

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

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

The UK plans to organise two signature events during the month. The first will be a briefing on the [Middle East](#), which will be convened in addition to the monthly meeting on “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”. UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy is expected to chair the meeting. A senior UN official is expected to brief. Additional meetings on the Middle East may be convened depending on developments in Israel, the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), and the wider region.

The second signature event is expected to be a briefing under the agenda item “Maintenance of peace and security of [Ukraine](#)”. Lammy is expected to chair the meeting, at which Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is scheduled to brief. There are likely to be additional meetings on Ukraine during the month.

In November, the UK will convene a briefing on [Sudan](#). The UK’s Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Africa, Lord Collins of Highbury, is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are DiCarlo, an official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a civil society representative.

Other African issues on the programme of work in November are:

- [Libya](#), the semi-annual briefing by the ICC Prosecutor concerning the court’s work in the country;
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations and mandate renewal of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA);
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and
- [Central African Republic](#), renewal of the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments, briefing by the chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, and renewal of the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee; and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701, which was adopted in 2006 and called for a cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel.

On European issues, the Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) and to reauthorise the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA).

On Asian issues, consultations are scheduled on the work of the 1718 [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) Sanctions Committee, which focuses on non-proliferation issues, are scheduled for late in the month.

Thematic issues will also be discussed during the month. The Council is expected to receive a briefing from the chairs of the three [counter-terrorism](#)-related committees: the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaeda Sanctions Committee, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), and the 1540 Committee, which aims to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

The Security Council will also hold an open briefing under the “Protection of civilians in armed conflict” agenda item on the Secretary-General’s recommendations on [measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel](#), which the Council requested through resolution 2730 of 24 May.

The 15 current Council members and the incoming five (Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia) will participate in the annual “Hitting the Ground Running” workshop organised by Finland on 21 and 22 November.

Other issues could be raised in November depending on developments.

1 November 2024

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In Hindsight: UN-AU Cooperation: A Path Toward Networked Multilateralism or Fragmented Responses?

Introduction

October was a significant month for UN-AU cooperation. The annual consultations of the members of the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) took place in New York on 18 October, with the informal dialogue held in a retreat format for the first time on 16 and 17 October in Tarrytown. Council members received an update on the operationalisation of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on financing AU-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs) pursuant to a 23 May presidential statement. The Security Council held its annual meeting on the Secretary-General's report on UN-AU cooperation on 2 October and the AUPSC and the Peacebuilding Commission held their seventh annual consultative meeting in New York on 15 October. Secretary-General António Guterres and AU Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat also met in Addis Ababa on 21 October for the eighth UN-AU high-level conference. This was followed by an AU-UN retreat in Abidjan on 25 and 26 October, which brought together AU and UN Special Representatives and Envoys. These joint activities between the UN and the AU last month reflect how far the relationship has developed over the past decade and a half.

This month's *In Hindsight* examines the progress and challenges in UN-AU cooperation and offers ideas for charting the way forward.

Institutionalised Cooperation

Chapter VIII of the UN Charter governs the relationship between the Council and regional arrangements in maintaining international peace and security (For more, see our research report on "The UN Security Council and Chapter VIII of the UN Charter: Toward More Effective Engagement between the Council and Regional Actors".) In this context, the UN maintains more extensive cooperation with the AU than with any other regional organisation.

In 2017, UN Secretary-General António Guterres and AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat initiated the annual UN-AU High-Level Conference, alternating between New York and Addis Ababa. During the meeting, the two leaders recognised the significant progress in enhancing the UN-AU cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening and deepening the partnership.

The high-level conference complements the UN-AU Joint Task Force (JTF) meetings, which have been held biannually since 2010 at the senior officials level, and the UN-AU Desk-to-Desk (D2D) meetings, working level interactions formally known as the Annual Consultative Meetings on Prevention and Management of Conflicts, which began in 2008. These mechanisms have become a regular feature of UN-AU cooperation, serving as key platforms for discussing and coordinating the efforts of the two organisations in advancing peace and security in Africa.

Furthermore, UN-AU cooperation is now bolstered by frameworks that align with the three pillars of the UN—peace and security, development, and human rights—as well as the AU's various

normative instruments and initiatives. These frameworks include the UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, the UN-AU Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the UN-AU Joint Framework on Human Rights, signed in April 2017, January 2018, and November 2023, respectively. Relevant AU instruments and initiatives include Agenda 2063, a blueprint for Africa's development transformation, and Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2030, one of the flagship projects under Agenda 2063 aimed at ridding the continent of conflict and violence.

On its part, the Security Council has deepened its cooperation with its AU counterpart. It has been holding annual consultations with the AUPSC since 2007, alternating between New York and Addis Ababa. Starting in 2016, these consultations have been preceded by an informal seminar that provides a platform for members of the two Councils to exchange views mostly on thematic topics of shared interest. Additionally, since 2017, the President of the Security Council and the Chair of the AUPSC have been holding informal meetings to coordinate the two councils' monthly work programmes. According to the latest Secretary-General's report on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) published on 26 August, there were nine informal meetings in the past year. While both councils have agreed in principle to conduct joint field missions, the modalities for implementing this initiative have yet to be worked out.¹ At the informal dialogue the idea of having joint visits at the subsidiary body level was discussed. Another suggestion from this meeting was a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of joint decisions from the annual consultations.

The Role of the A3

The three African members of the Security Council (known as the A3) have become the linchpin in fostering cooperation between the Security Council and the AUPSC. The A3 grouping was born out of Africa's experience in the Security Council during the 2011 Libyan crisis. Despite the AU's efforts to resolve the crisis through dialogue, it felt that the Security Council had not taken its views seriously. It was felt that the situation might have been different if Africa had presented a stronger, more unified voice within the Security Council.²

Since then, the A3 members have steadily strengthened their coordination and unity to advance a common African position in the Security Council. A decade ago, the AU launched the Oran process, an annual high-level seminar designed to help incoming African members of the Security Council prepare to address African peace and security issues in the Security Council by articulating Africa's common positions in its decision-making process. They are now increasingly speaking with one voice, regularly delivering joint statements in both country-specific and thematic meetings of the Council. While these joint statements were initially limited to

¹ In 2017 and 2018, the Security Council extended three invitations to the Chair of the AUPSC to participate in its field visits in Africa. However, he did not participate in any of these visits. The main reason was the AU's desire to agree on the modalities for the joint visit before implementing the decision. It seems that the AUPSC wants all of its members to participate in joint visits, which might be difficult to do from the Security Council's perspective because of technical and logistical constraints. The A3 had proposed draft modalities in 2018 for the AUPSC's consideration but there was no reaction from Addis Ababa.

² AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security, "The Oran Process and Africa's Global Peace Agenda", 18 June 2024 <https://youtu.be/sbiwlK03iRo?si=H8VrLl0MGnvPf-gj>

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African issues, they have since expanded to include other topics as well. The A3 has expanded on two occasions into the A3 Plus, when one of the like-minded Council members from Latin America and the Caribbean joined the group during their respective terms. This arrangement started with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, which served as an elected Council member in 2020-2021, and continued with Guyana, currently serving as an elected member in 2024-2025. Discussions are ongoing on how to institutionalise this arrangement.³

The A3 has also emerged as a cohesive negotiating bloc, significantly enhancing its influence within the Council. Recognising this, penholders on Council initiatives (usually France, the UK, and the US, otherwise known as the P3) have begun consulting with the A3 in a bid to secure their support in advance of negotiations on the mandate renewal of peace operations or the extension of sanctions regimes.

Traditionally, the A3 members have been the penholder or co-penholder on West Africa and the Sahel, and the Central Africa region—currently Sierra Leone and Switzerland on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), and Mozambique and the UK on the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The A3 Plus is now actively exploring “the possibility of ensuring pen-holding or co-pen-holding on all African dossiers and dossiers of interest to Africa” on the Council’s agenda.⁴ This year, Sierra Leone, which chairs the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee, became a co-penholder with France on the DRC file. (For more, see SCR’s chart on penholderships.)

In recent years, A3 members have jointly convened Arrria-formula meetings and delivered joint press stakeouts to highlight African priorities. They have also increasingly voted together, though on certain issues aligning votes has proved challenging over the years. These include, among others, the renewal of sanctions regimes, the longstanding Western Sahara issue, and other African issues that may involve the direct interest of a given A3 member. There have also been times when pressure from a permanent member has disrupted A3 unity in voting, both on African and non-African files. Most importantly, the A3, individually and collectively, have spearheaded the adoption of Council products on important priority issues for Africa. Recent examples of Council products jointly proposed by the A3 include resolutions 2457 and 2719 on Silencing the Guns in Africa and the financing of AUPSOs in February 2019 and December 2023, respectively. These resolutions are likely to guide UN-AU cooperation in the years ahead.

Challenges of the Partnership

Despite the institutionalised cooperation between the UN and the AU, significant challenges remain in addressing crises across Africa. The two organisations regularly exchange views on various conflicts and crises on the continent, but they may not always share the same perspective on how to handle them. While the UN has increasingly deferred to the AU and its sub-regional mechanisms as first responders, the situations in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel highlight the

limitations and difficulties the AU and its regional bodies face in effectively responding to crises on the continent. In turn, there have been differing views among Council members on when the Security Council should act more assertively, especially if regional and sub-regional responses are slow or ineffective.

The strategic interests of permanent Council members and their interpretation of a given crisis often dictate the nature and scope of the Council’s involvement. Some crises, such as the situation in Sudan, have not received as much attention from the Security Council due to competing global priorities, such as the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine. Some African members have lamented what they perceive as double standards in the Council’s work. For example, speaking on behalf of the A3 in a Council meeting on 16 March 2022, less than a month after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Gabon urged the European Union “to show the same compassion, in keeping with international humanitarian law, to Africans fleeing security and climate crises for which they are not responsible” as they did to refugees from Ukraine. Geopolitical rivalries have also hindered Council engagement on some issues, such as in the Sahel, where France, Russia, and the US have strong political and security interests; these interests have influenced the responses of the Council to the coups in West Africa in recent years, as well as its decision to shutter the peacekeeping mission in Mali in 2023. (For more, see our July 2022 *In Hindsight* titled “The Security Council and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa”.) There also seems to be a growing feeling that the role of other external actors is complicating the crisis response by the AU and the UN on the continent.

With UN peace operations in Africa rapidly declining, partly due to resistance from host governments and local communities, the space for AUPSOs and other regional forces has expanded. However, the operating environment has become more complex with the emergence of other external actors like the Africa Corps (formerly the Wagner Group)—a Russian private security firm now directly overseen by the Russian Ministry of Defense. While AUPSOs and regional forces are being viewed as potential alternatives to such actors, recent experiences have shown that these operations may face the same challenges as UN peacekeeping missions on the continent.

The Silencing the Guns initiative enjoys broad support at the UN, but there are questions about the AU’s contradictory approach to implementing it. The AU’s master roadmap for implementing the initiative outlines measures such as imposing arms embargoes on parties involved in conflicts and curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Yet, the AUPSC has been calling for lifting existing Security Council arms embargoes in conflict zones already flooded with weapons.

The A3’s role in advancing common African positions is generally welcomed by other Council members. Nonetheless, the group’s tendency to support African countries under the Council’s purview based on solidarity has at times complicated negotiations on mandate renewals and the extension of sanctions regimes. This situation

³ African Union, “Conclusions of the 10th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, Oran Process”, 17-18 December 2023. d682ab_c555b7655584412c893eeba2270e44c8.pdf (africanunion-un.org)

⁴ Ibid.

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has given host countries to UN peace operations and those targeted by sanctions enormous leverage during negotiations. The A3 usually take their cue from the AUPSC, but there have been instances when they appeared to contradict Addis Ababa, as in the case of Sudan. While the AU was touting its roadmap to resolve the Sudan crisis, the A3 was initially reluctant to agree on a Council product supporting Sudan’s national position.

Observations

UN-AU cooperation has made significant strides, especially over the past decade, but realising the partnership’s full potential requires moving beyond formalities and ritualistic engagements. To do this, the two organisations will need to strengthen the various cooperation platforms created over the years to allow for a frank exchange of views and to forge a shared perspective on addressing pressing peace and security issues on the continent.


While it is sensible for the Security Council to defer to the AU and its regional mechanisms when they are capable of making an impact, it must be ready to take decisive action whenever those conditions are not met. In other words, the partnership should not be a pretext for the Security Council’s inaction, particularly in the face of gross violations and crimes against humanity.

The mantra of “African solutions to African problems” enjoys widespread support at the UN. However, there is a growing sense that it has sometimes been misused to shield regimes with poor governance and human rights records. Therefore, the African solidarity

advocated by the A3 in the Security Council will only have real significance if it is anchored in the objectives and principles outlined in the AU Constitutive Act, particularly the principle of non-indifference, which marked a pivotal shift from the Organization of African Unity, the precursor to the AU.

Adopting resolution 2719 marked a significant milestone in the UN-AU partnership, but its successful implementation will require both organisations to be pragmatic. The AU may need to manage the expectations of certain member states advocating for full UN funding of AUPSOs and show a commitment to sharing the financial burden. In the Security Council, navigating the influence of some powerful members who strongly oppose applying resolution 2719 to potential cases such as Somalia, despite support from the host country and the AU, is likely to be a challenge. If members are able to rise above the politics of this issue, the resolution, which outlines clear parameters for decision-making and authorisation, will prove a useful guide.

The key challenge moving forward will be whether UN-AU cooperation can truly embody networked multilateralism—as the Secretary-General envisaged in his *A New Agenda for Peace*—by fostering a coherent and effective response to crises in Africa or will instead become a reflection of a fractured and dysfunctional multilateral landscape. The multiple and complex peace and security threats on the African continent certainly cry out for the former to be the path forward.

<p>UN SECURITY COUNCIL – AUPSC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual consultation between the two Councils • Annual informal consultation between Security Council Experts and AUPSC Committee of Experts • Informal coordination meetings between the President of the Security Council and the Chair of the AUPSC 	<p>A3 COORDINATION AND REPORTING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly meeting • Regular coordination at the PC and expert level • Report to the African Group in New York • Report to the AUPSC • Oran Process • A3 Retreat 	<p>SECURITY COUNCIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Security Council meeting on UN-AU cooperation • Ad-Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa
<p></p> <p>UN SECRETARIAT-AU COMMISSION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual High-Level conference • Joint Task force meeting • Desk-to-Desk meeting • Joint Retreat of AU SRCCs & UN SRSGs/SESGs • Joint task force on operationalization of resolution 2719 	<p>A3 IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint statements in the Council • Coordinate as a group in negotiations on outcomes • Increasing alignment of voting patterns 	<p>KEY SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution 2757 on Silencing the Guns in Africa • Resolution 2719 on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations
<p>PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORKS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security • The UN-AU Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development • The UN-AU Joint Framework on Human Rights 		

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UN-AU Cooperation

On 2 October, the Security Council held a briefing on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security, with a particular focus on the UN's cooperation with the AU (S/PV.9739). Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga; Permanent Observer of the AU to the UN Fatima Kyari Mohamed; and Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee briefed.

