

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In June, Guyana holds the presidency of the Security Council.

Guyana will convene one signature event during its presidency, a high-level open debate titled “[Poverty, underdevelopment and conflict: Implications for the maintenance of international peace and security](#)”. President Mohamed Irfaan Ali of Guyana is expected to chair the meeting. Invited briefers include UN Secretary-General António Guterres, an official from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and an African Union (AU) Commission official. A presidential statement is a possible outcome.

The annual open debate on [children and armed conflict](#) will take place in June. Vindhya Persaud, Guyana’s Minister of Human Services and Social Security, is expected to chair the meeting. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba, Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

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

Several African issues are on the programme in June:

- [UN Regional Office for Central Africa \(UNOCA\)/Lord’s Resistance Army \(LRA\)](#), briefing and consultations on developments in the Central Africa region;
- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the work of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA);
- [Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the situation in the country pursuant to resolution 2715 of 1 December 2023 and on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and
- [Democratic Republic of the Congo \(DRC\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN

Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and vote on a resolution to renew the mandate of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee and its Panel of Experts.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme this month are:

- [Syria](#), the monthly briefing and consultations on political and humanitarian developments, as well as a briefing and consultations on the chemical weapons track;
- [Iraq](#), biannual briefing and consultations on the situation in Iraq and on progress in implementing resolution 2732 of 31 May 2024, through which the Council streamlined the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and decided to close the mission by 31 December 2025;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly briefing and consultations on developments in the country;
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), and a vote to renew the mission’s mandate;
- [Iran](#), briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme; and
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the monthly briefing and consultations, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel.

[Afghanistan](#) is the one Asian issue on the programme this month, with a briefing and consultations planned on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

As in previous months, there may be one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in June. Council members will also hold an informal meeting with members of the European Union Political and Security Committee (PSC) during their visit to New York in June. Other issues could also be raised during the month, depending on developments.

The General Assembly is scheduled to vote on 3 June to [elect five new members](#) to the Security Council. Bahrain, Colombia, the DRC, Latvia, and Liberia are running unopposed for the five available seats.

2 June 2025

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Security Council Elections 2025

On 3 June, the 79th session of the UN General Assembly is scheduled to hold elections for membership of the Security Council. The five seats available for election in 2025, according to the regular distribution among regions, will be as follows:

- two seats for the African Group (currently held by Algeria and Sierra Leone);
- one seat for the Group of Asia and the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Asia-Pacific Group, currently held by the Republic of Korea);
- one seat for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRU-LAC, currently held by Guyana); and
- one seat for the Eastern European Group (currently held by Slovenia).

The Western European and Others Group (WEOG) is not contesting any seats this year, as its two seats, held by Denmark and Greece through 2026, come up for election every other year. The five new members elected this year will take up their seats on 1 January 2026 and will serve until 31 December 2027.

The 2025 Candidates

Five member states—Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Latvia, and Liberia—are currently running for the five available seats. Apart from Latvia, all other candidates have previously served on the Council: Colombia seven times, DRC twice, and Bahrain and Liberia once.

All the regional groups are running uncontested elections this year, known as a “clean slate.” The table below shows the number of seats available by region in the 2025 election, the declared candidate(s), and their prior term(s) on the Council.

REGION	SEATS AVAILABLE IN 2025	CANDIDATES AND PRIOR COUNCIL TERMS
Africa	2	Democratic Republic of the Congo (1982-1983, 1990-1991) Liberia (1961)
Asia-Pacific ¹	1	Bahrain (1998-1999)
Latin America and Caribbean	1	Colombia (1947-1948, 1953-1954, 1957-1958, 1969-1970, 1989-1990, 2001-2002, 2011-2012)
Eastern Europe	1	Latvia (None)

Potential Council Dynamics in 2026

The shifting global landscape and continuing political polarisation among the permanent members are expected to continue to shape Council dynamics in 2026. The priorities raised by the candidates in their campaigns, as well as their long-standing interests, help to provide insights into their potential approach to some of the key issues confronting the Council.

Given the long-standing positions of the permanent members—as well as those of the continuing elected members and the incoming members—several agenda items are likely to remain highly contentious, including the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Myanmar, “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, and Ukraine. African issues that may be difficult include the situations in the DRC and Sudan.

Although it is unclear what course the war in Ukraine will take in 2026, the situation is likely to continue to occupy a significant portion of the Council’s agenda in 2026. Among current candidates, Latvia has a significant interest in the situation in Ukraine, given its geographic proximity to the conflict. From the outset of the war, Latvia has consistently provided Ukraine with broad political, military, financial, development, and humanitarian assistance.

