

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In May, Greece will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

As a signature event of its presidency, Greece is expected to convene a high-level debate on **maritime security** under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and representatives from a UN agency and the private shipping industry are expected to brief the Council.

In May, the Security Council will hold its annual debate on the **protection of civilians**. The expected briefers are Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher, UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, and a civil society representative.

The Security Council and the General Assembly will hold an election in May to fill the **vacancy in the International Court of Justice (ICJ)** following the resignation of Judge Nawaf Salam (Lebanon) on 14 January.

African issues on the programme in May are:

- **South Sudan**, renewal of the 2206 South Sudan sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, as well as the mandate renewal of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), which was last renewed in

April until 9 May; and

- **Libya**, briefing by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the court’s Libya-related activities, reauthorisation of measures under resolution 2292 to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, and an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the implementation of resolution 2292.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- **Syria**, meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- **Yemen**, monthly meeting on developments;
- **Lebanon**, consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559; and
- “**The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question**”, the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments in Gaza and Israel.

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

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

Other issues could also be discussed during the month, including the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** and **Sudan**, depending on developments.

1 May 2025

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In Hindsight: Impact of a Delay in Subsidiary Body Chairs Appointments

The chairs of the Security Council's subsidiary bodies, which include sanctions committees and working groups, are responsible for several important aspects of the work of these bodies, including chairing meetings, briefing the Council on the work of the relevant subsidiary body, and managing subsidiary body casework, such as listing and delisting requests. At the time of writing, Council members are yet to reach agreement on selecting the chairs of the subsidiary bodies for 2025, which has had an impact on both their work and the Council as a whole. This *In Hindsight* provides an overview of the process for appointing chairs of subsidiary bodies, discusses how the Council has attempted to manage the current impasse, and describes some of the adverse consequences arising from the delay.

The Appointment Process

The Council's subsidiary bodies have generally been chaired by elected members, with a few exceptions. For many years, the process of selecting subsidiary body chairs was shrouded in secrecy, with the permanent members (P5) deciding how to allocate these positions, generally with minimal consultation. The process was also often concluded shortly before elected members were to begin their term, leaving little time for a handover. By 2015, elected members had become increasingly frustrated with not having any input in this process and pushed for a change in the system, arguing that they should have a say in a decision that affects them directly, as well as more time to prepare before joining the Council.

This led to a change in the process for appointing the chairs, which was first formalised in a 2016 presidential note concerning transitional arrangements for newly elected members (S/2016/619) and eventually incorporated into the 2017 version of Note 507 on working methods. In accordance with this process, members "should make every effort" to provisionally agree on appointing the chairs by 1 October each year and, with that deadline in mind, should start an informal consultation process "as soon as possible" after the Security Council elections. The newly elected members are to be consulted as part of the process, which should be undertaken in a "balanced, transparent, efficient and inclusive way" and chaired by two members of the Council "working in full cooperation". Although not explicitly stated in the Note, the understanding was that these two members would be the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG) and the P5 coordinator, a position that rotates quarterly.

In the last few years, elected members have had a greater say in the process. Generally, the incoming five elected members (I5) have first agreed on the list of chairs for available subsidiary bodies before having the IWG chair present the list to the P5 coordinator. While the I5 have had more choice in the matter since 2016, the process still requires a final stamp of approval from the permanent members.

Although the current process for appointing chairs contemplates that members will provisionally agree by 1 October, in practice, this deadline has not yet been met. In recent years, there have been a couple of occasions when the chairs were agreed to in early and mid-October, as happened following the elections in 2019 and 2022. However, prolonged negotiations over the allocation of chairs in 2021 and 2023 led to final decisions in early January and late January of the following years. The list of chairs is agreed as a package deal, which

means that it is not finalised until members have agreed on who will chair each body. Once there is agreement, the list of chairs and vice-chairs for each year is published in a Note by the President, which requires consensus among Council members before it can be issued.

There are a number of reasons why this process has been so protracted in some years. While in the past, elected members saw the chairing of subsidiary bodies as largely a technical task, in recent years, many recognise that chairing a subsidiary body that aligns with their priorities could create opportunities for showcasing those aims and highlighting the work they are doing to pursue them. For example, India, as chair of the counter-terrorism committee in 2022, held a meeting of the committee in Delhi, which led to the adoption of the Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes.

Some subsidiary bodies have been fought over because the priorities of elected members have overlapped. When this happens, the member that steps aside tends to want another body that might fit their objectives, which can lead to reopening negotiations on positions where there had been agreement. Occasionally, a member who has not got what it wants has refused to chair any subsidiary bodies, resulting in some members taking on an unusual number that year. On the opposite end of this spectrum, some subsidiary bodies have been considered undesirable, either because they involve a significant amount of work or because they can be politically sensitive. In such cases, it can be difficult to find a member willing to take them on.

Permanent members have also, at times, opposed certain elected members taking on particular roles, often without explanation. Moreover, the solutions proposed by members to try and resolve their differences have sometimes been contentious. In 2023, for example, the process was delayed because at least one permanent member was opposed to a footnote specifying that then-incoming member Japan would chair the IWG in 2024 following the departure of Albania, which held the chair in 2022 and 2023. Footnotes in the presidential note announcing subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs, which are a new development, were used in 2021 and 2022 to indicate how some positions would be filled in the future, and were reluctantly agreed to by the permanent members. In 2023, agreement was only reached when the footnote was removed. Subsequently, the E10 and the I5 reiterated their unanimous support for Japan assuming this position in 2024 in a letter to the President of the Council.

2025: The Story So Far

Thus far in 2025, Council members have not been able to agree on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs, making it the longest period with no subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs since this decision was first recorded in a presidential note in 1979. The negotiations have been particularly difficult and protracted, with significant differences emerging between and within different groupings in the Council at various times, including among the incoming members for 2025, within the current E10, and between the current E10 and the P5.

Although negotiations among the incoming members began immediately following their election to the Council in June 2024, they apparently continued for several months before agreement was reached. A proposed allocation of chairs was sent to the elected members on

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behalf of the I5 in early October 2024. It seems there was disagreement over the I5 proposal and, before that disagreement was resolved, it was forwarded to the permanent members. Apparently several permanent members also disagreed with some of the suggested allocations in the I5 proposal, further complicating the negotiations.

Negotiations have continued over the ensuing months with a number of proposals discussed by members. The feedback from the P5 has led to the need to reshuffle some of the allocations, which has had a cascading effect, requiring a number of members to be willing to relinquish their preferred bodies. Another issue has been the competition over several bodies, including the IWG and the Informal Working Group on General Sanctions.

It appears that the current E10 were able to achieve consensus in mid-April and subsequently forwarded a revised proposal to the P5. Members discussed this proposal under “any other business” on 17 April. During the discussion, one permanent member apparently expressed opposition to certain elements of the proposed allocation. At the time of writing, members were still working to reach consensus on this issue and resolve the impasse.

A table setting out the allocation of subsidiary body chairs as at 31 December 2024 can be found at the end of this *In Hindsight*.

How has the Impasse Impacted the Council and its Subsidiary Bodies?

After negotiations on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs continued into January in 2023, Council members adopted a presidential note (S/2023/615) in August 2023 outlining a contingency measure intended to ensure the continuous functioning of its subsidiary bodies: if members are unable to agree on appointing chairs by 1 January, then the responsibilities of all Chairs will devolve to the President of the Council during January.

This contingency measure, which was included in the 2024 version of Note 507 on working methods, was implemented for the first time this year when Algeria, the President of the Council in January, carried out some of the duties of the subsidiary body chairs in its capacity as president, such as signing formal letters. Although the August 2023 presidential note did not stipulate what should happen if members were unable to agree by the end of January, there appears to have been informal agreement that the Council presidents during the ensuing months would also fulfil this role. As a result, the presidencies of China, Denmark, and France have continued to perform certain tasks of subsidiary body chairs. While in this capacity, they cannot convene formal or informal meetings, they are able to hold informal consultations.

These members have, however, only carried out select duties of the subsidiary body chairs during their presidencies, due partly to the amount of work that this would involve in addition to their responsibilities as president. Instead, there appears to be an understanding that presidents of the Council will primarily handle urgent responsibilities of subsidiary body chairs during their presidencies until the chairs have been appointed, unless another member objects. On 7 March, for example, Denmark convened informal consultations of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee so that members could discuss a report of the Ombudsperson regarding a delisting request. Similarly, the presidents of the Council have also generally processed requests for exemptions to the measures imposed

by the Council's sanctions regimes, which are handled by the sanctions committees. At times, the president has briefed the Council on the work of subsidiary bodies. In February, for example, China delivered the briefing on the 90-day report regarding the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee in closed consultations, which is ordinarily provided by the chair of that committee. In addition, Council presidents have sometimes facilitated the publication of reports of experts assisting the sanctions committees, as was the case in February, when China handled the administrative steps that enabled the release of the latest report of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, including by coordinating a written no objection procedure regarding the publication of the report. This was also the case in April when France chaired informal consultations of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee to give members the opportunity to discuss a report of the panel of experts assisting that committee, a discussion that is necessary before the report can be published.

Although contingency measures such as these have prevented the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies from grinding to a halt, they have not been implemented consistently. There are, for example, a number of reports of experts assisting sanctions committees that have not been published because a member was not comfortable with a president fulfilling the role of the chair, including on the Central African Republic and Haiti files. Moreover, mandated briefings to the Council regarding the work of subsidiary bodies have not always been delivered, as happened in March, when a proposed briefing by Denmark on the activities of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee did not go ahead after another elected member expressed reservations.

There is also a raft of other subsidiary body work ordinarily facilitated by the chairs of these bodies that is not taking place. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has been unable to formally consider reports from the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in four country situations—Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Myanmar—which has prevented it from negotiating its conclusions based on these reports. The Counter-Terrorism Committee, which was already delayed in completing its 2024 programme of work, has not been able to make headway on resolving its backlog. Sanctions committees have also been unable to receive briefings from UN agencies on relevant issues, or from the experts assisting them in between the publication of their reports, and the broader UN membership has not had the benefit of briefings organised by these committees on the reports of the panel of experts.

The flow-on effects of delays and inconsistencies in the work of the Council's subsidiary bodies are significant for both the Council and member states more broadly. To take one example, reports of experts assisting sanctions committees are a crucial source of information for member states, many of which rely on these reports and use them to inform their decision-making. Delaying publication deprives these states of this information and can mean that the reports are not entirely up to date, which could limit their utility. Moreover, these delays have the potential to affect mandate renewals, particularly where the Council would ordinarily refer to these reports in the relevant resolution.

The delays also have implications for the Council's working methods and its overall workload. Even if the allocation of chairs is agreed

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in the coming weeks, Council members will face a significant backlog and may not have sufficient time to give due attention to the work required before the end of the year, particularly given UN budgetary constraints that have limited the number of meetings that the Council and its subsidiary bodies can hold each week. In addition, members have sometimes been forced to grapple with procedural irregularities that are time-consuming to manage, which has added a further layer of complication to the Council's work.

It should be noted that not all subsidiary bodies have been affected by the impasse. In this regard, the Military Staff Committee (MSC)—which advises and assists the Security Council on all military requirements for maintaining international peace and security and is made up of only the permanent members—has not been affected, with its chair rotating monthly. In addition, the informal expert groups on the protection of civilians; women, peace and security; and climate, peace and security have been able to operate without interruption in 2025. This is because they are not included in this process of allocating subsidiary body chairs as they are not formal subsidiary bodies.

Reflections

Overall, the failure to agree on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs has significantly hampered the Council's work and led to inconsistencies that have arguably damaged its credibility. It has also not been helpful for E10 unity for elected members to be competing among each other for these positions for such a prolonged period of time. It is therefore important for members to seriously reflect on how a similar situation can be avoided in the future.