Somalia

On 3 October, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in Somalia (S/PV.9740). Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) James Swan briefed on the Secretary-General's latest 120-day report on the implementation of the mission's mandate (S/2024/698). The report was circulated to Council members on 27 September and covered developments from 24 May to 20 September. Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) Mohamed El-Amine Souef and civil society representative Ilwad Elman also briefed the Council. Somali Foreign Minister Ahmed Moalim Fiqi represented his country at the meeting.

On 10 October, the Security Council held a private meeting to discuss an update on the overall mission design and financing options for the proposed successor mission to ATMIS, as requested in resolution 2748 of 15 August. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations, Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee; High Representative for the AU Peace Fund, Donald Kaberuka; and SRCC for Somalia and Head of ATMIS, Mohammed El-Amine Souef, briefed Council members. Ethiopia and Somalia participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

On 30 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution S/RES/2753 (2024), renewing the mandate of the UNSOM until 31 October 2025.

On 31 October, the Chair of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kazuyuki Yamazaki (Japan), briefed on the work of the committee.

UNDOF (Golan)

On 3 October, Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan to discuss the Secretary-General's latest report, dated 24 September, which covered developments from 21 May to 20 August. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed.

Counter-Terrorism

On 8 October, Council members issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack near Jinnah International Airport

in Pakistan (SC/15846).

On 30 October, Council members issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack on a patrol unit of the Law Enforcement Command of the Islamic Republic of Iran (SC/15875).

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

On 8 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Great Lakes region (S/PV.9742). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's latest semi-annual report on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region (PSC-F) (S/2024/629). Sarah Kyabu Ntambwe, a Congolese civil society representative, also briefed. The DRC and Rwanda participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Colombia

On 15 October, the Security Council held a briefing on Colombia (S/PV.9749). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2024/694). The Council was also briefed by Beatriz Quintero, Co-founder of La Red Nacional de Mujeres (the National Women's Network).

On 21 October, Council members issued a press statement on Colombia (SC/15858), in which they re-emphasised the importance of ensuring the comprehensive implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace concluded in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). Among other issues, they expressed concern that conflict-related violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, continues to have disproportionate effects on women and girls and on indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Members underlined the importance of security guarantees as a crucial element of the 2016 agreement and stressed the need to implement public policy for the dismantling of illegal armed groups and criminal organisations in conflict-affected areas.

On 30 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2754, renewing the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for one year, until 31 October 2025.

Western Sahara

On 16 October, Council members held closed consultations to consider the Secretary-General's report on Western Sahara, dated 1 October, which covered developments since 3 October 2023 (S/2024/707). The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, and the Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), Alexander Ivanko, briefed. On 31 October, the Council adopted resolution 2756, renewing the mandate of MINURSO until 31 October 2025. The resolution was adopted with 12 votes in favour and two abstentions (Mozambique and Russia); one member (Algeria) did not participate in the vote. Two amendments proposed

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by Algeria failed to be adopted because they did not garner the requisite number of votes.

Anticipating the Impact of Scientific Developments on International Peace and Security

On 21 October, Switzerland convened a briefing on “Anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9753). Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland Ignazio Cassis chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Switzerland’s October Council presidency. The briefers were Robin Geiss, Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); Jocelyne Bloch, Center for Research in Neuroscience, Faculty of Biology and Medicine at the University of Lausanne; Grégoire Courtine, Professor at the Center for Neuroprosthetics and the Brain Mind Institute at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL); and Amin Awad, President of the Foundation Council of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

On 21 October, the Security Council adopted a Swiss-authored presidential statement recognising the role that scientific developments can play in supporting the Council’s responsibility to maintain international peace and security, as well as in promoting mutual trust and cooperation (S/PRST/2024/6). The statement expresses the Council’s commitment to more systematically consider scientific advances, particularly with regard to their impact on international peace and security.

International Court of Justice

On 22 October, the Council held its annual private meeting with Judge Nawaf Salam, the president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Haiti

On 22 October, the Council received its quarterly briefing from

Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Maria Isabel Salvador on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and on the Secretary-General’s latest report on BINUH (S/PV.9757). The Council was also briefed by UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell and by Rosy Auguste Ducéna, Programme Director for the National Network for the Defense of Human Rights, a Haitian civil society organisation. The Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Kenya participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

Women, Peace and Security

On 24 October, the Security Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), titled “Women Building Peace in a Changing Environment” (S/PV.9760 and Resumption 1. President of the Swiss Confederation Viola Amherd chaired the open debate. The briefers were UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohamed; UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous; and Effie Owuor, Chair of the AU Panel of the Wise and Co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), which serves as the Secretariat for the Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks for 2023–2024. Wai Wai Nu, founder and Executive Director of the Women’s Peace Network, also briefed the Council.

Kosovo

On 30 October, the Council held its second briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.9765). Special Representative and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Ziadeh briefed on the Secretary-General’s latest UNMIK report and recent developments (S/2023/741). Marko Đurić, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure and Donika Gërvalla-Schwarz, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, participated under rule 39.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

On 18 November, the Security Council expects to hold an open briefing on the Middle East. A senior UN official is the anticipated briefer. One of the signature events of the UK’s presidency, the meeting will be chaired by UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs David Lammy. It appears that the UK intends to focus the meeting on securing longer term solutions to the conflict in the Middle East region.

The Council also expects to hold its monthly meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland is expected to brief.

Council members may convene additional meetings during the

month and evaluate whether further Council action is required.

Key Recent Developments

Israeli ground operations and heavy bombardment continue to be reported across the Gaza Strip, alongside fighting and rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups. The Security Council’s resolutions on the war in Gaza (resolutions 2712, 2720, 2728, and 2735) remain unimplemented, as do the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the context of South Africa’s proceedings against Israel concerning possible violations in the Gaza Strip of obligations under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. (For background on the war, see the brief on “The situation in the Middle East, including the

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2735 (10 June 2024) welcomed a ceasefire proposal announced by the US. S/RES/2728 (25 March 2024) demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan and the unconditional release of all hostages.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Palestinian question” in our October *Monthly Forecast*.)

Since 5 October, Israel has been carrying out a military offensive in the north of the Gaza Strip, progressively putting under siege the Jabalia refugee camp and nearby areas, where Israel says that Hamas has attempted to rebuild its capabilities. Senior UN officials have expressed alarm about the dire impact of Israel’s offensive on the Palestinian population. In a 25 October statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that, in the north of Gaza, the Israeli military is “subjecting an entire population to bombing, siege and risk of starvation”. Citing the Israeli army’s orders directed at “hundreds of thousands” of people to leave the area, Türk warned that Israel’s “policies and practices in northern Gaza risk emptying the area of all Palestinians” and “could amount to atrocity crimes, including potentially extending to crimes against humanity”. On 26 October, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya said that hospitals have been hit, health workers detained, and first responders “prevented from saving people from under the rubble”. In a 27 October statement expressing the Secretary-General’s shock at the situation, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric noted that repeated efforts to deliver essential humanitarian supplies “continue to be denied by the Israeli authorities, with few exceptions, putting countless lives in peril”. Aside from “limited missions, almost no aid operations have been permitted” into northern Gaza, according to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) cited by Dujarric at a 31 October press briefing.

The deteriorating situation in northern Gaza also led to the postponement of the UN vaccination campaign for variant poliovirus type 2 (polio) in that area. On 29 October, OCHA said that after “sustained negotiations”, agreement was reached with the parties to undertake the vaccination in the Gaza governorate between 2 and 4 November.

Israel’s offensive in northern Gaza is taking place against the backdrop of widespread destruction, including of critical infrastructure, in the rest of the Gaza Strip and abysmal humanitarian conditions. Figures provided by Palestinian officials in Gaza cited by OCHA indicate that, as at 29 October, at least 43,061 Palestinians had been killed during Israel’s military campaign, while an estimated 10,000 remain under the rubble. Nearly the entire population of Gaza has been displaced multiple times. A 17 October Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report found that the risk of famine persists across the Gaza Strip, with nearly 133,000 people facing catastrophic food insecurity.

According to Wennesland’s 29 October Security Council briefing, 101 hostages remain captive in Gaza in unbearable conditions and have been denied visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Figures from Israeli officials cited by OCHA, indicate that over 1,565 Israelis and foreign nationals have been killed between 7 October 2023 and 29 October, the majority during the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks in Israel.

On 16 October, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killed the leader of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar. This followed the 31 July assassination of Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, which has been widely attributed to Israel. While some analysts indicated that this could have marked a turning point for the prospects

for a ceasefire, in a statement announcing Sinwar’s death, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly said that the war was “not over yet”. A senior Hamas official said that Sinwar’s death would only increase the “strength and solidarity of [the] movement”. On 27 October, indirect talks between Israel and Hamas for a ceasefire and the release of the hostages resumed in Qatar after a prolonged lull. On the same day, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi proposed an initial two-day ceasefire in Gaza to exchange four hostages and some Palestinian prisoners as a first step towards a permanent ceasefire. On 29 October, a senior Hamas official reportedly said that Hamas will only accept a deal for a permanent ceasefire, the return of displaced Palestinians, and a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

On 28 October, the Israeli Knesset (parliament) passed into law two bills on the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). One piece of legislation is aimed at preventing the agency from “operating in Israel”. The other is expected to affect UNRWA’s diplomatic status and prevent Israeli agencies or representatives from having any contact with UNRWA. Key international interlocutors—including the UN and humanitarian and human rights organisations—have expressed deep concern at these measures for their anticipated severe impact on UNRWA’s capacity to function in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, as well as for stability in the region. The legislation is set to go into effect in 90 days.

UNRWA is mandated by the General Assembly to provide assistance to Palestine refugees, which the agency defines as persons whose place of residence was “Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 War”. The descendants of male Palestine refugees, including legally adopted children, are also eligible for registration. Israel’s relations with UNRWA, historically strained, worsened significantly since the start of the war between Hamas and Israel. Israeli officials have repeatedly called for the agency’s dissolution and for its functions to be handed over to other UN agencies. Legislators drafting the bills cited involvement of some UNRWA staff in the 7 October 2023 attacks, as well as the alleged affiliation of certain staff members with Palestinian armed groups. In January, several states announced the suspension of funding to UNRWA following allegations that twelve employees were involved in the attacks. UNRWA dismissed the staff concerned and, at the request of the UN Secretary-General, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) launched an investigation into the allegations. On 5 August, the UN announced the results of the investigation, which found that nine UNRWA employees “may have been involved” in the attacks. Separately from the OIOS investigation, an independent review evaluated UNRWA’s adherence to neutrality principles. The review’s report, issued on 20 April, noted that while “neutrality-related issues persist”, UNRWA possesses “a significant number of mechanisms and procedures to ensure compliance with the humanitarian principles” and “a more developed approach to neutrality” than similar entities. UNRWA has said that Israel has not substantiated any broader allegations against the agency and that measures taken against UNRWA are part of an ongoing effort to dismantle it in order to “eliminate UNRWA’s role in protecting the rights of Palestine Refugees and

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acting as a witness to their continuing plight”. Nearly all countries that had paused their contributions to UNRWA have resumed their support, except for the US, where funds remain frozen until at least March 2025.

On 30 October, the members of the Security Council issued a press statement on UNRWA expressing grave concern over the legislation, emphasising UNRWA’s “vital role” and affirming that “no organization can replace or substitute UNRWA’s capacity and mandate”. Members urged Israel to respect UNRWA’s privileges and immunities and allow unhindered humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. The statement highlighted the findings of the independent review, welcomed UNRWA’s commitment to implementing its recommendations, and called for an accelerated implementation process. Members “took note of the measures taken to terminate the employment of nine UNRWA staff” and stressed the “importance to take timely measures” to address credible allegations.

The situation in the West Bank remains volatile with violence continuing at alarming levels, including in the context of IDF operations against Palestinian armed groups, settler violence, and attacks by Palestinians against Israelis. In a 24 October update, OCHA said that, since the beginning of the month, it recorded approximately 180 incidents across the West Bank involving settlers, 60 percent of which were related to the olive harvest season. These incidents led to casualties or property damage in 104 cases.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The latest report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel, examines attacks on healthcare and the treatment of detainees and hostages from 7 October 2023 to August. Among other things, it says that Israel has implemented “a concerted policy to destroy” Gaza’s healthcare system. The report found that with their actions, such as the deliberate killing, detention and torture of medical personnel, Israeli security forces have committed war crimes and the crime against humanity of extermination. Additionally, it highlights widespread abuse of Palestinian detainees, including torture and sexual and gender-based violence. The report also concludes that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, including torture, in their treatment of the hostages.

Key Issues and Options

The Council’s failure to effectively expedite an end to the war in Gaza, prevent its regionalisation, and act to protect the viability of the two-state solution are fundamental issues undermining its credibility. That aid at scale is not reaching Palestinians in Gaza and that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure have continued unabated are also issues of major concern.

Over a year into the war the Security Council is yet to issue a direct call for a ceasefire. The Council could consider a resolution that:

- demands an immediate and permanent ceasefire;
- demands the immediate release of the hostages;
- demands the immediate release of Palestinians detained without charge;
- requests the Secretary-General to establish a UN-monitoring mechanism in the case of a ceasefire to verify compliance;
- demands that the international community support an end to the violence by stopping the transfer of arms to Israel and Palestinian armed groups while there is a risk that they are used

to commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law;

- imposes sanctions on those who impede humanitarian access or attack humanitarian personnel;
- imposes sanctions on Israeli officials responsible for advancing settlement activity;
- imposes sanctions on Israeli and Hamas officials for serious violations of international law.

However, given that a more comprehensive resolution is unlikely, considering the US’ strong support of Israel, members could consider more focused outcomes, including on UNRWA and the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Members could also start consultations on the deployment of an international protective presence in the OPT, as recommended in the latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

An option that would provide members with a better understanding of the impact of UNRWA’s inability to operate is a briefing from UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini in a private meeting.