Positions on Ukraine of some of the other incoming members have evolved over time. Shortly after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on 2 March 2022 titled “Aggression against Ukraine,” receiving support from 141 member states. All current candidates for Council membership in 2026-2027 voted in favour of that resolution. However, more recent votes in the General Assembly have revealed growing divisions among the wider UN membership on this issue. On 24 February 2025, the Ukrainian-EU resolution titled “Advancing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine” secured just 93 votes in favour, significantly less support than the 2 March 2022 resolution.

Among current candidates, Latvia and Liberia voted in favour of the 2025 resolution, while Bahrain and Colombia abstained, and the DRC did not vote. In 2022, all candidate countries were in broad agreement that Russia’s invasion of Ukraine constituted an act of aggression, as reflected by voting records in the General Assembly. Latvia and Liberia have since maintained a clear stance on this issue, supporting Ukraine’s position. In contrast, the positions of Bahrain, Colombia, and the DRC have seen slight shifts in line with a growing reluctance among Global South countries to take sides in the conflict.

The situation in the Middle East remains volatile and is likely to continue to feature prominently in the Council’s work in 2026. Security Council divisions are not expected to change dramatically over the Israel-Hamas war and its impact on other issues in the Middle East. While many members have condemned Hamas’ 7 October 2023 attack, several have strongly criticised Israel for its alleged violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza. The US has been strongly supportive of Israel throughout the war.

Voting patterns in the General Assembly show that the current candidates have exhibited a range of views with regard to the war in Gaza. While Liberia has traditionally tended to align with the US and Israel on this issue, there appears to have been a slight shift in its position since December 2023. For example, it voted in favour of the 16 December 2024 General Assembly resolution (ES-10/26)

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demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, as did other incoming members. The DRC has tended to be supportive of resolutions on the humanitarian situation in Gaza and on Palestinian rights. Latvia has also supported humanitarian measures related to the war in Gaza in the General Assembly. In May 2024, Colombia severed ties with Israel over its actions in Gaza. It has been critical of Israel's actions and supportive of humanitarian and diplomatic efforts to end the conflict. Although Bahrain normalised its relations with Israel after signing the Abraham Accords, it is expected to maintain its strong criticism of Israel's operation in Gaza in line with the position of the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Next year, with Somalia in the second year of its 2025-2026 tenure, there will be three non-permanent members serving in the Council that are also on its agenda.

The DRC has had a peacekeeping operation in the country since the early sixties, and a sanctions committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004). The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) is the largest and longest-running UN peacekeeping mission in Africa. In recent years it has faced significant pressure from both the government and local communities due to its perceived failure to effectively address the security situation in eastern DRC. As part of a disengagement plan for a phased and gradual drawdown of MONUSCO, the mission has withdrawn its forces from South Kivu, one of the eastern provinces. However, the security situation deteriorated sharply in early 2025, with the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) expanding its territorial control in the eastern regions of the country.

The DRC has a contentious relationship with Rwanda, which it accuses of supporting the M23, while Rwanda blames the DRC for supporting the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC that was implicated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. The Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee has corroborated these assertions in its past reports. In this context, the DRC has been advocating for punitive measures against Rwanda and the M23.

If elected, the DRC is likely to use its membership on the Security Council—alongside its concurrent seat on the African Union Peace and Security Council—to draw greater international attention to the situation in eastern DRC and the broader Great Lakes region.

Colombia has been on the agenda since 2016 following the signing of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP).

From the outset, Colombia's relationship with the Council has been positive. It requested to be added to the Council's agenda in 2016, which resulted in the establishment of the UN Mission in Colombia. This mission was succeeded by the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, which is tasked with verifying several aspects related to implementation of the 2016 agreement and is regularly discussed in the Council. Colombia also remains a rare file on the Council's agenda that enjoys consensus and has largely remained insulated from the difficult dynamics among Council members on other files. Colombia may be able to share its positive experience of

hosting a UN mission in discussions on UN peace operations.

As a West African country, Liberia is expected to pay particular attention to West Africa and the Sahel and may choose to focus on the deteriorating security situation in this region. It could replace Sierra Leone as a co-penholder on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) next year, joining Denmark, the other current co-penholder. In the same vein, the DRC could be the co-penholder on the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), which in recent years has had a Central African country co-pen with the UK.