One option is to cease treating the allocation of subsidiary bodies as a package deal in circumstances where the Council has been unable to reach agreement by January in a given year. This could allow those bodies which are not contentious to continue their work. Among the subsidiary bodies in this category would be those with chairs from the year before. While this might lead to fewer options for members that are willing to compromise and could create the impression that the Council is paying more attention to some files than others, this seems preferable to the current situation.

Members could also consider whether they could allocate the chairs by adopting a resolution rather than issuing a presidential note. It is unclear if such a resolution would be considered procedural and therefore not subject to a veto by the permanent members. However, members are likely to be wary of institutionalising this option as the

norm and are aware that it could create tensions between the E10 and I5 members. Members may therefore prefer to keep it in reserve when there are long delays in appointing the chairs.

Providing members with a clear understanding of the role of the chair of each available subsidiary body shortly after the June elections through briefings by the Secretariat could help facilitate a smoother appointment process. For smaller delegations, chairing sanctions committees may appear daunting, and exposure to the work of the committees could help dispel their doubts. Note 507 includes acknowledgement of this and requests the Secretariat “to consider further measures to provide incoming Chairs and their staffs with additional substantive and methodological briefings on the work of relevant subsidiary bodies.”

Another option would be to have the penholders of country-specific issues, which generally are permanent members, chair the subsidiary bodies of those issues until agreement is reached. It is unlikely that permanent members will want to perform this task for too long as they have been clear that they prefer elected members to take on the responsibility of chairing the subsidiary bodies.

Time is running out for the Council to salvage the work of its subsidiary bodies in 2025, particularly given that Security Council elections will take place in early June. If no decision is made by the time elections are held, the negotiations for the allocation of subsidiary bodies in 2026 will be due to begin at a time when the allocation for 2025 has not been agreed. This has the potential to further muddy an already complicated situation and make it even harder for members to agree on a way forward for the remainder of 2025. It could also complicate the negotiations concerning the allocation of chairs in 2026.

The inability of members to agree on subsidiary body chairs this deep into the year has consequences that will reverberate through the year. While the work of subsidiary bodies is often less visible, their activities are nonetheless vital to the Council's ability to fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Late agreement on the chairs of sanctions committees could further weaken this important Council tool, which has already been diminished in recent years. Additionally, the working groups on significant thematic issues, such as children and armed conflict, peacekeeping and working methods, have been essential to the advancement of these issues in the Council. Increased flexibility and willingness to compromise will be required to resolve the current impasse and get these essential bodies back on track.

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SUBSIDIARY BODY	COUNTRY-SITUATION OR THEMATIC MATTER	2024 CHAIR
Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associates	Counter-Terrorism (1267/1989/2253)	Vanessa Frazier (Malta)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1373 (2001) concerning counter-terrorism	Counter-Terrorism (1373)	Amar Bendjama (Algeria)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1518 (2003)	Iraq	Samuel Žbogar (Slovenia)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)	Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destructions (1540)	Andrés Efren Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) concerning Sudan	Sudan	Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1636 (2005)	Lebanon	Samuel Žbogar (Slovenia)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006)	DPRK (Non-proliferation)	Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1970 (2011) concerning Libya	Libya	Kazuyuki Yamazaki (Japan)
Committee pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011)	Afghanistan	Andrés Efren Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau	Guinea-Bissau	Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2745 (2024)	Central African Republic	Amar Bendjama (Algeria)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2140 (2014)	Yemen	Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan	South Sudan	Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2653 (2022) concerning Haiti	Haiti	Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana)
Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) concerning Al-Shabaab	Somalia	Kazuyuki Yamazaki (Japan)
Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations	Peacekeeping	Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea)
Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa	Peace and Security in Africa	Pedro Comissário Afonso (Mozambique)
Working Group established pursuant to resolution 1566 (2004)	Counter-Terrorism (1566)	Amar Bendjama (Algeria)
Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict	Children and Armed Conflict	Vanessa Frazier (Malta)
Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions	Working Methods	Kazuyuki Yamazaki (Japan)
Informal Working Group on International Tribunals	International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals	Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone)
Informal Working Group on General UN Security Council Sanctions Issues	UN Security Council Sanctions Issues	
Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) (Facilitator)	Iran	Vanessa Frazier (Malta)
Departing Member		Continuing Member

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Protection of Humanitarian and UN Personnel

On 2 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2730 of 24 May 2024, which concerns the protection of humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel and their premises and assets (S/PV.9889). The briefers were Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security Gilles Michaud, and International NGO Safety Organisation Executive Director Nic

Lee. Switzerland—which was the author of resolution 2730 during its Council term—participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

West Africa and the Sahel

On 3 April, the Security Council held a briefing, followed by consultations, on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PV.9890). The briefers were Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa

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and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Leonardo Santos Simão and Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi, Founding Director of Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center in Nigeria.

Myanmar

On 4 April, Council members issued a press statement regarding the earthquake that struck central Myanmar on 28 March (SC/16038).

On 30 April, Council members convened for a private meeting on Myanmar (S/PV.9910). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar Julie Bishop and Special Envoy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Chair on Myanmar Tan Sri Othman bin Hashim briefed. The meeting was requested by the Republic of Korea and the UK, the penholder on file.

Ukraine

On 2 April, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting on Ukraine titled “Disinformation and Sabotage of Peace in Ukraine”. Russia’s aim in holding the meeting was to revisit the events that took place in the Ukrainian city of Bucha nearly three years ago and to provide Council members with what the concept note it prepared for the meeting described as “first-hand information on the crimes of the Kyiv regime committed in the Kursk region”. The briefers were Maxim Grigoriev, member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation, and local residents of villages of Russia’s Kursk region.

On 8 April, the Security Council held a briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.9893). Ukraine—with support from Denmark, France, and the UK—requested the meeting following the 4 April Russian missile attack on the city of Kryvyi Rih, which resulted in multiple civilian casualties. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher briefed. Ukraine and several regional states participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, while Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN, participated under rule 39.

On 17 April, the Council convened for a private meeting (S/PV.9901) followed by closed consultations on the situation in Ukraine, under the agenda items “Maintenance of peace and security of Ukraine” and “Threats to international peace and security”, respectively. Director of Operations and Advocacy at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu briefed the Council in the private meeting, and Ukraine participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. There were no briefers at the closed consultations.

On 29 and 30 April, at France’s initiative, the Council held a briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.9908 and Resumption I). Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher briefed. Ukraine and several regional states participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, while Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN, participated under rule 39.

Arria-formula Meeting on Small Arms and Light Weapons

On 4 April, Sierra Leone convened an Arria-formula meeting on “Small Arms Control and Weapons Management in UN Sanctions

Regimes”. Director and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo; African Union High Representative for Silencing the Guns Mohamed Ibn Chambas; Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) Assistant Director for Policy, Innovation and Strategy Callixtus Joseph; and Savannah de Tessieres, a UN sanctions committee arms expert, briefed.

Arria-formula Meeting on Artificial Intelligence

On 4 April, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting on artificial intelligence (AI) titled “Harnessing safe, inclusive, trustworthy AI for the maintenance of international peace and security”. The meeting was organised by Greece, together with France and the Republic of Korea, and co-sponsored by Armenia, Italy, and the Netherlands. The briefers were: Giannis Mastrogeorgiou, Special Secretary for Strategic Foresight at the Presidency of the Hellenic Government and Coordinator of Greece’s National Advisory Committee on AI; Yasmin Afina, AI Researcher in the Security and Technology Programme at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); and Charlotte Scaddan, Senior Adviser on Information Integrity at the UN Department of Global Communications.

UN Peacekeeping

On 7 April, the Security Council received a briefing from the heads of military components of UN peacekeeping operations (S/PV.9892). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the heads of military components of two UN peacekeeping operations: Force Commander of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Lieutenant General Ulisses de Mesquita Gomes and Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz briefed the Council, focusing on the role of UN peacekeeping operations in ceasefire monitoring.

Kosovo

On 8 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.9894). Special Representative and head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Caroline Zia-deh briefed on the latest Secretary-General’s report (S/2025/200). 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.

Somalia

On 9 April, the Security Council convened for a private meeting on Somalia (S/PV.9895). Special Representative for Somalia and Head of the UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS) James Swan briefed on the Secretary-General’s 28 March report (S/2025/194) on the implementation of the mandates of UNTMIS and the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). Acting Head of the African Union (AU) Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) Sivuyile Thandikhaya Bam provided an update on the implementation of the mission’s mandate, in accordance with resolution 2767 of 27 December 2024.

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 11 April, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the Democratic Republic of Congo. The IID was split into two parts. In the first part, the DRC and Rwanda participated via videoconference (VTC) and delivered introductory remarks. Qatar also participated in person in this part of the meeting and briefed Council members on its role in support of African-led mediation processes. In the second part, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed. Council members also heard from representatives of Angola, Kenya, and Zimbabwe in their respective capacities as the current chairs of the African Union (AU), the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Western Sahara

On 14 April, Council members received a briefing in closed consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura, and Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) Alexander Ivanko briefed.

Sudan

On 15 April, Security Council members held closed consultations on Sudan, at the request of Denmark, Slovenia, and the UK (the penholder on the file). The meeting was focused on the country's deteriorating humanitarian situation in light of attacks by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on the town of El Fasher and the Zamzam and Abu Shouk camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). It also discussed initiatives aimed at achieving a ceasefire and advancing political dialogue. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan Ramtane Lamamra and Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu briefed.

On 17 April, Council members issued a press statement, authored by the UK, strongly condemning the repeated attacks on El Fasher, as well as on Zamzam and Abu Shouk IDP camps (SC/16046). They reiterated their demand for the RSF to lift the siege of El Fasher and called for an immediate halt to the fighting in and around the area.

Great Lakes Region

On 16 April, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in the Great Lakes region (S/PV.9899). The briefers were Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia, UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell, and Tété António, Angola's Minister of External Relations in his capacity as Chair of the Executive Council of the African Union. DRC's State Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, as well as representatives of Kenya and Rwanda, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Haiti

On 21 April, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Haiti (S/PV.9902). Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador briefed on recent developments in Haiti and the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH (S/2025/226). The National Security Advisor to the President of the Republic of Kenya Monica Juma, and Pascale Solages, the Co-Founder and General Coordinator of Haitian civil society organisation Nègès Mawon, also briefed. Salvador participated in the consultations as well.

Colombia

On 22 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.9903). 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/2025/188). The Council was also briefed by Hilda Beatriz Molano Casas, the coordinator of the technical secretariat of the Coalition against the involvement of children and young people in the armed conflict in Colombia (COALICO). Colombia participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs Laura Sarabia represented her country for the first time since assuming her role in late January.

Arria-formula Meeting on “The Impact of Unilateralism and Bullying Practices on International Relations”

On 23 April, China convened an Arria-formula meeting on “The Impact of Unilateralism and Bullying Practices on International Relations”. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and Wang Huiyao, Founder and President of the Center for China and Globalization in Beijing, briefed.

Counter-Terrorism

On 25 April, Council members issued a press statement condemning the 22 April terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, which killed at least 26 people and injured many more (SC/16050).

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

On 28 April, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi briefed the Security Council (S/PV.9905) on the effects of forced displacement related to conflicts across the globe.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 29 and 30 April, the Council held its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9907 and Resumption 1 and 2). France, the Council president for the month, convened the meeting at the ministerial level. French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noël Barrot chaired the meeting. UN Secretary-General António Guterres briefed.