Council Dynamics

Before 7 October 2023, Council dynamics precluded effective action in response to the non-implementation of Security Council resolutions as well as a shared strategy to restart a political process between Palestinians and Israelis, with the US maintaining that the circumstances were not ripe for the reignition of such a process.

These difficult dynamics shaped the Council’s response to the war, which has been marked by contentious and prolonged negotiations, with multiple failed adoptions. The US has vetoed three draft resolutions on the war proposed by Brazil, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Algeria, respectively. The US also vetoed a draft resolution that would have recommended that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the UN. The position of the US on the war in Gaza has led to accusations of double standards in comparison to its position on the war in Ukraine, deepening the divide among some Council members. China and Russia vetoed two US-proposed draft resolutions on the war, in both cases being accompanied by the negative vote of the Arab member of the Council (the UAE in 2023 and Algeria in 2024).

More recently, the US assented to the press statement on UNRWA and, on 13 October, sent a letter to Israeli officials listing measures to improve the humanitarian situation in Gaza. While it is too early to assess whether this will translate into a noticeable shift in Council dynamics, it is unlikely that the US position of steadfast military and political support to Israel will change. At the 16 October MEPQ meeting, the US said that the Security Council “has an important role to play”, but ultimately “actions on the ground” more than discussions in New York, “are what will bring real progress”—an apparent reference to the US’ long-standing opposition to the adoption of Council products on this file.

At the time of writing, the ten elected members of the Council were consulting on a possible draft resolution on Gaza.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In November, the UK is expected to convene a meeting on the situation in Ukraine to mark one thousand days since Russia's full-scale invasion of the country on 24 February 2022. Additional meetings on Ukraine are possible.

Key Recent Developments

In recent weeks, Russia has reportedly intensified assaults on Ukrainian Black Sea ports, damaging six civilian vessels and targeting grain infrastructure since 1 September. These attacks have disrupted Ukraine's grain exports, driving wheat prices up by over 6 percent between 1 September and 14 October. The heightened risk has also led to a surge in insurance costs for Ukrainian exporters. At a 21 October Security Council briefing on Ukraine, requested by Slovenia and the US, Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča emphasised that “the safety and sustainability of agricultural exports passing through the Black Sea remain critical for global food security”. He affirmed the UN's ongoing efforts, in collaboration with Türkiye and other stakeholders, to ensure free and safe navigation in the Black Sea.

In an 18 October press release, the National Intelligence Service of the Republic of Korea (ROK) accused the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) of sending approximately 1,500 soldiers to Russia for training, with the intent of deploying them to the frontlines. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Ukrainian intelligence suggests the number of DPRK troops preparing to join Russian forces is significantly higher, estimating it to be around 10,000. On 28 October, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte confirmed the deployment of DPRK troops to Russia's Kursk region, describing the development as a “significant escalation” and a “dangerous expansion” of the war. On 31 October, the Council held a briefing to discuss the alleged possible involvement of DPRK troops in the war. The meeting was requested by Ukraine, with the support of France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, the UK, and the US. (For more information, see our 29 October *What's in Blue* story.)

Council members remain concerned over the reported transfer of weapons and related materials, including dual-use goods, to Russia from China, the DPRK, and Iran. During the Council's 24 September briefing on Ukraine, the US accused China of supplying Russia with “machine tools, microelectronics, and other items” allegedly used to support Russia's military efforts. On 17 October, the US imposed sanctions on several Chinese companies for “directly developing and producing complete weapons systems in partnership with Russian firms”. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed the accusations, emphasising that China “strictly controls the export of dual-use items including drones and opposes the use of civilian drones for military purposes”.

Russia, for its part, has maintained that the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine has undermined the prospects for a peaceful settlement to the war in Ukraine. At its request, the Security Council convened a briefing on 31 October to discuss this issue, marking the 19th time the Council has met on the topic since the war began. Russia also convened an Arria-formula meeting on 25 October, titled “Systematic violations of IHL committed by the Armed

Forces of Ukraine on the territory of the Russian Federation”. (For more, see our 24 October *What's in Blue* story.)

On 27 September, Brazil and China convened a high-level meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly aimed at supporting the efforts of Global South countries in promoting a ceasefire and achieving lasting peace. Following the meeting, 13 member states, including Council members Algeria and China, signed a joint communiqué expressing their concern over the ongoing conflict and the serious risk of escalation. The communiqué underscored the importance of upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, particularly the respect for state sovereignty and territorial integrity. The signatories also announced the formation of the “Group of Friends of Peace” with the aim of “fostering common understanding to support global efforts to achieve lasting peace”.

In October, Zelenskyy presented a “victory plan”, which he has described as a bridge to the holding of a second peace summit on Ukraine. The plan comprises five points—as well as three “secret annexes”—including Ukraine's admission into NATO and authorisation to use Western-supplied long-range missiles to strike military targets within Russian territory. These are steps that Kyiv's allies have been reluctant to support. Additionally, Ukraine has announced its intention to prepare a “joint peace framework” that will incorporate the “constructive positions of the Global South”.

Russia has dismissed Ukraine's “victory plan”, characterising it as “a set of incoherent slogans”. During an 18 October meeting with media agencies ahead of the BRICS summit, which took place in Kazan from 22 to 24 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin voiced support for the peace initiatives put forward by Brazil and China. He described these proposals as “balanced and sensible”, suggesting they “could serve as a solid foundation for further attempts to seek peace”. Putin also noted that Moscow is carefully monitoring the activities of the “Group of Friends of Peace”.

On 23 October, during the BRICS summit, its members adopted the Kazan Declaration, underscoring that all states should adhere fully to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter “in their entirety and interrelation”. The declaration also acknowledged proposals of mediation and good offices aimed at finding a peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue. In response, Ukraine's foreign ministry issued a statement asserting that the declaration's focus on the UN Charter indicated the lack of a unified stance among BRICS members regarding the war in Ukraine.

Following the summit, Secretary-General António Guterres, who participated in the proceedings, met with Putin in Kazan on 25 October. During their discussions, Guterres reaffirmed that Russia's “ongoing invasion of Ukraine violates the UN Charter and international law”. He further emphasised his support for establishing a formal agreement to ensure safe navigation in the Black Sea.

Ukraine has criticised the bilateral meeting. In a 26 October post on X, Ukraine's Permanent Representative to the UN Sergiy Kyslytsya argued that “there should be no meetings between UN officials and persons for whom the [International Criminal Court] has issued an arrest warrant”. (The ICC issued an arrest warrant for Putin in March 2023 on charges of war crimes, including the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children.) Kyslytsya referenced a 2013 letter from the then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the President

Ukraine

of the Security Council, which provides guidelines on interactions with individuals under ICC arrest warrants or summonses. Guterres was scheduled to visit Kyiv following the BRICS summit, though media reports indicate that Zelensky declined to host him.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 8 October, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk presented an oral update to the Human Rights Council on the findings in the report of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regarding the situation of human rights in Ukraine. Türk described the war as quickly becoming “a tragic, flagrant example of the devastation of war on people, the environment, and a common future”. He reported that nearly all of the 174 Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) interviewed by the OHCHR since March 2023 recounted experiences of torture or ill-treatment by Russian forces throughout all stages of captivity, while around half of the 205 Russian POWs interviewed described torture or ill-treatment by Ukrainian authorities, particularly during the early stages of their captivity.

In a 22 October press release, UN human rights experts urged the Russian government to confirm reports regarding the death of Ukrainian journalist and human rights defender Victoria Roshchyna, who has been forcibly disappeared since early August 2023 when reporting in Russian-occupied eastern Ukraine. The human rights experts called for the immediate return home of Roshchyna’s body should her death be confirmed, along with “an independent investigation into the cause and circumstances of her death”. They noted that at least 1,672 Ukrainian civilians, including 25 journalists, remain detained in Russia and urged the Russian government to disclose their fates and release those arbitrarily detained.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching priority for the Council is to promote a solution to the conflict in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter and to facilitate dialogue among the parties to that end. One option is for the Council to issue a presidential statement recalling S/PRST/2022/3 of 6 May 2022, which expressed support for the Secretary-General’s efforts in search of a peaceful solution, and

encouraging the Secretary-General to appoint a personal envoy to explore openings for a peaceful settlement to the war. While the Secretary-General has the authority to appoint such an envoy on his own initiative, the Council’s request could provide important political backing.

The Council has held 96 formal meetings on Ukraine since the start of the war in February 2022 and approximately 99 percent have been public meetings. This has allowed members to present their positions on the conflict but not to discuss possible solutions. If there is interest in discussing current ideas for a ceasefire, members could choose to meet in a closed format, such as a private meeting or informal interactive dialogue.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the conflict in Ukraine and the appropriate framework for achieving a peaceful resolution. Ukraine and several of its allies on the Security Council have advocated for a just peace, conditioned on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine’s internationally recognised borders. Russia, in contrast, maintains that any settlement must reflect current realities on the ground, which, in its view, would require the withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from the four partially occupied regions in Ukraine: Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia.

Other Council members have emphasised the need for de-escalation, calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities without any preconditions. Such a move could effectively freeze the front lines, leaving Russia in control of substantial territory in eastern and southern Ukraine. Some of these members also call for inclusive dialogue that takes into account the security concerns of all parties.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a ministerial-level briefing on Sudan. The UK’s Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Africa Lord Collins of Highbury is expected to chair the meeting. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, an official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

Key Recent Developments

Hostilities continued unabated in Sudan as the warring parties engage in a protracted war of attrition. Fighting intensified across multiple front lines as the rainy season subsided. On 26 September, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched an offensive in Khartoum and the surrounding areas in a bid to besiege areas under the control of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), making significant advances in the ensuing days. In addition, the SAF-aligned Darfur Joint Forces (a coalition of armed movements from Darfur) engaged in fighting with the RSF on several front lines in North and West Darfur

states. In the past few weeks, the SAF had reportedly been able to make strategic advances in Sennar and Al Jazira states. (For background and more information, see the brief on Sudan in our October 2024 *Monthly Forecast* and 27 October *What’s in Blue* story.)

Media reports indicate that, on 24 October, the RSF launched a retaliatory attack on villages in East Al Jazira, following the defecation to the SAF of Abu Aqla Kikal, a prominent RSF commander. While UNICEF said that the attack killed about 124 people, others suggest that the death toll could be much higher. In a 26 October statement, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan Clementine Nkweta-Salami said that she was “shocked and deeply appalled” by reports of human rights violations in Al Jazira. The statement said that the RSF reportedly shot at civilians indiscriminately, perpetrated acts of sexual violence against women and girls, committed widespread looting of markets and homes and burned down farms. Consequently, approximately 47,000 people have fled their homes to several areas within the state, while others have been displaced to Gedaref and Kassala states.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2750](#) (11 September 2024) renewed the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime—including targeted sanctions (assets freezes and travel bans) and an arms embargo—until 12 September 2025. [S/RES/2736](#) (13 June 2024) demanded that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) halt the siege of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, and further called for an immediate halt to the fighting and for de-escalation in and around El Fasher. [S/RES/2724](#) (8 March 2024) called for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Sudan during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and for all warring parties to seek a sustainable resolution to the conflict through dialogue.

Sudan

On 18 October, the Secretary-General submitted his report (S/2024/759) pursuant to resolution 2736 of 13 June, which requested him to make recommendations for the protection of civilians in Sudan. The report outlined the recommendations under three broad headings: intensifying diplomacy towards ending the fighting, changing the behaviour of the warring parties, and supporting broader protection measures. It highlighted an urgent need for a renewed diplomatic push, including through the “personal involvement” of some heads of state, to ensure that the warring parties uphold their legal obligations. It called on the warring parties and relevant stakeholders to pursue scalable, locally negotiated ceasefires and other measures to reduce violence, protect civilians, and prevent the spread of conflict. It strongly recommended that the warring parties establish a robust and transparent compliance mechanism, as a critical step to ensure implementation of the “Declaration of Commitment to Protect the Civilians of Sudan”, which was signed by both sides in Jeddah on 11 May 2023. The report called for an immediate cessation of the direct or indirect flow of weapons and ammunition into Sudan, which continue to fuel the conflict. Highlighting the need to monitor violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, the report underlined the importance of supporting and cooperating with regional and international independent investigation bodies.

Efforts to resolve the ongoing conflict continued; however, without any significant breakthrough. On 25 September, France, Germany, the US, and the European Union organised a ministerial-level meeting in New York. In a press release issued following the meeting, the participants called on the warring parties to commit to localised humanitarian pauses and ensure immediate humanitarian access to El Fasher, Sennar, and Khartoum. They expressed readiness to support a cessation of hostilities monitoring mechanism and to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of civilians. They noted that the international community needs to explore options to support implementation of such measures and the durability of any future local or nationwide cessation of hostilities. They called on all foreign actors to refrain from providing military support to the warring parties.

On 3 October, AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) members undertook a field mission to Port Sudan to engage with senior officials from the Sudanese authorities and other key stakeholders. In a communiqué adopted following a 9 October meeting, AUPSC members requested the AU Commission (the organisation’s secretariat) to reopen the AU liaison office in Port Sudan in order to facilitate the AU’s engagement with stakeholders in Sudan at all levels and to provide technical support to Sudan. (Sudan’s membership to the AU was suspended in the wake of the 2021 military coup d’état.)

The humanitarian crisis continues to deepen in Sudan. The war has displaced approximately 11.3 million people, 3 million of whom have sought refuge in Sudan’s neighbouring countries—Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, and Uganda—making it one of the world’s largest displacement crises. Around 25.6 million people are facing acute levels of food insecurity, with famine conditions confirmed in the Zamzam camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in El Fasher and 13 other areas in nine states identified at risk of famine. The outbreak of multiple

diseases and the collapse of the healthcare system have exacerbated the humanitarian situation. According to OCHA’s 1 October update, approximately 3.4 million children under five years of age are at high risk of epidemic diseases. As at 15 October, more than 24,000 cholera cases, including about 700 related deaths, had been reported since mid-July.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 3 October press statement, the Designated expert on Sudan of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Radhouane Nouicer, called on the warring sides to take immediate measures to ensure the protection of civilians in the greater Khartoum area. He warned that the ongoing hostilities in greater Khartoum “could result in a large number of civilian casualties among people trapped next to strategic locations, serious human rights violations and massive displacement”. Nouicer also expressed alarm at reports of the summary execution of dozens of young men, reportedly from the Halfaya neighbourhood in Khartoum-North (Bahri), allegedly by the SAF and the Al-Baraa Bin Malik Brigade, which has previously indicated support to the SAF.

