) In addition, the issue of WMDs in space may remain a subject of debate, following discussions on the draft resolution on the topic penned by Japan and the US, which Russia vetoed in April, and on an alternative draft put forward by Russia in May that failed to obtain the nine favourable votes required for adoption.

The WPS agenda is expected to receive considerable attention in 2025, which will mark the 25th anniversary of resolution 1325, the first thematic resolution on the issue. Among the candidate countries, Denmark, Greece, Panama, and Somalia have all highlighted WPS as a priority area. These countries may sign on to the Shared Commitments on WPS initiative, which started with the "presidency trio" of Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico in 2021. Permanent members France and the UK can also be expected to remain proponents of the agenda, while the US position may depend on the outcome of the November 2024 presidential election. Russia will probably continue to argue that the issue of gender equality is not directly linked to international peace and security and therefore not within the Council's purview. China is likely to continue to maintain that the development gap is the most important barrier to women's empowerment.

The co-chairing of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS will transition in 2025: current co-chair Switzerland will conclude its Council term this December, paving the way for another member to join Sierra Leone as co-chair.

Two members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group—Ecuador and Switzerland—will leave the Security Council at the end of 2024. Among the current candidates, only Denmark is a member of the group. The other ACT group member who will continue on the Council in 2025 is Slovenia. These two members are likely to take the lead in pushing for improved Security Council working methods, including proposals advocated by the ACT Group. Other incoming members may also support such proposals, however, as illustrated by the fact that Greece, Panama, and Somalia have all signed the ACT Group's Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, which calls on all Council members to not vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities.

With Somalia joining Algeria and Sierra Leone on the Council, the three African members (A3) are likely to continue working closely in coordinating their positions and advancing a common African position on regional and thematic items on the Security Council's agenda. These members will also continue their partnership with Guyana, a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which aligns with the Council's African members on certain issues, replicating the A3+1 constellation first formed with former Council member Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2020-2021. While not a member of CARICOM, incoming GRULAC member Panama could weigh joining this grouping as well, potentially expanding it to "A3+2".

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

Security Council Elections 2024

by Switzerland. One or more elected members also traditionally hold the pen on Afghanistan, which is currently held by Japan. In December 2023, the Informal Working Group on Working Methods adopted a presidential note on penholderships (S/2023/945) that

encouraged continued efforts to “ensure that the arrangement of penholder or co-penholder reflects openness, a shared responsibility and fair burden-sharing”.

Status Update since our May Forecast

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 6 May, Security Council members held closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”. The meeting was requested by France to discuss its proposed draft resolution on the war between Israel and Hamas.

On 7 May, at Algeria’s request, Council members held closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” to discuss the discovery of mass graves in the vicinity of two hospitals in Gaza. High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Francesca Albanese, briefed.

On 9 May, Council members held closed consultations on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Russia requested the meeting to discuss a possible role for the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in monitoring a potential ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. UNTSO Head of Mission and Chief of Staff Major General Patrick Gauchat briefed.

On 10 May, the members of the Security Council issued a press statement on the discovery of mass graves in Gaza (SC/15692). The statement calls for investigators to be provided “unimpeded access to all locations of mass graves in Gaza to conduct immediate, independent, thorough, comprehensive, transparent and impartial investigations to establish the circumstances behind the graves”. Following opposition from the UK and the US, the adjective “international” with reference to the investigation was apparently removed from the draft press statement during the negotiations.

On 16 May, the US convened a Security Council Arria-formula meeting titled “Condemning Hostage-Taking in Israel on October 7 as a Psychological Tool of Terrorism”. Professor of Law at the Bar-Ilan University and former Vice Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) Ruth Halperin-Kaddari briefed. Council members also received briefings from Shoshan Haran, Ayelet Samerano, and Gili Roman, who shared their experience of being taken hostage during the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks or having family members held captive in Gaza.

On 20 May, the Security Council held an open briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9631). Algeria and Slovenia requested the briefing to discuss the situation in Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost governorate, following the start of Israel’s offensive in the area on 7 May. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland and Director of OCHA’s Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu briefed.

On 28 May, Council members held emergency consultations on

“The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”. Algeria requested the meeting after Israeli airstrikes on 26 May hit tents housing displaced Palestinians in Rafah. During the consultations, Algeria announced that it will pursue a draft resolution on the situation in Rafah.

On 29 May, the Security Council held an open briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9638). Wennesland briefed. This was the regular monthly meeting on the file.

Sudan/South Sudan

On 7 May, the Council held a briefing (S/PV.9622) on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), circulated to Council members on 30 April (S/2024/354). The briefers were Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, and Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa.

Lebanon

On 8 May, Council members received their semi-annual briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559 (S/2024/319). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

Ukraine

On 14 May, the Security Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine at the request of Ecuador and France (S/PV.9625). OCHA’s Director for Financing and Partnerships, Lisa Doughten, and Director of Operations for the Conflict Observatory team based at the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab, Caitlin Howarth, briefed the Council.

On 20 May, the Council convened for an open briefing under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9629). Russia requested the meeting to discuss the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu and Executive Editor of Black Agenda Report Margaret Kimberley briefed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 15 May (S/PV.9626). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt briefed on the most recent report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), which covers the period from 16 October 2023 to 15 April (S/2024/367). Denis Bećirović,

Status Update since our May Forecast

the Bosniak member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic Presidency of BiH and the incumbent Chairman of the Presidency, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force

On 15 May, Security Council members held closed consultations on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). Alexandre Zouev, the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), briefed. He presented the Secretary-General's recommendation, recently reiterated in a 1 May letter (S/2024/357), to end the reporting cycle on the FC-G5S, given the dissolution of the Group of Five for the Sahel and its joint force. At the time of writing, Council members, who agree on ending the reporting obligation but have different views about whether and how to continue to receive updates about the situation in the Sahel, were expected to resume discussions on a letter to respond to the Secretary-General's recommendation.

Annual Report to the General Assembly

On 16 May, the Security Council adopted its annual report to the General Assembly, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023. The UK, which drafted the introduction to the report, presented it to Council members. The rest of the report was prepared by the UN Secretariat and approved by the current members and immediate past members of the Council. For the first time, the annual report featured a dedicated chapter on the special reports on the use of the veto.

Iraq

On 16 May, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/PV.9628). Outgoing Special Representative and Head of UNAMI Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's latest reports on UNAMI (S/2024/369) and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property (S/2024/368). Iraq and Kuwait participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

On 31 May, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2732, renewing UNAMI's mandate for a final 19-month period until 31 December 2025.

Arria-formula Meeting on “Unlocking the Potential of Science for Peace and Security”

On 17 May, Switzerland convened a Security Council Arria-formula meeting on “Unlocking the Potential of Science for Peace and Security”. Thomas Gürber, State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation, delivered opening remarks and chaired the meeting. The briefers included: Henrietta Fore, former Executive Director of UNICEF (2018-2022) and a board member of the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator, an independent foundation that leverages science and technology to generate “inclusive and global solutions for a sustainable future”; Dr. Sascha Langenbach, a data scientist at the Center for Security Studies at the ETH Zürich university; and Lieutenant General Mohan Subramanian, the Force Commander of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

Non-Proliferation

On 20 May, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution on the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and outer space security, which was prepared by Russia (S/PV.9630). The draft resolution (S/2024/383) 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 text was co-sponsored by Belarus, China, the Democratic Republic of Korea (DPRK), Nicaragua, and Syria.

Protection of Civilians

On 21 and 22 May, the Security Council held its annual open debate on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict (S/PV.9362 and Resumption I). Mozambique, the Council president for May, convened the meeting as one of the signature events of its presidency, with a focus on the 25th anniversary of resolution 1265 of 17 September 1999, which first established PoC as a matter of international peace and security and introduced it as an item on the Council's agenda. Member states received briefings from Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide Alice Wairimu Nderitu; Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya; ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger; and Executive Director of the non-governmental organisation Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) Hichem Khadhraoui.

On 24 May, the Council adopted resolution 2730 on the protection of humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel and their premises and assets. The resolution—which was prepared by Switzerland and co-sponsored by 97 member states—was adopted by a vote of 14 in favour and one abstention (Russia). In its explanation of vote, Russia acknowledged the importance of the issue but objected to the resolution's reference to international courts, its proposed parameters for ensuring humanitarian access, and its gender-related language.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 22 May, the Chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl (Switzerland), briefed Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report on the Committee's work.

On 31 May, the Council convened for an open briefing on the DPRK. France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US requested the meeting to discuss the DPRK's failed satellite launch on 27 May. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. The DPRK participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

The Role of African States in Global Security and Development Challenges

On 23 May, Mozambique convened an open debate on strengthening the role of African states in addressing global security and development challenges as a signature event of its May Council presidency (S/PV.9633). Secretary-General António Guterres, AU

Status Update since our May Forecast

Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye, and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Ambassador Sérgio França Danese (Brazil) briefed. The Security Council adopted a presidential statement proposed by Mozambique which, among other things, expresses support for progress in enhancing the role and representation of African States in global governance and decision-making processes (S/PRST/2024/2).

West Africa and the Sahel

On 24 May, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PRST/2024/3). It was the Council's first presidential statement on the region since August 2021, as negotiations stalled several times for more than two years over language on the link between climate change and security. The presidential statement welcomed the appointment of Special Representative Leonardo Santos Simão, who became the head of the UN Office of West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in May 2023; highlighted the importance of addressing the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism and for states to ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with all their obligations under international law; expressed serious concern at the unconstitutional changes of governments and attempted coups d'état in the region; and underscored the importance of the timely, nationally owned transition processes and the restoration of constitutional order in concerned countries.

“Maintenance of International Peace and Security: the role of women and young people”

On 28 May, the Security Council held a debate titled “Maintenance of international peace and security: the role of women and young people” (S/PV.9637). The Council received briefings from Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary

DiCarlo, UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs Felipe Paullier, and AU Youth Ambassador for Peace for West Africa Simone Mbode Diouf. Belgium, Brazil, Denmark and Finland participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Arria-formula Meeting on Myanmar

On 29 May, the UK convened an Arria-formula meeting on the effects of the ongoing conflict in Myanmar on children and youth. Director of UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes Lucia Elmi briefed. Council members, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member states, and countries bordering Myanmar were invited to participate. The Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN, Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, also took part in the meeting.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

On 30 May, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi briefed the Council under the agenda item “Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees” (S/PV.9641). He provided an overview of the current situation of displaced people and refugees globally, as well as some of the main challenges facing UNHCR.

South Sudan

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2731, renewing the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2025 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2025. The resolution was adopted with nine votes in favour and six abstentions (Algeria, China, Guyana, Mozambique, Russia, and Sierra Leone).

Cybersecurity

Expected Council Action

In June, the Republic of Korea (ROK) is organising a high-level open debate on cybersecurity as a signature event of its presidency.

No outcome is expected.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Over the past several years, the Council has become increasingly involved in addressing cyber threats to international peace and security. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with a surge in the use of digital technologies, has heightened Council members' awareness of this issue. To date, most of the discussions among Council members on cybersecurity-related issues have occurred in informal settings, such as Arria-formula meetings. These discussions have covered a wide range of issues, from cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure to efforts aimed at countering hate speech and preventing the incitement of discrimination, hostility, and violence on social media.

The Security Council held its only formal meeting on cybersecurity on 29 June 2021, during Estonia's presidency of the Council. Other

meetings on related aspects include a formal meeting on the use of technologies in maintaining international peace and security that the US convened during its May 2022 presidency and a July 2023 high-level briefing on artificial intelligence organised by the UK.

The Council has also discussed states' malicious use of cyberspace in country-specific situations. For example, on 5 March 2020, Council members discussed Georgia in the context of cyber threats and hybrid warfare under the “any other business” agenda item. The closed meeting was initiated by Estonia, the UK, and the US, after Georgia informed the Council that its government and media websites had been targeted by a large-scale cyber-attack in October 2019. In a joint statement to the media after the meeting, the three members attributed the cyberattacks to Russian military intelligence agencies and said that these actions represented a wider pattern of Russia's activities. Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu issued a press statement following the meeting, suggesting that such conduct was an “example of irresponsible behaviour” by Russia. Russia denied these accusations and said there was no evidence to support the claims.

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYBERSECURITY Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9381 (18 July 2023) was a high-level briefing titled “Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Risks for International Peace and Security”, organised by the UK. **S/PV.9039** (23 May 2022) was a briefing on technology and security convened by the US as one of the signature events of its Council presidency. **S/2021/621** (1 July 2021) is a record of the open debate on cybersecurity convened by Estonia on 29 June 2021.

Most recently, on 4 April, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting titled “Evolving CyberThreat Landscape and its Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. The meeting was organised by the ROK and co-hosted by Japan and the US. At that meeting, the briefers highlighted key trends in the field of cybersecurity, including the increasing sophistication of ransomware attacks, the emergence of cybercrime as a global service, the proliferation of commercially available cyber-intrusion capabilities such as surveillance technologies, and the effects of emerging technologies such of artificial intelligence and quantum computing on the cybersecurity landscape.

Several Council members emphasised how illicit cyber activities enable both state and non-state actors to circumvent Security Council-mandated sanctions, thereby undermining the efficacy of some tools available to the Council. In particular, members highlighted the challenges these illicit activities pose to the non-proliferation regime. Many members referred to reports by the Panel of Experts of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) sanctions regime, which have documented the involvement of DPRK actors in cyber-attacks targeting financial institutions and critical infrastructure. Additionally, the DPRK has been implicated in the illegal transfer of cryptocurrencies and money laundering. The Panel has stressed that the DPRK’s use of cyberattacks provides an opportunity for sanctions evasion involving minimal resources while offering low-risk, high-reward opportunities.

Several members expressed regret that the Council failed on 28 March to adopt the draft resolution extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. The draft resolution was vetoed by Russia. All other members—except China, which abstained—voted in favour of the text. In its statement prior to the vote, Russia claimed that the Panel of Experts had ceased to carry out its obligations and said that the sanctions regime no longer reflected realities on the ground and had failed to achieve the international community’s stated aims. 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.

The final report of the Panel, issued on 7 March, noted that the Panel was investigating reports of arms transfers from the DPRK to other member states, including Russia, and said that the DPRK had continued to flout the 1718 sanctions regime, including by further developing nuclear weapons, producing nuclear fissile materials, importing refined petroleum products, and receiving income from DPRK nationals working overseas. In relation to the DPRK’s cyber activities, the report observed that the Panel was investigating 58 cyberattacks on cryptocurrency-related companies executed between 2017 and 2023, valued at approximately \$3 billion, adding that these attacks have reportedly funded the DPRK’s weapons programmes. The Panel’s mandate expired on 30 April.

Although the Council has increased its engagement on cybersecurity, discussions on the matter have primarily taken place in two General Assembly-mandated processes: the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in

the context of international security, and the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on security of and in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Since 2004, there have been six GGEs and two OEWGs. The GGEs have established a set of 11 norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace. These include commitments by states to avoid conducting or knowingly supporting ICT activity contrary to their obligations under international law that intentionally damage critical infrastructure; to take appropriate measures to protect their critical infrastructure from ICT threats; and to respond to requests for assistance by another state whose critical infrastructure has been targeted by malicious ICT acts.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members generally agree that implementing existing norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and confidence- and capacity-building measures help reduce mistrust among member states and contribute to stability in the cyber domain. Most members believe that Security Council discussions on cyber issues raise awareness of emerging threats posed by new technologies and highlight the importance of effective deterrence against the malicious use of ICTs by states and other actors.

There are stark divisions between members over the Council’s role in addressing cyber threats, the applicability of international law in cyberspace, and the need for the development of additional legally binding obligations. Several Council members have expressed the view that the Security Council should address incidents in which malicious cyber activity poses a threat to international peace and security, just as it would in respect of threats posed by conventional means. These members often highlight how cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure can have devastating effects on civilians, exacerbate tensions, and even trigger armed conflicts. Conversely, Russia has maintained that the Security Council is not the appropriate forum for discussing cybersecurity. Instead, it argues that the Council should defer to the specialised expertise of the OEWG on the security of and in the use of ICTs.