Protection of Civilians

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will receive the Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict and hold its annual open debate on the topic. Greece, the Council president in May, is convening the debate as one of its signature events. The expected briefers are Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher, UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger. A civil society representative may also brief.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's most recent report on PoC, dated 14 May 2024, provides an overview of the general state of PoC in 2023. The UN observed a significant increase in civilian casualties that year, with over 33,400 recorded deaths, constituting a 72 percent rise from 2022. The proportion of women and children killed doubled and tripled, respectively, while incidents of sexual violence increased by 50 percent. Over two-thirds of recorded deaths occurred in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) and Israel, primarily among women and children, making it the deadliest conflict for civilians in 2023. Civilians in other ongoing conflicts, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine, also suffered from significant violence. In light of these trends, the Secretary-General's report described the state of PoC in 2023 as "resoundingly grim" and "overwhelmingly tragic".

Since then, humanitarian conditions in these and other conflict situations around the world have continued to deteriorate. According to numbers cited by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of 22 April, the total death toll in Gaza has surpassed 51,000 as the territory "likely" faces what OCHA calls its worst humanitarian crisis since the current war began in October 2023. Over 420,000 people have been newly displaced, and humanitarian operations are being "stifled by a combination of expanded military activity, the Israeli government's blockade on the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial supplies [since 2 March], killing of aid workers and attacks on their premises, and severe movement restrictions". The escalating security situation in eastern DRC—where the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) rebel group has significantly expanded its territorial control since January—has reportedly resulted in over 1,000 civilian deaths, serious human rights violations and abuses, and mass displacement. The conflict in Sudan entered its third year in April and has continued to have catastrophic consequences for civilians: on 11 April in North Darfur province, the Rapid Support Forces—the paramilitary group fighting the Sudanese government—launched a large-scale assault on the city of El Fasher and two displacement camps that killed over 100 people, including over 20 children and at least nine humanitarian personnel. In Myanmar, a massive earthquake that struck in late March exacerbated already dire humanitarian conditions for the civilian population caught in ongoing fighting between the military junta and opposition groups, which impeded subsequent emergency relief efforts. The limited ceasefire agreements that the US announced in March between Russia and Ukraine were not implemented, and Russia has

continued what Secretary-General António Guterres described in a 13 April statement as the country's "devastating pattern" of assaults on Ukrainian cities, in which hundreds of civilians were killed and more than 20,000 people displaced in the first two months of 2025 alone.

Violence has also increased against civilians performing protected functions in armed conflict. At the Security Council's 2 April briefing on the implementation of resolution 2730 of 24 May 2024, which concerns the protection of UN and humanitarian personnel, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya noted that 2024 was the deadliest year on record for aid workers, with 377 killed across 20 countries—100 more casualties than in 2023, which had seen a 137 percent increase from 2022. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CJP), a non-profit organisation, 2024 was also the deadliest year for journalists since the CJP started keeping records over 30 years ago, with 124 reporters killed across 18 countries, constituting a 22 percent increase from 2023. Both surges in fatalities were largely driven by the war in Gaza, where over 400 aid workers and 175 journalists have been killed since the beginning of the conflict.

Widespread impunity for violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) appears to be a key driver of the increasingly prevalent and flagrant targeting of civilians in armed conflict. While the international legal and institutional structures governing the conduct of war have grown increasingly robust since the introduction of PoC as a stand-alone item on the Council's agenda in 1999, the implementation of these frameworks has become more inconsistent, selective, and politicised as geopolitical tensions have intensified in recent years. In a February 2024 policy brief, OCHA identified non-compliance with IHL as a growing challenge to the PoC agenda, exacerbated by a lack of effective accountability mechanisms, and observed that the gap between the agenda's expanding normative framework and the realities experienced by civilians in specific contexts has "remained, if not widened," over the past five years. Similarly, the Secretary-General's 2024 PoC report refers to a range of contemporary conflict situations in which "compliance with [IHL] and human rights law is often lacking; and in which the demands of the Council's [PoC] resolutions of the past 25 years have gone largely unheeded". More recently, during his 8 April Council briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, Fletcher bemoaned the discrepancy he had observed between the Council's mandate to uphold IHL and recent trends in Ukraine, as well as in other conflict situations such as Gaza, Lebanon, Myanmar, and Sudan. In these places, Fletcher said, the Security Council and the international community are not only failing to "stand robustly for international law, but in some cases [are] supporting its debasement".

Against this backdrop of soaring civilian needs and harm, recent budget cuts by member states have exacerbated the chronic underfunding of humanitarian operations. Notably, the US—the world's largest humanitarian donor—has slashed its aid contributions since President Donald Trump took office in January. As a result of the austere funding environment, OCHA faces a budget shortfall of \$58 million and announced on 10 April that it would reduce its workforce by nearly 20 percent—from 2,600 to 2,100 staff—while scaling back operations in Cameroon, Colombia, Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria,

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. **Security Council Letter S/2024/852** (22 November 2024) was a letter from the Secretary-General transmitting recommendations for measures to prevent and respond to attacks, violence, and threats targeting humanitarian personnel and UN personnel as requested by resolution 2730.

Protection of Civilians

Pakistan, Türkiye, and Zimbabwe. During her 2 April Council briefing, Msuya said that the funding shortfalls are forcing humanitarian organisations to “make impossible choices between our mandate to serve the most affected people and the safety of our teams”.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching protection challenge for the Security Council is the continued erosion of IHL and the normative framework on which it rests, as civilians increasingly bear the brunt of armed conflicts worldwide. Attacks either perpetrated or supported by Council members themselves have contributed to this trend.

Strengthening accountability for IHL violations—including through sanctions, referrals to the International Criminal Court (ICC), or the establishment of ad-hoc tribunals and investigative mechanisms—remains a key option to counter impunity and deter future abuses. Geopolitical divisions within the Council, however, have often hindered such measures. To address this gap, Council members could consider establishing a standing reporting mechanism to notify it of conflict situations in which there is a documented pattern of IHL violations and signal its intention to consider such reports, similar to the mechanisms established by resolution 2730 on the protection of UN and humanitarian personnel and resolution 2417 of 24 May 2018 on conflict-induced food insecurity.

Another option is to expand the Council’s engagement on certain drivers and methods of civilian harm. Explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA) have caused the majority of civilian casualties in conflicts such as Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine. Council members could reiterate the Secretary-General’s call for states to endorse and implement the 2022 Political Declaration on EWIPA and take measures to reduce the use of these weapons in particular contexts, such as by imposing arms embargoes to prohibit or limit their transfer to conflict parties with an established pattern of EWIPA-related IHL violations.

Attacks on humanitarian and UN personnel also remain a serious concern. As requested by resolution 2730, the Secretary-General issued recommendations in November 2024 for preventing and responding to such attacks. The Council’s follow-up of these recommendations—which included embedding safety and security considerations in mission mandates, countering misinformation and hate speech, and promoting survivor-centred responses—could be discussed in the Council’s Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians.

To maintain momentum after May’s open debate, Greece could consider producing a chair’s summary outlining key proposals and recommendations made during the meeting.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members still express broad rhetorical agreement that protecting civilians in armed conflict remains a core component of the

Council’s mandate to maintain international peace and security. Deep divisions persist, however, over how the Council should implement the PoC agenda in both thematic and country-specific contexts.

One recurring area of divergence concerns the frameworks guiding humanitarian assistance. While Western members typically invoke the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, others—particularly China and Russia—emphasise the General Assembly’s 1991 resolution on the UN’s guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, which stress state sovereignty and host-country consent. These tensions have typically affected Council negotiations on PoC language across mandates and resolutions.

Similar disagreements have emerged in peacekeeping contexts. China, Russia, and some African members underscore the primary responsibility of the host state to protect civilians, whereas other members stress that the Council has an obligation to act in contexts where state authorities are unwilling or unable to ensure protection. This debate has taken on renewed salience as several UN peace operations with PoC mandates—such as those in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Sudan—have drawn down or transitioned amid worsening security conditions, often at the request of host governments.

Council members also differ in their views on the scope of the PoC agenda. Some have expressed concern that linking PoC to other thematic areas, including emerging threats such as climate change or artificial intelligence, could dilute the agenda or exceed the Council’s mandate. Others view such linkages as necessary to reflect contemporary protection challenges.

Geopolitical tensions have further strained discussions of accountability. Western members have condemned IHL violations by Russia in Ukraine, while Russia and many Arab states have criticised Israel’s conduct in Gaza and alleged Western double standards. These dynamics have contributed to accusations of selectivity in the Council’s engagement on PoC and have complicated consensus on country-specific outcomes.

Finally, shifting US positions since Trump’s return to office have fractured the traditional consensus among Western members on several of these issues. While the US under former President Joe Biden joined its allies in criticising Russia’s targeting of civilian infrastructure in Ukraine and in expressing cautious concern about the humanitarian impact of the war in Gaza, the Trump administration reportedly blocked a G7 statement that would have condemned Russia’s 14 April attack on the city of Sumy—where two missiles struck a crowded street during Palm Sunday celebrations, killing at least 34 people—and it has expressed full support for Israel’s resumption of military operations in Gaza, which has sparked renewed international concern. The US has also adopted a more confrontational stance toward international accountability mechanisms such as the ICC, re-imposing sanctions against the court similar to the ones it had issued during Trump’s first term, which Biden later lifted.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

On 30 April, the Council members unanimously adopted resolution 2778, extending the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 9 May, to allow time for further deliberations.

Key Recent Developments

The past few months have witnessed a dramatic deterioration in the political and security situation in the country, placing the peace process at serious risk of collapse. In early March, violent clashes broke out in Nasir, a town in Upper Nile state, leading to the town's capture by the White Army, an armed youth group composed of members of the Nuer community. This led the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF)—the government's forces—to reportedly conduct airstrikes and launch attacks on opposition barracks outside Juba. In a 9 April press release, Human Rights Watch alleged that the government used improvised incendiary weapons during at least four attacks in Upper Nile state, resulting in the deaths of at least 58 people. Violent incidents involving government and opposition forces also escalated in other states, including Western Bahr el-Ghazal, Western Equatoria, Unity, and Jonglei. (For more information, see the brief on South Sudan in our April 2025 *Monthly Forecast* and 15 April *What's in Blue* story.) According to media reports, on 20 April, the SSPDF announced that it had recaptured Nasir town from the White Army following intense clashes that reportedly resulted in heavy casualties on both sides.

On 17 March, the South Sudanese government confirmed that Ugandan troops were in the country under a bilateral agreement for technical support and training. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO) condemned the deployment, accusing the Ugandan forces of violating the UN arms embargo and participating in attacks in Upper Nile state—allegations that Uganda has denied.

Responding to the escalating security situation, the government detained several political and military figures aligned with the SPLM-IO's leader, Riek Machar. On 26 March, government security forces placed Machar under house arrest in Juba, accusing him of inciting rebellion—a move that sparked widespread domestic and international reactions, including calls for his immediate release and a return to dialogue.

These developments have placed significant strain on the SPLM-IO, exposing internal rifts and underscoring the fragility of South Sudan's peace process. Following Machar's arrest, senior SPLM-IO figures, including Deputy Chairman Oyet Nathaniel, fled to neighbouring countries or went into hiding amid a security crackdown. On 7 April, Oyet announced the suspension of four members of the SPLM-IO Political Bureau—including Stephen Par Koul, the minister for peacebuilding—accusing them of conspiring to replace Machar and fomenting disunity in the group. Koul rejected the suspension, arguing that Oyet lacked the authority to make such a decision.