On 9 October, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the human rights situation and humanitarian crisis in Sudan (A/HRC/RES/57/2). Among other things, the resolution expressed grave concern about reported acts of sexual and gender-based violence, the indiscriminate use of force against civilians by both parties to the conflict, the illegal recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, and sexual violence against children, primarily by the RSF. It underlined the critical need to ensure accountability to address the root causes of the armed conflict and prevent further instability in the country. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 23 in favour, 12 against, and 12 abstentions. Among Security Council members, France, Japan, and the US voted in favour, Algeria abstained, and China voted against.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue for the Security Council is how to halt the ongoing fighting and support efforts to achieve a sustainable ceasefire across Sudan. The levels of intercommunal violence and insecurity throughout the country are a related concern. In light of the continuing violence, the lack of implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, and the failure of mediation initiatives to achieve meaningful breakthroughs, Council members face several questions, including:

- how to bring the Sudanese warring parties to a meaningful dialogue;
- how to protect civilians and enforce compliance with international humanitarian law;
- how to ensure accountability for past and ongoing crimes; and
- how to mitigate the regional spillover effect of the conflict.

The Council members could consider a resolution that:

- strongly condemns the ongoing violence across the country and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure;
- demands an immediate and permanent cessation of hostilities;
- reiterates the Council’s demand to the RSF to halt the siege of El Fasher;
- expresses deep concern about the dire humanitarian situation and urges the parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate the rapid, safe, unhindered and sustained passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need;
- demands that all parties to the conflict ensure the protection of civilians, including by full implementation of the 11 May 2023 Jeddah declaration; and
- welcomes the Secretary-General’s recommendations for the

Sudan

protection of civilians and expresses support for locally negotiated ceasefires and humanitarian pauses as well as for establishing a monitoring and verification mechanism in case of a ceasefire.

Council members may also wish to convene a private meeting with the actors that have influence over Sudan's warring parties to discuss the search for a mediated solution to the crisis and evaluate the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations on the protection of civilians.

An additional key issue for the Security Council is the humanitarian crisis and how to foster the continuous and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid while also securing the safety and security of UN officials and other humanitarian actors. The fact that aid at scale is not reaching people in need is a further concern for Council members. Periodic briefings by OCHA have helped keep the Council informed about the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Council Dynamics

One of the points of contention in the recent negotiations, including on resolution 2750 of 11 September, has been how to reference the central authorities in Sudan. Countries such as China, Russia, and the members of the "A3 plus one" grouping (Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) were supportive of maintaining the term "Sudanese government". Russia considers Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council, led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the SAF, as Sudan's highest legitimate authority. Some members, however, argued that the SAF has lost territorial control over parts of the country and underlined the need to use a broader term to encompass offshoots of the government body. (For background, see our 10 September *What's in Blue* story.)

During negotiations on a draft press statement proposed by the UK in October, members seem to have agreed to the term "Sudanese Transitional Sovereign Council". However, disagreements persisted on other issues, including humanitarian access. Russia apparently requested the removal of the phrase "administrative or other impediments" with regard to humanitarian access, arguing that it suggests that Port Sudan authorities are creating artificial barriers

for aid delivery and distribution. Some members, such as France, however, contended that several obstacles remain to the delivery of aid and suggested language encouraging cooperation "to overcome persisting difficulties". Continuing disagreements among members resulted in the penholder withdrawing the draft text after four revised drafts.

Russia has argued that any cooperation and coordination on humanitarian assistance should be carried out via channels agreed with the central authorities as the sole entity responsible for aid distribution and relief assistance. In a similar vein, Russia maintains the position that Sudanese government forces remain responsible for protecting civilians. (For background, see our 13 June *What's in Blue* story.)

Amidst mounting protection concerns, however, several human rights organisations and Sudanese civil society actors have advocated robust measures, including the deployment of protection forces in Sudan. Some Council members are apparently exploring options for the possible deployment of an African Union (AU)-led mission and considering how the mission could be supported in the context of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs). The Secretary-General's 18 October report acknowledges these calls but notes that "at present, the conditions do not exist for the successful deployment of a UN force to protect civilians" in Sudan.

Speaking at the 28 October Council meeting on Sudan, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (US) supported action from the Council regarding options for the protection of civilians. In this regard, she underlined that "the international community should, in close collaboration with African partners, begin considering options to establish a compliance and monitoring mission, one that could strengthen the protection of civilians and support the implementation and durability of any future local or nationwide cessation of hostilities. At the same meeting, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) stressed that the Council needs to take a balanced approach, taking into account the current developments in the country and the complexity of the historical context in Sudan.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

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

Background

The 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP), also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement, created two entities within BiH: the predominantly Bosniak and Croat Federation of Bosnia

and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the predominantly Serb Republika Srpska (RS). The two entities are linked by a rotating tripartite inter-ethnic presidency and a two-chamber legislative branch with equal representation by the three major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs). Both entities also have their own executive and legislative branches.

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

UN DOCUMENTS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2706 (2 November 2023) renewed the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) for another year. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9626 (15 May 2024) was the semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina. S/PV.9621 (30 April 2024) was a meeting on BiH requested by Russia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

replaced in 2004 by the EU-led Multidimensional Stabilisation Force (EUFOR).

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

On 27 May 2021, following the announcement by then-High Representative for BiH, Valentin Inzko, of his intention to resign, the PIC issued a statement designating Christian Schmidt as his successor. Russia objected to Schmidt’s appointment, arguing that the decision was reached without the support of all PIC members and that Bosnian Serb representatives had not been adequately consulted. Furthermore, Russia argued that the appointment lacked the endorsement of the Security Council. However, the US and European members of the Council maintained that the PIC SB’s authority to appoint High Representatives does not necessitate Security Council approval.

The 1995 GFAP specifies that High Representatives are “to be appointed consistent with relevant UN Security Council resolutions”. In past practice, among the seven High Representatives preceding Christian Schmidt, only one—Christian Schwarz-Schilling—was appointed without the adoption of a Security Council resolution. Rather than adopting a resolution, Tanzania, in its capacity as Security Council president, issued a letter on 30 January 2006, welcoming the PIC’s decision to nominate Schwarz-Schilling as High Representative.

On 22 July 2021, China and Russia introduced a draft Security Council resolution (S/2021/667) supporting the appointment of Christian Schmidt as High Representative until 31 July 2022, with the “subsequent closure of the OHR”. With a vote of two in favour (China and Russia) and 13 abstentions, the draft resolution failed to be adopted. In response, China argued that the outcome signaled a lack of Security Council support for Schmidt’s appointment, a sentiment Russia echoed, further claiming the position remained vacant. Subsequently, on 28 July 2021, Russia announced that it would cease participation in meetings of the PIC SB, and on 17 February 2022, declared it would suspend financial contributions to the OHR.

Aligning itself with the positions of China and Russia, Republika Srpska has taken a series of steps challenging the authority of the OHR. In June 2023, Republika Srpska’s National Assembly (RSNA) enacted legislation ceasing the publication of the High Representative’s decisions in the entity’s Official Gazette, rendering them invalid within Republika Srpska. In response, on 1 July 2023, Schmidt amended BiH’s criminal code, enabling criminal prosecution of authorities or officials who fail to “apply, implement, enforce or otherwise comply with a decision of the High Representative”.

In August 2023, BiH’s Prosecutor’s Office filed charges against RS President Milorad Dodik for failing to implement the High Representative’s decisions. The trial is currently ongoing.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 March, Schmidt issued a decree amending BiH’s Election Law to strengthen election integrity across the country. In response, on 19 April, the RSNA adopted its own election law, which would establish a new entity-level election commission that would oversee all electoral processes within RS.

Amidst these developments, BiH’s Central Election Commission (CEC) announced on 8 May that local elections would take place on 6 October. On 21 May, RS authorities confirmed their participation in the local elections under the supervision of the CEC, affirming adherence to the state-level electoral framework. However, Dodik clarified that this decision “is not an endorsement” of Schmidt’s authority, pledging that RS would enforce its own Election Law in the 2026 general election.

The RSNA’s election law took effect on 17 July. The day before, the PIC issued a statement cautioning that the law could “usurp responsibilities of the CEC and create parallel legal frameworks”, while affirming that “the international community retains the necessary instruments” to uphold BiH’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. On 19 September, BiH’s Constitutional Court annulled the RSNA’s election law, determining that it violated BiH’s constitution.

The latest report of the OHR (S/2024/777) notes that the 6 October elections were conducted in a “peaceful atmosphere without any serious incidents”. Preliminary results indicate that BiH’s major national parties maintained their dominance over most of the country’s town halls, while some of those parties lost important mayorships in urban centres, including Sarajevo and Banja Luka.

On 23 May, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 11 July as the “International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide”. Among Security Council members, China and Russia voted against the resolution, two abstained—Algeria and Mozambique—and the remaining 11 members voted in favour. According to the latest OHR report, the adoption was met with “an aggressive campaign of historical revisionism, repeated denial of genocide in Srebrenica, and glorification of war criminals on the part of the ruling coalition in the Republika Srpska”. On the same day, the RSNA held a session in Srebrenica, during which it adopted a Draft Agreement on the “peaceful disassociation” from the FBiH. The OHR report describes the agreement as “a document that disregards the statehood, sovereignty and territorial integrity of BiH”. A special session of the RSNA to discuss the agreement, scheduled for 9 July, was cancelled.

Key Issues and Options

The role of the OHR remains a key issue for the Council. Neither China nor Russia recognise Schmidt’s authority as High Representative. A draft Security Council resolution S/2021/667 (proposed by China and Russia in July 2021) supported Schmidt’s appointment as High Representative until 31 July 2022, with the “subsequent closure of the OHR”. Several Council members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US), opposed the draft text because it

Bosnia and Herzegovina

imposed a time frame for the OHR's closure without referencing the 5+2 Agenda, which is a set of five objectives and two conditions established by the PIC SB that need to be fulfilled prior to the OHR's closure. One option for the Council is to consider a presidential statement proposing an independent strategic review of the OHR that takes these views into consideration.

Another key issue for the Council is the need to address the separatist rhetoric and actions of RS authorities. The Council may wish to issue a press statement endorsing the continued relevance of the GFAP and noting the continued willingness of the international community and major donors to lend their support.

Council Dynamics

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

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

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), which was circulated to Council members on 14 October.

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

Key Recent Developments

According to the Secretary-General's UNISFA report, which covered developments from 16 April to 1 October, no progress had been made in resolving the final status of Abyei, the disputed area along the Sudan-South Sudan border, amidst ongoing hostilities in Sudan and political uncertainty in South Sudan. The report noted that, as at 1 October, an estimated 400 South Sudanese security personnel were deployed in southern Abyei, primarily in Agok, Athony Junction and Juljok, representing a decrease from the estimated number at the end of the last reporting period. South Sudan has argued that these forces have been deployed to de-escalate intercommunal violence in the region. Nevertheless, their presence violates the 2011 agreement between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, as well as Council resolutions on UNISFA.

During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, UNISFA's leadership travelled to Juba on two occasions to meet with senior South Sudanese government officials. The discussions focused on tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Twic Dinka communities in southern Abyei, the presence of South Sudanese security forces in the region, and challenges in implementing the mission's mandate. UNISFA called for South Sudan's support in re-establishing the JBVMM's presence in its Sector 1, including the sector headquarters in Gok Machar and team sites 11 (Safahah/Kiir Adem) and

12 (Sumayah/War Abar), which have remained closed since 2021.

On 3 July, Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council, headed by the leader of the Sudanese Armed Forces, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, appointed Hamed Manan Mohammed Mirghani as co-chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. (The committee is designed to provide administrative and political oversight of Abyei and is co-chaired by a Sudanese official and a South Sudanese official.) On 3 August, Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council appointed Salouma Musa Yahya Boushara as the Sudan-appointed Chief Administrator for Abyei.

The Secretary-General's report further noted that the security situation in the Abyei region remained tense, despite a reduction in intercommunal armed clashes. Following an increase in intercommunal violence involving the Ngok Dinka, Twic Dinka, and Nuer elements in late 2023 and early 2024, there were no clashes reported among these communities during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report. No clashes were recorded either between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities in the same period. However, rumours of an attack between the Ngok Dinka and Twic communities prompted 756 people from Awolnhom and Anthony to seek refuge at UNISFA camps between 9 and 11 July. During the reporting period, 82 arms-related incidents were reported, resulting in 78 casualties, including 27 deaths. (For background and more information, see the brief on Sudan/South Sudan in our May 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

In a 25 June press release, UNISFA reported that on 23 June, an alleged intrusion attempt at one of its camps in Abyei resulted in one death and one injury. It noted that despite repeated warnings, the intruders attacked peacekeepers, escalating the situation and forcing the mission to use force. During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, UNISFA recorded six incidents of intrusions into the mission headquarters and its bases at Noong, Highway Camp, and Kadugli.

The fighting in Sudan has contributed significantly to the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations in the Abyei region. The Secretary-General's report documented the conflict's spillover

Sudan/South Sudan

effects, which include the proliferation of both small arms and higher calibre weapons inside Abyei. The fighting has also led to an influx of South Sudanese returnees, displaced Sudanese, and third-country nationals fleeing the crisis in Sudan. According to some estimates, at the time of writing, over 22,000 people had entered Abyei from Sudan since the onset of the conflict.

Heavy rains and flooding have exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Abyei in the last couple of months. In a 3 October press briefing, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said that more than 18,000 people in Abyei have been displaced by the floods, compounding the challenges of existing food insecurity and disease outbreaks. He added that UNISFA personnel have intensified their efforts to support communities affected by flooding, including through the distribution of essential supplies and the rehabilitation of roads to improve access for humanitarian assistance. In July, health authorities in Abyei declared an outbreak of the Hepatitis E virus following an increase in confirmed cases of the virus among refugees and returnees from Sudan. In a 19 September press release, Médecins Sans Frontières reported 41 cases of Hepatitis E in Abyei, which resulted in six deaths.

During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, the deployment of all peacekeepers as part of the reconfiguration of UNISFA was completed. The deployment of contingent-owned equipment for the reconfiguration reached its final stage, with the equipment of the Indian infantry battalion, the Ghanaian infantry battalion, the Nigerian base defence company, and most of the equipment of the Chinese quick-reaction force reaching the mission area between April and June.