Both the DRC and Liberia are expected to advance common African positions in line with the decisions of the AU and its Peace and Security Council. In this regard, during their election campaigns, both countries expressed support for "Silencing the Guns in Africa", the AU's flagship initiative aimed at ending all wars and conflicts on the continent by 2030. Curbing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons—one of the initiative's key objectives—has been emphasised by both countries and could feature as a theme during their Council tenures.

Some candidates have emphasised the importance of addressing terrorism and violent extremism. Bahrain has highlighted this issue as one of its priorities, stressing its role in combating the challenges in its region. Colombia may be interested in focusing on a broader set of issues related to transnational crime.

Several of the candidates have indicated that peacekeeping will be one of their priorities. Colombia, the DRC, and Liberia have extensive experience hosting UN peace operations, while Bahrain and Latvia have emphasised the importance of peacekeeping in their candidacies. These members will enter during a period of transition for peacekeeping in light of potential cuts to the peacekeeping budget and the ongoing review of peace operations. They may therefore have an opportunity to share their experiences and express their views on the drawdown, reconfiguration, and termination of UN peace operations during their term.

Additionally, all candidates have expressed interest in supporting peacebuilding efforts. The ongoing peacebuilding architecture review, which is expected to culminate with twin resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the General Assembly at the end of 2025, may provide new opportunities for involvement.

Maritime security may receive significant attention from the Council in 2026. Given that this is one of its core priorities, Bahrain is expected to advance discussions in the Council on this issue. As a country with one of the world's largest ship registries, Liberia has a particular stake in this issue as well. These members could work closely with the continuing elected members—Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia—who also have a strong interest in promoting maritime security issues.

All candidate countries have expressed an interest in advancing Women, Peace and Security (WPS)-related issues. Several, if not all, may sign on to the Shared Commitments on WPS initiative, which started in late 2021. Permanent members France and the UK, the penholder on WPS, can be expected to remain proponents of the agenda. There have been changes to the US position on this agenda since the start of President Donald Trump's term in January 2025. The US, which signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS in 2023, has so far not participated in any of the joint stakeouts that

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the Council members who signed on to this initiative have held to deliver joint statements. The US has also sought to modify some references to the WPS agenda during negotiations in early 2025, with a particular focus on eliminating gender-related language. Russia will probably continue to argue that gender equality is not directly linked to international peace and security and is therefore not within the Council's purview. China is likely to continue to maintain that the development gap is the most important barrier to women's empowerment.

There will be a vacancy for one of the co-chair positions of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS in 2026: current co-chair Sierra Leone will conclude its Council term this December, paving the way for another member to join Denmark as co-chair.

Climate, peace and security ranks high on the priority list for many candidates this year, with most candidate countries emphasising the importance of addressing the nexus between environmental issues and international peace and security. In particular, the DRC, Latvia, and Liberia have expressed strong interest in addressing issues related to natural resource management and its linkages to conflict. While the majority of Council members support Council engagement on this issue, China and Russia continue to express concerns about the climate, peace and security file. The current US administration has reservations about this issue as well.

One member of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group—Slovenia—will leave the Security Council at the end of 2025. Among the current candidates, only Latvia is a member of the group. Another ACT Group member, Denmark, will continue on the Council in 2026. These two members are likely to take the lead in

pushing for improved Security Council working methods, including proposals advocated by the ACT Group.

All incoming members have signed the ACT Group's Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, which calls on all Council members to not vote against any credible draft resolution intended to prevent or halt mass atrocities. In line with ACT's position on the selection process for the next UN Secretary-General, ACT members on the Council are expected to be supportive of greater transparency and openness in this process.

In 2026, elected members may continue to seek active roles in the Council as penholders or co-penholders, the informal designation of those that take the lead in drafting outcomes and convening meetings or negotiations on particular agenda items, a responsibility most often assumed by one of the P3 (France, the UK, and the US). In recent years, a growing number of elected members have served as co-penholders with a permanent member on various files. Among current elected members, this includes Slovenia with the US on Ukraine political issues, Panama with France on Ukraine humanitarian issues, and Panama with the US on Haiti. Elected members usually hold the pen on the Syria humanitarian file, and some candidate countries may be interested in this role when Denmark (current penholder) leaves the Council at the end of 2026. Several current members are still vying to be penholders on Afghanistan in 2025; next year, depending on how this issue is resolved, there may be an opportunity for one or more of the elected members to serve as a penholder or co-penholder on Afghanistan.