On 9 April, a group of SPLM-IO members convened in

Juba—without the participation of several top officials—and declared an interim leadership, appointing Koul as interim chair. Koul reportedly said that the interim leadership structure is temporary and will cease once Machar is released. Nevertheless, the absence of internal consensus and any attempt to displace Machar from his statutory role as First Vice President under the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) has raised serious concerns about the destabilisation of the peace framework. Recent weeks have also seen a series of significant military defections, with senior opposition military commanders—along with large numbers of personnel—joining the SSPDF, undermining the security sector reform process outlined in the revitalised agreement.

On 16 April, Council members held an open briefing on the situation in South Sudan. Special Representative and Head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom described a rapidly deteriorating security environment, warning that, if the current trajectory continues, the conflict risks shifting from sub-national and community-based violence to a more complex crisis involving signatory parties and foreign actors.

Haysom added that UNMISS is concentrating its efforts on preventing a relapse into widespread conflict and refocusing attention towards the implementation of the revitalised agreement. He underscored the importance of UNMISS' protection mandate in light of the deteriorating security situation. He said that the mission has responded proactively to the situation by increasing its patrols and enhancing security at its bases, with the Quick Reaction Forces on standby to address unexpected situations. Haysom highlighted, however, that UNMISS faces operational limitations in implementing its mandate, particularly due to access denials.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 27 March press release, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan expressed deep concern over the country's rapidly deteriorating security situation. The Commission warned that, without adherence to the revitalised agreement, South Sudan's escalating crisis could spiral further, destabilising an already fragile region. Cautioning against the imminent risk of a return to full-scale conflict, the Commission urged South Sudanese leaders to engage in dialogue across political divides to de-escalate tensions and address their differences. The Commission also called on regional and international partners to intensify diplomatic pressure to secure the immediate and full implementation of the peace agreement.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 14 March, the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee circulated its final report to committee members.

On 15 April, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council an assessment report on the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577 of 28 May 2021 for modifying, suspending, or progressively lifting the arms embargo. The report found that the transitional government has made some progress in implementing two benchmarks, namely the completion of the Strategic Defense and Security Review process contained in the revitalised agreement and the formation of a unified command structure for the Necessary Unified Forces (NUF). It noted, however, that progress remained limited and slow. Disagreements between the SPLM and the SPLM-IO continue to hinder the formation of a unified command structure of the NUF, thereby increasing the risk of further destabilising the fragile security environment.

Furthermore, since April 2024, no progress has been made on the remaining three benchmarks, which relate to the establishment and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process; the proper management of existing arms and ammunition stockpiles; and the implementation of the Joint Action Plan for the armed forces on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. The Secretary-General expressed concern over the stalled progress, highlighting the persistent

South Sudan

lack of political will and insufficient funding for the DDR process and the management of weapons and ammunition. He warned that these continued shortcomings gravely undermine the prospects for lasting peace and security in South Sudan.

Women, Peace and Security

Jackline Nasiwa—Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice—briefed during the Council's 16 April meeting. She warned that the conflict in South Sudan is having “a devastating impact on women and girls” while also deepening food insecurity and displacement, eroding civic and political space, and weakening democratic processes. Nasiwa called on the Council to demand that the parties “jointly declare an immediate cessation of hostilities” and recommit to the revitalised agreement. She urged the international community to urgently support grassroot peacebuilding and early warning and atrocity prevention mechanisms. Regarding the Council's negotiations on the renewal of UNMISS mandate, Nasiwa highlighted the importance of prioritising gender “across the implementation of the UNMISS mandate” and urged Council members to “work together to preserve and renew this mandate in full”.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate key issue for the Council is the extension of the South Sudan sanctions regime (targeted sanctions and the arms embargo) and renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee. In their discussions in May, Council members are likely to be guided by the findings and the recommendations of the panel's 14 March final report and the assessment provided by the Secretary-General in his 15 April report.

One option for Council members is to renew the sanctions measures and the panel's mandate for one year while maintaining the benchmarks and urging the parties to the revitalised agreement to make urgent progress in their implementation. Another option for Council members would be to consider listing individuals or entities found to be in violation of the sanctions regime.

A significant issue for the Council is how to prevent South Sudan from descending into civil war while addressing the structural issues that contribute to recurring violence and political instability. Although the revitalised agreement has so far prevented large-scale clashes, local violence persists, with recent unrest heightening fears of a return to a full-scale conflict. Council members could consider holding a private meeting with relevant AU officials and regional stakeholders to discuss approaches to resolving the political and security tensions. They could also consider issuing a press statement to respond to the rapidly evolving security situation.

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

Council Dynamics

The sanctions imposed on South Sudan remain a divisive issue in the Council. When the Council last renewed the sanctions regime in May 2024 through resolution 2731, six Council members abstained—Algeria, China, Guyana, Russia, Sierra Leone, and then-Council member Mozambique. Several Council members—including France, the UK, and the US—continue to view sanctions as an essential tool for maintaining pressure on parties in South Sudan to implement the revitalised agreement. These members argue that the arms embargo, first imposed in July 2018 through resolution 2428, has played a significant role in reducing violence by limiting the flow of weapons into South Sudan. They have expressed concern that lifting the embargo could worsen the security situation by enabling greater access to arms in an already volatile environment. Given the deteriorating security situation and South Sudan's vulnerability to regional security dynamics, particularly the war in Sudan, several members are also likely to emphasise strict adherence to the arms embargo provisions.

On the other hand, China and Russia have long opposed the South Sudan sanctions regime. These members argue that sanctions imposed on the South Sudanese government have hindered its ability to build and consolidate its security institutions and should be lifted or adjusted to support the country's peace efforts. African members of the Council have also expressed concerns about maintaining the sanctions regime, which, in their view, undermines progress in the political and security spheres. It remains unclear how certain “A3 plus” members (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) and newer Council members, such as Pakistan—which have generally been sympathetic to the host government's concerns—will approach the vote on renewing the sanctions regime, especially amid the deteriorating security landscape.

In response to the deteriorating political and security situation in South Sudan, the US (the penholder on South Sudan) apparently proposed a draft resolution in April. It appears that while some Council members—including France, the UK, and other like-minded states—expressed support for the initiative, others, such as China and Russia, pushed back against the resolution. During the Council's 16 April meeting, Russia argued that “the situation in South Sudan is under the control of the current [g]overnment” and emphasised that the Council's priority should be to support the authorities' stabilisation efforts rather than apply undue pressure. The “A3 plus” members engaged on the substance of the draft resolution but apparently favoured a press statement instead of a resolution. At press time, it remained unclear whether the deliberations on the draft resolution would continue.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August.

Key Recent Developments

The 26 November 2024 cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon has continued to hold despite violations. Under the terms of the arrangement, which was brokered by France and the US, Israel will not carry out any offensive military operations against Lebanese targets in the territory of Lebanon, and the Lebanese government will prevent Hezbollah and all other armed groups from conducting operations against Israel. In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) will dismantle unauthorised infrastructure and confiscate unauthorised arms, among other tasks.

The arrangement outlined a 60-day deadline for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to withdraw south of the Blue Line and, in parallel, for the LAF to deploy to positions south of the Litani River, a deadline that was later extended until 18 February. (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 the two states.)

According to Israeli media reports, also cited by Lebanese news outlets, the US bilaterally provided additional guarantees to Israel with respect to the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement's implementation, including recognising "Israel's right to respond to Hezbollah threats".

Since the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement, Israel has regularly carried out airstrikes in Lebanese territory, saying that it was targeting members of Hezbollah and weapon depots. On 28 March and 1 April, Israel conducted airstrikes in Beirut for the first time since the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement was agreed. These followed rocket fire from Lebanon towards northern Israel on 22 and 28 March, for which Hezbollah denied responsibility. On 16 April, the LAF, which has been deploying to positions south of the Litani River under the terms of the arrangement, announced the arrest of a group of Lebanese and Palestinians in connection with the rocket launches. These arrests were followed on 20 April by the detention of several people who were "allegedly planning to launch rockets into Israel". On 27 April, Israel carried out airstrikes in the suburbs of Beirut, targeting what it said was a missile storage facility belonging to Hezbollah. In a statement issued the same day, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called on France and the US to "assume their responsibilities" as guarantors of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement and "compel Israel to immediately cease its attacks".

According to a 15 April statement by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), at least 71 civilians

have been killed by Israeli forces in Lebanon since the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement began. Civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities and roads, has also been destroyed. Citing IDF figures, the statement says that during this period, at least five rockets, two mortars and a drone have been launched from Lebanon towards Israel. Over 92,000 people remain displaced in Lebanon and tens of thousands of Israelis are still displaced from the north of the country. OHCHR called for violence to immediately stop and urged all parties to respect international humanitarian law.

In mid-February, Israel withdrew from most of south Lebanon but retained a presence in five positions in Lebanese territory near the Blue Line. Announcing its decision regarding the five positions, the IDF reportedly said on 17 February that it will remain there "until Israel is certain that Hezbollah will not return to the area south of the Litani River". In an 18 February joint statement, Aoun, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam, and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri stressed "the urgent need for Israel's full withdrawal from occupied Lebanese territory".

In an 11 March statement, the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that an agreement had been reached among French, Israeli, Lebanese, and US officials to form working groups to discuss issues related to the five areas that remain under Israeli control, disputed areas along the Blue Line, and Lebanese prisoners held by Israel. At the time of writing, it appears that the working groups have yet to be set up. In a 15 April interview, Aoun said that Lebanon is open to negotiations on the land border. He indicated, however, that the issue of the Lebanese detainees and the five areas of Lebanese territory occupied by Israel should not be matters for negotiation.

In the same interview, Aoun said that he is working to make 2025 the year the Lebanese state achieves a monopoly over weapons. This is in line with the position Aoun has taken on the issue of Hezbollah's weapons since his presidential inauguration speech in January.

On 16 April, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that Israeli troops would remain indefinitely in what he referred to as "security zones" in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip. In response, Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Kassem declared that the group would not disarm. While Hezbollah is open to participating in talks on a comprehensive defence strategy for Lebanon, he said that would only happen "after Israel halts its ongoing attacks on Lebanon".

These developments are taking place against the backdrop of Hezbollah's declining military power and decreasing political influence following the war with Israel and the ousting of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, which has led to the loss of a key military supply route for Hezbollah from Iran through Syria.

According to the most recent Secretary-General's report on resolution 1701, which was issued on 12 March and covered developments between 21 October 2024 and 20 February, the IDF's presence north of the Blue Line is a violation of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as resolution 1701 and undermines the efforts of the Lebanese authorities to extend state authority throughout its territory. The report also said that, since 27 November 2024, the LAF has started to dismantle military infrastructure and confiscate weapons "believed to have belonged to Hizbullah south of the Litani

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

Lebanon

River”, noting that the maintenance of arms outside the state’s control by nonstate groups is in violation of resolution 1701 and restricts the state’s ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. (Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah based on a series of principles, including the establishment between the Blue Line and the Litani River in Lebanon of “an area free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons” other than those of UNIFIL and the Lebanese government, as well as “no foreign forces” in Lebanon without its government’s consent.)

UNIFIL has adjusted its posture within its existing mandate to support the implementation of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement. The mission has supported the gradual redeployment of the LAF across southern Lebanon, uncovered numerous weapons caches, and removed unexploded ordnance. In his statement at the 7 April briefing of the heads of military components of UN peacekeeping operations, UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz said that UNIFIL developed an adaptation plan focused on, among other objectives, strengthening its operational posture, securing local communities’ support, and enhancing the mission’s profile. Another objective is to support the mechanism created by the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement to monitor, verify, and assist in “ensuring enforcement” of the commitments outlined in the arrangement. This is a reformulated version of the tripartite mechanism established following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, which consisted of representatives of UNIFIL, the IDF, and the LAF, and was chaired by UNIFIL. Under the terms of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement, the revised mechanism is chaired by the US and hosted by UNIFIL. It also includes France.