Key Issues and Options

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

The fundamental issue for the Council remains how to reinvigorate the political process to address the final status of Abyei and the Sudan-South Sudan border issue amidst the war in Sudan, which has put the process on hold. In this regard, securing a ceasefire in Sudan appears critical to help mitigate the effects of Sudan's conflict on the security, humanitarian, and socioeconomic conditions in Abyei.

Also, an important issue for the Council is the continued presence

of South Sudanese and Sudanese security forces in Abyei in violation of the area's demilitarised status. A related issue is the proliferation of arms in Abyei, which could further aggravate persistent intercommunal tensions in southern Abyei.

The operational difficulties that UNISFA and the JBVMM face because of the presence of South Sudanese forces in Abyei, restrictions on the freedom of movement of the mission, and the conflict in Sudan are also matters of concern for Council members. (Sudanese airspace has remained closed since the outbreak of fighting in April 2023, preventing any aerial monitoring operations by the JBVMM). In renewing UNISFA's mandate and its support for the JBVMM, the Council could highlight the operational challenges facing the mission and urge the parties to engage with the mission to address their concerns in this regard.

Council members could also request the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of UNISFA in the mandate renewal to assess its effectiveness in light of evolving political and security dynamics and present recommendations in this regard.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree on the important roles that UNISFA and the JBVMM play in supporting peace, security, and stability in Abyei and the broader region. Members share concerns about the incidents of inter-communal violence, attacks on peacekeepers, and the compounding effects of Sudan's conflict on the political, humanitarian and security situation in the Abyei area.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2708, which last renewed UNISFA's mandate, demonstrated that Council members remain united in their support for the mission's important role in promoting regional stability, protecting civilians, and advancing efforts towards a political settlement. Resolution 2708 introduced new preambular language on the safety and security of peacekeepers. It further underscored the need for the Secretary-General and troop- and police-contributing countries and member states to work together to ensure that UNISFA is adequately resourced and that all peacekeepers in the field are willing, capable and equipped effectively and safely to implement their mandate. (For more information, see our 13 November 2023 *What's in Blue* story.)

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in South Sudan. Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicholas Haysom is expected to brief on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, dated 25 October, and developments in the country.

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 30 April 2025.

Key Recent Developments

On 13 September, all signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) agreed to a 24-month extension of the transitional period. The decision again postponed the country's first post-independence elections, which were scheduled for December 2024, until December 2026 and extended the transitional period until February 2027. (The

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2731 (30 May 2024) renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2025 and extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2025. S/RES/2729 (29 April 2024) renewed the mandate of UNMISS until 30 April 2025. **Secretary-General's Report S/2024/776** (25 October 2024) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan, which covered developments from 16 July to 15 October.

South Sudan

original transitional period outlined in the R-ARCSS was set to end in February 2023; it had been extended until February 2025 through a roadmap adopted in August 2022.) In extending the transitional period, the R-ARCSS signatories cited lack of progress in implementing critical tasks necessary for holding elections, such as the constitution-making process, the registration of political parties, the holding of a census, and an integrated security plan. (For background and more information, see the brief on South Sudan in our August 2024 *Monthly Forecast* and 13 August *What's in Blue* story.)

The decision to extend the transitional period was endorsed during the third extraordinary plenary session of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Although 35 members of the plenary, including UNMISS, voted in favour of the endorsement, six members abstained, including the members of the Troika on South Sudan (Norway, the UK, and the US) and the European Union (EU). Subsequently, South Sudan's Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) ratified the extension.

During a 9 October press briefing, Haysom expressed regret about the decision to extend the transitional period. He acknowledged the frustration and fatigue felt by the South Sudanese people at the political paralysis and inaction in the country. Haysom said that the only way forward for the South Sudanese authorities was to find compromises to implement a critical mass of the key political and operational benchmarks outlined in the R-ARCSS. Talking about the delays in the unification of forces, Haysom urged South Sudanese leaders to be open and honest about their intentions to unify their forces as it was the only way to sustainably prevent increasing subnational violence. He further noted that requests for financing from international partners for any aspect of the transition process needed to be accompanied by commitments demonstrating that South Sudanese authorities were ready to invest in their own democratic elections and processes.

According to the Secretary-General's 25 October report, on 7 October, the South Sudanese High-Level Standing Committee—a senior South Sudanese ministerial-level body responsible for overseeing the implementation of the R-ARCSS—finalised their assessment and recommendations for aligning the Tumaini Peace Initiative with the revitalised agreement. (The Tumaini initiative refers to the high-level mediation talks between the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity [R-TGoNU] and the non-signatories to the revitalised agreement, facilitated by Kenya, in Nairobi.) On 28 October, the standing committee, led by South Sudanese Minister Martin Elia Lomuro, met with Kenyan President William Samoei Ruto in Nairobi.

The security situation remains volatile, with intercommunal and subnational violence persisting in many areas of the country. On 16 October, the UNMISS Human Rights Division released its quarterly brief on violence affecting civilians (covering April to June), which documented 317 incidents of violence affecting 1,062 civilians. In comparison to the previous quarter (January to March), the brief reported a 32 percent increase in the number of documented violent incidents (from 240 to 317) and a 168 percent increase in the

number of victims of sexual violence (from 47 to 126).

In an 11 October press release, UNMISS expressed alarm about reports of a series of violent clashes in the greater Juba area of Central Equatoria state, resulting in the deaths of 24 people, including 19 civilians. It noted that these interconnected incidents allegedly involved attacks and counter-attacks between former members of the National Salvation Front, an armed group that continues to fight government forces. In response to the incidents, UNMISS intensified its patrols across Central Equatoria and engaged with state and local authorities and community leaders to access the area and prevent further escalations.

The humanitarian situation in the country remains difficult, with nearly nine million people in need of humanitarian assistance and 7.1 million people facing high levels of food insecurity. The challenging situation has been further compounded by flooding and impediments to humanitarian relief. According to an 18 October update from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), flooding has affected more than one million people across 42 counties and Abyei, with Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity states accounting for more than 40 percent of the affected population. Heavy rainfall and flooding also rendered 15 key supply routes impassable, restricting physical access.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 25 September press release, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan attributed the decision to extend the transitional period to the failure of the country's transitional political leaders to "conscientiously implement the revitalised peace agreement", which it said has the potential to consolidate peace and uphold human rights protections. The Commission observed that this decision has resulted in a dire humanitarian crisis, characterised by extreme hunger and food insecurity, and the displacement of more than four million South Sudanese both in the country and the region. Chair of the Commission Yasmin Sooka said that "[s]ince independence in 2011, South Sudan's unelected leaders have continued to entrench impunity for systematic and gross human rights violations, fuel insecurity, and deliberately thwart efforts to democratise the country."

Key Issues and Options

The fundamental concern for the Council is the significant political and security challenges in South Sudan stemming from the delays in political transition and implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to make progress towards implementing the outstanding tasks and create conditions necessary for holding elections.

One option for the Council would be to invite Interim Chairperson of the RJMEC Major General (Retired) Charles Tai Gituai to brief the Council. Council members might be keen to learn about the progress of the inter-party dialogue and the Tumaini initiative mediation talks. In a 19 September joint statement, UNMISS, the AU Mission in South Sudan (AUMISS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) underlined the need for South Sudanese leaders, among other things, to engage and accommodate all voices and viewpoints, including non-signatory parties, who have joined the Tumaini initiative, with a view to breaking the perpetual cycle of transitions in South Sudan.

In addition, the Council could invite a civil society representative in November to brief on the challenges facing South Sudan,

South Sudan

including the implementation of the revitalised agreement.

Another option for Council members would be to issue a press statement, taking note of the decision by the South Sudanese authorities to extend the transitional period, expressing concern about the consistent delays in implementing the peace agreement, and urging all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and a consultative process to implement the outstanding tasks, including the agreed-upon benchmarks for holding peaceful general elections, in a timely manner.

An additional key issue for the Council is the humanitarian and food security situations. An option would be to seek regular briefings on these matters from OCHA. The impact of the conflict in neighbouring Sudan on the humanitarian, political, and security situations in South Sudan remains a matter of concern for Council members. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as at 11 August, approximately 819,402 people—including 184,658 Sudanese refugees and 631,172 South Sudanese refugee returnees—have crossed into South Sudan since the outbreak of fighting in Sudan on 15 April 2023. The influx of refugees and returnees has exacerbated the strain on local communities, which are already grappling with diminishing resources.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Most Council members have similar concerns about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, the ongoing sub-national and intercommunal violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises in South Sudan. Members, however, have diverging views about the context of the situation and the extent to which the Council can and should apply pressure on the parties to fully implement the peace agreement.

Some members, such as the US, are more critical than others about what they perceive to be the South Sudanese government's lack of political will to implement the R-ARCSS. On the other hand, Council members such as China, Russia, and the members of the "A3 plus one" (Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) are less critical of the government, often highlighting the progress the South Sudanese government has made amidst the country's severe challenges, including the dire humanitarian situation, intercommunal violence, and the economic crisis.

On 18 September, the members of the Troika on South Sudan, joined by Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the EU, issued a joint statement, expressing disappointment at the decision to extend the transitional period. The decision, the statement said, reflects the failure of the transitional government to implement the 2018 revitalised agreement despite repeated promises made by the authorities. It called on all stakeholders to create the conditions necessary for holding peaceful, transparent and inclusive elections as soon as possible. It further stressed the need to engage all parties, including the non-signatories to the R-ARCSS, in a constructive process and demonstrate how they would use the proposed extension to advance the objectives that have not been realised in recent years. It added that the members expect the South Sudanese government to present a credible and transparent plan to finance the institutions responsible for implementing the peace process.

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

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

The Council will also hold its monthly meeting on Yemen and receive a briefing from the chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea).

The mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) expires on 14 July 2025.

Key Recent Developments

The ongoing tensions in the Middle East, including fallout from the Israel-Hamas war and the escalation between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, have had a negative effect on efforts to address Yemen's political stalemate and humanitarian crisis.

The past month saw the intensification of direct conflict between the Houthis and Israel, as well as the continuation of Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and US-led retaliatory strikes. (For more information,

see the brief on Yemen in our October 2024 *Monthly Forecast* and 14 October *What's in Blue* story.) On 16 October, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had conducted airstrikes in Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, targeting "numerous Iran-backed Houthi weapons storage facilities". The statement claimed that these "hardened underground facilities" contained weapons that were used to target US and international vessels in the Red Sea.

At the Council's latest briefing on Yemen, held on 15 October, UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg warned that the "cycle of retaliation" is pulling Yemen deeper into the regional conflict and distracts from the urgent need to address the country's internal crises. He stressed that peace in Yemen is achievable despite the difficult regional context and outlined existing tools to achieve that end. These include the commitment made by the Yemeni parties towards "the establishment of a roadmap, including a nationwide ceasefire, addressing humanitarian and economic needs and preparing for an inclusive political process", which serve as reference points in discussions with the sides.

In the context of these discussions, the Special Envoy has been holding consultations with political parties and civil society, including the Rashad Party, the Nasserite Party, and the Yemeni Socialist

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Party. According to a 23 October statement by the Office of the Special Envoy, participants in these consultations have emphasised the urgency of economic recovery and humanitarian relief while noting that issues such as the payment of salaries and the reopening of vital roads cannot be delayed until a political settlement is reached.

Humanitarian conditions in Yemen continue to worsen, including the spread of cholera and growing food insecurity. In her briefing at the 15 October Council meeting, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya noted that more than 203,000 suspected cases of cholera have been reported and more than 720 people have died from the disease. She warned that the number of cases is expected to double by March 2025, noting that funding for the cholera response has run out. Unless urgent funding is received, 70 percent of the remaining diarrhoea treatment centres and 42 percent of the remaining oral rehydration centres will close by December, according to Msuya.

In a 24 October statement, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF warned about the outbreak of variant poliovirus type 2 (polio) in Yemen, noting that 273 cases have been reported over the last three years. The statement said that the outbreak persists amidst increasing health emergencies, further straining the country's overburdened health system.

At the 15 October Council meeting, the briefers and many Council members reiterated their deep concern about the Houthis' ongoing detention of several UN national staffers in Yemen as well as civil society personnel. Some speakers voiced alarm about reports that the Houthis had referred a significant number of detained personnel, including three UN staffers detained in 2021 and 2023, for "criminal prosecution".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 19 September, the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee discussed its PoE's final report, which was made public on 31 October. The report says that the "scale, nature and extent of transfers of diverse military materiel and technology provided to the Houthis from external sources, including financial support and training of its combatants, is unprecedented". These sources include Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah, and Iraqi armed groups. The report makes several recommendations to the Security Council, including adding an expert to the panel to monitor maritime activities such as smuggling. It also suggests for the Security Council to call on regional armed groups to refrain from providing military and financial assistance to the Houthis and to express its intention to impose sanctions on those who commit such acts. At the 19 September committee meeting, it seems that many Council members welcomed the PoE's report, but at least one permanent member accused the panel of going beyond its remit.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 October, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a resolution without a vote on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights (A/HRC/RES/57/37). The HRC expressed deep concern at the serious violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict, including those involving sexual and gender-based violence, the continued recruitment of children, the abduction of political activists, the violations of human rights against journalists, and the killing of civilians. The HRC also requested all parties to the conflict to fully implement Security Council resolution 2216 of 14 April 2015—which established an arms embargo on the Houthis and demanded that they withdraw from all seized areas and relinquish all seized arms—while noting that this "will contribute to an improvement in the situation of human rights".

Key Issues and Options

Insulating Yemen from destabilising regional tensions and reinvigorating the stalled intra-Yemeni political process are overarching priorities for the Council. Members are likely to continue to call on Yemeni parties to exercise restraint and to take confidence-building measures to create conditions conducive to the resumption of talks. In this regard, members could encourage implementation of the economic de-escalation agreement reached on 23 July between the Houthis and the Yemeni government. Although the agreement includes a pledge by the sides to hold meetings to discuss economic and humanitarian issues, no such meetings have taken place.

A key priority for the Council in November is renewing the Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the PoE supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee. One option would be to pursue a straightforward renewal. Another would be to consider whether adjustments are needed, including any based on recommendations contained in the PoE's final report.

Council Dynamics

Council members have maintained general unity in support of UN mediation to achieve a sustainable resolution to the conflict in Yemen. The Red Sea crisis, however, has produced some notable divisions. The P3 members (France, the UK, and the US) have criticised the Houthis' destabilising actions, while Council members such as Algeria, China, and Russia emphasise that ending the conflict in Gaza is critical to resolving the crisis in the Red Sea.