Consensus reports from previous GGE meetings have acknowledged the applicability of the UN Charter in its entirety, including the principles of state sovereignty, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and non-intervention. However, the applicability of the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter has been more contentious. Member states, including China and Russia, have expressed concerns that recognition of the right to self-defence may lead to the “securitisation” of cyberspace, legitimising military intervention and unilateral sanctions in the context of ICTs. In its national contribution on the subject of how international law applies to the use of ICTs by states, submitted during the 2019–2021 GGE, Russia also noted the difficulty of attributing responsibility for particular actions to states.

Russia has also voiced a preference for a legally binding instrument to regulate states’ relations concerning the security and use of ICTs. In March 2023, Russia, along with Belarus, the DPRK, Nicaragua, Syria, and Venezuela, submitted an updated concept note to the OEWG for a UN Convention on Ensuring International Information Security. The concept note emphasised a “growing need for states to conclude a legally binding multilateral treaty within the

Cybersecurity

[UN] to ensure the prevention and settlement of inter-State conflicts in the global information space, to promote the entirely peaceful use of [ICTs] and to provide a framework for cooperation among States for these purposes”.

Many member states have raised concerns about the proposal, arguing that the existing cybersecurity framework—which includes international law, the UN Charter, confidence-building measures, and agreed norms of responsible state behaviour in the cyber domain—is sufficient for maintaining a safe and secure cyberspace.

In December 2022, the General Assembly adopted a resolution welcoming a proposal to establish a programme of action (PoA) to advance responsible state behaviour in the use of ICTs in the context of international security (A/RES/77/37). The PoA is envisioned as an action-oriented mechanism to support states’ capacities and efforts to implement the voluntary, non-binding norms established by the GGE and OEWG. The resolution was co-sponsored by numerous countries, including Council members France, Japan, Malta, ROK, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US.

Children and Armed Conflict

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on children and armed conflict. Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba is expected to present the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict, which is due in mid-June. Other speakers are likely to include Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of the Elders Ban Ki-moon, and a civil society briefer.

It seems that this year’s annual open debate will cover several themes and trends, including the denial of humanitarian access for children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the effects of the drawdown of UN peace missions on child protection capacities.

Key Recent Developments

The year 2024 marks 25 years since the Security Council adopted resolution 1261 of 30 August 1999, its first to condemn the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict and the first-ever thematic Council resolution. Worrying trends of grave violations committed against children in the past year—including in the context of the eruption and intensification of conflicts in places like Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine—demonstrate the continued importance of the children and armed conflict agenda. (The six grave violations, as determined by the Security Council, are child recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; abductions; and the denial of humanitarian access.)

The Secretary-General’s most recent annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC), dated 14 May, says that the 7 October 2023 attacks against Israel led by Hamas, the Palestinian armed group and de facto authority in Gaza, and the subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza “resulted in civilian deaths and destruction at a level unprecedented in the decades-long conflict”. According to figures provided by Israeli authorities cited by OCHA, the 7 October attacks led to the deaths of more than 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, of whom 33 were children, and the abduction of some 250 Israelis and foreign nationals, including more than 30 children. Figures provided by Palestinian officials in Gaza cited by OCHA indicate that, as at 27 May, at least 36,000 Palestinians had been killed, of whom (at 30 April) close to 8,000 had been identified as children. The numbers are likely to be higher, as many people in Gaza are missing and

presumed buried under the rubble. In 2023, hostilities in the Gaza Strip rendered 23 hospitals and 56 healthcare centres out of service and damaged 370 educational facilities, according to the Secretary-General’s PoC report.

The Security Council has met frequently to discuss developments since 7 October 2023, with a 22 November 2023 briefing focusing on the effects of the fighting on women and children. The first resolution that the Council was able to adopt on the war between Israel and Hamas after several failed attempts—resolution 2712 of 15 November 2023, which was authored by Malta, the chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict—references child protection issues throughout.

In Sudan, fighting that started in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has displaced more than four million children, making Sudan the largest displacement crisis in the world, according to a 15 April UNICEF statement. The statement added that “2023 saw the highest number of grave child rights violations verified in Sudan in more than a decade”, noting a five-fold increase compared with 2022 in reports of grave violations, particularly recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and sexual violence against children.

The already perilous conditions faced by children in Haiti have worsened since late February, when the main gangs in the capital Port-au-Prince, in an apparent alliance, carried out a series of coordinated attacks that targeted state institutions and critical infrastructure. Briefing at a 22 April Council meeting on Haiti, Russell said that between 30 and 50 percent of armed groups in Haiti have children within their ranks, adding that thousands of cases of sexual violence were reported in 2023, many of which targeted children. A multinational security support (MSS) mission to help Haiti combat gang activity and restore security, authorised through Security Council resolution 2699 of 2 October 2023, may deploy to Haiti in early June, according to media reports. At the 22 April briefing, Russell provided several recommendations for the MSS, including on the need to treat children associated with armed groups as victims and to safely hand them over to child protection actors.

UNICEF reported on 13 May that nearly 2,000 children have been killed or injured in Ukraine since Russia’s invasion of the country in February 2022, highlighting that the number of child fatalities this year has increased by almost 40 percent compared to 2023.

Children and Armed Conflict

Hostilities in Ukraine resulted in the destruction or damaging of 103 medical facilities and 294 educational institutions in 2023, according to the Secretary-General's PoC report.

On 29 May, the UK convened a Security Council Arria-formula meeting on Myanmar focused on the situation of children and youth. Briefing at the meeting, Director of UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes Lucia Elmi highlighted that children in Myanmar are harmed in ways that are "often hidden in the shadows from the international limelight", such as killing and maiming caused by landmines. A 4 April UNICEF statement noted that children accounted for over 20 percent of the 1,052 verified civilian casualties from landmine and explosive ordnance incidents during 2023.

Decisions relating to the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict—which list parties that have committed grave violations against children—have traditionally attracted considerable attention. In an April report titled "A Credible List", the organisation Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict provides several recommendations for the upcoming annual report, including to list the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), as well as the Al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military wing) and Al-Quds Brigades (the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad). Other civil society organisations have made similar calls and criticised the Secretary-General for failing to hold accountable Israeli security forces and Palestinian armed groups, neither of which were listed in the annexes of the 2023 annual report. Among other things, the "A Credible List" report also includes recommendations relating to listing parties in Sudan (the SAF and the RSF) and various armed gangs in Haiti.

During its April Council presidency, Malta organised a briefing titled "Addressing the consequences of the denial of humanitarian access for children". At the meeting, Gamba noted that data collected for the upcoming annual report on children and armed conflict indicates "a shocking increase" in incidents of denial of humanitarian access globally. The briefers and Council members expressed concerns about the denial of humanitarian access in several contexts, including Afghanistan, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar, and Yemen.

Developments in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

In the past several years, due to difficult Council dynamics, the Working Group has failed to adopt conclusions, which require consensus, on a number of Secretary-General's reports. In 2023, when it became chair of the working group, Malta inherited five sets of pending conclusions: three that were presented in 2021 (Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Syria) and two in 2022 (Nigeria and Somalia). In an unprecedented development, the working group had failed to adopt conclusions on the three reports submitted in 2021 before the Secretary-General presented new two-year reports on Afghanistan and Syria. He is soon expected to issue a new report on Myanmar.

On 22 May, the working group agreed on its conclusions on the Secretary-General's new report on Afghanistan, an achievement which required compromise on language about which some permanent members (P5) had reservations. Regarding the reports presented in 2022, the working group has adopted conclusions on Nigeria. The adoption of conclusions on Somalia has apparently

been delayed due to difficulty in securing the country's participation in a working group meeting to provide its response to the draft conclusions—which is a standard practice of the working group.

The working group is currently negotiating its conclusions on Secretary-General's reports on the Central African Republic (CAR), Colombia, and Syria, and is expected to begin negotiating conclusions on Iraq.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure the effectiveness of the tools that support the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. The working group's failure to adopt conclusions on some country situations for over two years is a matter of concern, as it hampers its ability to respond to developments on the ground in a timely manner; enhancing the transparency and visibility of its work may assist in this regard. An option would be to request the chair to provide periodic reports to the Security Council or the wider UN membership, similar to periodic briefings provided by chairs of sanctions committees. The working group chair could also alert the Council about stalled negotiations on conclusions by raising the matter under "any other business" during closed consultations, an informal meeting format.

How to maintain child protection capacities and monitoring and reporting on violations following the drawdown of UN peace operations is a crucial issue. A recent spate of abrupt mission closures—of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in December 2023 and the UN Integrated Transition Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) in February—has highlighted this issue and raised PoC concerns. The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is also undergoing a transition, with the Congolese government having called for its accelerated drawdown to begin by the end of 2023. There appears to be little or no documentation on lessons learned regarding transferring child protection and monitoring capacities during transition processes. An option for Council members would be to ask the Secretary-General to prepare such a report. Working group conclusions and other Council products can also call on donors to facilitate adequate funding for entities such as UNICEF that are slated to take over child protection and monitoring capacities after the UN peace operations' departure. (For more on UN peace mission transitions, see our December 2023 research report titled *UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment*.)

Council Dynamics

The children and armed conflict agenda enjoys broad general support among Council members. However, political sensitivities in the Council are also evident at the subsidiary body level, resulting in protracted negotiations before consensus can be reached on some conclusions in the working group.

Five member states are running uncontested for a 2025–2026 seat on the Council: Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia. It remains to be seen how this change in membership might affect dynamics within the working group, not least since Somalia is on the children and armed conflict agenda and Pakistan is a situation of concern. In last year's annual report, the Secretary-General said that engagement by Pakistan's government to develop measures to

Children and Armed Conflict

protect children “may lead to the removal of Pakistan as a situation of concern from my next report, should all agreed practical measures be fully implemented”.

There appear to be differing views among Council members on whether the denial of humanitarian access—the only violation that does not trigger listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s report—should become a trigger violation. At the April briefing on the denial of humanitarian access, Algeria was the only member to

express support for making denial of humanitarian access a trigger violation. Other Council members seem to have less appetite for a resolution that would make denial of humanitarian access a trigger violation, particularly as some P5 members have sensitivities about country situations where this violation is prevalent. (For more information, see the children and armed conflict brief in our April 2024 *Monthly Forecast*).

Iraq (UNITAD)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council will receive the biannual briefing from the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL in Iraq (UNITAD). Acting Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Ana Peyró Llopis is expected to brief the Council. UNITAD’s final mandate expires on 17 September 2024.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The Council established UNITAD through resolution 2379 of 21 September 2017 for an initial period of two years. It has since renewed the mechanism annually, most recently through resolution 2697 of 15 September 2023, which renewed the team for a final one-year non-extendable term. UNITAD is mandated to support Iraqi domestic efforts to hold the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da’esh) accountable for crimes it committed in the country “by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide”. The collected evidence is intended to support investigations carried out by Iraqi authorities or by authorities in third countries at their request.

Resolution 2379 emphasised that UNITAD should be “impartial, independent, and credible” and act consistently with its terms of reference, the UN Charter, “UN best practice”, and relevant international law, including international human rights law. Because UNITAD is implementing its mandate in accordance with “UN best practice”, it does not share evidence for criminal proceedings in which capital punishment could be imposed. At present, the international crimes that UNITAD is mandated to investigate have not been incorporated into Iraq’s legal system. As a result, perpetrators in Iraq who have committed acts that contravene international criminal law are usually charged with terrorism offences. Under Iraqi law, the death penalty can be imposed for these offences, which has prevented UNITAD from sharing its evidence of ISIL’s potential violations of international criminal law with Iraq’s government—the primary intended recipient.

In October 2020, a draft law that would incorporate international crimes into Iraq’s domestic legal system was proposed in the Iraqi parliament, but the legislation has not advanced since then. In March 2023, UNITAD and Iraqi authorities announced the establishment of a joint working group to study the issue further. While seeking a

comprehensive solution, UNITAD and Iraqi authorities have also pursued initiatives to facilitate information-sharing in specific areas, for instance relating to UNITAD’s analytical reports and case assessments and the evidence it has collected of ISIL’s financial crimes.

Despite these efforts, Iraq sent a letter to the Council prior to UNITAD’s most recent mandate renewal in September 2023 requesting that the renewal be for a period of one year “without the possibility of extension”. The letter emphasised that during this period, the team “must turn over” all the evidence it has obtained in Iraq since the start of its mandate. It also requested UNITAD not to share further evidence with third countries and to disclose to Iraqi authorities the evidence that the team has previously shared.

Consequently, resolution 2697 extended UNITAD’s mandate until 17 September 2024 “only”. It noted Iraq’s request for UNITAD to share its evidence with national authorities within this period and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Security Council a report setting out recommendations for implementing this request “with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq”. That report, dated 15 January, urged UNITAD to provide to Iraqi authorities all evidence originally received from them—which constitutes the majority of the team’s holdings—as digitalised and managed, as well as any other evidence “that it is in a position to share”. In this regard, the report emphasised that all evidence sharing should still be consistent with the team’s terms of reference, including UN best practice, which the report said remains “applicable”.

The report also described challenges that UNITAD’s drawdown poses for future accountability efforts. One concern is the preservation and management of the team’s collected evidence. The UN Secretariat will assume responsibility for UNITAD’s materials upon the team’s closure—including copies of records shared with Iraq, as well as other evidence—but the Secretariat is not currently in a position to guarantee, within existing resources, that the evidence will be preserved in accordance with international criminal law standards and remain usable for future judicial proceedings. In addition, the report underscored the importance of maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the evidence, particularly as it concerns the consent, privacy, and security of witnesses and other sources. To address these challenges, the report recommended establishing a secure evidence repository within the Secretariat to preserve the evidence in a manner that guarantees the chain of custody, integrity, and reliability of data,

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2697](#) (15 September 2023) extended UNITAD’s mandate for a final one-year non-extendable term, until 17 September 2024. [Secretary-General’s Report 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. [Security Council Letters 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. [S/2023/882](#) (16 November 2023) transmitted the 11th report of the Special Adviser and head of UNITAD.

Iraq (UNITAD)

which would require additional budgetary resources. The report also emphasised Iraqi authorities' need for ongoing capacity-building to effectively manage and use the digitalised evidence that they receive.

Resolution 2697 additionally requested the Special Adviser to transmit to the Council a roadmap for the completion of the team's mandate and necessary steps for its closure. According to that report, dated 14 March, UNITAD has been actively sharing with Iraqi authorities the team's work related to major investigations, including finalised case assessments and analytical reports relating to ISIL's crimes against the Yazidi community in Sinjar, its crimes against the country's Christian community, the Tikrit Air Academy massacre, and the Badush prison attack. By the end of its mandate, UNITAD expects to hand over preliminary case assessments on crimes against other minority communities, as well as thematic reports on ISIL's delegated committee—known as Diwan al-Jund—and on the group's sexual and gender-based crimes. All disclosed products will be accompanied by underlying evidence and will be “redacted as necessary”.

The report also highlighted several remaining challenges. It described the process of preparing findings for disclosure as time-consuming, as it requires strict coding and redactions to uphold source consent. Additionally, the report underscored the need for Iraq to establish its own evidence management system, which is a resource-intensive endeavour. Furthermore, UNITAD's capacity-building efforts, such as training for forensic and judicial personnel, are heavily reliant on extrabudgetary funds that will be returned to donors once the team's mandate ends. Against this backdrop, the report outlined additional steps that UNITAD could achieve if its mandate were extended an additional year, which the report said would ensure a smoother transition with regard to evidence management, capacity-building, and support to third-country investigations, in turn strengthening the sustainability of efforts to promote accountability for ISIL's crimes.

At the Council's June briefing, Peyró Llopis—whom Secretary-General Antonio Guterres appointed on 2 April to succeed former Special Adviser Christian Ritscher—will present the team's 12th and final biannual report, which was circulated to Council members on 28 May but was not yet publicly available at the time of writing. The report provides a general overview of UNITAD's accomplishments over the course of its mandate, as well as an update on drawdown preparations. According to the report, UNITAD has collected a total of 40 terabytes of evidence, stored and analysed in a centralised digital archive; pursued ten investigations spanning both thematic and incident-related lines of enquiry, resulting in numerous case assessment and analytical reports; and supported judicial proceedings in 20 third-country jurisdictions, resulting in 15 convictions. The team initiated its drawdown and liquidation plans in April for an orderly withdrawal from Iraq by the end of its mandate, coordinating with Iraqi authorities and relevant UN departments to ensure the preservation of evidentiary materials. The team has continued efforts to transfer evidence to the Iraqi judiciary in a digitised format, in line with its terms of reference and international criminal law standards, while providing additional technical assistance to Iraqi authorities to develop their own digital evidence management system. On 1 June, the team will begin preparing its holdings for transfer to the UN Secretariat, in line with the Secretary-General's report of 15 January,

and based on an archiving plan currently under development to ensure that all records are adequately preserved for future use. The report concludes by emphasising the importance of continuing global accountability efforts for ISIL's crimes to ensure that the stories and memories of survivors and victims are preserved.