On 16 April, Qatar announced that it would be sending 162 military vehicles and a \$60 million donation towards the salaries of LAF officers. In March, the US State Department reportedly approved an exception to the 90-day foreign aid funding freeze imposed by US President Donald Trump, allowing \$95 million in military assistance to the LAF.

Municipal elections are scheduled to be held in Lebanon in four phases starting on 4 May. This will be the first time since 2016 that the Lebanese people will vote to elect local government bodies. Municipal elections were originally planned for May 2022 but were initially postponed to May 2023 to avoid their coinciding with the May 2022 legislative elections. Polls were again postponed in April 2024 following a vote by the parliament to extend the term of local government officials until 31 May 2024.

From 10 to 13 March, a fact-finding mission of the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) visited Lebanon. The press release issued at the end of the visit welcomed the Lebanese authorities’ request for a new IMF program to “support their efforts to address Lebanon’s significant economic challenges”. Lebanon did not implement most of the reforms envisaged by a previous preliminary agreement with the IMF, requiring that a new agreement be reached. On 24 April, the Lebanese parliament approved amendments to banking secrecy legislation, one of the issues that had long been identified by the IMF as needing reform.

In a 5 March statement, Amnesty International said that it investigated four Israeli attacks on healthcare facilities and medical vehicles in Lebanon that killed 19 healthcare workers between 3 and 9 October 2024. The statement called for the attacks to be investigated as war crimes, adding that Amnesty International did not find evidence that the targeted facilities and vehicles were being used for military purposes at the time of the attacks. The statement called on Lebanon to provide the International Criminal Court with the jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute international crimes committed in Lebanese territory.

Key Issues and Options

Supporting the full implementation of the cessation-of-hostilities agreement between Israel and Hezbollah remains the Security Council’s foremost immediate priority.

Council members could consider issuing a press statement that urges all parties to fully implement the arrangement and the Security Council’s relevant resolutions, calls on the international community to support Lebanon’s reconstruction, and stresses the importance of protecting civilians and civilian infrastructure.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree on the need for the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon to hold and the importance of guaranteeing safety and security for UNIFIL peacekeepers.

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 socio-political force in Lebanon.

China and Russia have opposed the Council taking positions they perceive as overly prescriptive regarding Lebanon’s internal affairs.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The current authorisation for the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) expires on 1 November.

Key Recent Developments

The trial against Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik for failing to implement the High Representative's decisions began on February 2024 following the filing of charges in August 2023 by Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) Prosecutor's Office. (For background and earlier political developments, see our brief on BiH in the November 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 26 February, the BiH state court sentenced Dodik to one year in prison and banned him from holding office as RS president for six years for defying the decisions of the High Representative. The decision was a first-instance verdict, meaning that both sides can appeal; a second-instance verdict is expected to be delivered by the end of this year. In response to the sentencing, Dodik vowed to ignore the verdict, and the RS National Assembly (RSNA) banned BiH's state-level court and prosecutor's office, as well as the State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) and State Intelligence Agency from exercising jurisdiction in RS.

On 26 February, the RSNA also adopted a statement claiming that the state court decision was "rendered on the basis of a decision imposed by a foreign national, contrary to the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and as such, constitutes a breach of the constitutional order of Bosnia and Herzegovina". In a 27 February statement, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Dodik's sentencing was politically motivated, expressed support for RS authorities, and added that Russia was using all political means to prevent the situation from "developing into a negative track". Hungary and Serbia also voiced support for Dodik.

On 6 March, Security Council members held closed consultations on BiH, during which Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed. In requesting the meeting, Russia apparently said that the court's decision had drastically worsened the internal situation in BiH, increased tensions, and posed a serious threat to the Dayton Agreement. (For more information, see our 6 March *What's In Blue* story.)

On 12 March, the Prosecutor's Office of BiH issued arrest warrants for Dodik, RS Prime Minister Radovan Višković, and RSNA Speaker Nenad Stevandić. The three faced accusations of undermining the constitutional order by enacting legislation that barred state-level judicial and police institutions from operating within RS territory.

On 13 March, the RSNA adopted a new draft constitution and a draft Law on the Protection of the Constitutional Order of RS, asserting the entity's right to greater autonomy and establishing separate institutions, including its own army and judiciary. The draft constitution and law also proposed the authority for RS to enter into alliances with other states. At Slovenia's request, Council members discussed these developments on 21 March under the "any other business" agenda item during consultations. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed.

In a 28 March press statement, the Security Council expressed

deep concern over recent developments in BiH. The statement reaffirmed the Council's full support for the GFAP and its annexes, underscoring the importance of adherence to BiH's constitution. It called on all political actors, including both entities and the three constituent peoples, to engage in sincere, open, and constructive dialogue aimed at preserving the country's unity and political stability. The Council also emphasised the need to avoid confrontational approaches and refrain from provocative and divisive rhetoric and actions.

On 23 April, SIPA officers reportedly attempted to arrest Dodik in East Sarajevo, but were prevented from doing so by RS police. The following day, High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt issued a decree suspending all disbursements of budgetary funds for the ruling political parties in RS—Ujedinjena Srpska and Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD).

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 7 February press release, independent human rights experts voiced alarm over the reintroduction of draft legislation on registering non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in RS after it was withdrawn in May 2024. Titled "Republika Srpska Law on the Special Registry and Publicity of the Work on Non-Profit Organisations", it aims to create a register of non-profit groups receiving foreign funding or other assistance of foreign origin in RS.

According to the experts, in its current form, the bill would "impose severe restrictions on [NGOs] and grant disproportionate government control over their operations" and would "likely lead to unnecessary impingements on civil society and the work of human rights defenders". The experts called for RS authorities to take into account the concerns of all sectors of civil society and refrain from approving the draft legislation as it was inconsistent with BiH's international human rights obligations. They likewise urged "political leaders to refrain from stigmatising NGOs by calling them pejorative names and designating them as 'foreign agents'".

Key Issues and Options

The role of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) remains a key divisive issue for the Council. At the Council's last regular meeting on BiH, held on 1 November 2024, China expressed concerns about the appointment of Schmidt to the position of High Representative and claimed that he "has frequently used the Bonn powers to amend the laws of Bosnia and Herzegovina, giving rise to tensions and divisions within the country". Russia has expressed similar concerns over Schmidt's actions and has repeatedly challenged his legitimacy and mandate. During the same Council meeting, Russia reiterated its call for the OHR's closure, accusing it of interfering in BiH's internal affairs and damaging the country's post-conflict settlement process.

Western Council members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US), have opposed imposing 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 that need to be fulfilled prior to the OHR's closure.

One option the Council could consider is to request the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel, Elinor Jane Britt Hammarskjöld, to provide a legal opinion on the procedures for designating High Representatives under Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement and on whether the PIC Steering Board's decision of 27 May 2021 designating Christian Schmidt complied with those procedures. Such an opinion would have to analyse the Council's own record of acting on earlier designations—normally by "welcoming and agreeing" through resolutions (from resolution

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1031 of 1995 through resolution 1869 of 2009), but on one occasion, in 2006, by a presidential letter that endorsed Christian Schwarz-Schilling's appointment (S/2006/61)—and assess whether endorsement by the Council, unanimity in the Steering Board, or consent of the Bosnian parties is legally required. By providing an authoritative legal baseline, the request could provide a common point of reference for future Council discussions on the OHR. There is a precedent: at the Council's request, then-Legal Counsel Hans Corell issued a public opinion on 29 January 2002 concerning Moroccan mineral resources contracts in Western Sahara (S/2002/161).

Another option would be for the Council to request the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the procedures and modalities for appointing High Representatives of BiH under the Dayton Peace Agreement.

Council Dynamics

Council members broadly agree on the risks posed by BiH's entrenched ethnic divisions and political polarisation. Most are also critical of Dodik's rhetoric and his continued threats of dissolution, which they view as challenging BiH's

sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, however, tends to be supportive of Dodik's positions and frames international oversight—particularly by the High Representative—as illegitimate.

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. However, under the Trump administration, there has been a lack of clarity about the US position on this issue, adding further uncertainty to the process.

As part of the separate EU enlargement process, the European Council agreed to open accession talks with BiH on 21 March 2024 after having unanimously voted to grant BiH candidate status in December 2022. This milestone was welcomed by many Council members as a positive step toward strengthening BiH's institutions and promoting long-term stability. This development has raised the stakes in Council dynamics, as Russia's support for Dodik—whose actions have challenged state institutions and the authority of the OHR—runs counter to the EU's requirement for full implementation of the Dayton Agreement, a key condition for BiH's accession.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold its monthly meeting on Yemen. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and a representative from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief on political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

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

Key Recent Developments

The US continues to conduct near-daily air strikes on military and strategic targets in Yemen controlled by the Houthi rebel group (also known as Ansar Allah). The strikes—which have intensified under President Donald Trump's administration—are part of a campaign to degrade the Houthis' capability to conduct attacks on vessels in the Red Sea and on Israel. Since the onset of the war in Gaza in October 2023, the Houthis have launched over 100 attacks on ships in the Red Sea, as well as multiple missile and drone attacks targeting Israeli territory, most of which have been intercepted. The Houthis are part of a coalition dubbed the “Axis of Resistance”, which is supported by Iran and includes Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, and they claim their attacks are in solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Since 15 March, US strikes have hit targets in Yemen's capital, Sanaa; the key Red Sea port city of Hodeidah; and the governorates of Marib and Saada. According to media reports, the Houthis claim that over 250 people have been killed since the US intensified its airstrike campaign. A 17 April strike on Ras Isa oil port—which the US claimed is an important source of fuel and revenue for the Houthis—reportedly killed over 80 people. On 28 April the Houthis

reported dozens killed in US strikes in Sanaa and on a detention centre in Saada, which reportedly killed at least 68 African migrant detainees. In a 27 April press release, US Central Command said that since the start of the campaign it has struck over 800 targets, killing “hundreds of Houthi fighters and numerous Houthi leaders”, leading to a reduction of ballistic missile and drone attacks.

On their part, the Houthis announced that the “continued aggression” will be met with “more counter-attack and attack operations, clashes and confrontations” and said that they had carried out missile attacks on sites in Israel and on US aircraft carriers and reaper drones. The group has now reportedly launched at least 20 ballistic missile attacks and several drone attacks on Israel since Israeli forces resumed large-scale military operations in Gaza on 18 March, all of which have been intercepted or have fallen short of their intended target.

A 19 April statement attributable to the Spokesperson of the UN Secretary-General expressed grave concern about the US airstrikes on Ras Isa—noting that they also resulted in the injury of five humanitarian workers—and alarm that the strikes have caused significant damage to the port infrastructure and possible oil leaks into the Red Sea. The statement also expressed deep concern about the Houthis' attacks on Israel and in the Red Sea and called on them to cease such attacks immediately, underscoring the need to fully respect resolution 2768.

On 20 April, Grundberg also issued a statement echoing the Secretary-General's concern regarding the impact of the strikes on civilians. Grundberg noted that the cycle of attacks between the Houthis and the US “jeopardises peace efforts and risks drawing Yemen further into the regional conflict” and said the attacks “must stop with credible guarantees that protect the Red Sea from becoming a prolonged arena of conflict”.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9873 (6 March 2025) was a Council meeting on Yemen. Security Council Press Statement SC/15995 (13 February 2025) condemned the detention of UN and NGO personnel by the Houthis.