The UK and the US have been calling for the Council to take further action to impede Iran's supply of arms to the Houthis, including by strengthening the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), which inspects ships travelling to Houthi-controlled ports to ensure compliance with the arms embargo against the group.

Stronger Council action against the Houthis or Iran seems unlikely, however, given Council dynamics. Russia traditionally seeks to minimise references to the Houthis and is reluctant to single them out in Council products. A red line for Russia has also been language about Iran violating the arms embargo against the Houthis. At the 15 October Council meeting, the US referenced public reports alleging that Russia is considering providing the Houthis with anti-ship ballistic missiles and might be negotiating a deal to supply the group with small arms. These developments may further complicate Council dynamics on the issue. Therefore, members such as the UK and the US are instead seeking to enhance bilateral support to UNVIM, which relies on voluntary funding.

The Council has been unable to agree on a unified message calling for the release of the UN staff detained by the Houthis. Although Russia has expressed concern about the situation of the detained personnel, it has not called for their release, focusing instead on calls for access to the arrested staff. It has also accused Western countries of double standards, arguing that although they call on the Houthis to release the UN staff, they fail to hold Israel accountable for its actions against the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the UN Interim Force In Lebanon (UNIFIL).

Given the complex dynamics on the file, members may opt to pursue a straightforward renewal of the Yemen sanctions regime in

Yemen

November. This would be consistent with the approach taken during the most recent renewal of UNMHA's mandate through resolution 2742 of 8 July. In general, recent years have witnessed difficult Council negotiations on the renewal of sanctions regimes. A notable example is the recent termination of the Panel of Experts assisting

the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee following a 28 March veto cast by Russia.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. The US and Japan have served as co-penholders on the Red Sea crisis.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In November, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which expires on 15 November.

The Central African Republic (CAR) sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2025, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2745 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2025.

Key Recent Developments

On 23 October, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the CAR and Head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza briefed the Council on efforts to advance the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, including progress in the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration of former combatants; the implementation of security sector reform; and the restoration of state authority. (For more, see our 22 October *What's in Blue* story.)

On 26 September, CAR President Faustin Touadéra, in his statement at the 79th session of the UN General Assembly, expressed his satisfaction with the Security Council's decision to lift the arms embargo imposed on his country. In addition to lifting the embargo, resolution 2745 of 30 July also strengthened all other targeted sanctions measures against armed groups and associated individuals. (For more, see our 29 July *What's in Blue* story.)

Touadéra also spoke about his country's strong potential for expanding its mining industry and reiterated his government's call for the total lifting of the embargo on diamonds. The embargo was imposed by the Kimberley Process, a multilateral trade regime established in 2003 with the goal of preventing the flow of conflict diamonds that limited export volumes and their per-carat value. The suspension limits exports from production areas in the east and some parts in the west of the CAR, according to the Panel of Experts supporting the work of the 2745 CAR Sanctions Committee. This has led the CAR government to campaign for the lifting of the suspensions.

The CAR has been preparing to hold local elections for the first time in four decades. MINUSCA is expected to provide assistance to the CAR authorities in organising the polls, in accordance with resolution 2709 of 15 November 2023, which renewed the mandate of MINUSCA. With a budget shortfall posing a major challenge, CAR authorities announced in August the postponement of local elections, which had been planned for 13 October, until April 2025. As at 1 October, only \$4.8 million out of \$14.8 million needed to organise the elections had been mobilised, according to

the Secretary-General's latest report on MINUSCA published on 11 October.

The security situation has remained volatile, particularly in the northwest and east, because of competition over natural resources and control of major roads. Civilians continue to bear the brunt of instability in the country, and the use of explosive ordnance remains an ongoing challenge. Various armed groups are also involved in kidnapping for ransom. The influx of refugees and returnees to the CAR from Sudan has exacerbated the humanitarian situation. Since April 2023, over 29,000 Sudanese have crossed into the CAR to seek refuge, according to the Secretary-General's report. In line with its mandate, MINUSCA continues to assist the CAR government in expanding state authority and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 7 October, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, Yao Agbetse presented his report (A/HRC/57/79) to the Human Rights Council. The expert carried out two assessment visits to the CAR from 9 to 18 August 2023 and from 11 to 22 February.

The report noted that between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024, the MINUSCA Human Rights Division documented 2,724 human rights violations and abuses affecting 4,121 victims, including 2,493 men, 426 women, 306 girls, 524 boys, 5 minors whose sex is unknown, and 367 collective victims. The report added that armed groups were responsible for 1,575 human rights violations, resulting in 2,199 victims. It further mentioned that violations committed by the army, police and gendarmerie have declined but not ceased. According to the MINUSCA Human Rights Division, state agents were responsible for 1,149 violations affecting 1,932 victims.

The report highlighted that women's participation in national decision-making mechanisms remains marginal, as does their place in the ongoing peace and reconciliation process. The proportion of women in the National Assembly is 12 percent. Women's desire to be voters and candidates in local elections and to play a role in local development is impeded by psychological violence, stubborn prejudices and certain customary practices that confine them to subordinate roles, according to the report.

Peacebuilding Commission Developments

On 23 October, the Chair of the CAR country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco), briefed the Council. He emphasised the need to support CAR's ongoing efforts to promote stabilisation, recovery and sustainable development. He also stressed the need to ensure adequate financial support for the organisation of local elections in 2025 to consolidate sustainable peace in the country.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of MINUSCA's mandate will be a key issue for Council members in November. In this regard, MINUSCA's transition could be a focus of attention during the upcoming mandate-renewal negotiation process. The MINUSCA strategic review, circulated to

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. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9758** (23 October 2024) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

Council members on 14 August, recommended that the mission and the host country initiate discussions on a potential transition plan in 2026, following the presidential and legislative elections expected to take place in 2025-2026.

The most likely option for Council members is to extend the mission's mandate for one year, as recommended by the Secretary-General's report. However, there could be discussion and negotiations on the mission's mandate, priorities, and authorised strength. While the review said that "there is currently no desire or request from the national authorities for the drawdown of MINUSCA", it acknowledged the host country's desire to see the mission's mandate adapted to support the CAR government's early recovery and development initiatives. The review also assessed MINUSCA's mandate as remaining relevant, stressing that its full and effective implementation required sustained support from the CAR government and the Security Council. Some Council members, however, may still want to advocate for a reduction in the mission's authorised strength.

The CAR authorities have formally requested the UN to provide electoral assistance to the presidential and legislative elections in 2025-2026. Pursuant to resolution 2709, MINUSCA has already been given the mandate to support the CAR authorities in organising local elections. Council members may note the postponement of local elections planned for October and call on the CAR authorities to ensure that fair and inclusive local elections are held in April 2025. They may also consider enhancing the current mandate to allow MINUSCA to provide support to the upcoming presidential and legislative elections.

The restrictions on MINUSCA's freedom of movement and the use of uncrewed aerial vehicles, or drones, have been an ongoing issue. Since December 2023, the CAR government has restricted the use of drones, which some Council members argue undermines the mission's ability to enhance its situational awareness, protect civilians, and ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. According to the Secretary-General's report, the mission had to terminate its

contract for drones on 15 July because of these restrictions.

The implementation of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) could also be an issue in the upcoming negotiations. The CAR authorities have raised concerns about tax exemptions, citing pressing economic challenges. MINUSCA is exempt from taxation, but the CAR authorities are trying to increase their tax revenue by renegotiating the SOFA to include taxes on MINUSCA.

Council Dynamics

Council members appreciate MINUSCA's work and the Special Representative's efforts in maintaining positive relations with host country authorities. Several members continue to raise concerns, however, about restrictions on the mission's freedom of movement, particularly on its use of uncrewed aerial vehicles. On the other hand, Russia and the CAR have expressed concerns about armed groups that operate drones, which they give as the reason the CAR government suspended all drone flights.

Some Council members, such as France, the US, and the UK, have expressed alarm at the increasing disinformation campaign against MINUSCA. The CAR has highlighted the government's continued efforts to counter this trend but notes that it should be seen as an expression of public dissatisfaction with the mission's inability to meet people's expectations.

Regarding MINUSCA's mandate renewal in November, the CAR had in the past underscored the need to adapt the mandate to new priorities and realities on the ground, but the review said that the government is no longer pushing for a mission drawdown. China noted positively the strategic review's "recommendations for optimizing and adjusting the mandate and staffing of the Mission, so as to ensure that MINUSCA performs its duties efficiently". It seems that China may wish to see a reduction in the mission's authorised strength at this mandate renewal.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria) chairs the 2745 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Libya

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

imprisonment, torture, persecution, and other inhumane acts) and war crimes (including murder, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity). The court has investigated these alleged crimes in relation to four priority lines of inquiry: 1) the 2011 Libyan Civil War; 2) military operations conducted between 2014 and 2020; 3) crimes committed in detention facilities; and 4) crimes committed against migrants.

There is currently one open case before the court related to the first line of inquiry. It is centred on Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. In June 2011, the court charged him with two counts of alleged crimes against humanity and issued a warrant for his arrest. He remains at large.

Regarding the second line of inquiry, on 4 October, the ICC unsealed arrest warrants for six individuals allegedly affiliated with

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2702 (30 October 2023) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2024. S/RES/1970 (26 February 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (assets freeze and travel ban) and established a sanctions committee. **Secretary-General's Report S/2024/598** (8 August 2024) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15848** (9 October 2024) welcomed the agreement reached between Libyan actors on the Central Bank of Libya and its endorsement by the House of Representatives and High State Council.

Libya

the Al Kaniyat militia, which controlled Tarhuna—a city of approximately 150,000 people located 90 kilometres southeast of Tripoli—from 2015 to 2020. The militia was allied with General Khalifa Haftar’s Libyan National Army (LNA) during its failed 2019-2020 military campaign to take Tripoli from the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), the predecessor to the current Government of National Unity (GNU). Since GNA forces ousted the militia from Tarhuna in June 2020, hundreds of bodies have been exhumed from mass graves in the town. The ICC’s arrest warrants accuse the six individuals of war crimes, including murder, outrages upon personal dignity, cruel treatment, torture, sexual violence, and rape. In a statement announcing the unsealing of the warrants—which were issued in April and July 2023—Khan said that his office is “seeking to work closely with Libyan authorities so that these individuals can face the charges against them in a court of law”. (For more information on Al Kaniyat’s alleged atrocities in Tarhuna, see the 30 August joint report by the UN Support Mission in Libya [UNSMIL] and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR].)

Khan’s previous biannual report to the Council, dated 14 May, outlined a roadmap for the completion of the ICC’s investigative activities in relation to the situation in Libya. The roadmap foresees applications for additional arrest warrants across several of the priority lines of inquiry, combined with renewed efforts with respect to “arrest strategy, fugitive tracking and preservation of evidence” to enable a transition to the judicial phase of the court’s activities by the end of 2025. Following this transition, the prosecutor’s office would not seek additional arrest warrants, focusing instead on supporting trials before the court. At this stage, Khan’s report notes, Council members may “consider how they would wish to mark the completion of the investigation phase, including with respect to the reporting requirements of the Office in relation to this situation”.

Regarding the broader situation in Libya, the political impasse continues between the GNU, based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah with advisory support from the High State Council (HSC), and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), which splintered from the GNU and is led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and backed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the LNA. According to the Secretary-General’s most recent report on UNSMIL, dated 8 August and covering events since 9 April, the parties have not achieved any progress in resolving disagreements about proposed electoral legislation that would allow national elections to be held and reconcile the country’s divided government. Among other issues, a key point of contention concerns the formation of a unified interim government to organise the elections, a move favoured by the GNS and HoR but opposed by the GNU and some segments of the HSC. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments—which has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections—is a root cause of Libya’s political, security, and economic instability.

In August and September, the stand-off further escalated due to a dispute between the GNU and GNS over the leadership of the Central Bank of Libya (CBL)—the country’s sole depository for public revenues and one of the few state institutions servicing both governments. The disagreement, which affected Libya’s domestic oil

production and access to foreign currencies, was eventually settled through an UNSMIL-mediated process that led to an agreement on compromise candidates to lead the bank. In a 9 October press statement, Council members welcomed the agreement, called on the parties to take steps toward establishing a unified national budget to ensure the stability of Libya’s financial system, and reiterated their support for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process to enable the holding of free and fair elections “as soon as possible”.

During the Council’s most recent 60-day briefing on the situation in Libya, held on 9 October, Deputy Special Representative and Political Officer in Charge of UNSMIL Stephanie Koury—who has been leading the mission since Special Representative and Head of UNSMIL Abdoulaye Bathily stepped down in April—announced that she intended to “build on recent positive achievements and advance an inclusive political process in the coming week aimed at breaking the political deadlock, addressing long-standing conflict drivers and moving towards national elections” in the country.

On 31 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2755, extending UNSMIL’s mandate for three months, until 31 January 2025, with a “further automatic extension” of an additional nine months, until 31 October 2025, if a new Special Representative and Head of UNSMIL has been appointed by 31 January 2025. (For more information on the mandate extension, see our *What’s In Blue* story of 30 October.)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Security Council is how to promote justice and accountability for atrocities committed in Libya. November’s briefing by Khan will allow Council members to take stock of the ICC’s work toward this end, presenting the first opportunity for members to review the court’s progress on its roadmap to transition from the investigative phase to the judicial phase of its activities in the country.

In addition to Khan’s briefing, Council members could learn more about the significance of the court’s recently unsealed arrest warrants for individuals affiliated with the Al Kaniyat militia by inviting a civil society representative who was impacted by the militia’s crimes to address the Council.

Members that are party to the ICC could also continue the practice of holding a joint press stakeout in connection with the meeting.

More broadly, supporting political momentum towards national elections to unify Libya’s divided governments remains another key issue for the Council. In this context, an important objective for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country’s rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement on electoral laws. Council members could consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with representatives of the rival governments to hear their perspectives and better inform the Council’s decision-making.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country.

Members are divided, however, on the work of the ICC. Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK are states parties to the

Libya

Rome Statute of the ICC, while Algeria, China, Mozambique, Russia, and the US are not. These distinctions largely reflect how members view the court's work on Libya, with the notable exception of the US, which is supportive of the ICC's efforts regarding the country despite not being a party to the Rome Statute.

Following the ICC's March 2023 announcement that it had

issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia has been increasingly critical of the court, describing it as a Western political instrument and urging the Council to recall the situations in Libya and Sudan that had previously been referred to it.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In November, Security Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701 of 2006. The report is expected by 13 November. Resolution 1701 reshaped the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in light of the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah and called for a cessation of hostilities between the parties. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix are the anticipated briefers.