Women, Peace and Security

On 8 April, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in Iraq. UNAMI Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance Claudio Cordone briefed. According to the summary of the meeting, issued on 8 May by Sierra Leone and Switzerland as the IEG co-chairs, together with the UK as the penholder on WPS, Council members asked questions about women's political participation, violence against women, and monitoring and reporting by UNAMI of harassment and attacks against women human rights defenders. Members also inquired about accountability for atrocities perpetrated by ISIL against women and girls, including what will happen to the evidence collected by UNITAD once its mandate ends. According to the meeting summary, UNITAD is working to share analytical products with the Iraqi government, such as “briefs with legal and factual findings”, including a brief on sexual and gender-based crimes committed against the Shia Turkmen community as well as an updated brief on crimes against the Yazidi community, including sexual and gender-based violence. Among other issues, the summary also reports that there has been a “campaign on social media and by political actors” in Iraq “against the use of the word ‘gender’, seen as associated with the promotion of LGBTQI issues” with serious consequences for women civil society leaders and activists, including several actors working on women's rights suspending their activities for fear of reprisal.

Key Issues and Options

As UNITAD's mandate draws to a close, the key issue for the Council is to support efforts to ensure an orderly drawdown that preserves the team's work for future efforts to hold ISIL/Da'esh responsible for its crimes. Important aspects in this regard include developing an evidence management system that allows the UN Secretariat to store the team's holdings properly for future investigations, in line with international criminal law standards; continued capacity-building for Iraqi authorities to help them effectively store, analyse, and use shared evidence for domestic prosecutions; and engagement with third-party countries to support prosecutions in their jurisdictions. The June briefing is an opportunity for Council members to learn more about these activities and how the Council may facilitate further progress.

Council members could also consider inviting a civil society representative to brief on the impact of UNITAD's closure on victims of ISIL's crimes and other affected communities.

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

The issue of evidence-sharing, however, has been a longstanding source of contention. Members who oppose the death penalty—such as France, Malta, Switzerland, and the UK—have been concerned about the possibility that evidence shared by the team with the Iraqi authorities might be used in criminal proceedings in which the death penalty could be imposed. Other members—such as Algeria, China, and Russia—have maintained that the use of the death penalty is Iraq's sovereign right, a point Iraq has also emphasised.

Iraq (UNITAD)

During negotiations over UNITAD's mandate renewals, Iraq and like-minded Council members exerted increasing pressure to mandate the team to promptly share its evidence holdings. Prior to the last renewal in September 2023, Iraq agreed to request only one final extension, on this condition. Given their diverging interpretations of

UNITAD's evidence-sharing obligations, however, Council members reached a compromise by requesting the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on how to implement Iraq's request, as outlined above.

The UK is the penholder on UNITAD.

Counter-Terrorism

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is scheduled to vote on a draft resolution on the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime. The draft resolution will include provisions extending the mandates of the 1267/1988 Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and the Office of the Ombudsperson, both of which expire in June. The first draft of this resolution was circulated to all Council members in mid-May.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions regime imposes an assets freeze, a travel ban, and an arms embargo on individuals and entities associated with ISIL or Al-Qaida. Resolution 2610, which last renewed and updated the regime in December 2021, sets out the listing criteria for these sanctions, which include participating in the acts or activities of ISIL or Al-Qaida; selling weapons to ISIL or Al-Qaida; and recruiting for ISIL or Al-Qaida.

The 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee is a subsidiary organ of the Council established to oversee the regime. Its tasks include designating individuals and entities who meet the listing criteria, responding to requests for sanctions exemptions, reporting annually to the Council, and conducting outreach activities. The Monitoring Team supports the work of the Committee by, among other things, preparing written reports on the implementation of the sanctions and other topics, assisting with listing proposals, and gathering information on the Committee's behalf. The Ombudsperson receives delisting requests and reports to the Committee regarding these requests. These reports include a recommendation on how the Committee should respond to the delisting request. While the Committee has the power to overturn the Ombudsperson's requests in certain circumstances, this has not happened to date. Richard Malanjum, the former Chief Justice of Malaysia, is the current Ombudsperson.

The Monitoring Team's latest report was issued on 29 January. It concluded that the threat posed by ISIL and Al-Qaida remains high in conflict zones and neighbouring countries and observed that threat levels have risen in other regions, including Europe. Regarding West Africa and the Sahel, the report noted that greater freedom of movement and closer links between terrorist groups have raised fears that they could establish a safe operating base in the region. The report further analysed the situation in South and Central Asia, noting that while the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K)—ISIL's Afghan affiliate—have decreased in Afghanistan, member states nonetheless remain concerned about

the group's ability to project attacks beyond Afghanistan's borders. The threat posed by the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan was also considered in the report, which concluded that the group poses a regional threat and has the capacity to conduct transnational operations from bases inside Afghanistan.

The Monitoring Team made two recommendations in the report: stressing the need for member states to share additional information regarding entries on the sanctions list and proposing that the Committee direct the Monitoring Team to assess whether to update the standard form for listing requests and consider if there are any tools that could be used to manage the sanctions list more effectively. In a 27 February letter, the Committee accepted these recommendations.

The most recent report of the Ombudsperson was issued on 28 March. Among other matters, the report noted that the Ombudsperson's "lack of institutional autonomy" remains an unresolved issue. According to the report, the Ombudsperson briefed the Committee on this issue on 30 November 2023 and highlighted several long-standing problems, such as the reporting line of the Ombudsperson's staff, the lack of decision-making power regarding expenses, security of tenure, and "the contractual status and conditions of service of the Ombudsperson as a consultant". The Ombudsperson also discussed the need to ensure continuity if they are unable to fulfil their duties or if there is a gap between the end of one Ombudsperson's tenure and the beginning of another. At present, the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime does not include a deputy Ombudsperson who could fulfil this role.

In November 2023, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) issued a report on accountability for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) linked to terrorism. Citing a gender and counter-terrorism expert, the report noted that "designating individuals or entities for UN sanctions due to their involvement in SGBV linked to terrorism could serve as a tool to discourage and penalise those engaged in activities that undermine international peace and security".

Key Issues and Options

Deciding whether to update the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime is a key issue for the Council. The Council could choose to update the regime by adding SGBV as a standalone listing criterion. This would align with the Council's previously stated intention, as expressed in resolution 2331, to consider targeted sanctions against individuals and entities associated with ISIL or Al-Qaida involved in human trafficking and sexual violence in conflict. The Council could also make consequential changes to the regime specifically directing

UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2610 (17 December 2021) renewed and updated the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime. S/RES/2331 (20 December 2016) was the first resolution on human trafficking, which condemned the phenomenon and stressed that human trafficking can exacerbate conflict and foster insecurity.

Counter-Terrorism

the Monitoring Team to collect relevant information from member states in order to assist the Committee with its decision-making regarding this issue.

Given the long-standing concerns regarding the Ombudsperson's independence, the Council could request that the Secretary-General reconstitute the institutional arrangements currently in place with a view to addressing the issues that have been raised by the current Ombudsperson and his predecessors.

The Council could also encourage member states to consult with the Monitoring Team when preparing listing proposals. The Monitoring Team's July 2023 report noted that member states sometimes lack an adequate understanding of the relevant procedure and said that this can have an adverse effect on listing proposals. Encouraging consultations with the Monitoring Team could help resolve this issue.

Council Dynamics

In general, counter-terrorism enjoys the support of all Council members. Members do, however, focus on different aspects of the issue. Some members favour an approach that is founded on human rights, prevention, and the involvement of civil society, while other members prefer to focus more closely on security and law enforcement.

During negotiations concerning the previous update to the

1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime, which took place in December 2021, Council members generally agreed that the regime functions effectively as currently formulated and that no major amendments were required. Discussions apparently centred on references to the effects of counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian activities, updates to the institutional arrangements for the Ombudsperson and the asset freeze measures, and a proposed reporting requirement for the Monitoring Team relating to ISIL's activities in Africa.

Certain then-Council members, including some of the European members, apparently proposed establishing the Ombudsperson as a distinct UN entity and appointing a deputy Ombudsperson to fill the role if the Ombudsperson is absent. It seems that these proposals were opposed by other members, including China and Russia, and they were not included in resolution 2610. (For more information on the negotiations, see our *What's in Blue* story of 17 December 2021.)

In 2016, when the Council adopted resolution 2331 on sexual violence and human trafficking, several members, including China, Russia, and the US, expressed concern about expanding the work of the Council's sanctions committees. These concerns led to changes in the tasks for the Monitoring Team set out in the resolution. (For more information, see our *What's in Blue* story of 19 December 2016.)

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Special Representative and Head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry is expected to brief. The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2024.

Key Recent Developments

Chad conducted a presidential election in May, marking the conclusion of a transition period that began following the death of President Idriss Déby Itno in April 2021. According to media reports, violent incidents marred the election, and opposition groups alleged that there was electoral fraud. The killing of opposition leader Yaya Dillo in February overshadowed the pre-electoral period, and the circumstances surrounding his death remain contentious. The Chadian government claims that Dillo died in a confrontation with security forces, but opposition factions contend that he was assassinated.

Among the dozen presidential candidates were Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno, the late president's son, who served as the head of the transitional government for the last three years, and Succès Masra, a former opposition figure who returned from exile to assume the role of prime minister in January. Announcing the provisional election results, Chad's electoral commission declared Itno the winner with 61 percent of the vote. Ahead of this announcement, Masra, who only garnered 18 percent of the vote according to the electoral commission, appeared on social media declaring himself the winner

and calling upon his supporters to mobilise peacefully to assert his victory. Chadian soldiers were deployed in N'Djamena, the capital, anticipating potential post-electoral violence. In a 10 May press statement, Abarry called on Chadian political actors to exercise restraint and use legal avenues to resolve disputes. On 23 May, Itno was inaugurated at a ceremony attended by regional leaders.

Following the August 2023 coup in Gabon that led to the overthrow of President Ali Bongo Ondimba, who had ruled the country since 2009, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) suspended Gabon from all its activities. It also temporarily relocated the ECCAS headquarters from Libreville to Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) followed by suspending Gabon from all activities and organs of the AU until constitutional order is restored.

The Gabonese transitional government has been exerting efforts to show its commitment to the restoration of constitutional order. It announced in November 2023 plans to hold elections in August 2025 and convened a national dialogue in April in which more than 600 people participated, including opposition and civil society representatives. The meeting reportedly concluded with the submission of several recommendations to the president of the Gabonese transitional government, General Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema. These included a two-year transition period, as proposed by the transitional government, that could be extended for another 12 months under exceptional circumstances, and a seven-year presidential term, renewable once. However, the proposal to suspend political parties until new political rules are issued appeared controversial during the

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOCA [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/10](#) (12 September 2019) expressed the Council's full support for UNOCA. [Secretary-General's Report S/2023/934](#) (30 November 2023) was the semi-annual report on UNOCA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9505](#) (13 December 2023) was a meeting on the situation in Central Africa.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

national dialogue. Subsequently, a new constitution is expected to be submitted for a referendum to pave the way for elections at the end of the transition period.

In recent months, Nguema undertook a regional tour on which he sought the support of several ECCAS member states for lifting the suspensions imposed by ECCAS and the AUPSC. At its ordinary summit, held in Equatorial Guinea on 9 March, ECCAS decided to lift the suspensions imposed on Gabon and to temporarily relocate the ECCAS headquarters from Libreville to Malabo. The summit also instructed the ECCAS Commission President to undertake an advocacy mission to explain this decision to the AU and the UN.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea have continued to decline, according to Omar Touray, President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, speaking at the fourth annual meeting of the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC) in Abuja, Nigeria, on 18 April. (The ICC was established in 2014 by ECOWAS, ECCAS, and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to serve as a coordination centre on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.) Abarry also attended the meeting and expressed UNOCA's support for regional partners in strengthening maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. "When UNOCA's mandate is renewed this August, we will ensure that the international partnership on maritime security is strengthened and expanded", he told the meeting.

In the Lake Chad Basin, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), composed of forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, has intensified its military operations against the terrorist groups Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The Secretary-General's 30 November 2023 UNOCA report notes, however, that "economic hardships continued to drive vulnerable young persons towards illegal activities, including joining extremist groups", adding that insecurity has disrupted traditional transhumance routes, "affecting local economies and exacerbating resource competition, food insecurity, and displacement".

Peacebuilding Commission-Related Developments

From 13 to 15 May, the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Sérgio França Danese (Brazil), visited São Tomé and Príncipe. The visit was organised to follow up on the Commission's first meeting on the country on 15 January, during which Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada presented the government's plans to reform its justice and security sectors. Special Representative Abarry also participated in the meeting and appealed to the international community to contribute to the implementation of the November 2023 recommendations of a joint UN-ECCAS strategic assessment mission, which forms a basis for mobilising resources and carrying out reforms in the justice and security sectors.

Ahead of the Council's 24 April bi-annual meeting on the Great Lakes, the PBC sent the Council a written advisory in a letter of 12 April. The PBC advised the Council to consider encouraging the ongoing efforts to revitalise the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, including by reiterating the need for the Framework's signatories to fulfil their commitments to promote judicial cooperation among Great Lakes countries.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situations in several parts of Central Africa continue to be key concerns for the Council. In this regard, Council members are likely to be interested in hearing Abarry's assessment of transition processes and elections in the region. The election in Chad

and the situation in Gabon may draw the attention of Council members.

Additionally, Council members could be keen to understand the regional implications of the fighting in Sudan and its effects on Chad and the Central African Republic. In its January report, the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee noted that the supply lines for military equipment and fuel used by the Rapid Support Forces, one of the Sudanese conflict parties, passed through neighbouring countries, including Chad.

The continued threat of terrorism in the Lake Chad basin and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea also remain matters of concern. The implementation of the Regional Stabilization, Recovery, and Resilience Strategy for Areas Affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin Region, developed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the support of the AU, could be of particular interest in this regard.

Another major issue for several Council members is the adverse effects of climate change in the Central Africa region, with worsening drought and receding water levels in Lake Chad, which has weakened livelihoods and exacerbated communal violence.

Looking ahead to the UNOCA mandate renewal in August, an option for Council members is to aim to conclude the negotiations on the draft presidential statement on UNOCA that has been lingering for two years. Council members had been negotiating a similar draft presidential statement on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), with climate language proving a major sticking point. Their ability to agree on language, and adopt a UNOWAS statement, in May could provide a basis for achieving consensus on the UNOCA draft.

Council and Broader Dynamics

Council members support a holistic regional approach to addressing the peace and security challenges in Central Africa, based on cooperation between UNOCA and the various regional mechanisms. They tend to underscore challenges in the region related to political transitions; humanitarian crises, including the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons; the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism; and the adverse effects of climate change. The two-year effort to produce a presidential statement on UNOCA has stalled over differences on language on climate, peace, and security.

Some country situations in the region, such as the situation in north-western and south-western Cameroon, remain a focus for some Council member states, which continue to call for dialogue to find a lasting political solution to this longstanding crisis. In June, Council members may pay particular attention to the situation in Chad. The country hosts a large number of refugees from Sudan, where the ongoing fighting has caused major displacement. Chad has also been playing a significant role in countering the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Chad, which hosts French and American forces, in April requested the US to end its operations at an air base near N'Djamena, the capital. Subsequently, the US announced the temporary withdrawal of some troops pending a review of its security cooperation with the country.

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

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The President of the IRMCT, Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, and the Chief Prosecutor of the IRMCT, Serge Brammertz, are expected to brief during the debate and to meet with the Informal Working Group on Tribunals prior to that. The term of the Chief Prosecutor expires on 30 June.