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India/Pakistan

On 5 May, Council members held closed consultations on "The India-Pakistan question" at the request of Pakistan to discuss the rising tensions between India and Pakistan following the 22 April terrorist attack in Pahalgam, a town in Indian-administered Kashmir, that claimed the lives of 26 people (including 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali national). Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. He gave an overview of developments in Kashmir and the state of India-Pakistan relations following the 22 April attack. Condemning the attack, Khiari called for restraint and dialogue to help resolve the crisis.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) on 6 May (S/PV.9911). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt briefed on the most recent report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), which covers the period from 16 October 2024 to 15 April (S/2025/272). Željka Cvijanović, the Serb member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic presidency of BiH and the incumbent chairperson of the presidency, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

On 8 May, the General Assembly and the Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue with the Peacebuilding Commission as part of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. Discussions emphasised the need to translate previous commitments into tangible outcomes that enhance UN peacebuilding efforts across contexts. The discussion is expected to inform ongoing negotiations toward the adoption of twin resolutions by the end of the year.

DPRK (North Korea)

On 29 May, Council members convened for a briefing in closed consultations on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee.

South Sudan

On 8 May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2779, renewing the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 30 April 2026 (S/PV.9913). The resolution was adopted with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia).

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2781, renewing the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2026 and

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the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2026 (S/PV.9928). The resolution was adopted with a vote of nine in favour and six abstentions (Algeria, China, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone).

Somalia

On 12 May, Security Council members convened for closed consultations on the African Union (AU) Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). The consultations were requested by Somalia (which is currently an elected member of the Council) and the UK (the penholder on the file).

Resolution 2767 of 27 December 2024 requested the Secretary-General to implement the framework established under resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023—which concerns the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs)—in a “hybrid” format to AUSSOM starting on 1 July. However, the resolution made the implementation of this framework contingent on the Council confirming its request through a decision by 15 May.

On 23 May, Council members agreed on the contents of a letter addressed to Secretary-General António Guterres, expressing regret over the lack of consensus regarding the implementation of the 2719 framework for AUSSOM, despite the broad support expressed by member states (S/2025/322). The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue working closely with the AU to support the implementation of resolution 2767 and provide advice and support, as requested by the AU, to strengthen resource mobilisation for AUSSOM, including through support for the urgent convening of a high-level donor meeting.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 13 May, the Security Council held a briefing under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ) (S/PV.9914). The meeting—which was requested by the Council’s European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK) and supported by Algeria—focused on the humanitarian situation and the protection of aid workers in Gaza. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) New York Liaison Office Director Angélica Jácome briefed. Israel, the Observer State of Palestine, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) participated in the meeting.

Protection of Civilians

On 22 and 23 May, the Security Council held its annual open debate on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict (S/PV.9921 and Resumption I and II). Greece, the Council president for May, convened the meeting as one of its signature events. It was chaired by the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs George Gerapetritis. The briefers were 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 President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US Janti Soeripto.

Maritime Security

On 20 May, the Security Council held a high-level open debate titled

“Strengthening Maritime Security through International Cooperation for Global Stability” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9919). Greece, the Council president in May, convened the debate as one of its signature events. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis chaired the meeting. The briefers included: UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the Board of Directors of the Union of Greek Shipowners Melina Travlos, and Professor of International Relations at the University of Copenhagen and UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) Research Fellow Christian Bueger.

“Protecting Water in Armed Conflict” Arria-formula Meeting

On 23 May, Slovenia (together with Algeria, Panama, and Sierra Leone) convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “Freshwater Resources and Related Infrastructure under Attack: Protecting Water in Armed Conflict—Protecting Civilian Lives”. Several non-Council members—Costa Rica, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Mozambique, the Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland, and Viet Nam—supported the meeting. Melita Gabrič, Slovenia’s Deputy Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, chaired the meeting. The briefers were: International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations Ted Chaiban, and Regional Head of Programmes for Geneva Call in Africa Mehwash Ansari.

ICJ Elections

On 27 May, the Security Council and General Assembly held concurrent meetings to fill a vacancy following the resignation of the former President of the ICJ, Judge Nawaf Salam (Lebanon), effective 14 January (S/PV.9922). The Council and the General Assembly elected the sole candidate, Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud (Jordan), to serve for the remainder of Judge Salam’s term of office, until 5 February 2027.

Haiti

On 28 May, the members of the Security Council held closed consultations on Haiti. Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador and Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Atul Khare briefed. The meeting was requested by the ten elected members to receive an update on the situation in the country and to discuss a Council response to the Secretary-General’s 24 February letter containing recommendations on options for UN support for Haiti (S/2025/122).

Ukraine

On 29 May, the Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine at the request of Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK (S/PV.9924). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Director of the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Lisa Doughten 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

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to the UN, participated under rule 39.