Council members are also likely to watch developments in Lebanon, Israel, and the region and evaluate whether additional Council action is required.

Key Recent Developments

The armed conflict between Israel and Hezbollah has continued to intensify. Following the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas on 7 October 2023, Hezbollah and other armed groups have fired rockets into northern Israel in support of Hamas since 8 October 2023, while Israel has responded with airstrikes and the killing of Hezbollah commanders in Lebanon. In September, hostilities rapidly escalated with a wave of attacks widely attributed to Israel, which detonated thousands of Hezbollah's electronic communication devices and a large-scale Israeli airstrike campaign targeting several areas in Lebanon, including Beirut, with one of these airstrikes killing Hezbollah secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah on 27 September.

Since 1 October, Israel has been carrying out ground operations in southern Lebanon to degrade Hezbollah's capabilities in the area while expanding its airstrike campaign. For its part, Hezbollah has continued to launch rockets and missiles towards Israel, expanding its targets to areas deeper inside Israel. On 22 October, it claimed responsibility for a failed drone attack on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's holiday residence. In a 25 October statement on social media, UNIFIL reported that since early October, peacekeepers have observed "clashes on the ground" in numerous locations in UNIFIL's area of operations. On 29 October, Hezbollah announced the appointment of Sheikh Naim Kassem, who had been Nasrallah's deputy for over thirty years, as Hezbollah's new secretary-general.

UNIFIL's positions have repeatedly come under fire. Incidents included the wounding of two peacekeepers on 10 October after an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) tank fired towards an observation tower at UNIFIL's headquarters in Naqoura, and the destruction of the

main gate and forcible entry by two IDF tanks into a UN position in Ramyah on 13 October. UNIFIL said that, after the two tanks left, peacekeepers reported the firing of several rounds that emitted smoke, injuring 15 peacekeepers. On 29 October, UNIFIL reported that a rocket hit its headquarters, noting that it was likely fired by Hezbollah "or an affiliated group".

Israel has urged UNIFIL to move from its positions, stating that this is to avoid danger. On 2 October, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said that, in response to Israel's request, a decision was made both "operationally and politically" for UNIFIL to stay in its positions to implement its mandate. Israel's warnings have raised concerns regarding the prospect of Israel launching a full-scale ground invasion in southern Lebanon. Commentators also noted that a withdrawal of UNIFIL troops would leave no impartial observers in that event. At a 10 October Security Council meeting on the situation in Lebanon, Lacroix said that UNIFIL has adopted measures to mitigate risks, including reducing the mission's footprint by 25 percent "at the most affected UN positions" and temporarily relocating peacekeepers to larger bases in UNIFIL's area of operations, while continuing to re-assess the force's posture against "prevailing risks". While peacekeepers remain deployed, most civilian personnel have been temporarily relocated north of the Litani River.

In response to the attacks on UNIFIL positions, a group of troop-contributing countries issued a joint statement on 12 October reaffirming support for UNIFIL and calling for the attacks to stop immediately. On 14 October, the members of the Security Council issued press elements expressing concern at UNIFIL's positions coming under fire and urging all parties to respect the safety and security of UN personnel and premises. Members also expressed deep concern over civilian casualties and displacement and called for adherence to international humanitarian law. Additionally, members emphasised UNIFIL's role in supporting regional stability and called for the full implementation of resolution 1701, while also recognising "the need for further practical measures to achieve that outcome" and emphasising the need for diplomatic efforts that would bring "a durable end to the conflict" and allow civilians on both sides of the Blue Line to return to their homes. (The Blue Line is a withdrawal line set by the UN in 2000 to confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon. While not representing an international border, the Blue Line acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2749 (28 August 2023) renewed the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2025. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

Lebanon

the two states.)

The humanitarian situation in Lebanon continues to deteriorate. A 30 October update by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), covering developments until 28 October, says that 2,710 people have been killed in Lebanon since 8 October 2023. The update notes that the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported a sharp increase in the number of casualties among health sector workers. Healthcare and access to clean water have been severely affected by the hostilities, with reports of 15 hospitals being damaged in Lebanon and a confirmed case of cholera in the Akkar governorate. The OCHA update also indicates that journalists are also facing severe risks. During a 25 October press briefing, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Farhan Haq noted with concern reports of an Israeli airstrike in southern Lebanon which hit an apartment housing journalists and other media personnel. The airstrike killed three people and wounded three others.

OCHA reports that displacement of civilians remains a key concern amid “ongoing airstrikes and forced displacement orders” issued across Lebanon by the Israeli army. As at 27 October, 834,746 people had been displaced in Lebanon, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Additionally, an estimated 440,000 people (Lebanese, Syrians, and third-country nationals) have crossed into Syria, and 22,498 Lebanese nationals have entered Iraq since the escalation of hostilities.

According to Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo’s 10 October Security Council briefing, more than 50 people had been killed and over 60,000 displaced in Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan since the start of the hostilities. DiCarlo also said that at least twelve Israeli soldiers had been killed in Lebanese territory since 1 October.

On 24 October, France organised an international conference in Paris to mobilise support for Lebanon. Participants announced \$1 billion in aid, including \$800 million in humanitarian aid and \$200 million to support Lebanon’s security forces. A statement issued by France after the conference said that the financial and in-kind support pledged to the Lebanese security forces should allow them to “prepare a massive deployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, as part of a diplomatic settlement”.

The political situation in Lebanon remains unchanged. Lebanon has been without a president for two years since Michel Aoun’s term ended on 31 October 2022, with opposing politico-sectarian blocks unable to agree on a candidate. The presidential vacuum is compounded by the fact that, over two years since the 15 May 2022 legislative elections, Lebanon’s government remains in caretaker status.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 22 October press release, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said that he was appalled by the Israeli strike that occurred a day earlier near Rafik Hariri University Hospital, one of Beirut’s main medical facilities in the densely populated Jnah neighbourhood. The strike reportedly killed at least 18 people—including four children—injured 60 others and damaged the hospital itself. Türk emphasised that the protection of civilians must be the utmost priority for all parties, stating that “all feasible precautions must be taken to avoid, and in any event to minimise, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects” in military operations. He also stressed that hospitals, ambulances, and medical personnel are specifically protected under international humanitarian law due to their critical life-saving roles. Türk

reiterated the UN’s call for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Women, Peace and Security

A 25 October UN Women update highlights the risks to the health, safety and dignity of women and girls in Lebanon against a backdrop of escalating hostilities and pre-existing discriminatory norms. According to consultations carried out by UN Women, women heads of households, widows, women with disabilities, migrant domestic workers, and older women are facing increased risks and need specific humanitarian support. The update says that, despite significant challenges, women-led and women’s rights organisations are “at the forefront of the humanitarian response and are actively engaged in delivering life-saving aid” to displaced people. The update calls for funding these efforts and underscores the need for the humanitarian response to uphold the rights of women and girls. It also calls for strengthening the representation of women in decision-making forums.

Key Issues and Options

Returning to a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah and averting a regional conflagration in the Middle East are urgent issues for the Security Council.

Council members may consider issuing a presidential statement urging all parties to immediately return to a full cessation of hostilities and to fully implement resolution 1701. The presidential statement could stress the importance of protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure, guaranteeing the safety and security of UNIFIL, and fully adhering with international law.

Shortly before publication, several news outlets described a leaked ceasefire proposal between Israel and Lebanon drafted by the US. In the event of such an agreement, a key issue for the Council would be to evaluate the implications of the terms of the proposal on UNIFIL’s mandate and the framework established by resolution 1701.

That the root causes of the hostility between Israel and Hezbollah and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain unaddressed is a long-standing issue. At the same time, a ceasefire in Gaza would contribute to de-escalating the situation along the Blue Line and in the wider region. Council members could renew their efforts towards that end. (For options in this regard, see the brief on “The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” in our November *Monthly Forecast*.)

Council Dynamics

Council members ostensibly agree that there should be a return to a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. Council members are also broadly supportive of UNIFIL. Council dynamics on this file remain difficult, however.

There are sharp differences in Council members’ views of Hezbollah. Some members distinguish between Hezbollah’s political and military wings and have only designated its military wing as a terrorist organisation; other members, including the UK and the US, have listed Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. On the other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon.

The US has said that it supports “Israel’s efforts to degrade” Hezbollah while also stating that “ultimately” it wants to see a diplomatic solution to the conflict. In Council negotiations, it has apparently called for language stressing the need for a diplomatic solution to achieve the implementation of resolution 1701, rather than language directly urging the resolutions’ full implementation. The US has also

Lebanon

apparently opposed language calling for de-escalation and a cessation of hostilities in recent negotiations on draft Council products on Lebanon.

During the negotiations on resolution 2749, renewing UNIFIL's mandate in August, the US sought at first to delete, and later to qualify, draft language directly demanding a restoration of the cessation of hostilities across the Blue Line, a move that some members interpreted as being motivated by the intention to avoid restricting Israel's ability to fight Hezbollah. Proposals from the US to reduce

the length of UNIFIL's mandate renewal from 12 to 6 months or, alternatively, linking a one-year renewal to expressing the Council's intention to revisit UNIFIL's mandate to "help enable the full implementation of any future diplomatic understanding between the parties" did not find support and were not included. Among other issues, several members were apparently uncomfortable with the Security Council linking UNIFIL's mandate renewal to an agreement that was yet to materialise and the conditions and format to which they were not privy.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The Israel-Hamas war that erupted on 7 October 2023 has fuelled an escalation of tensions and violence in the Middle East, including in Syria. Israel has continued to strike positions in Syria that it claims are associated with Iranian forces and affiliated militants, including Hezbollah. Iran-linked proxies, in turn, have attacked US and allied forces stationed in the region, including in Syria. On 8 October, an Israeli airstrike hit a residential and commercial building in the densely populated Mezzeh neighbourhood of Damascus that houses UN offices and several embassies, killing 13 people, including nine civilians. Media reports indicate that the Israeli military was targeting a senior Hezbollah official involved in weapons smuggling. As at 6 October, Israel had conducted 255 attacks in Syria since 7 October 2023, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a non-governmental organisation that collects conflict-related data.

Israel conducted large-scale attacks in Lebanon on 23 and 24 September, targeting Hezbollah positions in southern and eastern Lebanon as well as some areas of Beirut. In response, Hezbollah launched hundreds of rockets into Israel. The hostilities have aggravated the suffering of Syrian refugees living in Lebanon, which, prior to the onset of hostilities, hosted approximately 1.5 million Syrian refugees. According to the 25 October update from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 440,000 people are estimated to have fled from Lebanon to Syria since 23 September, 71 percent of whom are Syrians and 29 percent are Lebanese and third-country nationals. The security situation remains volatile as strikes, allegedly conducted by Israel, have been documented in the vicinity of the border crossings between Lebanon and Syria.

Tensions continued to escalate within Syria across multiple front lines. In mid-October in north-west Syria, Russia carried out its first airstrikes in three months, coinciding with the increase in drone strikes and shelling by pro-Syrian government forces. In a 17 October statement, the UN's Deputy Regional Humanitarian

Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, David Carden, expressed alarm over the escalating violence in north-west Syria since 14 October. In the ensuing three days, he noted that at least 144 attacks were reported, 115 of which struck Idlib and western Aleppo, including residential areas, local shops and farmland. On 15 October, two airstrikes struck a power station west of Idlib city, disabling two water stations that serve 30,000 people. The fighting halted critical humanitarian activities, including services provided by ten healthcare facilities, he added. Between 14 and 16 October, the Syrian Network for Human Rights—a UK-based organisation that monitors and documents human rights violations in Syria—reported at least 13 civilian deaths, including five children, with 42 people injured.

On 29 September, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had conducted two targeted strikes in Syria that killed 37 terrorist operatives, including several senior leaders of ISIS and Hurras al-Din, an affiliate of the terrorist group Al-Qaida. On 11 October, CENTCOM conducted another round of airstrikes targeting several ISIS camps in Syria, with the aim of disrupting its capacity to plan and coordinate attacks against the US and its allies.

On 23 October, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu briefed the Council on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria, respectively. Two civil society representatives also participated at the meeting—Regional Vice President (Middle East and North Africa) at the International Rescue Committee Su'ad Jarbawi and Abir Haj Ibrahim, a peacebuilder from Syria.

Pedersen highlighted the urgent need to prevent Syria from becoming "a free-for-all venue, where different actors settle their scores or fuel other theatres, nor a staging ground for attacks or retaliation". He called for de-escalating regional tensions and for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Lebanon. He also expressed concern about the prospect of further escalations between Israel and Iran and what this could mean for Syria. Moreover, he cautioned that regional escalation posed a risk of undermining ceasefire agreements that, despite their imperfections, have maintained a crucial freeze in the front lines within Syria for nearly four years.

On the political front, Pedersen noted that partial, piecemeal or conflict-management approaches alone could not tackle the scale of

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. It was adopted unanimously.

Syria

the ever-mounting challenges facing Syria. He remarked that Syria would continue to be embroiled in crises unless the long-stalled Syrian-owned and -led political process facilitated by the UN resumes and begins to move forward. He underlined the need to develop a “new and comprehensive” path out of the conflict, one that addresses the political issues central to the conflict as well as issues pertaining to sovereignty, security, civilian protection, and economic issues.

In her remarks, Wosornu stressed the need to ensure the safety and security of Syrians who are fleeing Lebanon under extreme duress and the freedom to reach their preferred destinations. She also called for unhindered access for the humanitarian organisations providing aid to those arriving and all people in need. She said that the humanitarian response is now shifting to providing assistance to people in the areas where they have settled and to support host families and communities, “many of whom are themselves already stretched to breaking point”. She said that attacks at the Lebanon-Syria border crossings have rendered the roads impassable for vehicles, forcing people to cross the border on foot. In addition, she pointed to the disruptions caused in the transport of humanitarian assistance and commercial goods because of damage to the roads connecting Lebanon and Syria.