A resolution on the IRMCT is also scheduled for adoption in June. The first draft of this resolution was circulated to Council members in late May.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT—with branches in The Hague, the Netherlands; and Arusha, Tanzania—focuses on completing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which closed in December 2017 and December 2015 respectively. Its tasks have included hearing the remaining trials and appeals from the ICTY and the ICTR; locating the remaining fugitives indicted by the ICTR; assisting national jurisdictions with requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia; monitoring cases referred to national courts; enforcing sentences; protecting witnesses and victims; and preserving archives.

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

Under resolution 1966, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for subsequent periods of two years unless the Council decides otherwise. The Council most recently extended Brammertz’s term in resolution 2637, which was adopted on 22 June 2022 with 14 votes in favour and Russia abstaining. It contained new elements—including language on member state cooperation with the enforcement of sentences handed down by the ICTR, the ICTY, and the IRMCT—and welcomed the continuing support that states had provided. It called on the IRMCT, as part of its completion strategy, to provide options regarding the transfer of its remaining activities in due course. (For more information on resolution 2637, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 21 June 2022.) It appears that the Informal Working Group on Tribunals is currently considering a framework of operations for completing the IRMCT’s functions. This document was prepared by the IRMCT and provided to the Working Group.

On 4 March, the Council adopted a presidential statement which, among other matters, requested the Informal Working Group on Tribunals to review a progress report from the IRMCT and a report by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the evaluation of the methods and work of the IRMCT and present its views and any recommendations to the Council by 15 May. The presidential statement said that the outcome of the review will be “reflected by the Security Council in an appropriate form” and included new language

requesting that the report from the IRMCT provide detailed timelines for the completion of its functions and realistic options for the transfer of those functions. Council members received the progress report from the IRMCT on 15 April. The OIOS report was issued on 29 February.

The OIOS report, which assessed “the relevance, effectiveness and coherence of the outcomes achieved as a result of the [IRMCT] discharging its residual functions”, concluded that the IRMCT has effectively leveraged cooperation with member states and international organisations to track fugitives, supervise the enforcement of sentences, and facilitate access to information from its archives. It also noted that the IRMCT assisted more than 400 investigations and judicial proceedings in 15 countries between January 2021 and August 2023. The report recommended that the IRMCT should:

- clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of its principals regarding the relocation of acquitted and released persons;
- further strengthen the ways it leverages partnerships with the UN system to find long-term solutions to the challenges it faces regarding cooperation with member states;
- apply lessons learned and best practices from the closure of the Sarajevo field office, particularly for the upcoming closure of the Kigali field office; and
- take steps to further client orientation, including by improving statistics on assistance activities and soliciting feedback from those who request assistance and receive capacity-building training.

The Council’s last semi-annual debate on the IRMCT took place on 12 December 2023. Brammertz and Gatti Santana briefed. Gatti Santana said that the IRMCT “has finally transitioned to its new, truly residual phase” and noted that it no longer has active trials or appeals related to core crimes on its docket following the indefinite stay of proceedings against Félicien Kabuga granted in September 2023. Gatti Santana also mentioned that she had presented the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals with “a draft framework of operations to complete functions” and highlighted that sentence enforcement, the situation of seven acquitted or released persons relocated to Niger in December 2021, and attempts to undermine the IRMCT’s work continue to cause difficulties.

Brammertz noted that his office is now focused on its remaining residual functions, particularly the provision of assistance to national authorities. In this regard, he explained that his office provides three primary forms of assistance: access to evidence and information contained within the IRMCT’s evidence collection; advice on legal, evidentiary, prosecutorial, and strategic matters; and expert support concerning fugitives from Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

On 15 May, the IRMCT announced that it had accounted for all fugitives indicted by the ICTR after confirming that the remaining two fugitives—Ryandikayo and Charles Sikubwabo—have died. In a decision handed down on 10 May, the IRMCT denied an application filed by Ratko Mladić, a former military officer serving a life sentence at the UN Detention Unit after being found guilty of committing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The application sought provisional release on compassionate grounds or, in the alternative, permission for Mladić to serve the remainder of his sentence in Serbia.

International Criminal Tribunals

Key Issues and Options

Appointing a Chief Prosecutor is an issue for the Council. A related issue is reflecting the outcome of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals' review "in an appropriate form", as requested in the 4 March presidential statement. The Council could adopt a resolution that appoints a Chief Prosecutor, reflects the outcome of the review process, and makes any changes to the IRMCT's mandate that are deemed necessary.

Continuing to monitor the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate is another key issue. Members could choose to use the closed format of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals to have a frank discussion with Gatti Santana and Brammertz regarding the IRMCT's operations. Members could also use this format to ask questions about the framework of operations for completing the IRMCT's functions and to discuss whether there is anything the Council can do to help manage the issues identified by Gatti Santana during her 12 December 2023 briefing.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, except for Russia. Russia has regularly criticised the appointment of Brammertz, who was the ICTY prosecutor from 2008 until its closure in 2017, and it

abstained on resolutions reappointing him in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022. Russia was also consistently critical of the ICTY.

The negotiations on resolution 2637, which most recently extended Brammertz's term, were lengthy and difficult. Members disagreed about how to characterise the conclusions of the 23 February 2022 OIOS report on the IRMCT. Russia apparently proposed language noting that the IRMCT failed to implement all OIOS recommendations and text calling on the OIOS to generate new recommendations on the evaluation of the IRMCT's methods and work pertaining to its closure, especially with a focus on staff reduction. Russia also apparently sought the inclusion of language expressing concern that the IRMCT had failed to demonstrate any visible reduction in its staff or budget. Most members did not support such language, however, and it was not added to the resolution.

Language regarding the importance of ensuring the rights of persons detained on the authority of the IRMCT—including those related to healthcare—was also contentious. At least two members were apparently in favour of deleting this text, but Russia opposed the deletion. Russia has repeatedly emphasised the importance of protecting persons detained by the IRMCT and maintaining their access to medical care, often by referring to the cases of specific individuals. (For more information on the negotiations, see our 21 June 2022 *What's in Blue* story.)

Syria

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council expects to hold two meetings on Syria: one on political and humanitarian issues and another on the chemical weapons track.

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 25 April, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and OCHA Head in Geneva and Director of the Coordination Division Ramesh Rajasingham briefed the Council on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria, respectively. Pedersen described the continuing hostilities in the country, including missile and drone strikes by pro-government forces and attacks by the Security Council-listed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in the north-west; sustained attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh); and Turkish drone strikes and growing insurgency by some tribal elements against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF),

a primarily Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government, in the north-east. He warned that "Syria is [being] treated by many as a sort of free-for-all space for settling scores", adding that "any temptation to ignore or merely contain the Syrian conflict itself would be a mistake". Pedersen also stressed the need for regional de-escalation, starting with an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

With regard to the resumption of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, Pedersen said that despite intense efforts, there has not been any progress. (The Constitutional Committee has not met since June 2022 because Russia, a close ally of Syria, opposed Geneva as the venue following Switzerland's imposition of sanctions on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine in 2022.) He expressed his openness to any alternative venue that attracts consensus of both the Syrian parties and the host country, while noting that he is continuing engagements in this regard. In the meantime, however, he appealed to the parties to resume the Committee's work in Geneva as a bridging option. He also stressed the need for exploring a new and comprehensive approach to addressing the wide range of issues facing Syria. (For background, see our *What's in Blue* story of 24 April.)

In his remarks, Rajasingham provided an overview of the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the country and the devastating consequences of the persisting insecurity on civilians. He also described the continuing threat posed by explosive ordnance, noting that Syria witnessed more civilian casualties in 2023 from landmines, explosive remnants of war, and improvised explosive devices than any other country. He underscored that funding shortages for relief

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) focused extensively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. It was adopted unanimously. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9618 (25 April 2024) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situation in Syria. S/PV.9562 (4 March 2024) was a briefing on the chemical weapons track.

Syria

efforts had significantly curtailed the ability of humanitarian organisations to provide assistance in the country. He said that hundreds of medical facilities and mobile health teams are at risk of closing in the coming months because of funding constraints, which could affect access to life-saving care for millions, including urgently needed maternal, sexual and reproductive care for 4.1 million women and girls of reproductive age. (For background and more information, see the Syria brief in our *May Monthly Forecast*.)

According to the 16 May OCHA situation report, Syria's 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan, which calls for \$4.07 billion, was only six percent funded. At the same time, the Syria Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund—a multi-donor country-based pooled fund facilitating delivery of humanitarian assistance across border and conflict lines—has received only \$9 million in contributions this year, as at 15 May, which is \$92 million less than the fund had received during the same period in 2023.

The ministerial session of the EU-sponsored eighth Brussels Conference, titled “Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region”, was convened on 27 May. The conference aimed at deepening engagement among the relevant stakeholders in the Syrian conflict and garnering financial support for Syrians in need inside Syria as well as in neighbouring countries as refugees. The donor community pledged €7.5 billion, including €5 billion in grants and €2.5 billion of loan for 2024 and future years.

In a 10 May press release, OCHA welcomed the Syrian government's decision to extend its authorisation for the use of the Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee border crossings at the Syria-Türkiye border—used by UN humanitarian agencies and their partners for conducting cross-border humanitarian operations—until 13 August. Humanitarian operations have also continued through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing at the Syria-Türkiye border, which, according to OCHA, is an essential lifeline for reaching millions of Syrians in north-west Syria who remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance, including food, nutrition, health, shelter, protection, education, and other critical support.

Heavy flooding in several parts of north-west Syria has further exacerbated the humanitarian situation. According to the 16 May OCHA situation report, heavy rainfall and flooding that struck areas in Idlib and northern Aleppo on 1 May affected more than 12,600 people. Due to the flooding, over 2,500 tents and 200 shelters were damaged at 33 displacement camps, mostly in Idlib. The report added that on 6 May, an OCHA team completed a cross-border mission from Türkiye to Idlib to assess the impact of the floods. Following the visit, the OCHA team held a meeting with the focal points of the protection clusters to take stock of the response and address the remaining gaps. Since the first inter-agency visit to Idlib on 14 February 2023 in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that struck south-east Türkiye and northern Syria on 6 February 2023, the UN has conducted 469 cross-border missions to north-west Syria, as at 14 May. The report said that most cross-border missions in 2024 have been carried out to conduct monitoring, assessment, and engagements with partners and communities.

World Health Organization Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Hanan Balkhy visited Syria from 14 to 18 May. She met with senior Syrian government officials in Damascus and

travelled to Homs, Hama, and Aleppo governorates, where she held discussions with local health authorities. In discussions with Syrian officials, she emphasised the importance of enhancing multi-sectoral coordination and the urgency of obtaining updated health data to inform prioritised response planning. She expressed concern about the crippled health system in the country, noting that only 65 percent of hospitals and 62 percent of primary healthcare centres are currently fully operational.

On 4 March, the Council convened a briefing, followed by consultations, on the Syria chemical weapons track. At the meeting, Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo updated the members on the 26th round of consultations between the Declaration Assessment Team (DAT) of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the Syrian authorities, which took place from 23 January to 1 February. During this round, Ebo said that the DAT stressed the need for “for tangible, scientifically plausible and verifiable explanations, amendments and documents to resolve [outstanding] issues”. The DAT also discussed the results of analysis of samples it collected between 2019 and 2023, focusing on the “unexpected presence of indicators of potentially undeclared activities involving research and development on, and the production, storage and/or weaponization of unknown quantities of chemical weapons”. He added that considering the identified gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies that remain unresolved, the declaration submitted by Syria cannot be considered accurate and complete in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention. The 27th round of consultations was ongoing, at the time of writing.

On 22 February, the OPCW Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) released its fourth report, based on investigations conducted from January 2023 to February 2024. The report concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that units of ISIL were responsible for the chemical weapons attack on 1 September 2015 in Marea, Syria. It added that all remnants and munitions observed at the sites were conventional artillery projectiles modified to disperse a liquid payload. The report identified four individuals as perpetrators and two ISIL members as the primary drivers of ISIL's chemical weapons programme.

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. 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 shifted to other crises, such as those in Gaza and Ukraine.

As well, a key issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian

Syria

needs throughout the country. Council members could also consider adopting a press statement calling on the international community to scale up the humanitarian response in Syria, including additional 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. (A private meeting is a closed, formal meeting format; unlike closed consultations, non-Council member states are allowed to participate in this format.)

Council Dynamics

Syria remains 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.

With regard to the chemical weapons track, Council members have displayed starkly different views over the years on a range of related issues, including responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the credibility of the work of the OPCW, and numerous procedural aspects of the OPCW's decision-making bodies. While several members have consistently expressed support for the OPCW's work, maintaining that it is credible and essential, other members, such as China and Russia, claim that its work is biased and politicised.

Switzerland is the penholder on the Syria humanitarian file.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The Houthi rebel group has continued to attack maritime shipping since November 2023 to pressure Israel to cease its military offensive in Gaza, although with less frequency in recent months. Along with US strikes against Houthi targets in response to the attacks, the situation has frozen Yemen's peace talks.

In a televised speech on 3 May, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said that the rebel group, which has targeted ships in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean, would also target ships in the Mediterranean Sea heading to Israeli ports. While the pace of attacks has declined, a Houthi ballistic missile struck the oil tanker M/T Wind on 18 May as it transited the Red Sea. Before it could resume its voyage, the ship had to address flooding caused by the attack. The tanker is a Panamanian-flagged, Greek-owned vessel that had recently docked in Russia and was bound for China, according to US Central Command. On 28 May, three Houthi missiles hit the Marshall Islands-flagged and Greek-owned M/V Laax fifty-four miles southwest of Hodeidah port. According to reports, the bulk carrier took on water, which was causing it to list. During the month, the Houthis also claimed to have shot down two US reaper drones over Yemen, one each on 17 May and 21 May; these would represent the fourth and fifth US reaper drones, which can fly at an altitude of 50,000 feet and each cost about \$30 million, that the group has downed since November 2023.

On 7 May, senior representatives from across the humanitarian community gathered in Brussels for the sixth Yemen Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting, co-hosted by Sweden and the European Commission. Belgium, the EU, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US committed \$791.69 million to address humanitarian needs in the country.

At the 13 May Council briefing on Yemen, Grundberg reiterated that the regional situation has hampered his mediation efforts. As part of his briefing, Grundberg noted that the security situation along the front lines in Yemen had remained stable over the past month but expressed concern about the parties' threat to return to war, including Houthi rhetoric and actions in relation to Marib governorate.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths updated the Council on the humanitarian situation, marking one of his final briefings before he concludes his tenure as the head of UN humanitarian affairs at the end of June; Griffiths was Grundberg's predecessor as UN Special Envoy for Yemen, serving from March 2018 to June 2021. During his briefing, Griffiths flagged a "rapidly worsening" cholera outbreak in Yemen, occurring particularly in Houthi-controlled areas. According to Griffiths, the outbreak has caused 40,000 suspected cases and 160 reported deaths, which marked a sharp increase from the previous month, and required rapid funding to prevent the outbreak "from spiralling out of control".

At the Council meeting, the UK reiterated its concern over vessels entering Hodeidah governorate ports without reporting to the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM). Since 2016, vessels travelling to Yemeni ports not under the internationally recognised government's control have been required to inform UNVIM, which inspects ships and clears them for continued transit. The UK

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 Meeting Record S/PV.9623** (13 May 2024) was a briefing on Yemen by Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths.

Yemen

and US first raised concerns publicly about the issue at a 14 March Council briefing. According to the UK at last month's briefing, there has been a "notable surge" in bypassing UNVIM, with the equivalent of as many as 500 truckloads of uninspected material entering Hodeidah since October 2023.

On 26 May, the Houthis unilaterally released 113 prisoners, according to a statement by the ICRC. It was the first prisoner release since the Houthis and the Yemeni government released over 800 prisoners in April 2023.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 3 May, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee met with its Panel of Experts to consider the panel's mid-term update. Since the renewal of its mandate in November 2023, there have been delays in appointing two of the panel's five experts—the experts on armed groups and on international humanitarian law—as Algeria, China and Russia each made requests to extend consideration of UN proposed candidates. Speaking at the 13 May Council briefing, Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea), who chairs the committee, stressed the need to expedite the appointment process of the two outstanding members. On 17 May, the chair informed the committee that there had been no new holds or objections regarding the two nominated individuals. Their appointment to the panel was expected to proceed.