Yemen

In closed consultations on 15 April, Grundberg briefed Council members on the latest developments and apparently said that recent escalations have added complexity to the already fraught situation in Yemen, as prospects for peace in the country are being entangled with conflict in the wider region. He also warned that political progress for peace in Yemen should not be conditioned on regional factors and emphasised the need to allow space for dialogue through de-escalation by all parties, stressing that a resumption of attacks on merchant vessels in the Red Sea must also be avoided.

Although the UN-mediated truce of April 2022 continues to hold, progress on the intra-Yemeni political and peace processes remains deadlocked because of the persistent threat of escalation in the Red Sea and regional attacks. In recent weeks, an increasing concern is that the US campaign against the Houthis, including sanctions imposed through its re-designation of the group as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation, is shifting the strategic calculus for the factions of Yemen's internationally recognised Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). The Wall Street Journal has reported that Yemeni factions are planning ground operations aimed at retaking territory controlled by the Houthis, while a senior PLC military source has reportedly told local media that the Houthis are planting mines around Hodeidah port in anticipation of a ground attack. During the 15 April consultations, Grundberg apparently noted the increased military activity in Yemen and a heightened level of risk; he also stressed, however, that the front lines remain stable.

The Houthis also continue to hold more than 50 UN, non-governmental organisation, civil society, and diplomatic mission personnel in detention, further undermining efforts to advance the Yemeni peace process. In the 19 April statement, the Secretary-General also reiterated his call for the immediate and unconditional release of all UN and other personnel arbitrarily detained by the Houthis.

Briefing the Council during the 15 April Council consultations, OCHA Director Edem Wosornu warned that funding shortfalls are posing huge challenges for the humanitarian response. She apparently informed the Council that OCHA is working on reprioritising the 2025 Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan and reviewing the humanitarian architecture to better address the situation within the current operational and budgetary constraints.

Key Issues and Options

Yemen is facing immense challenges on the political, security, and economic fronts. Preventing an escalation of hostilities in Yemen and the Red Sea and relaunching the stalled intra-Yemeni political process remain priorities for the Security Council. Should the risks of a resumption of hostilities between Yemeni factions and the Houthis escalate, Council members could consider action that could de-escalate the situation and encourage the parties to resume negotiations for a nationwide ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement. Any resumption of hostilities in Yemen would have grave implications for the already dire humanitarian situation and push the country further away from the peace process.

At the same time, the Council will seek to maintain pressure to protect the safety of navigation and shipping in the Red Sea and avoid a scenario in which the Houthis resume attacks on merchant ships and global supply chains. Given the Houthis' use of the

conflict in Gaza as a justification for their attacks in the Red Sea and on Israel, addressing this situation separately from the broader regional context remains a challenge, especially as the Council is divided over whether the two situations are directly linked or not.

One option for the Council would be to issue a presidential statement stressing that there is no military solution to the conflict in Yemen and demanding that the Yemeni parties resume concrete discussions on establishing a roadmap under UN auspices for inclusive peace in the country. The statement could also reiterate provisions from Council resolution 2768, emphasising the need to address the root causes of the attacks in the Red Sea and calling on all member states to adhere to the arms embargo imposed by the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen also continues to be a pressing issue. The US air campaign against the Houthis—including its strikes on Hodeidah and Ras Isa ports, which are critical infrastructure for humanitarian and commercial activities—has raised concerns about its impact on the already dire humanitarian situation in the country. Additionally, the 10 February UN pause on operations and programmes in the Saada governorate continues, impacting the UN's ability to deliver aid to those in need.

In light of the increasingly fraught humanitarian context, Council members could consider holding a public briefing, possibly at high level, focused specifically on Yemen's humanitarian crisis, which could also allow members the opportunity to highlight the urgent need for bolstering funding pledges.

Council Dynamics

Council members are largely aligned in support of an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process, the need to improve humanitarian conditions in the country, and the need to restore freedom of navigation and security to the Red Sea. Advancing mediation efforts towards a resumption of dialogue and a peace process under UN auspices remains an overarching priority for members.

Nevertheless, Council members have divergent views on what is fuelling the political stalemate and insecurity in Yemen. In Council meetings, Algeria, China, Pakistan, and Russia have stressed that the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea cannot be discussed in isolation from the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and some have directly blamed Israel for instability in the region. Russia has also accused the UK and the US of undermining security in Yemen through their retaliatory strikes on the Houthis. On the other hand, the P3 members (France, the UK, and the US) have been critical of Iran's role in supporting the Houthis, including militarily.

The US has taken an increasingly hawkish stance against Iranian support, viewing it as the key facilitator of the Houthis movement. In the Security Council, the US has also made clear that any resolution of the security situation in the Red Sea must include pushback against Iran's support to the Houthis. For example, during the 6 March Council meeting on Yemen, it stressed that the Council must respond to Iran's flagrant violations of Council resolutions through its continued arming of the group.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution renewing for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. The current authorisation expires on 31 May.

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

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council last renewed the authorisation for maritime inspections through resolution 2733, adopted on 31 May 2024, in which it requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of the measures within six and 11 months of the resolution's adoption. The first report was published in November 2024 and covered the period from 15 April to 31 October 2024. It described the fragile security situation in the country, marked by clashes among armed groups in Tripoli and western Libya and heightened tensions between western Libyan forces and the Libyan National Army in the southwest. In this context, the report emphasised that the effective and comprehensive implementation of the arms embargo remains essential to reduce violence, support the political process, enhance security, and prevent arms proliferation and illicit transfers by air, land, and sea. At the time of writing, the second report had not been published.

According to the Secretary-General's November report, the EU naval operation EUNAVFOR Med IRINI (Operation IRINI) remained the only regional arrangement to inspect vessels under the authorisation. During the reporting period, it conducted 2,192 hailings (making contact with other vessels), 70 friendly approaches (consensual visits to vessels that can be carried out without flag state approval and without the use of enforcement measures), and two vessel inspections related to the arms embargo. It attempted but did not carry out two additional inspections—one because the vessel's flag state refused consent and the other because of the vessel's brief transit through Egyptian and Libyan waters and short travel in the area of operation. (The authorisation requires good-faith efforts to first obtain the consent of the vessel's flag state prior to any inspections.) No cargo seizures were reported.

Besides renewing the maritime inspection authorisation, the Council is expected to receive a briefing this month from Khan on the ICC's activities related to Libya. The Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through resolution 1970, which requested biannual updates from the prosecutor. The court has jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed on Libya's territory or by its nationals from 15 February 2011 onward. The ICC opened investigations in March 2011 related to alleged crimes against humanity (including murder, imprisonment, torture, persecution, and other inhumane acts) and war crimes (including murder, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity). There is currently one open case before the court, centred on Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. On 27 June 2011, the court charged Qaddafi with two counts of alleged crimes against

humanity and issued a warrant for his arrest. He remains at large.

In his last Council briefing on 19 November 2024, Khan informed members that Pre-Trial Chamber I unsealed arrest warrants for six individuals from the Al-Kaniyat armed group that the court believes are responsible for Rome Statute crimes committed in Tarhuna. Khan requested the Council's assistance in ensuring the execution of these warrants, the arrest of these individuals, and their participation in fair, independent, and impartial trials. He also noted that investigations into detention-facility crimes and crimes relating to the 2014–2020 period were progressing and that he anticipated further applications for arrest warrants in the next reporting period.

On 18 January, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Osama Elmasry Njeem, suspected of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Libya from February 2015 onward. Njeem allegedly oversaw Tripoli prison facilities, where thousands were murdered, tortured, raped, and subjected to sexual violence. On 19 January, Italian authorities arrested Njeem in Turin, Italy. On 21 January, however, the Rome Court of Appeal (an Italian appellate court) ordered his release because of a procedural error. That same day, Italy returned Njeem to Libya, citing security concerns. The ICC claims Italian authorities failed to notify them of any warrant issues. As a result of the incident, Italian prosecutors have launched an investigation into Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and two ministers concerning the repatriation of Njeem to Libya despite the ICC warrant for his arrest.

The political impasse in Libya continues over the holding of national elections that would reconcile the country's divided government. During the Council's most recent briefing on the situation in Libya held on 17 April, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Tetteh briefed about her consultations with Libyan political, military, security and judicial actors; oversight institutions, political parties, civil society and women leaders; and the diplomatic community since her appointment in February. She also explained how UNSMIL was supporting the Advisory Committee set up in February to address outstanding issues hindering the holding of elections in Libya. The committee is expected to conclude its work by the end of April.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council in May is to renew the authorisation for maritime inspections off the coast of Libya. From 2016 until 2023, the Council has renewed the authorisation annually through straightforward rollovers. Last year, however, the Council adopted resolution 2733, which provided for an enhanced role of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee in approving the disposal of seized items. An option for the co-penholders is to propose reauthorisation of maritime inspections for another year with no changes.

An option ahead of the authorisation's renewal would be for Council members to continue the regular practice of convening an informal interactive dialogue to discuss its implementation with an EU representative.

Regarding the briefing by the ICC Prosecutor, Council members that are party to the ICC could hold a joint press stakeout in connection with the meeting. A longstanding and persistent issue for the Council is how to help foster common ground between Libya's

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2769](#) (16 January 2025) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 May 2026 and the authorisation of measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 1 May 2026. [S/RES/2733](#) (31 May 2024) renewed for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. **Secretary-General's Reports** [S/2025/223](#) (11 April 2025) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL. [S/2024/858](#) (26 November 2024) was the six-month report on the authorisations in relation to the inspection of vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, requested by resolution 2733 in support of the implementation of the arms embargo established in resolution 1970.

Libya

rival legislatures to agree on electoral laws to unify the country's divided governments. Council members are likely to continue reiterating their support for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process to resolve the ongoing impasse over the holding of elections, as well as for Tetteh's efforts in supporting these initiatives.

Council Dynamics

Until 2022, the Council unanimously renewed the maritime inspection authorisation every year. Since then, Russia has abstained on the vote, questioning the viability of the authorisation. It has noted that Operation IRINI has failed to uncover significant arms supply channels and has alleged that the operation conducts its inspections in a selective and non-transparent manner.

During last year's negotiations on the draft authorisation renewal resolution, Russia proposed language that would strengthen the Council's oversight; in this regard, by requiring member states acting under the authorisation to obtain the 1970 Committee's approval prior to disposing of seized materials. China and "A3 plus one" also supported this proposal. These six members abstained during the vote, noting that the co-penholders at the time (France and Malta) did not fully address their concerns. The US and European members of the Council have traditionally been very supportive of Operation IRINI. It is unclear how some of the members who joined in January 2025 will vote on this matter.

Russia has also criticised the work of the ICC. During Khan's

November 2024 Council briefing, Russia said that it did not consider Khan to be an independent prosecutor and saw no benefit in listening to his briefing. Russia described the court as "mired in politicization, double standards and corruption" and having no bearing on the fight against impunity.

Although less forceful in their criticisms, some other Council members have also expressed reservations about the court's work. China has described it as a violation of the principle of national sovereignty, while African members have long expressed concerns about the court's perceived disproportionate focus on their continent. Those Council members that are state parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC—currently Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and the UK—are generally supportive of the court's work.

The position of the US, which is not a party to the Rome Statute, has varied depending on the administration. On 6 February, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order imposing sanctions on the ICC and Khan in response to the court's decision to issue arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant over alleged war crimes in Gaza. The first Trump administration imposed similar sanctions on the ICC in June 2020 because of the ICC's investigations into alleged war crimes involving US personnel in Afghanistan. The Biden administration later lifted those sanctions.