Wosornu also highlighted the UN inter-agency emergency appeal for \$324 million for the influx from Lebanon to Syria to support up to 480,000 people over the next six months. This appeal is in addition to Syria’s 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), which requires \$4.07 billion. At the time of writing, the HRP was only 27.2 percent funded. She urged further support for the critical activities under these plans.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 10 October, during its 57th session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on human rights in Syria (A/HRC/RES/57/21). The resolution expressed grave concern over the conflict in Syria, characterised by consistent patterns of gross violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. It reaffirmed the critical need to establish appropriate mechanisms to achieve justice, reconciliation, and accountability for violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The resolution strongly reiterated the Secretary-General’s call for a “global ceasefire”; the Special Envoy for Syria’s call for a complete, immediate and nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria; and the Syria Commission of Inquiry’s recommendation to ensure the space for Syrian-led negotiations, including full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women. The resolution was adopted with 26 votes in favour, four against, and 17 abstentions. Council members France, Japan, and the US voted in favour of the resolution, Algeria abstained, and China voted against.

Key Issues and Options

Addressing the spillover effects of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Lebanon—as well as de-escalating rising tensions in the region, including in Syria—is also an issue of utmost importance for the Council. One option would be for the Council to request a briefing from the Secretary-General covering the regional impact of the Hamas-Israel conflict on Syria and other countries in the region.

An important issue for Council members is the ongoing hostilities across multiple front lines in Syria. Continuing violence and the lack of accountability threaten to destabilise the country further. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) remains one of the key security threats in Syria. The deteriorating socioeconomic conditions

in the country are also of concern.

Regardless of the escalating violence in the country, the international community’s attention appears to be inadequate in addressing the gravity of the situation.

Another key issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs throughout the country. The Syrian refugee crisis is of paramount importance. Since the start of the civil war in 2011, approximately 6.8 million Syrians have sought refuge in third countries, including Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye. Concerns about safety and security within Syria and the lack of livelihoods have been the key obstacles to the voluntary return of refugees. The recent escalation of hostilities in the region has left Syrian refugees in peril, however.

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 option would be a presidential statement on the deteriorating humanitarian situation, including the refugee crisis.

The need to break the underlying political impasse in the country and support the Special Envoy’s work in this regard is another key issue. The Council could consider holding a private meeting with stakeholders to discuss the impediments to the resumption of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, including the issue of venue, and support Pedersen’s efforts to reinvigorate the political process. (The Syrian Constitutional Committee has not met since June 2022 because 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.)

Another option for Council members would be to adopt a press statement that could:

- express strong concern about the persisting violence across Syria and the spillover effects of the regional escalation and the resulting humanitarian consequences;
- call on relevant stakeholders to de-escalate tensions in the region and within Syria and make efforts toward a nationwide ceasefire;
- express strong support for the efforts of the UN and humanitarian actors on the ground;
- call on the international community to scale up the humanitarian response in Syria, including through enhanced funding; and
- express support for Pedersen’s efforts to reinvigorate the political process.

Council Dynamics

Over the years, Syria has been one of the most divisive files on the Council’s agenda. China and Russia are supportive of the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and drawing connections between unilateral coercive measures on Syria and the country’s challenging humanitarian and economic situations. 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, not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue, and not creating conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees. Ensuring accountability for violence against

Syria

civilians also remains a key issue for these members.

Russia has consistently criticised the presence of US forces in Syria, accusing them of destabilising the country. The US maintains that its deployment of forces in the country remains focused on fighting

ISIL/Da'esh and has blamed Damascus for allowing Iranian-backed militias to operate in the country. (For more information, see the brief on Syria in our October 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Switzerland is the penholder on the Syria humanitarian file.

Protection of Humanitarian and UN Personnel

Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold an open briefing on the Secretary-General's recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel, which the Council requested through resolution 2730 of 24 May. The UK, the Council president for the month, is convening the meeting. Representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) are expected to the brief. A civil society representative may also participate.

The Secretary-General's recommendations are being drafted jointly by OCHA and UNDSS and are due to the Council by 25 November.

Background and Key Recent Developments

In recent years, the eruption and intensification of several conflicts around the world have exacerbated challenges to humanitarian action and threats faced by humanitarian personnel in conflict. According to the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC), which was issued on 14 May and describes the state of PoC in 2023, 91 humanitarian workers were killed, 120 wounded, and 53 abducted last year. This does not include Gaza, where the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) alone lost 142 staff members in conflict-related violence between October and December. Preliminary numbers from the Aid Worker Security database indicate that 2024 has been similarly dangerous for humanitarian personnel: in total, 234 workers have been killed, 79 kidnapped, and 132 abducted so far this year.

Moreover, in addition to direct threats of physical violence against aid workers, the Secretary-General's report describes several other constraints on humanitarian action. These include bureaucratic and administrative impediments imposed by host states, such as restrictions on the recipients, timing, and type of aid provided, which violate humanitarian principles and may serve to politicise aid delivery. The report also cites misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech—especially on digital platforms—as a growing challenge that discredits humanitarian actors, undermines trust among local populations, and creates additional security risks for humanitarian personnel.

Resolution 2730—penned by Switzerland—sought to address these issues. Among other provisions, the resolution recalled the primary responsibility of host states for the security and protection of UN and humanitarian personnel; expressed grave concern about the growing number of attacks, acts of violence, and threats against such

personnel; recalled the obligation of all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law (IHL); and underlined the obligations of all parties to armed conflict under IHL related to protecting civilians and civilian objects, including allowing and facilitating the rapid, safe, and unhindered passage of humanitarian assistance.

The scope of the resolution encompassed the protection of humanitarian and UN and associated personnel, including national and locally recruited personnel, and their premises and assets. It addressed several direct threats to their safety and security, such as the indiscriminate use of explosive devices, as well as indirect ones, including the spread of misinformation and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to target humanitarian operations. It also condemned the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and the deprivation of civilians of essential objects, which impede relief efforts and exacerbate conflict-induced food insecurity.

The resolution placed a particular emphasis on accountability. It urged countries to conduct “full, prompt, impartial and effective” investigations of violations of IHL and international human rights law committed against humanitarian and UN personnel and to take action against those responsible, in accordance with domestic and international law, “with a view to reinforcing preventive measures, ensuring accountability and addressing the grievances of victims”. It also urged countries to prosecute persons allegedly responsible for serious IHL violations and to cooperate with domestic, regional, and international courts and tribunals “in accordance with States’ respective obligations”.

The resolution also established or expanded several reporting requirements for the Secretary-General. Among other requests, it asked him to submit to the Council, within six months, recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel and to brief the Council on this matter no later than 12 months after the adoption of the resolution and on a yearly basis thereafter. Additionally, the resolution requested him to report “swiftly” to the Council when “widespread issues” regarding the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel occur, expressing the Council's intention to give its “full attention” to such situations when they are brought to the Council's attention.”

Like resolution 2730, the Secretary-General's recommendations are expected to emphasise the obligation of parties to armed conflict to uphold IHL and the need to ensure accountability for violations. While stressing the primary responsibility of national authorities in this regard, the recommendations may call for more consistent action by the Security Council when member states are unable or

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2730](#) (24 May 2024) was a resolution on the protection of humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel and their premises and assets. [Secretary-General's Report S/2024/385](#) (14 May 2024) was the Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Protection of Humanitarian and UN Personnel

unwilling to discharge this responsibility. Measures to this end could include the establishment of investigative mechanisms (such as the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL) or the referral of a conflict situation to the International Criminal Court (such as the situations in Darfur and Libya). On the political track, the recommendations may urge actors with influence in a conflict situation to exert diplomatic pressure on the parties to ensure compliance with their obligations under international law.

The recommendations may also propose redress mechanisms, such as reparations for victims and survivors of attacks on humanitarian personnel, and advocate for more systematic consultations with those directly affected by such attacks when devising responses to the issue. Additionally, the recommendations may note that threats of physical violence, while grave, are less common than other impediments to humanitarian action that receive less attention—such as the harassment and detention of aid workers, the politicisation and criminalisation of aid delivery, and misinformation and disinformation targeting aid operations—all of which also require dedicated efforts to address.

Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue for the Security Council is to support efforts to ensure compliance with IHL as the number of violations is increasing in armed conflicts around the world. Preventing, responding to, and ensuring accountability for attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel is an important component of such efforts.

In this regard, the Council could consider issuing a product in connection with November's briefing to welcome the Secretary-General's recommendations and to commit to the implementation of those directed at the Council. Such measures could include the more systematic application of multilateral accountability mechanisms to address violations, such as international courts, tribunals, and fact-finding missions.

In addition to receiving briefings by OCHA and UNDSS, the Council could consider inviting a civil society briefer to speak on behalf of victims of attacks on humanitarian and UN personnel, ensuring that those directly affected by the issue participate in the discussion.

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

This consensus largely extends to the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel. Resolution 2730 was adopted by a vote of 14 in favour, with Russia abstaining, and was co-sponsored by 97 member states. 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.

More broadly, views diverge regarding the applicability of different frameworks for the provision of humanitarian assistance. While Western members typically refer to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, other members—particularly China and Russia—have emphasised the UN guiding principles for humanitarian assistance adopted by the General Assembly in 1991, which stress state sovereignty and consent of the concerned member state.

In recent years, these diverging interpretations have combined with rising geopolitical tensions to create rifts beneath member states' unanimous rhetorical support for humanitarian action and IHL. For instance, Western countries have condemned alleged IHL violations by Russia in Ukraine, while Russia and many Arab countries have condemned alleged violations by Israel in Gaza and criticised Western countries for supporting Israel's war effort. This has led to accusations of hypocrisy and double standards from both sides.

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

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have escalated markedly in recent months, while concerns regarding increased cooperation between the DPRK and Russia have also continued to grow.

On 8 October, Republic of Korea (ROK) Defence Minister Kim Yong-hyun reportedly told ROK politicians it was "highly likely" that media reports indicating DPRK military officers had been killed in a Ukrainian missile strike near Donetsk were true. Approximately

a week and a half later, several media outlets reported that DPRK troops had been sent to eastern Russia for training and appeared to be readying for deployment in Ukraine, citing the ROK National Intelligence Service. On 23 October, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told reporters "there is evidence that there are DPRK troops in Russia", describing the situation as "very, very serious".

During a press conference held as part of the recent BRICS summit, which took place in Kazan from 22 to 24 October, Russian President Vladimir Putin neither confirmed nor denied that DPRK troops were in Russia, responding to a question regarding satellite images that appeared to confirm their presence by saying "images, that is something serious, if there are images they are a reflection of something". On 28 October, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte announced that DPRK troops had been deployed to the Kursk

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Sanctions Committee Documents S/2024/215 (7 March 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee

DPRK (North Korea)

region in Russia, where Ukrainian troops launched a cross-border offensive in early August. The Pentagon estimates that the DPRK has sent approximately 10,000 DPRK troops to Russia.

The deployment of DPRK troops on Russian territory comes after the DPRK and Russia signed a “Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership” on 19 June. Among other matters, the treaty provides that “in case any one of the two sides is put in a state of war by an armed invasion from an individual state or several states, the other side shall provide military and other assistance with all means in its possession without delay in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of the DPRK and [Russia]”.

Since the treaty was signed, the DPRK and Russia have bolstered ties in several different areas. According to media reports, independent groups have continued to document evidence indicating that the DPRK is supplying missiles to Russia for use in Ukraine. On 13 September, former Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu met with DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang for talks that focused on the implementation of the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. DPRK Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui has also travelled to Russia twice in the last six weeks. In a 26 September statement, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov described the denuclearisation of the DPRK as a “closed issue”.

On 30 October, Council members convened for an open briefing regarding the DPRK’s involvement in the conflict in Ukraine. The meeting was requested by Ukraine with support from France, Japan, Malta, Slovenia, the ROK, the UK, and the US and was held under the “Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine” agenda item. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed.

The increasingly close relationship between the DPRK and Russia has prompted the ROK to boost its cooperation with NATO. ROK officials briefed the North Atlantic Council and representatives of Australia, Japan, and New Zealand regarding the deployment of DPRK troops to Russia on 28 October, while the ROK Ministry of National Defence has reportedly indicated that it could send weapons or military personnel to Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, tensions between the DPRK and the ROK have continued to rise. On 4 October, DPRK state media reported that Kim Jong-un said that the DPRK would not hesitate to use “all the offensive forces” it has, including nuclear weapons, if the ROK attempts “to use armed forces encroaching upon the sovereignty of the DPRK”. A week and a half later, on 15 October, the DPRK destroyed rail and road links between the two countries on the northern side of the demilitarised zone. This came days after the DPRK accused the ROK of flying drones carrying political leaflets over Pyongyang. On 17 October, DPRK state media appeared to confirm that the DPRK had amended its constitution and classified the ROK as a “hostile state”, a move first signalled in January when Kim Jong-un announced that the DPRK would no longer pursue reunification with the ROK. The DPRK has also continued to trial its weapons systems, including by launching ballistic missiles, firing rocket launchers, and testing “suicide drones”. On 13 September, the DPRK published photos showing Kim Jong-un inspecting a weapons-grade uranium manufacturing facility. The publication marked the first time that the DPRK has publicly revealed the

existence of such a facility. On 31 October the DPRK tested two missiles, including an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

On 16 October, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the ROK, the UK, and the US announced that they will establish the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team, a mechanism intended to monitor and report on violations of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime. The announcement came approximately seven months after Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. (For more information, see our 22 March *What’s in Blue* story.) At the time of writing, it appears that the modalities and working methods of the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team are still being determined by the participating member states.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The Secretary-General’s latest report on the situation of human rights in the DPRK was issued on 5 August (A/79/277). Among other matters, the report concluded that “available information points to an increase in repression of fundamental freedoms, in particular freedom of expression and access to information, with the application of new laws severely constraining this right and introducing severe punishments”.

Key Issues and Options

The deployment of DPRK troops on Russian territory, together with reports of ongoing arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia, has created a major issue for Council members. As more information comes to light, the Council could choose to hold an open briefing to discuss any relevant developments. Given the direct involvement of a permanent member, a more substantive response is likely to be difficult.

Council members are also considering how the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team could assist both the Council and the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. Council members could choose to request an open briefing on the work of this mechanism once it is operational, including in relation to any information it obtains regarding violations of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime.

The heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula are another issue for the Council. Council members could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue or a closed Arria-formula meeting to discuss possible strategies for managing these tensions.

Council Dynamics

The Council is deeply divided over the DPRK. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded countries, including Japan and the ROK, support using sanctions to manage the threat posed by the DPRK and often call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the DPRK to engage in dialogue and abandon its weapons programmes, while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some of these members call for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK’s weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened it by blocking Council action on the file. They also highlight evidence of arms transfers between the DPRK and Russia and note that these transfers violate Council resolutions.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US for heightening tensions and have accused it of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These

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two members have also contended that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation and have expressed their support for a draft resolution circulated by China in October 2021 that would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK if adopted.

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