Women, Peace and Security

In his briefing during the 15 May Security Council meeting on Yemen, Grundberg said that he continues preparations for "a nationwide ceasefire and the resumption of an inclusive political process" adding that his office has recently organised "several meetings together with Yemenis on how to enhance women's meaningful participation in all aspects of the peace process". One of these meetings was the "Women, Peace, and Security Agenda in Yemen Forum", which took place in Madrid from 23 to 26 April and was attended by women peace advocates and experts in gender and mediation, among other participants. According to a press release issued by Grundberg's office, the meeting "highlighted the importance of including women in peace processes, and explored ways to address the existing barriers impeding women's meaningful participation". According to a social media post by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU and Cooperation, which co-organised the event, the meeting attempted to identify strategies to increase women's participation in political and economic leadership in Yemen.

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. A related key issue is 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.

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 protect the gains made to date in peace talks. They may use opportunities, such as a potential 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 for inclusive

intra-Yemeni political talks.

Council members may also call on donors to quickly disburse funding commitments and increase support to the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and to support economic stability, as the humanitarian situation remains a key issue. At the Humanitarian Senior Officials Meeting, \$792 million in pledges were announced, but OCHA's 2024 HRP requires \$2.7 billion. 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.

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, China, Mozambique, and Russia 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. In its interventions at Yemen briefings, the US has repeatedly said that it would like the Secretary-General's monthly reporting on Houthi attacks on maritime shipping in accordance with resolution 2722 to include information on the types of weapons used in each incident and, where appropriate, the likely origin of these weapons.

China, Russia, and the African Council members (Algeria, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone) and Guyana, which are known as the "A3 plus one", also highlight the importance of a Gaza ceasefire to end the Red Sea crisis, and 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 is identifying Iran, in the Council's Yemen products, 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.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 30 June. Ahead of the mandate renewal, an official from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief Council members in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 3 June, and the most recent developments.

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

Carrying out the mandate entails monitoring violations of the 1974 agreement, reporting them, and liaising with both sides. Such violations regularly include unauthorised personnel and equipment present in the areas of separation and limitation, weapons fired, and drones and aircraft traveling across the ceasefire line.

The Secretary General's 18 March UNDOF report, covering the period from 21 November 2023 to 20 February, observed that several violations of the 1974 agreement had continued, although the ceasefire between Israel and Syria in the Golan had generally held. Violations during this period included rocket fire across the ceasefire line, the presence of Syrian forces in the area of separation, and the "continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the areas of limitation on both the Alpha [Israeli] and Bravo [Syrian] sides, as well as the flying of aircraft and drones across the ceasefire line and over the area of separation".

According to media reports, on 8 April, a rocket was fired from Syria towards the Golan. No casualties were reported. In response, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly fired artillery at the site from which the rocket was launched.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 1 February, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report (A/HRC/55/72) titled "Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan" to the 55th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The report said that Israel's plan "to double the settler population in the Syrian Golan by 2027 is ongoing—both in terms of an increase in the number of Israeli settlements...and also in the size of the Israeli settler population". The report said that Israel has also been involved in commercial activity in the Golan, such as the construction of wind turbines, which may have detrimental health effects for the local inhabitants and limit the access of the Syrian population to land and water.

It concluded that the establishment and continuing expansion of settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan amount to the transfer by Israel of its own civilian population into the occupied territories, which is prohibited under international humanitarian law.

On 5 April, during its 55th session, the HRC adopted a resolution titled "Human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan" (A/HRC/RES/55/31). The resolution called on Israel to comply with relevant UN General Assembly, Security Council, and HRC resolutions, in particular, Security Council resolution 497 of 17 December 1981, which decided that Israel's decision "to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights is null and void and without international legal effect". The 5 April resolution also deplored the "continuing settlement policies and practices in the occupied Syrian Golan" and called on Israel to "cease changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan". The resolution was adopted with 29 votes in favour, 14 against, and four abstentions. Among Security Council members, China voted in favour, while France, Japan, and the US voted against the resolution.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in June is the renewal of UNDOF's mandate. Continued ceasefire violations are another important issue, especially as these jeopardise the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and could contribute to instability in the wider region.

The most likely option for the Council this month is to renew UNDOF's mandate for the customary six-month period. At this month's consultations, Council members may be interested in receiving information from the DPO briefer on how the escalation of hostilities in the region since the 7 October 2023 attack on Israel led by Hamas, the Palestinian armed group and de facto authority in Gaza, and the subsequent Israeli military response in Gaza has affected UNDOF's activities. In this regard, when renewing UNDOF's mandate, the Council could emphasise its concern about the risk of escalation resulting from ceasefire violations and the potential danger they pose to the safety of peacekeepers.

Council Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2718 of 21 December 2023, which reauthorised UNDOF's mandate for six months, illustrated that the Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. Despite deep divisions in the Council regarding the Syria file and opposing positions by the UNDOF co-penholders—Russia and the US—about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, as well as antagonism over other files such as Ukraine, the two countries continue to consider UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree. The difficult dynamics on other Council files were not evident during the straightforward negotiations on UNDOF's mandate in December 2023, and no Council member felt that an explanation of vote was necessary following the adoption. Some Council members believe that the situation has turned into a protracted conflict owing to continued violations of the 1974 agreement by both sides.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing on the situation in Sudan. Pursuant to resolution 2715 of 1 December 2023, which terminated the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a briefing every 120 days on the “UN’s efforts to support Sudan on its path towards peace and stability”.

Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea), the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to brief the Council on the committee’s work.

Key Recent Developments

One year into the conflict that erupted on 15 April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), headed by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Sudan’s military leader, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (also known as Hemedti), the fighting continues to have devastating consequences for civilians. As at 17 May, more than 16,650 people had reportedly been killed since the onset of the conflict, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a non-governmental organisation that collects conflict-related data. At the same time, over 8.8 million people have been displaced since the conflict began, 1.8 million of whom have sought refuge in neighbouring countries—the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan—according to data provided by UNHCR.

The fighting has continued unabated across multiple frontlines and has intensified in the last few months, despite numerous calls for a ceasefire by regional stakeholders and the broader international community, including Council resolution 2724 of 8 March. El Fasher, the capital city of North Darfur state and the only capital in the Darfur region outside the RSF’s control, has been one of the main areas of contention and strife between the warring parties, marked by inter-communal fighting since early April. A truce brokered by the local authorities in El Fasher in the early days of conflict last year had allowed the SAF and the RSF to maintain positions on the west and east sides of the city, respectively, with a central area designated as a buffer zone under the control of the joint force of the armed movements, a coalition of armed movements from Darfur. However, recently the joint force reportedly renounced its neutrality in the conflict and pledged support to the SAF, apparently citing RSF provocations, including attacks on its positions and threats to block humanitarian aid. (For background and more information, see our *What’s in Blue* stories of 19 and 28 April.)

A mission of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Emergency Directors Group (EDG), including 11 representatives from UN agencies and partners, visited Port Sudan from 28 April to 2 May. (The IASC is the UN’s high-level humanitarian coordination platform.) The aim of the mission was to engage with the humanitarian community and local authorities to assess how to sustain operations and to identify strategies to overcome access constraints and bureaucratic impediments.

According to a 12 May OCHA flash update, clashes escalated between the SAF, supported by the joint force, and the RSF in El

Fasher on 10 May. The update said that the attacks included airstrikes and the use of heavy weapons and extended into the centre of the town, the outskirts of the main market, and into civilian neighbourhoods. Another OCHA flash update on 23 May on the situation in El Fasher noted that continuing fighting in the northern and eastern parts of the city and attacks on villages in the west had pushed civilians to take shelter in “extremely overcrowded” gathering sites throughout the southern neighbourhoods. The update indicated that several neighbourhoods in the city had witnessed indiscriminate bombing and increased use by the warring parties of civilian infrastructure and objects for military purposes.

In a 27 May press release, *Médecins Sans Frontières* reported that since 10 May, more than 1,000 patients had arrived at El Fasher South Hospital—the only working hospital in the state, according to OCHA—145 of whom succumbed to injuries. It added that “the hospital finds itself on the frontlines, with a significant risk of going out of service”. On 25 May, a mortar shell hit the El Fasher hospital, killing one person and injuring eight others. Another shell landed inside the hospital the next day (26 May) injuring three more people.

On 24 May, the Security Council convened a private meeting to discuss the situation in Sudan, including the deteriorating humanitarian situation and developments in Darfur. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed. Chad and Sudan participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. (For more information, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 23 May.)

Since the onset of the conflict, several regional and international stakeholders have initiated mediation efforts, but these have yet to achieve any breakthrough. The last few months have seen efforts to resume the Saudi-US facilitated talks in Jeddah. On 15 April, US Special Envoy for Sudan Tom Perriello announced that the talks would recommence “within three weeks”. In testimony to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 1 May, Perriello said that the new round of talks would include key African and Arab regional leaders and focus on “aligning external political will”. Media outlets on 8 May, however, reported that al-Burhan said that he would not participate in peace talks until the RSF is decisively defeated.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 1 March, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk presented his report (A/HRC/55/29) on the situation of human rights in Sudan during the 55th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). The report covered the developments from 15 April to 15 December 2023 and described the key human rights challenges facing Sudan. It concluded that both the SAF and the RSF have committed gross violations and abuses of international human rights law as well as serious violations of international humanitarian law. Some of these acts, the report said, may amount to war crimes. The report called on the warring parties to immediately cease hostilities and engage in an inclusive dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the conflict; to end the recruitment and use of children in hostilities; and to ensure rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.

On 14 May, Türk held separate phone calls with al-Burhan and Hemedti, urging both to immediately de-escalate the situation in El-Fasher. He called on them to take specific and concrete steps to cease hostilities and ensure effective protection of civilians. Furthermore, he warned both sides that fighting in El Fasher would deepen intercommunal conflict with disastrous humanitarian consequences, noting that more than 1.8

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2724 (8 March 2024) called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Sudan during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. S/RES/2715 (1 December 2023) terminated the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). **Security Council Letters** S/2024/362 (6 May 2024) was a request from Sudan to convene an emergency Council meeting. S/2024/345 (26 April 2024) was a request from Sudan for a meeting of the Security Council to consider alleged support provided by the United Arab Emirates to the Rapid Support Forces in Sudan. S/2024/326 (21 April 2024) was from the United Arab Emirates, denying allegations made by Sudan during the 19 April Council meeting on the situation in Sudan. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/15686 (27 April 2024) expressed concern over the growing tensions and military operations around El Fasher.

Sudan

million residents and internally displaced persons (IDPs) currently remain encircled in the city and at imminent risk of famine.

Women, Peace and Security

Niemat Ahmadi, the president and founder of Darfur Women Action Group, briefed the Council during the 23 April annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Referring to the ongoing hostilities between the RSF and the SAF, Ahmadi stressed that the war has had “devastating consequences for women”, with thousands killed and accounting for up to 70 percent of internally displaced people. Ahmadi called rape and other forms of gender-based violence a “defining feature” of the war, with a clear pattern of targeting of women because of their ethnicity. She stressed that access to life-saving services for CRSV survivors, such as sexual and reproductive health care, is impaired by factors that include attacks on medical facilities and the deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid by the warring parties. Ahmadi stressed that “without the spread of weapons, the levels of sexual violence we are currently seeing in Sudan would never have occurred”. Referencing the 15 January final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, she also noted that the conflict parties “and their external sponsors have continued to violate the Security Council’s arms embargo on Darfur”. In this respect, she urged the Council to maintain and enforce its arms embargo in Darfur and “expand it to the whole of Sudan and to all parties to the conflict”.

Among other recommendations, Ahmadi urged the Council to demand that the parties commit to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and immediately cease all acts of sexual and gender-based violence. She also urged the Council to ensure that women’s rights are central to all criminal accountability processes and to demand and support the full, equal, safe, and meaningful participation of Sudanese women in all peace and political processes regarding the future of Sudan.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to stop the ongoing fighting and support efforts to achieve a sustainable ceasefire in Sudan. The situation in Darfur and the increasing levels of intercommunal violence are a related issue. In this regard, Council members may be keen to learn more about the efforts being made to facilitate the resumption of negotiations between the warring parties. One option for Council members would be to invite the Secretary-General’s Personal Envoy for Sudan, Ramtane Lamamra, to brief on ongoing mediation efforts in Sudan and his interactions with different stakeholders in the country and the broader region in this regard.

Another urgent issue for the Security Council is the humanitarian crisis and how to ensure continuous and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid and, at the same time, secure the safety and security of UN personnel and other humanitarian actors. The 23 May OCHA flash update said that approximately 1,500 metric tonnes of non-food items (NFIs) had been awaiting approval for three weeks at the Tine border crossing from Chad. It added that 13 trucks carrying health, nutrition, and NFI supplies for more than 121,000 people dispatched from Port Sudan on 3 April had been unable to enter El Fasher due to persisting insecurity and delays in obtaining clearances at checkpoints. Periodic briefings by OCHA could help keep the Council informed about the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the dire political, security, and humanitarian situations in Sudan. Members have diverging views, however, on the tools that the Council should use to address these situations. The co-authorship of the 27 April press statement by the “A3 plus one” members (Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana)—which expressed concern over the

growing tensions and military operations around El Fasher—reflects a renewed sense of urgency in the Council to engage on the situation in Sudan, particularly in light of the deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions. In contrast, last year the three African members (Mozambique and then-Council members Gabon and Ghana), with the support of Russia and China, argued that adopting a Council product could duplicate messaging in light of the ongoing regional efforts and create complications at a delicate time.

From 28 to 29 January, al-Burhan visited Algiers, where he met with Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. In a joint press conference following the meeting, Tebboune expressed support for Sudan to “overcome the difficult situation and confront the evil forces that target it” while affirming that Algeria favoured the resolution of conflict through “a purely internal approach, far from any form of foreign interference”. At the same time, al-Burhan supported Algeria’s involvement in any initiative aimed at resolving the Sudanese crisis.

The past few months have witnessed reinvigorated efforts by the US to resolve the crisis, including through restarting the talks between the warring parties in Jeddah. The US and like-minded members have also expressed concern about impediments to the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance across Sudan. In this regard, in an 18 March *New York Times* opinion piece, US Permanent Representative to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield said that the Security Council “should consider all tools at its disposal, including authorising aid to move from Chad and South Sudan into Sudan”, while adding that the US is prepared to help lead this initiative.

Russia, however, argued that “[i]t is counterproductive to downplay, for political reasons, the role of central authorities in addressing humanitarian issues, including the issuance of permits for cross-border humanitarian relief supplies”. On 29 April, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister and Special Representative for Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov visited Port Sudan, where he met al-Burhan, among other high-level Sudanese officials. In a press conference, Bogdanov said that Russia recognises the Sudanese Sovereign Council as “the official body representing the leadership of Sudan and Sudanese people”.

Russia has expressed its interest in acquiring a naval base in Port Sudan, although discussions on this issue seemed to have paused following the outbreak of fighting last year. One reason for Bogdanov’s visit was reportedly to revive talks about the naval base: in a 25 May interview, Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the SAF General Yassir al-Atta said that “Russia [has] proposed military cooperation through a logistical support centre...in return for urgent weapons and ammunition supplies.” Media reports earlier this year indicated that Ukrainian forces had been operating in Sudan, fighting the RSF and Wagner Group—the Russian private security company now known as Africa Corps. Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, reports also suggested that Sudan had supplied weapons to Ukraine. Al-Burhan met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at Ireland’s Shannon Airport in September. In a statement following the meeting, Zelensky said that “we discussed our common security challenges, namely the activities of illegal armed groups financed by Russia”.

Reports also suggest that Wagner, which initially deployed to Sudan in 2017 to provide political and military support to former

Sudan

Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, has apparently also been involved in gold mining operations. Following the military takeover in Sudan in 2021, Wagner reportedly intensified its cooperation with Hemeti, and after the onset of fighting last year, reports emerged that Wagner had been supplying weapons and training to the RSF.