Maritime Security

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold an open debate on maritime security under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security". This will be the signature event of Greece's May presidency. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres, and representatives from a UN agency and the private shipping industry are expected to brief the Council.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The Council has traditionally approached maritime security by focusing on specific geographic hotspots and addressing threats in isolation. A notable exception was its first thematic meeting on maritime security in August 2021, during India's Council presidency, which sought to frame the issue more holistically by examining the wide-ranging security, economic, and environmental impacts of maritime crime. Following that meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement, which identified a range of maritime threats—including piracy, armed robbery at sea, terrorist activities exploiting maritime routes, and attacks on shipping, offshore installations, and critical infrastructure—and recognised the importance of international and regional cooperation. It emphasised the need to enhance information-sharing and

strengthen national capacities to promote maritime safety and security.

The Council's initiative in 2021 followed years of efforts—continuing to this day—to address maritime security threats across different regions. In May 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2634, spearheaded by Ghana and Norway, to draw attention to the growing threat of piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea following a notable increase in such incidents in 2020. This was the Council's first resolution on the matter since resolution 2039 of 29 February 2012, which had called on the Gulf of Guinea states to convene a summit and formulate a regional counter-piracy strategy. That initiative served as the catalyst for the development of the "Yaoundé Code of Conduct," which laid the foundation for the region's maritime security architecture. On 21 June 2023, the Council held an open briefing at the request of Ghana to underscore the need for sustained regional and international efforts to enhance maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

In response to the surge in irregular migration across the Mediterranean, the Council adopted resolution 2240 of 9 October 2015, authorising member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect and seize vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya suspected of being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. The European Union (EU) Naval Force operation in the Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) conducted

UN DOCUMENTS ON MARITIME SECURITY Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/15 (9 August 2021) reaffirmed that international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in the oceans and encouraged member states to continue building and strengthening their capacities to enhance maritime security.

Maritime Security

inspections under the authorisation granted by resolution 2240 to counter migrant smuggling until 2024 when France and Malta—the co-penholders on the file—informed Council members that they would not pursue a further renewal. These members apparently maintained that the use of EU aerial assets could sufficiently monitor and address the issue moving forward. Operation IRINI was launched in March 2020 to implement the arms embargo on Libya under resolution 1970 of 26 February 2011, as strengthened by resolution 2292 of 14 June 2016. It continues to implement the arms embargo measures, which are set to expire on 31 May.

The Council has played a central role in addressing the Red Sea crisis, which escalated sharply following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on 7 October 2023. Beginning in mid-November 2023, Yemen's Houthi rebel group launched a series of sophisticated attacks against merchant and commercial ships transiting the Red Sea. These attacks, initially portrayed by the Houthis as retaliation against Israel's military actions in Gaza, expanded to indiscriminate attacks on vessels from numerous nations, severely disrupting international shipping and global supply chains.

In response, the Council adopted resolution 2722 of 10 January 2024, which, among other things, demanded that the Houthis cease attacks on vessels and acknowledged member states' right to defend their vessels from attacks, including those that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to provide written monthly reports on further Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, a mandate extended by resolution 2768 of 15 January until 15 July. In December 2023, the US announced the formation of an upgraded multinational task force, Operation Prosperity Guardian, which has since conducted retaliatory strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen. On 15 March, the US unilaterally launched a series of precision strikes aimed at restoring freedom of navigation in the region. The EU also established Operation Aspides (EUNAVFOR Aspides), a defensive operation headquartered in Greece that protects and accompanies vessels in the Red Sea.

Sanctions Related Developments

The final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, dated 11 October 2024, suggested that the Houthis are exploring options to extend their area of operation and carry out attacks at sea from the Somali coast. According to the report, the Houthis have been reportedly deepening their collaboration with Al-Shabaab—a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida—to that end, including through increased smuggling activities between the two, mostly involving small arms and light weapons. In resolution 2776 of 3 March, which extended the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime, the Council expressed concern about the flow of weapons and ammunition from Yemen to Somalia and emphasised the importance of preventing Al-Shabaab from developing relationships with "listed groups in the region".

Key Issues and Options

Maritime security has emerged as an important issue on the Council's agenda, shaped by the convergence of traditional threats and emerging challenges. Recent escalations in the Red Sea region have exposed the fragility of global maritime trade routes and demonstrated how disruptions at critical choke points can impact international commerce and undermine economic stability. A related issue is the threat from emerging technologies and proliferation of advanced weaponry, including drones and missiles, which has transformed maritime conflict dynamics. In recent years, there

has been a noticeable rise in targeted attacks on critical maritime infrastructure, including port facilities. With the increasing digitisation of ports, vessels, and logistics networks, these systems have become highly susceptible to cyber intrusions. Private companies are increasingly affected, facing higher costs for security, rerouting, and insurance, as well as risks to the safety of seafarers and vessels.

A significant issue is organised crime at sea, along with the growing nexus between terrorism and maritime crime. Addressing underlying causes, such as weak governance, poverty, and limited economic opportunities, remains a key challenge in countering these threats, ensuring regional security, and promoting sustainable economic development. Additionally, environmental and climate-related risks are exacerbating maritime insecurity through rising sea levels and the degradation of marine ecosystems. Illegal fishing, pollution, and unsustainable resource exploitation remain significant security threats, particularly for vulnerable coastal and island states.

An important issue is how the Council can work with a broad range of actors—including national governments, local authorities, civil society and the private sector—to develop coherent and holistic responses to the threats to maritime security. While the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) provides the primary international framework for maritime governance, contemporary maritime challenges have prompted the development of new mechanisms and initiatives that bridge traditional divides between civil, military, and private actors. The evolving threat landscape in the maritime domain has underscored the need to enhance situational awareness and strengthen international cooperation to ensure effective maritime governance.

The open debate in May might offer Council members an opportunity to take a more integrated and strategic approach to maritime security, fostering a comprehensive discussion about the interconnected nature of maritime threats and the need for coordinated international responses.

Some members may suggest the need for regular reporting from the Secretary-General on maritime security, moving beyond incident-based updates to comprehensive assessments that identify emerging trends and vulnerabilities. Such reporting could help raise awareness, highlight gaps in existing provisions, and inform early response strategies. To galvanise efforts and keep the Council's attention on the issue, Council members may consider organising informal briefings to consider adequate responses to contemporary challenges in the maritime domain and invite industry experts to share insights, best practices, and emerging trends that could promote policy coherence.

Council Dynamics

Council members acknowledge that the wide-ranging peace and security threats posed by maritime crime demand coherent and effective multilateral approaches, particularly because of the transnational nature of these challenges. Given that all Council members are littoral states, they have a direct stake in maritime security. Along with Greece, the other elected members for the 2025-26 term—Denmark, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia—also prioritise the issue. Vessels owned or operated by companies from Denmark, Greece, and Panama have been targeted by Houthi forces in the Red Sea; Pakistan has participated in maritime security operations in the western Indian Ocean;

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and Somalia has long been engaged in counter-piracy off its coast.

The Council has previously referred to the strengthening of state institutions, economic and social development, and the respect for human rights and the rule of law as necessary conditions for the eradication of piracy and armed robbery at sea. Certain Council members, however, may be reluctant to acknowledge the Council's role in addressing matters they consider as further removed from maritime security and crime, such as the protection of the marine environment and the depletion of natural resources through illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

During the negotiations on the August 2021 presidential statement, China reportedly opposed references to IUU fishing as a threat to maritime security, as well as a request for the Secretary-General to produce a standalone report on

maritime security threats. As a result, these references were removed from the final text of the presidential statement.

The US and China differ sharply in their legal interpretations of UNCLOS, particularly regarding the principle of freedom-of-navigation. China, a party to UNCLOS, asserts claims in the South China Sea, which other states view as excessive. The US—despite not being a party to UNCLOS—regards its principles as customary international law and rejects China's maritime claims. To reinforce its interpretation of navigational rights and freedoms, the US routinely conducts freedom-of-navigation operations in the region using its naval and air forces. As a result, language on maritime security has often been sensitive for China during negotiations on Council products, with China favouring wording that reflects a narrower interpretation of UNCLOS's scope and universality.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to hold a meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and a representative from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The Security Council held two meetings on Syria in April. On 10 April, the Council held an emergency briefing following a 7 April letter from the Permanent Mission of Syria to the Council (S/2025/216), which described Israeli attacks on Syrian territory as a “serious threat” to international peace and security and a violation of international law and the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement between Israel and Syria. (For more information, see our 9 April *What's in Blue* story.)

On 25 April, the Council held its monthly political and humanitarian briefing on Syria. Syrian interim Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani participated in the meeting. Addressing the Council, Shaibani highlighted advances made by the caretaker authorities in recent months, including the establishment of the new transitional government. He also said that the interim government will soon be announcing a transitional justice body, a commission for missing Syrians, and steps to form a representative national parliament.

During the meeting, Special Envoy Pedersen briefed on the challenges currently facing Syria, including the need for more political inclusion and more economic action, which are essential for the political transition in Syria to succeed. He stressed the need for “substantive efforts towards inclusivity, transparency and openness” in the process of establishing the interim parliament to ensure that it represents Syria's unity and diversity.

On the economic front, Pedersen noted that the situation is “disastrous” and that without economic recovery and stability, the country's political stability and transition will suffer. Both Pedersen and Shaibani also made strong appeals for the urgent easing of sanctions impeding the country's recovery following 14 years of

war. On 24 April, Syria's central bank governor and finance minister attended meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to discuss the country's reconstruction, in which IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said that they intend to help Syria rebuild its institutions and reintegrate into the world economy. This followed announcements made by Saudi Arabia and Qatar that they will repay Syria's outstanding debt to the World Bank.

Syria also continues to reel from the repercussions of March's sectarian violence in the country's coastal northwestern region (For more information, see the Syria brief in our April *Monthly Forecast* and our 14 March *What's in Blue* story). On 11 April, Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa extended the deadline given to the independent fact-finding committee established to investigate and report on the coastal violence by three months. Reports of ongoing attacks against Alawites in the area have also continued to emerge.

Following the 10 March agreement between Damascus and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), there have been further encouraging steps signalling de-escalation and reintegration for Syria's SDF-controlled northeastern region. Among these were the 4 April withdrawal of SDF fighters from Kurdish neighbourhoods in Aleppo; and the SDF ceding control of the Tishreen Dam—a key irrigation and hydro-electric power source—to the government's forces on 12 April.

Against this backdrop, in mid-March, the UN Secretary-General at apparently circulated a non-paper to Council members noting that the Secretary-General has directed the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) to lead an integrated strategic assessment of the changing situation in the country, which will culminate in a report due by the end of May. On 14 April, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo visited Damascus to hold meetings with interim government officials on Syria's political transition.

In a 21 April statement, the UN's Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis David Carden announced

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that his position would be abolished on 22 April. His role involved coordinating the delivery of cross-border humanitarian assistance into northwest Syria and has been phased out following the decision to create a unified coordination structure under the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Damascus. Carden said that so far this year, the UN has dispatched 936 aid trucks through the cross-border modality, which is more than all of 2024.

In her 25 April briefing to the Council, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya stressed that Syria remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with three-quarters of the population in need, more than half facing food insecurity, and over seven million persons displaced. In addition to highlighting the need to continue de-escalating conflict and ensure protection of civilians, Msuya warned that the ongoing provision of critical assistance by the UN is being severely strained due to funding cuts.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 March, the UN Syria Commission of Inquiry (COI) submitted a report to the Human Rights Council on developments relating to respect for human rights and international humanitarian law since the fall of the Assad regime. Noting Syria's key challenges, the report examines the measures required to address the justice-based needs of the Syrian people and re-establish the country's stability amid ongoing tensions.

On 26 March, the COI concluded its mission to Damascus after the retaliatory attacks in the coastal regions. A subsequent press release commended the authorities for their determination to restore Syria's social harmony and ensure human rights and accountability for its people despite the challenges ahead, while also noting the importance of the international community in bringing forth tangible actions to assist in Syria's transition.