Tensions continue to escalate between Sudanese authorities and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Following its allegations that the UAE had been providing support to the RSF through the supply of weapons, equipment, and mercenaries, Sudan requested in letters to the Council dated 26 April and 6 May that the Council hold a

meeting to discuss the matter. The UAE has denied the allegations, including in a 21 April letter to the Council. It appears that Council members have diverging views on whether to convene such a meeting. While the issue of “external interference” has been part of its discussions, the Council has not yet decided to meet specifically in response to the Sudanese letters. In a stakeout, following the Council meeting on 24 May, Sudan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Al-Harith Idriss al-Harith Mohamed, urged the Council to “reconsider its approach and convene a meeting that fully aligns with [its] request”.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its bimonthly briefing on the situation in Libya. Deputy Special Representative and Political Officer in Charge of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Stephanie Koury is expected to brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country. The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Yamazaki Kazuyuki (Japan), will also brief on the committee’s activities.

Key Recent Developments

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

Recent efforts by both the UN and national actors to facilitate agreement on a new roadmap for national elections to unify the country’s divided governments have not borne fruit. The joint 6+6 committee—which was established by the HoR and the GNU-aligned High State Council (HSC) to draft electoral laws to enable elections, comprising six representatives from each body—presented its initial draft legislation in June 2023. Because of persistent disagreement about certain provisions in that draft, however, the committee subsequently amended the draft legislation in September 2023. The HoR approved this version, but the HSC rejected it, instead endorsing the previous draft and withdrawing its members from the 6+6 committee.

Attempting to break the deadlock, UNSMIL announced in November 2023 that Special Representative Abdoulaye Bathily—who has since stepped down—had invited key Libyan institutional stakeholders to a meeting to resolve the contested electoral issues. The statement said that Bathily had requested the HoR, the HSC,

the LNA, and the Presidential Council (established under the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement to serve as the country’s head of state) to designate representatives to attend a preparatory meeting to discuss the date, venue, and agenda of the meeting of their principals. Representatives of the GNS—which the UN does not officially recognise—were not invited to attend.

The Secretary-General’s latest report on UNSMIL, which was published on 9 April and covers developments since 7 December 2023, described continued efforts by Bathily to convene Libyan stakeholders under his proposed format. The report noted, however, that limited progress had been made, as some actors had not yet nominated their representatives or had set preconditions for their participation. According to the report, Haftar and HoR Speaker Aguila Saleh insisted on including the GNS in the meetings or excluding both the GNS and GNU. In addition, Saleh requested that the meeting focus on the formation of a new unified government, while Dbeibah continued to affirm that the GNU would only step down following the successful completion of the electoral process. The HSC maintained its opposition to the revised electoral laws and sought to focus discussions on reverting to the initial version.

While Bathily’s initiative remained stalled, the heads of the HoR, the HSC, and the Presidential Council met on 10 March in Cairo under the auspices of the League of Arab States (LAS). In a joint statement following the meeting, the leaders said that they had agreed on the need to establish a unified government to organise elections and had decided to set up a technical committee “within a specified period of time” to build consensus on the 6+6 committee’s legislation, consider amendments, and resolve contested issues. On 9 May, Libyan press reported that Saleh had conducted a media interview in which he said that the HoR and HSC were nearing agreement on a “mechanism” to form a new unified government. No additional details have emerged since then, however.

In his 16 April briefing to the Council, 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

Libya

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.

In a 6 May press statement, Council members expressed their gratitude to Bathily for his efforts and called on the Secretary-General to appoint a successor “as soon as possible”. The statement reiterated members’ continued support for UNSMIL and called on its interim leadership to continue to implement the mission’s mandate and ensure a smooth transition for a new Special Representative. Members also reaffirmed their commitment to an inclusive Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process, facilitated by the UN and building on the 6+6 committee’s revised legislation, to deliver elections and “durable peace”. On 20 May, UNSMIL shared a video on X (formerly Twitter) in which Koury—whom Guterres appointed Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs on 1 March—was titled Political Officer in Charge of UNSMIL and reiterated the mission’s commitment to facilitating an inclusive political process and the holding of free and fair elections to “restore the legitimacy of Libyan institutions”.

Regarding the security situation, the Secretary-General’s latest report said that no violations of the 2020 ceasefire agreement had been recorded during the reporting period, but it expressed concern that sporadic clashes had continued in the country’s western region between rival militias affiliated with different factions of the GNU. Additionally, the Ras Jdir border crossing into Tunisia was closed on 18 March following tensions between local authorities and law enforcement forces affiliated with the GNU Ministry of Interior. The border crossing is in a region inhabited by the Amazigh—Libya’s largest ethnic minority—and has been under the de facto control of their governing body, known as the Amazigh Supreme Council. On 18 May, another security incident in the region resulted in one death and six injuries, although local officials reportedly described the violence as involving “individuals rather than armed groups”. In response, UNSMIL issued a statement urging an immediate end to the hostilities and calling on authorities to ensure the protection and safety of civilians. Independent analysts have cited competition over the illicit economic activities at the border crossing as one cause of the ongoing disputes in the region.

On the reconciliation track, AU-supported preparations to convene a national reconciliation conference in Libya appear to have stalled. On 5 February, the AU High-Level Committee on Libya, which is chaired by Republic of Congo President Denis Sassou Nguesso, held a summit in Brazzaville, resulting in an outcome declaration that welcomed the recent decision of the Preparatory Committee for the Inclusive Conference on National Reconciliation—a joint planning entity comprising AU and Libyan representatives that is led by Libya’s Presidential Council—to hold the conference on 28 April in the city of Sirte. During his April briefing to the Council, however, Bathily said that the conference had been postponed

indefinitely, as “divisions among Libyan leaders manifested themselves once again on this critical file”.

On 14 May, the Council received the biannual briefing of the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, on the ICC’s Libya-related activities. Khan presented his office’s 27th report to the Council, which outlined a roadmap to complete the investigation phase of the court’s activities in the country by the end of 2025. The Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through the adoption of resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011

On 31 May, the Council adopted resolution 2733, 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 that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo imposed on the country in resolution 1970.

Key Issues and Options

Supporting political momentum towards national elections to unify Libya’s divided governments remains the key issue for the Security Council. In this context, an important objective for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country’s rival legislatures to agree on electoral laws—a goal that Bathily had repeatedly urged Council members to support by wielding their influence on national stakeholders.

To receive additional perspectives on these efforts, one option for the Council is to invite representatives of the LAS and the AU to brief on their organisations’ recent engagement on the country, concerning the political process and reconciliation process, respectively.

Following Bathily’s resignation, another issue for the Council concerns the Secretary-General’s appointment of his successor. When former Special Envoy Jan Kubiš resigned in November 2021, it took nearly a year to identify a successor, leading to Bathily’s appointment in September 2022. (Resolution 2629 of 29 April 2022 changed UNSMIL’s leadership position from a Special Envoy to a Special Representative.) Council members are likely to encourage a quicker appointment this time, although political differences may again complicate the process.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country. They also remain broadly supportive of the UN’s mediation role toward this end.

Broader geopolitical tensions still influence Council dynamics with respect to Libya, however. The US and other Western members remain concerned about Russia’s presence—which has reportedly grown in recent months—in the eastern part of the country under Haftar’s control. For its part, Russia routinely blames Libya’s current instability on the NATO-led military intervention in 2011 and accuses Western countries of seeking to exploit Libya’s oil reserves for economic gain.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly open briefing on Afghanistan. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and a representative of civil society are expected to brief. Closed consultations are scheduled to follow the briefing.

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

UNAMA's mandate expires on 17 March 2025.

Key Recent Developments

Afghanistan continues to face a series of overlapping challenges, with the humanitarian situation in the country remaining particularly dire. According to OCHA's February humanitarian update on Afghanistan, which was published on 25 April, an estimated 23.7 million Afghans—over half of the population—require humanitarian aid this year. Despite the severity of the situation, the 2024 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan remains underfunded. At the time of writing, pledges have been received for 16.2 percent of the \$3.06 billion required by the plan.

The lack of funding has begun to affect the humanitarian response in Afghanistan. OCHA's February update said that the funding gap has “jeopardised the implementation of vital humanitarian interventions” and noted that a funding gaps analysis conducted in March “revealed a decline in the quality, coverage, and timeliness” of different forms of humanitarian assistance, particularly in remote areas. Efforts to provide humanitarian aid have also been complicated by intense flash flooding in different parts of the country in recent weeks. The World Food Programme (WFP) has launched a flash appeal calling for \$14.5 million to support Afghans affected by flash flooding.

The Taliban's policies and practices have also complicated efforts to provide humanitarian aid. In a 23 May briefing on her recent trip to Afghanistan, Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu told reporters that restrictions imposed by the Taliban on Afghan women aid workers have added a layer of complexity to humanitarian operations in Afghanistan.

In a 21 May note to correspondents, the UN Secretariat announced that Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo visited Afghanistan from 18 to 21 May. It appears that Council members received a briefing on DiCarlo's visit during the Secretary-General's monthly luncheon on 24 May. DiCarlo met with representatives of the Taliban and the diplomatic community in Kabul and invited the Taliban's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amir Khan Muttaqi, to participate in the third meeting of Special Envoys and Special Representatives on Afghanistan, which is scheduled to take place in Doha on 30 June and 1 July.

The second meeting in this format, which aimed to “discuss how to approach increasing international engagement in a more coherent, coordinated and structured manner, including through consideration of the recommendations of the independent assessment on Afghanistan”, was held in Doha on 18 and 19 February. The Taliban did not take part after objecting to the participation of

representatives of Afghan civil society, including members of Afghan women's groups. Taliban officials have also expressed opposition to some of the recommendations outlined in the independent assessment, which was requested by the Council in resolution 2679, particularly the appointment of a Special Envoy who would focus on diplomacy between Afghanistan and international stakeholders and advancing intra-Afghan dialogue. (For more information on the independent assessment, see our *What's in Blue* stories of 27 November 2023, 8 December 2023, and 28 December 2023.) At the time of writing, a Special Envoy had not been appointed.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan remains grim, particularly for women and girls. In late March, Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada seemed to announce that the Taliban planned to reintroduce draconian punishments for women accused of adultery, reportedly saying “we will flog the women... we will stone them to death in public [for adultery]”. UNAMA's latest report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, which was published on 1 May and covers the period from January to March, described some examples of apparent human rights violations, including public corporal punishment, extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, and public executions.

On 16 April, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) released a report on women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan. The report, which analysed data collected from Afghan women over the last three years, found that they have faced a range of hurdles while doing business and experienced deepened discrimination and operational constraints since the Taliban seized power in August 2021.

Terrorism continues to be a concern in Afghanistan. On 21 March, multiple people were killed and wounded in a terrorist attack that took place outside a bank in Kandahar city. The attack, which was claimed by ISIL-K, an affiliate of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant based in Afghanistan, was condemned by Council members in a 22 March press statement. Several media outlets have also reported that US intelligence sources believe ISIL-K was responsible for a 22 March attack on a concert hall in Moscow that killed at least 143 people.

Tensions between the Taliban and the Pakistani government have also escalated in recent months. On 18 March, Pakistan conducted two airstrikes in Afghan territory, killing at least eight people. The airstrikes followed an increase in attacks by militants in Pakistan, which Pakistani officials have blamed on militants residing in Afghanistan. Pakistan has also claimed that a 26 March terrorist attack that killed five Chinese nationals and one Pakistani was planned in Afghanistan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Afghanistan's human rights record was examined by the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group on 29 April. These reviews are based on three documents: a national report containing information provided by the state being reviewed, a compilation of information found in reports prepared by the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities, and a summary of information provided by other stakeholders, including regional organisations and civil society groups.

The national report was prepared by Afghanistan's Permanent Mission to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva, which is staffed by officials appointed by the former government. Among other matters, the report concluded that the Taliban is systematically dismantling the human rights of Afghans and erasing women from Afghan society. It also recommended that any dialogue or engagement with the

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2721 (29 December 2023) requested, among other things, that the Secretary-General appoint a Special Envoy on Afghanistan in consultation with a range of stakeholders, welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to convene the next meeting of the group of Special Envoys and Special Representatives on Afghanistan, and encouraged the meeting to discuss the recommendations of the independent assessment on Afghanistan. S/RES/2727 (15 March 2024) extended UNAMA's mandate until 17 March 2025.

Afghanistan

Taliban be contingent on respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the people of Afghanistan.

The latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, was issued on 29 February. The report observes that the human rights situation in the country has continued to deteriorate, with women and girls erased from public life, peaceful dissent stifled, violence used to control and instil fear, and extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and torture prevalent.

The Human Rights Council is scheduled to hold an enhanced interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on 18 June during its 55th session. Bennett will present his report (A/HRC/56/25) on the "institutionalized system of discrimination, segregation, disrespect for human dignity and exclusion of women and girls".

Key Issues and Options

Council members are likely to monitor the possible appointment of a UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan. If a Special Envoy is appointed, Council members could have an informal meeting with the UN Secretariat to discuss the division of labour between the Special Envoy and UNAMA and how this might work in practice.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is a significant issue for the Council. An informal meeting with humanitarian organisations working in Afghanistan could allow Council members to learn more about the problems facing those working to deliver aid in the country, particularly after the Taliban banned women from working for the UN, while also providing an opportunity to consider whether there is anything the Council can do to help manage these challenges.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan, particularly for women and girls, is another major issue. Council members could hold an informal meeting with representatives of UN Women, OHCHR, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, and civil society to discuss how the Council can exert pressure on the Taliban regarding its practices and policies that restrict human rights.

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

The terrorist threat in Afghanistan is another key concern. The Council could meet with a counter-terrorism expert, which would give members a chance to discuss possible options for bolstering the Council's efforts to manage the threat posed by terrorism in Afghanistan.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Although Council members are generally united in their desire to see

a prosperous, peaceful Afghanistan free from terrorism and ruled by an inclusive government, they have been divided over how to achieve this goal. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded states, have argued that the Taliban must adhere to international norms if they want to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community. Several of these members appear to favour maintaining pressure on the Taliban, particularly regarding their policies and practices that violate the rights of women and girls.

China and Russia, on the other hand, have contended that the international community should provide assistance to Afghanistan without linking it to other issues, such as human rights, and appear to prefer dialogue and engagement with the Taliban over increased pressure. China has sent an ambassador to Kabul and on 30 January became the first country to accept diplomatic credentials from a Taliban envoy. Beijing has emphasised, however, that it has not officially recognised the Taliban regime as Afghanistan's government. In early April, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Russia was working to remove the Taliban from its list of banned terrorist organisations and, in late May, media outlets reported that Russia had invited the Taliban to its largest economic forum, which is expected to take place in St. Petersburg from 5-8 June.

Some of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries have taken a similar approach, pursuing closer relations and greater cooperation with Kabul. This has also been reflected in diplomatic engagement: the Taliban have participated in meetings held in countries in the region and on 29 January hosted their first international meeting since August 2021 in Kabul.

Some analysts have suggested that certain Western countries, including the US, are concerned that increasing cooperation between regional states and Afghanistan can weaken international leverage over the Taliban by giving it the appearance of legitimacy, and in some cases, the economic benefits that it seeks.

There are also differences of view among Council members about the implementation of the independent assessment on Afghanistan. China and Russia have emphasised the importance of taking the Taliban's views on the assessment into account and have questioned the added value of a UN Special Envoy. Other members, including the UK and the US, have expressed support for the appointment of a UN Special Envoy and argued that establishing this office will help coordinate international engagement on Afghanistan.

Japan is the penholder on Afghanistan.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia. Members were expected to receive the Secretary-General's 120-day report on the situation in Somalia and the implementation of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) by 31 May.

The Council is expected to extend the authorisation of the AU

Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in June.

Key Recent Developments

On 30 March, Somalia's bicameral Federal Parliament unanimously approved amendments to the first four chapters of its provisional constitution. Among other things, the amendments introduce a one-person and one-vote election system, replacing the clan-based formula

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2719 (21 December 2023) was on the financing of AU-led peace support operations. S/RES/2710 (15 November 2023) extended the authorisation of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia until 30 June 2024. S/RES/2705 (31 October 2023) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia for one year.

Somalia

that has traditionally been used to organise elections; provide for direct presidential election; and authorise the President to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister without parliamentary approval. The changes also provide for a five-year term for constitutional bodies and establish a multi-party system with three national political parties.

Somalia's constitutional review process has been marked by disagreements among the leaders over forms of government and the electoral model, particularly as it relates to the distribution of power and resources among distinct clans and regions within Somalia. Several Somali leaders, including former Somali Presidents Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo and Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, expressed reservations about the recent constitutional amendments, citing a lack of consensus among the political leaders.

On 31 March, Puntland announced its decision to withdraw recognition of and trust in the federal government of Somalia. The statement said that Puntland will act independently until a federal system of governance is established based on consensus, an agreed Somali constitution, and a public referendum in which Puntland participates. Puntland has not participated in the meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC)—which brings together the leaders of the federal government and the federal member states—since January 2023, when it declared its intention to act independently until the finalisation of a new Somali constitution.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud convened the ninth meeting of the NCC from 14 to 17 May to advance the Somali government's priorities. In a communiqué adopted following the meeting, the NCC urged the federal government and legislative bodies to fast-track laws and institutions necessary for a one-person and one-vote election; supported the federal government's efforts in assuming security responsibilities following the departure of ATMIS; and agreed to collectively intensify operations against “terrorist groups”.

Pursuant to resolution 2710 of 15 November 2023, which extended ATMIS' authorisation until 30 June, Somalia submitted the joint technical assessment evaluating the second phase of ATMIS' drawdown on 26 March, which was undertaken by the Somali government and the AU. The assessment noted that the Somali security forces (SSF) are likely to struggle in implementing their mandate of ensuring stability and sustaining gains without a substantial increase in force generation. It highlighted the need for ATMIS to address challenges in troop movement and operations, enhancing coordination with the SSF, and acquiring critical force enablers. It underlined the importance of reassessing operational needs, bolstering force protection measures, and re-evaluating the cooperation framework involving ATMIS, the UN Support Office in Somalia, and the SSF. It further cautioned that there is a heightened risk of attacks by Al-Shabaab against forward operating bases (FOBs) using improvised explosive devices, which necessitates proactive measures to address vulnerabilities and enhance security postures to mitigate potential threats effectively.

On 10 April, the Somali government submitted its proposal for post-ATMIS security arrangements to the Council, in line with resolution 2710, which envisions a new AU-led and UN-authorized multilateral mission limited in scope, size, and timeframe and designed to address specific capability gaps. The mission is expected to provide stabilisation support, enable state-building priorities, secure

identified strategic population centres and critical infrastructure in the federal capital and federal member states, and provide air support to the SSF. The proposal also called for a UN-mandated mission to provide logistical support to the new AU-led mission and the SSF. Regarding the financing of the mission, the proposal noted that the strategic and operational-level planning for the new mission would build on the necessary requirements to enable access to UN assessed contributions.

In a communiqué released on 3 April, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) welcomed Somalia's proposal for post-ATMIS security arrangements and requested the AU Commission to undertake comprehensive and detailed planning based on the situation on the ground. It further stressed the need to ensure adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for the post-ATMIS mission arrangement, including through Council resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, which provided for the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs).

A delegation of the AU's Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD) led by the head of the PSOD, General Cheikh Dembele, undertook a visit to Somalia to conduct a technical assessment for a post-ATMIS scenario. The delegation visited the FOBs in Xawaadleey and Qoryooley in Middle and Lower Shabelle regions, along with Baidoa, where they held discussions with the President of Somalia's Southwest state, Abdiiaz Hassan Mohamed. Following the visit, it seems that the delegation briefed the AUPSC in an informal meeting held on 21 May on the assessment of their mission and the strategic concept of operations of the post-ATMIS mission.

In a letter circulated to the Council members on 8 May, Somali Foreign Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi requested the termination of UNSOM's mandate and called for the “swift conclusion of the necessary procedures for the termination of the [m]ission by the end of the mandate in October 2024”. Somalia sent another letter, which was circulated to the Council members on 10 May, expressing its readiness to engage with relevant stakeholders in the “preparation of [a] complex transition process within [the] appropriate timeframe”. Referring to a 29 April telephone conversation between President Mohamud and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the letter said that Somalia had requested the “initiation of a planning process to articulate [a] clear end state toward a transition from a special political mission to a [UN] Country Team”. It further said that the Somali government aims to ensure that the eventual objective of the transition can be achieved through “distinct stages”.

On 15 May, Secretary-General Guterres appointed James Swan as the Acting Special Representative for Somalia and Head of UNSOM. Swan previously held the Special Representative position between 2019 and 2022. Following his appointment, it appears that Swan held bilateral consultations with some Council members before departing for Mogadishu to discuss the modalities of the transition process with relevant authorities. Swan has replaced Catriona Laing, who served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of UNSOM for one year.

In a 16 May letter to the AUPSC, the Somali government requested a revised timeline for the drawdown of 4,000 ATMIS personnel, foreseen for June, as set out in resolution 2710. The letter seeks a phased drawdown, whereby 2,000 troops would leave Somalia by the end of June. It envisaged that the second batch of troops would exit by September, the exact number of which is expected to be

Somalia

determined by Somalia and the AU, based on the troop requirement for the follow-on mission to ATMIS.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The independent expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Isha Dyfan, visited Somalia from 7 to 10 May, her third official visit to the country since her appointment in May 2020. In a press conference at the end of her visit, she said that her discussions with Somali government officials focused on the constitutional review process, legislative and institutional developments, the protection of civilians in light of the ATMIS drawdown and “violations of the rights of women and children”. She called on the Somali government to bolster efforts to address the country’s security challenges and strengthen processes to investigate and prosecute cases of sexual and gender-based violence. She said that “[c]ivilians, especially women and children, continue to bear the brunt of deadly attacks carried out by Al-Shabaab”. She noted that “joint military operations by Somali security forces and local clan militias also had an impact on the civilian population and infrastructure”. Dyfan appealed to the international community to continue its assistance towards strengthening Somalia’s federal and state institutions and the justice and security sector.

Dyfan is expected to present a comprehensive report on her visit to the Human Rights Council at its 57th session and to the UN General Assembly at its 79th session this year.

Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for Council members is the future of UNSOM. In a 16 May letter to Somalia, the Council took note of Somalia’s requests and asked the Secretary-General to ensure that the UN engage promptly with the Somali government to determine the modalities and timeline for the transition. It also requested the Secretary-General to provide the Council with a written update by the end of August.

A related issue is how to continue supporting the Somali government in achieving its national priorities, including the constitutional review process and security sector reform. The increasing tension between the federal government and some federal member states is a matter of concern for several Council members.

The ATMIS drawdown process and the post-ATMIS security arrangements are also key issues for Council members. Members remain concerned about whether Somali security forces will be able to assume security responsibilities from ATMIS personnel by the end of 2024 when the mission is set to complete its drawdown and exit.

The follow-on mission’s funding is expected to be a major issue,

as Somalia’s intention seems to be to seek support from UN assessed contributions under resolution 2719. One option for Council members would be to request the UN and the AU to conduct a joint technical assessment to lay out the modalities and options for financing of the follow-on mission before the end of this year.

The persisting insecurity in the country and the ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, continue to be a major issue for Council members. Al-Shabaab retains the ability to carry out attacks against civilians, civilian infrastructure, and state institutions. Between 23 March and 19 April, Al-Shabaab carried out 26 attacks against Somali security forces in Lower Shabelle and was responsible for six remote explosions, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a non-governmental organisation that collects conflict-related data.

Council Dynamics

Council members support the Somali government’s priorities and recognise the many challenges facing the country, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. They also support ongoing efforts to fight the group. Some members, however, believe that a security approach will not be sufficient and underscore the need to make progress in governance, justice, and economic reforms. Other Council members emphasise the need for progress in implementing the Somali Transition Plan, including national force generation.

Although Council members seem to agree on continuing security support to Somalia post-ATMIS, views differ on the financing of such efforts. The US is apparently not keen to consider a follow-on mission within the framework of resolution 2719. Some other Council members also apparently share this view. These members seem to believe that there is a lack of clarity on the modalities of implementing resolution 2719, including burden-sharing. It appears that the US has produced a non-paper to explain its position as discussions pick up on possible test cases to be presented for the Council’s consideration under resolution 2719. Apparently, the US preference is to apply the resolution to an entirely new AUPSO with a narrow set of tasks and defined timeline.

Iran

Expected Council Action

In June, the Council is expected to convene a briefing on the Secretary-General’s biannual report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme.

The Council will also receive reports from its 2231 facilitator, Ambassador Vanessa Frazier (Malta), and the Joint Commission, which was established to oversee the implementation of the JCPOA and comprises the current parties to the agreement: China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Iran. Under-Secretary-General for

Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, Frazier, and a representative of the EU in its capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission are expected to brief the Council.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Efforts to revive the JCPOA remain frozen following a breakdown in negotiations in 2022 and subsequent political developments that have led to a further deterioration in relations between the parties. In May 2018, then-US President Donald Trump announced that the US, which was originally a signatory to the JCPOA, was withdrawing

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. Secretary-General’s Report S/2023/975 (15 December 2023) was the biannual report on the implementation of resolution 2231.

Iran

from the agreement and went on to impose unilateral sanctions on Iran. Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it took steps that directly contravene its terms, including enriching uranium to levels beyond the JCPOA-mandated limits and removing cameras and monitoring equipment required by the agreement. Following the election of current US President Joseph Biden, the US, Iran, and other parties to the JCPOA began talks in April 2021 in Vienna to revive the agreement.

Those discussions progressed until August 2022, when the EU circulated what it described as a “final” draft agreement. Iran reportedly insisted as a condition for accepting the deal that the IAEA close its investigation into traces of enriched uranium it had discovered at three undeclared sites in Iran in 2019. The US and European parties to the JCPOA objected to this demand, which they viewed as a separate issue related to Iran’s obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the country’s NPT Safeguards Agreement, which every non-nuclear NPT state party is required to conclude with the IAEA to ensure that its nuclear activities are for peaceful purposes. In a 17 November 2022 resolution, the IAEA Board of Governors censured Iran and directed it to comply with the IAEA’s investigation. In response, Iran announced on 22 November 2022 that it had started enriching uranium to 60 percent purity at its Fordow nuclear facility, approaching the roughly 90 percent level required to produce a nuclear weapon and well above the 3.67 percent limit imposed by the JCPOA.

With negotiations to revive the JCPOA stalled, Iran began increasing its production of highly enriched uranium. By the end of 2023, Iran had reportedly amassed enough 60-percent enriched uranium to produce three nuclear weapons if further enriched to weapons-grade, according to the IAEA’s technical thresholds. Since then, the country has slightly reduced its stockpile of 60-percent enriched uranium by diluting it to a lower purity level: the IAEA’s latest quarterly verification and monitoring report, dated 26 February, estimated that Iran held a total of 121.5 kilograms of 60-percent enriched uranium, a reduction of 6.8 kilograms from the agency’s previous report, and a total of 712.2 kilograms of 20-percent enriched uranium, an increase of 145.1 kilograms from the last report. Overall, Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium had increased by approximately 30 percent. According to a 4 March technical analysis of the IAEA’s findings by the non-partisan Institute for Science and International Security, Iran’s “breakout capacity”—the amount of time that it would take to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon—was seven days, notably lower than the 12-day breakout time that the institute estimated a year ago.

Cooperation between the IAEA and Iranian authorities has been strained since Iran began breaching the terms of the JCPOA. After the IAEA’s February 2023 verification and monitoring report said that the agency had detected traces of uranium enriched to 83.7 percent at Iran’s Fordow facility—which Iran claimed was accidental—the IAEA and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran issued a joint statement on 4 March 2023 permitting the IAEA to “implement further appropriate verification and monitoring activities”, including the installation of surveillance cameras and enrichment-monitoring devices at certain nuclear facilities. However, the agency’s latest quarterly report on the implementation of Iran’s NPT Safeguards Agreement,

also dated 26 February, said that while “limited progress” was made in implementing the commitments set out in the joint statement during the March-June 2023 reporting period, “no further progress” had been made since then. The report said that IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi was “seriously concerned” that Iran had “unilaterally stopped implementing” the joint statement and that he questioned “Iran’s continued commitment to its implementation”.

In parallel to this dispute, Grossi announced in a September 2023 statement that Iran had withdrawn the designation of several IAEA inspectors assigned to conduct verification activities in Iran under the NPT Safeguards Agreement. Grossi said that although this measure was formally permitted by the agreement, Iran had exercised it “in a manner that affects in a direct and severe way the ability of the IAEA to conduct effectively its inspections” in the country. The IAEA’s latest safeguards report said that Grossi continued to “strongly condemn” Iran’s withdrawal of the designations, which he regarded as “not only unprecedented but unambiguously contrary to the cooperation that is required and expected” to effectively implement Iran’s Safeguards Agreement as well as being “in contradiction” with the 4 March 2023 joint statement.

Attempting to resolve these differences, Grossi visited Tehran in early May for high-level meetings with Iranian officials. Following a 6 May meeting with Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Grossi said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) that he had proposed “a set of concrete practical measures for the revitalization of the 4 March 2023 Joint Statement with [the] aim of restoring [the] process of confidence building and increasing transparency”. In a 7 May press conference upon his return to Vienna, Grossi did not elaborate on his proposals but said that he expected to see “concrete results soon”. According to media reports, the IAEA’s forthcoming quarterly reports—which will be published in June—describe a continued impasse on these issues and document a new increase in Iran’s stockpile of 60-percent enriched uranium.

While JCPOA negotiations remain dormant, continued fall-out from the Israel-Hamas war has sharply raised geopolitical tensions. On 1 April, Israel launched an airstrike against the Iranian consulate in Damascus, in which several senior commanders of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps—which Israel and its allies accuse of supporting Hamas’ war effort—were killed. On 13 April, Iran retaliated with a large-scale airborne attack on Israel—the first time that Iran has directly targeted Israeli territory. Media reported that the Nevatim air force base in Israel’s southern Negev desert suffered minor damage but remained operational, while 12 people in southern Israel received hospital treatment, including one seven-year-old girl for serious injuries caused by shrapnel. The Security Council convened a 14 April emergency meeting to discuss the Iranian attack. On 19 April, Israel launched a retaliatory missile strike that destroyed an air defence radar facility near the city of Isfahan.

The heightened tensions appear to have further weakened prospects for reviving the JCPOA. In a joint statement at the most recent meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors in March, France, Germany, and the UK—known within the JCPOA Joint Commission as the E3—said that in light of “increasing doubts about the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear programme” the countries “stand ready to use all diplomatic levers available” to prevent Iran from developing

Iran

nuclear weapons. More recently, in 30 April remarks to the UK House of Commons, Deputy Foreign Secretary Andrew Mitchell said that the UK and its allies are prepared to use “all options” at their disposal to address concerns about Iran’s nuclear programme, including “triggering the UN snapback and ending the JCPOA if necessary”. The snapback mechanism is a provision in resolution 2231 that allows any party to the agreement to reinstate the UN sanctions against Iran that were in place prior to the JCPOA.

On 20 May, a helicopter transporting Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Amir-Abdollahian, and several other government officials crashed near the Azerbaijan border, killing all on board. In line with the Iranian constitution, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei named First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber interim head of government and charged him with organising presidential elections within 50 days. Those elections are currently scheduled for 28 June.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 2 February, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran submitted its report (A/HRC/55/67) to the Human Rights Council’s (HRC) 55th session, outlining its findings concerning the protests in Iran that began on 16 September 2022 and spread across the country in the context of the “Woman, Life, Freedom” movement. The protests were triggered by the death in custody of Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian-Kurdish woman who was arrested by the country’s morality police for “improper” wearing of the hijab in Tehran.

The mission found that serious human rights violations had been committed by the Iranian authorities in the context of the protests. It also established that many of these violations amounted to crimes against humanity, including murder, imprisonment, torture, sexual violence, persecution, enforced disappearance, and other inhumane acts against women, girls, and others expressing support for human rights.

On 4 April, during its 55th session, the HRC adopted a resolution (A/HRC/RES/55/19) extending for an additional year the mandates of the fact-finding mission and the special rapporteur on human rights in Iran. The resolution was adopted with 24 votes in favour, eight against, and 15 abstentions. Council members France, Japan, and the US voted in favour of the resolution, whereas China voted against.