In a 7 April press release, UN experts underscored the importance of ending ISIL-related arbitrary detention in northeast Syria. Around 42,500 individuals are held in camps without legal process, including family members and associates of ISIL suspects, as well as IDPs and human trafficking victims. The experts underscored that the political transition is also an opportunity to bring to justice those suspected of involvement in genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and called on the caretaker authorities to plan for the safe, dignified and voluntary reintegration of Syrian detainees back into their communities, among other recommendations.

Women, Peace and Security

On 27 February, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in Syria. Deputy Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria Najat Rochdi briefed. According to the 31 March summary of the meeting, in their engagement with the UN, Syrian women "have expressed their expectation that the transitional process, including the constitution-making process, will guarantee women's and girls' rights", including their meaningful participation in public and political life, and access to public services. The summary notes that the situation in Syria has been covered in the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) since 2012 and warns that, unless transitional justice mechanisms integrate measures on CRSV focused on justice, truth and non-repetition, "these crimes may disappear from the historical record".

UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, recommended that, in any upcoming decision on Syria, the Security Council urge the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of diverse Syrian women in a Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political transition, with a minimum participation threshold of 30 percent. Among other recommendations, UN Women advised the Council to call on the caretaker authorities to "urgently secure and preserve information and evidence of atrocities". UN Women further recommended that the Council demand unhindered humanitarian access across Syria and that humanitarian personnel are able to operate safely and without any form of gender-based discrimination.

Key Issues and Options

A priority for the Council is to encourage and support Syria's interim government as it works to introduce a credible, transparent, and

inclusive political process—grounded in the principles of resolution 2254. An issue for the Council is ensuring that the interim government's actions align with its priorities of meeting the aspirations of all the Syrian people, ensuring the protection of all Syrians, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, and advancing representative governance. Council members are also likely to pay particular attention to how the interim government handles the issue of sectarian violence against Alawite minorities and transitional justice.

The future of the UN's role in Syria is another key issue for the Council. Council members are likely to use the findings of the UN's integrated strategic assessment as a basis for discussing how to best utilise the UN's expertise to support Syria's transition. Depending on those findings, this could include considering a Council product which updates resolution 2254 to reflect the new context and could also include adjusting the UN's presence in the country. During these discussions, members will have to consider what the country needs most, what the Syrian interim government would allow, and what is practically possible given the UN's beleaguered financial situation.

The security situation in Syria is also a significant problem for the Council. Israel's encroachment into the country and its airstrikes on Syrian territory, the threat of ISIL/Da'esh resurgence, and the presence of foreign terrorist fighters are all issues that contribute to the overall security situation and feature prominently in the Council's discussions on Syria.

Council members could also consider holding a high-level public briefing on the interrelation between the dire economic situation, the detrimental effects of sanctions, and the humanitarian crisis in Syria, featuring briefings from the Secretary-General and a representative of the IMF. Following the meeting, members could hold a press stakeout calling for increased support for economic recovery and the further easing of sanctions on Syria.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are aligned on the need for the Syrian authorities to advance an inclusive, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process that is based on the key principles of resolution 2254. They also agree that the Syrian interim government must credibly pursue transitional justice and reconciliation efforts and take measures to prevent any further violence against minorities as part of this process, in line with the Council's 14 March presidential statement. Members are closely monitoring steps taken in this regard.

Several members have expressed cautious optimism at actions taken so far by the interim authorities, with many emphasising that the current period represents a critical and hopeful moment for the country. There is broad agreement that the new Syrian government requires international support to rebuild Syria and its crippled economy, including through the easing of sanctions. Several members have announced steps taken in this regard. On 10 April, the Republic of Korea re-established diplomatic relations with Syria, paving the way for bilateral economic cooperation and trade. On 24 April, the UK further eased its sanctions on the country, including restrictions on the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Interior, national media institutions and on key sectors such as financial services and energy.

On the other hand, the US continues to use its sanctions to pressure the interim authorities. During the 25 April Council meeting,

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the US reiterated that it will “hold Syrian interim authorities accountable for the following steps to fully renounce and suppress terrorism, adopt a policy of non-aggression to neighbouring states, exclude foreign terrorist fighters from any official roles, prevent Iran and its proxies from exploiting Syrian territory, destroy weapons of mass destruction, assist in the recovery of US citizens disappeared

in Syria, and ensure the security and freedoms of all Syrians.”

Israel’s presence and military activities in Syria remain a point of contention for Council members. Many members believe Israel’s actions are fostering tensions and instability in an already fragile Syria, but the US sees its actions as defensive in nature and tied to ensuring its national security, in line with Israel’s position.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In May, Council members are scheduled to discuss the 90-day report on the work of the 1718 Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee in closed consultations.

Ordinarily, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee briefs Council members on the report. At the time of writing, the Chair had not been appointed, as Council members were still negotiating this year’s allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the Chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, Greece, the president of the Council during May, is expected to brief members on the report in its capacity as president.

Key Recent Developments

Tensions on the Korean peninsula have continued to rise in recent months. On 10 March, Republic of Korea (ROK) officials announced that the DPRK had launched several close-range ballistic missiles into the Yellow Sea from Hwanghae province in the southwestern part of the country. The launches, which were the first ballistic missile tests conducted by the DPRK since 14 January, came shortly after the ROK and the US began their annual “Freedom Shield” military exercise. Since the conclusion of this exercise, the ROK and the US have conducted additional joint military drills in the region, including an operation involving the deployment of long-range B1-B bombers in ROK airspace. In late February, the DPRK fired multiple cruise missiles into the Yellow Sea several days before a nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier arrived in Busan, a port city in southern ROK. On 8 April, ROK troops fired warning shots at a group of DPRK soldiers who had crossed the border between the two countries.

Against this backdrop, the DPRK has continued to show little willingness to take steps towards denuclearisation. In a mid-March statement, the DPRK’s foreign ministry vowed to “steadily update and strengthen” its nuclear capabilities. The statement appeared to be a response to a 14 March joint statement of the foreign ministers of the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US), which demanded “that the DPRK abandon all its nuclear weapons and any other weapons of mass destruction as well as ballistic missile programmes in accordance with all relevant [Security Council] resolutions”. DPRK leader Kim Jong-un and his sister Kim Yo-jong have also made similar remarks reaffirming the DPRK’s commitment to its nuclear weapons programme in recent months.

Since his inauguration, President Trump has made several public statements indicating that he may seek to reestablish dialogue with Kim Jong-un, which he pursued unsuccessfully in his

first term. During a 13 March meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Trump expressed an interest in restarting the talks, saying that he has a “great relationship” with Kim Jong-un and calling him a “nuclear power”. On 1 April, Trump told reporters that “there is communication” in response to a question about possible talks with Kim Jong-un. According to media reports, officials in the Trump administration have been undertaking preparatory work for a possible resumption of dialogue with the DPRK.

The DPRK has also continued to bolster its relationship with Russia, including by deploying additional troops to Russia’s Kursk region, where Ukraine launched a cross-border offensive in August 2024, and by supplying Russia with weapons for use against Ukraine. In a 15 April Reuters report highlighting the support provided to Russia by the DPRK, Hugh Griffiths, the former Chair of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee, described the DPRK’s contribution to Russia’s war effort in Ukraine as “strategically vital”. On 21 March, Russian security official Sergei Shoigu met with Kim in Pyongyang, where the pair reportedly discussed the conflict in Ukraine, the relationship between the US and Russia, and the security situation on the Korean Peninsula. In recent days, the DPRK and Russia have publicly acknowledged that DPRK troops had been deployed to Kursk for the first time.

The DPRK also appears to be seeking to strengthen its naval capabilities. On 8 March, state media claimed that the DPRK was building a “nuclear-powered strategic guided missile submarine”. On 26 April, the DPRK unveiled what it described as a “new multipurpose destroyer” saying that it will be available for navy service in early 2026.

Reports of possible sanctions evasion related to the overseas employment of DPRK nationals have also emerged in recent months. On 9 February, Yonhap news agency reported that thousands of DPRK workers were sent to Russia in 2024, citing ROK intelligence sources. On 24 February, the Associated Press reported that a fleet of Chinese fishing vessels used DPRK crews between 2019 and 2024, citing a report published by a London-based non-profit organisation.

On 22 March, the foreign ministers of China, Japan, and the ROK convened in Tokyo for the 11th trilateral foreign ministers’ meeting between the three countries. Following the meeting, ROK Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul told reporters that he had asked Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to help persuade the DPRK to pursue denuclearisation.

On 22 April, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Rafael Grossi reportedly warned that the DPRK’s nuclear programmes have grown “exponentially” and called on the

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international community to resume high-level diplomacy with the country's leadership.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 January, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a report on promoting accountability in the DPRK. The report, which covers the period from 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2024, describes the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' efforts to promote accountability for human rights violations in the DPRK and examines information gathered on such violations in light of international legal standards. Among other matters, the report recommends that member states take further steps to ensure accountability for gross human rights violations in the DPRK, including through referral by the Security Council of the situation to the International Criminal Court. Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada Al-Nashif presented the report to the Human Rights Council (HRC) on 20 March.

The latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK Elizabeth Salmón was issued on 5 February. The report provides an overview of the current human rights situation, the interlinkages among human rights, development and peace and security, and an analysis of the DPRK's approach to economic, social, and cultural rights and relevant Sustainable Development Goals in relation to the normative content of human rights.

On 3 April, the HRC adopted its annual resolution on the situation of human rights in the DPRK. On 25 March, the HRC adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review on the DPRK.

Key Issues and Options

The DPRK's ongoing weapons tests, many of which violate Council resolutions, remain a serious concern for the Council. Sanctions evasion is another key issue, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have continued developing nuclear weapons since the regime was first introduced. The DPRK's ongoing refusal to participate in denuclearisation dialogue and the humanitarian situation in the country are also problems for the Council. In light of these issues, the Council could adopt a resolution that condemns the DPRK's ongoing missile tests, urges member states to comply with existing resolutions, and calls on the DPRK to take part in denuclearisation talks. It could also update and strengthen the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime with a view to exerting additional pressure on the DPRK.

The lack of a panel of experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is another major issue. (The previous panel was shut down when Russia vetoed a resolution that would have extended its mandate in March 2024. For more information, see our 22 March 2024 *What's in Blue* story). Some members are currently exploring how the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team, which was first announced in October 2024, could assist the Council and the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. Interested Council members could ask for a briefing on the work of this mechanism, particularly following the inaugural meeting of its steering committee on 19 February. Members could also request a briefing on the implementation of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime from UN agencies or civil society organisations with relevant expertise.

The deployment of DPRK troops on Russian territory and reports of ongoing arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia have created another major issue for the Council. Council members could choose to hold a meeting to discuss any relevant developments. Given the direct involvement of a permanent member, however, a more substantive response is likely to be difficult.

Council Dynamics

The Council is sharply divided over the DPRK, and this dynamic appears to have worsened as cooperation between the DPRK and Russia has grown. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded Council members, including the ROK, generally favour using sanctions to help manage the threat posed by the DPRK and regularly call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the country to engage in dialogue and abandon its nuclear weapons programme while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some have also called for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK's weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened the DPRK by blocking Council action on the file. Several of these members have strongly criticised the growing cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, including by highlighting evidence of arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia and noting that these transfers violate Council resolutions.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US and its allies for heightening tensions and have accused the US of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These two members have previously argued that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation in the country and have also repeatedly blocked attempts to issue a Council product responding to missile launches carried out by the DPRK in recent years.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

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