Key Issues and Options

As the prospects for a revival of the JCPOA grow increasingly remote, the key issue for the Security Council is how to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. Analysts have suggested that Iran’s steps since the US withdrawal from the agreement, including its uranium enrichment activities, are likely to make a return to the original terms of the agreement and full compliance with those terms difficult, particularly given the institutional knowledge acquired by Iran’s nuclear programme and the IAEA’s diminished monitoring capabilities, which prevent it from establishing a new baseline against

which to measure compliance with a future agreement. The Iranian government’s apparent support for Hamas and the Russian war effort in Ukraine have also made reviving the JCPOA politically difficult—if not impossible—for Western countries.

Given Iran’s non-compliance with the JCPOA, Council members could initiate the snapback mechanism in resolution 2231 if they decide the agreement is no longer viable. The P3 countries—France, the UK, and the US—have typically maintained that their “red line” for initiating the snapback is the detection of weapons-grade uranium in Iran, but that calculus could possibly change if geopolitical tensions continue to rise.

The P3 and like-minded countries may choose, as they have in the past, to adopt a resolution censuring Iran at the next meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, scheduled for 3 to 7 June. Since Iran ceased to comply with the JCPOA, the board has adopted three such resolutions, most recently in November 2022. According to media reports, the JCPOA’s E3 countries have prepared a draft resolution that they may present at the upcoming IAEA meeting.

Council Dynamics

A revival of the JCPOA has grown increasingly unlikely, given current geopolitical dynamics.

The P3 and other Western countries remain concerned about Iranian activities that contravene the JCPOA and the country’s lack of cooperation with the IAEA. At the Council’s June briefing, some Council members may call on Iran to re-certify the agency’s inspectors and to fully implement the March 2023 joint statement on verification and monitoring measures. The US and European members might reiterate allegations that Iran has supplied uncrewed aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Russia for use in Ukraine and express concern at what they view as Iran’s destabilising behaviour in the region, including its support for Hamas in Gaza and proxy militias in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

China and Russia are more supportive of Iran. Both countries have previously blamed the US for the collapse of the JCPOA, criticising it for withdrawing from the deal and imposing unilateral sanctions on the Iranian regime. In April, China, Iran, and Russia held high-level trilateral security talks in Saint Petersburg, during which Iran’s representative, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Akbar Ahmadian, reportedly told Iranian media that his mission was to promote “multilateralism” and to fight “Western hegemony and monopoly over global security spheres”.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will vote to renew the mandate of the 1533 Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) sanctions regime, which expires on 1 July, and of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, which expires on 1 August.

Key Recent Developments

The deteriorating security situation in North Kivu due to continued fighting between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by allied militias known locally as Wazalendo, and the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) has displaced a massive number of people, exacerbating the humanitarian situation. Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, hosts over 500,000 displaced people, according to the UN. On 3 May, bombings of two internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Lac-Vert and Mugunga near Goma reportedly killed at least 35 people. In a 3 May press statement, the Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita, strongly condemned the attacks against the IDP camps and called on parties to the conflict to guarantee the civilian character of all sites for displaced people.

In an 8 May letter to the Council President, the DRC accused Rwanda and the M23 of responsibility for the attack and characterised the situation as a serious breach of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

In a 3 May press release, the US also said the Rwandan Defence Forces and M23 were implicated in the attack. The US has called for an evaluation of Rwanda's role as a major UN troop-contributing country. The US press release elicited a strong reaction from Rwanda, which, in a 5 May press statement, rejected the US accusation as unjustified and called for a credible investigation into the attack to establish the facts. It referenced a warning issued by *Médecins Sans Frontières*, which it said drew attention to the placement of heavy artillery by FARDC in the IDP camps. Rwanda accused the FARDC and the Burundian forces deployed in eastern DRC as part of a bilateral agreement with the Congolese government of the deadly shelling. In a 20 May note verbale addressed to the Security Council, Rwanda requested that a brief describing its position regarding the incident be circulated to members.

In its 8 May letter to the Security Council, the DRC urged the Council to suspend Rwanda from participating in UN peacekeeping operations until it ceases to support the M23 and withdraws its forces from Congolese territory. In the letter, the DRC also reiterated its request for the Security Council to impose sanctions on Rwanda based on the reporting of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

In their 13 June 2023 report, the Group of Experts presented evidence implicating Rwanda for directly intervening inside Congolese territory, either to reinforce M23 combatants or to conduct military operations against the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR)—an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC—and other local armed groups. The Group of Experts also provided evidence that local armed groups and the FDLR have created an entity—known as Wazalendo—to fight the M23 alongside the FARDC. The report said that senior FARDC officers had coordinated these operations and supported the armed groups

with logistics, military equipment, and financing.

On 19 May, a group of armed men attacked the Palais de la Nation, the Congolese president's office in Kinshasa. Media reports indicate that Christian Malanga, a Congolese politician residing in the US, was allegedly behind this attack. He reportedly lost his life with some of his associates during a shootout with government security forces. His son and other associates, including foreigners, are in custody. The residence of Vital Kamerhe, deputy prime minister for the economy and the leader of the ruling Union pour la Nation *Congolaise* (UNC) party, was targeted as well, and two police officers were killed in the attack on Kamerhe's residence. On 22 May, the national assembly elected Kamerhe as the Speaker of Parliament. In an appearance on public television, the spokesperson of the Congolese army described the situation as a foiled "coup." In an X (formerly Twitter) post, Keita strongly condemned the attacks on the Palais de la Nation and the Kamerhe residence, and expressed MONUSCO's readiness to provide support in line with its mandate.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, visited the DRC from 15-18 April 2024. At the conclusion of his visit, the High Commissioner underscored the complexity of human rights challenges in the DRC, highlighting the situation in the eastern provinces, where he said that "there is an exhausted and profoundly traumatised population, devastated by decades of war and conflict." Türk emphasised that the continuous attacks and abduction of civilians frequently targeted human rights defenders, journalists, and community leaders in North Kivu. He also mentioned the continued forced conscription of children by the M23. Since October, Türk said that 500,000 people have been displaced from areas controlled by M23, taking the total number of people displaced in North Kivu to nearly 2.7 million.

The High Commissioner urged countries that support or have influence over the armed groups to assume their responsibility to ensure the fighting stops. He expressed concern about what could happen to civilians should MONUSCO leave precipitously. He also urged the South African Development Community mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) to establish and implement a robust human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework to prevent civilian casualties and retain the essential support and trust of the population.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 2 May, the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee issued a clarification to banks, ship-owners, carriers, financial institutions, and firms operating in the military field to inform them that the Congolese armed and security forces are exempt from the embargo imposed on the supply of military equipment and assistance under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. Pursuant to resolution 2667 of 20 December 2022, the Council lifted the notification requirement on the provision of such assistance to the DRC.

It seems that the final report of the Group of Experts due by 15 June has already been circulated to Council members. At the time of writing, Council members were expected to meet and discuss the report and its recommendations.

Several months ago, Rwanda proposed individuals and entities for designation under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. The DRC also proposed individuals and entities named in the Group of Experts report for designation. At the time of writing, the Rwandan and DRC proposals had yet to be acted upon.

On 27 September, France, the UK, and the US proposed designating one member of M23 and one member of the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR). On 25 October, the sanctions committee approved their addition to the sanctions' designation list.

On 20 February, the committee approved the request by France, the UK, and the US for the designation of six individuals: two from the Allied Democratic Forces and one each from the Twirwaneho armed group, the National People's Coalition for the Sovereignty of Congo, the M23, and the FDLR.

Women, Peace and Security

As the Security Council's president for April, Malta decided to include a focus on

Democratic Republic of the Congo

women, peace and security (WPS) at the 24 April open briefing on the Great Lakes. Several participants addressed WPS issues during the meeting. In her briefing, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya said that the eastern DRC “is today one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman or a girl”. She updated Council members on gender-based violence in the DRC and on the impact of the conflict on children, noting that 37 percent of girls in the DRC are “forcibly married before the age of 18”. The Coordinator of the civil society organisation *Femmes Engagées pour la Paix en Afrique* (Women Engaged for Peace in Africa), Pétro-nille Vaweka, said that almost 30 years of violence, atrocities and mass displacement “orchestrated by domestic and foreign armed groups, and with a lack of protection for civilian populations” have plunged eastern DRC into “chronic insecurity”.

In her statement, Vaweka addressed the link between the minerals used in technological tools such as phones, computers, and electric cars, and the violence and insecurity in the Great Lakes region, particularly in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. She urged the Security Council to work towards turning “blood minerals into minerals of life and happiness for the world” through equitable trade which would allow all parties to benefit. Switzerland stressed that although women play a central role in peace movements in the Great Lakes region, “much remains to be done to ensure their full participation, in particular in the Nairobi and Luanda processes”. Similarly, Malta urged the facilitators of the Nairobi and Luanda processes to “appoint women mediators and gender advisors, and to leverage the African Women Leaders Network”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in June is extending the 1533 DRC sanctions regime and renewing the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the sanctions committee. Council members could opt for a straightforward renewal process.

In light of the recent military developments on the ground—particularly with the M23 capturing Rubaya, a mining town in North

Kivu province known for producing strategic minerals used in smartphones—the DRC appears to be increasing pressure on Council members to impose sanctions on Rwanda, arguing that the capture of the mining sites in Rubaya will fuel the conflict through the illegal exploitation of natural resources. However, sanctioning Rwanda could be challenging given the lack of consensus within the Council on explicitly referencing the role of external actors in the DRC.

Council Dynamics

Considering the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC and the increasing regional tensions, Council members such as the US, France, Switzerland, and Slovenia have been vocal in calling for Rwanda to end its support for M23 and withdraw from Congolese territory.

In their most recent press statement on the situation in DRC, issued on 5 April, Council members opted for broad language to condemn “foreign military support provided to M23 and any other armed group operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo” and demanded “the cessation of such support and the immediate withdrawal of any such external party from the Democratic Republic of the Congo”. Council members also used a similar approach to condemn “support, notably provided by military forces, to certain armed groups such as the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR)” and to demand “the cessation of such support”.

France is the penholder on the DRC. Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

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

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

Key Recent Developments

On 21 February, Rugwabiza briefed the Council, highlighting the discussions that took place in Bangui on 6 February under the leadership of President Faustin Touadéra to take stock of the progress in the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. She also underlined the need to provide MINUSCA with the necessary resources to effectively fulfil its priority task of supporting the CAR in extending state authority, a major task assigned to the mission in resolution 2709 of 15 November 2023. Additionally, Rugwabiza called on member states and partners to support security sector reform efforts in the CAR, another priority task, which she said cannot be handled by the mission alone.

When renewing MINUSCA’s mandate in November 2023, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct an independent strategic review of the mission through broad consultations with the CAR government and other relevant partners, including UN agencies, member states, regional organisations, civil society, and independent experts. His report is expected to provide detailed recommendations regarding the reconfiguration of MINUSCA’s mandate, including a possible transition plan for the mission’s draw-down when conditions are met. On 26 February, the Secretary-General appointed Edmond Mulet—a former UN official who most recently served as the head of the Joint Investigative Mechanism set up under resolution 2235 of 7 August 2015 to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria—to lead the independent strategic review of MINUSCA. Mulet visited the CAR in March and held several meetings with President Touadéra and other relevant stakeholders. The outcome of the strategic review, which is expected to be submitted to the Council no later than 15 August, will inform the upcoming MINUSCA mandate renewal in November.

The security situation appears to have improved in some regions of the CAR, but violence persists in others, resulting in displacement. The Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), the main rebel coalition in the CAR, reportedly carried out an attack on 12 May in Gaga, a mining town 125 miles from the capital city, in which four people

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2709 (15 November 2023) renewed MINUSCA’s mandate for one year until 15 November 2024. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2024/170](#) (15 February 2024) was the most recent report on the situation in the CAR. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9554](#) (21 February 2024) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

were killed and several others injured. MINUSCA continues to conduct joint patrols with the CAR defence and security forces in the conflict-affected regions to deal with security threats, restore stability, and facilitate the return of displaced people and the resumption of humanitarian assistance.

The Special Criminal Court—a hybrid court which became operational in 2018 and composed of domestic and international judges to investigate, prosecute, and judge the most serious crimes committed in the CAR—issued an arrest warrant for former president François Bozizé for crimes committed during his leadership of the country. Bozizé, who leads the CPC and is based in Chad, reportedly left Chad for Guinea-Bissau following a February 2023 meeting involving Touadéra and Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby in Luanda under the auspices of Angolan President João Lourenço, who is the current chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 1 February, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee held its first meeting with the Panel of Experts assisting its work. Following the extension of the CAR sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts' mandate in July 2023, four of the five panel members were appointed only in January, after Russia lifted its hold on their appointment in the last week of December 2023.

During the 1 February meeting, the panel members presented a tentative work plan for the remainder of their mandate, including visits to the CAR and the region. They also submitted their midterm report to comply with the timelines in resolution 2693 of 27 July 2023 renewing the 2127 CAR sanctions regime, but they did not have sufficient time to provide a substantive report. Their final report was circulated to Council members in May.

Pursuant to resolution 2693, the Secretary-General submitted his report on the CAR authorities' progress towards the key benchmarks that could guide the Security Council in reviewing the arms embargo measures imposed under the 2127 CAR sanctions regime. These benchmarks relate to security sector reform; the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process; and weapons and ammunition management.

Peacebuilding Commission-Related Developments

On 5 May, the Peacebuilding Commission's country configuration for CAR, which is chaired by Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), convened a meeting with the objective of "promoting a concerted and unified approach" from all partners in support of CAR's recovery and long-term development, according to the meeting's concept note. A particular focus was placed on the upcoming local elections in October 2024, for which there exists a significant funding gap. The Commission heard briefings from Deputy Special Representative of MINUSCA Joanne Adamson; Chargé d'affaires of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development Ghislain Lavodrama; and President of the National Elections Authority Mathias Barthélemy Moruba.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situation in the CAR continues to be a key issue for Council members. They are keen to hear about the progress in implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, particularly the dissolution of armed groups and the process of disarming former combatants.

The other issue of interest to Council members is the 2127 CAR

sanctions regime and the work of the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee. In light of the CAR authorities' request for the total lifting of the arms embargo, which is supported by some Council members, the upcoming discussion about the extension of the sanctions regime and the mandate renewal of the Panel of Experts in July is expected to be contentious.

Human rights remain another controversial issue, particularly the annual report on the human rights situation in the CAR, which is prepared by MINUSCA's human rights division. The last report was released after the renewal of the MINUSCA mandate in 2023, to the dissatisfaction of several members, who wanted the opportunity to review the report before renewing the mandate. In line with resolution 2709 of 15 November 2023, the annual report is now expected to be released before the next mandate renewal negotiations in November.

Council members will be interested in the outcome of the MINUSCA strategic review and its recommendations about the mission's reconfiguration and transition. It seems that the Secretary-General suggested that Council members undertake a visiting mission to the CAR during his monthly lunch with them in March. A possible option for Council members is to conduct a visiting mission to the CAR ahead of the next MINUSCA mandate renewal in November.

Council Dynamics

Council members support the implementation of the 2015 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. They also welcome the dissolution of armed groups and the disarmament of former combatants, continue to encourage the government to engage with other armed groups to resolve differences through political dialogue, and support ongoing preparations to hold local elections scheduled for October. However, they remain concerned about the security situation in the country and the impact of the war in Sudan, including the increase in the number of refugees crossing into the CAR.

Council members appreciate the work of MINUSCA and the role of the Special Representative in fostering cordial relations with the host country authorities. Some members continue to raise the matter of limitations the mission faces on its freedom of movement. During the last Council briefing on MINUSCA in February, the US, in particular, highlighted restrictions on the mission's use of uncrewed aerial vehicles, arguing that these limit MINUSCA's capacity to maintain awareness of the security environment, impede efforts to counter armed groups and protect civilians, and jeopardise the safety and security of peacekeepers.

CAR supported MINUSCA's independent strategic review in anticipation of an adjusted mandate in line with the current country situation, a transition process that will facilitate the mission's drawdown. In February, China supported this view, saying that "the Council should optimize and streamline MINUSCA's mandate and rationalize its staffing level and size."

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Erik Ramberg
Policy Analyst

Gaurav Redhal
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Communications Officer

Abdulkadir Abdella
Research Intern

Lanxin Li
Research Intern

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

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 9429
Web securitycouncilreport.org

Follow **@SCRtweets** on X/Twitter