On 30 May, at Russia's request, the Council held a briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item to discuss the actions of a number of European states that it claims are hindering efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Ukraine (S/PV.9926).

Draft Report of the Security Council to the General Assembly

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted the draft of its annual report to the General Assembly, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2023 (S/PV.9927). Sierra Leone raised a point of order and said that it had broken silence on the full draft report and had drawn the Council's attention to the section on Western Sahara and urged its revision due to inaccuracy. As a result, it dissociated itself from the "impugned paragraph

Children and Armed Conflict

Expected Council Action

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

The open debate is expected to cover trends relating to the six grave violations against children, with a focus on violations that had a high incidence in the past year. (The six grave violations, as determined by the Security Council, are child recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; abductions; and the denial of humanitarian access.) In this regard, it seems that the meeting will focus on the killing and maiming of children, including the effects of the use of explosive weapons, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

Key Recent Developments

This year marks 20 years since the Security Council adopted landmark resolution 1612 of 26 July 2005, which established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The resolution was a milestone in the development of the architecture of the children and armed conflict agenda, which is viewed as one of the Council's most developed thematic issues. The conclusions adopted by the working group and the annexes in the Secretary-General's report, which list parties that have committed violations against children, have helped promote accountability and encourage conflict parties to take concrete steps, such as signing and implementing action plans to end and prevent violations against children.

In her 26 July 2024 report to the General Assembly, Gamba noted that more than 200,000 children have been separated from armed forces and groups since 1999 through dialogue and advocacy efforts by the UN. Additionally, 43 action plans have been signed by conflict parties, with 22 currently being implemented. Most recently, in June 2024, the Syrian National Army (SNA), a coalition of armed groups operating in Syria, signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children.

Despite this important progress, there have been worrying trends of grave violations committed against children in the past several years, driven by the eruption and intensification of conflicts in places like Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine. Last year's annual Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, dated 3 June 2024, documented 32,990 UN-verified grave violations, representing the highest number of violations recorded since the MRM's establishment.

These trends appear to have worsened in the past year. In a 28 December 2024 statement, UNICEF said that the effects of conflict on children reached "devastating and likely record levels" in 2024, noting that over 473 million children—more than one in six globally—live in conflict-affected areas. The statement added that the UN verified more child casualties in the first nine months of 2024 than during all of 2023, meaning that this year's upcoming annual report is likely to document an increase in violations. In her 8 January annual report to the Human Rights Council (HRC), Gamba noted that the UN verified over 18,000 grave violations against children in the first half of 2024 alone. She added that the period witnessed children being killed and maimed "in unprecedented numbers" in Burkina Faso, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and Ukraine.

Decisions relating to the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict have traditionally attracted considerable attention. On 29 May, 20 civil society organisations sent an open letter to Secretary-General António Guterres, calling on him to publish a full list of perpetrators that is "evidence-based and accurately reflects data collected and verified" by the MRM. In an April report titled "A Credible List", the organisation Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict provides several recommendations for the upcoming annual report, including to list two parties in the Central African Republic (CAR) for rape and other forms of sexual violence: government and pro-government forces, including the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), and the Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation (3R) armed group. The report also recommended listing the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and related state security forces for killing and maiming and the Defence and Security Forces of Burkina Faso for killing and maiming.

Developments in the Working Group on Children and

UN DOCUMENTS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT Security Council Resolution S/RES/1612 (26 July 2005) established the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Secretary-General's Report S/2024/384 (3 June 2024) was the annual report on children and armed conflict.

Children and Armed Conflict

Armed Conflict

In an unprecedented development, in 2025, Security Council members were unable to agree on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs more than five months into the year. This has prevented the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, like the rest of the Council's subsidiary bodies, from beginning its work to date. (For more information, see the *In Hindsight*, titled "Impact of a Delay in Subsidiary Body Chairs Appointments", in our May 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.) The allocation was agreed on 28 May, but the Note by the President setting out the subsidiary bodies for 2025 had yet to be issued at the time of writing. According to the agreed allocation, Greece will chair the working group in 2025-2026, with Panama serving as its vice chair.

This delay is likely to have significant repercussions in terms of the number of conclusions the group is likely to be able to adopt this year. Currently, there is a backlog of five country reports that have been published and are awaiting review, namely Burkina Faso, the DRC, Mali, Myanmar, and Yemen.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure the effectiveness of the tools that support the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. In the past several years, difficult dynamics in the working group have caused significant delays in the adoption of its conclusions, which require consensus. It has also on occasion in recent years failed to adopt conclusions on a number of Secretary-General's reports.

Against this backdrop, the upcoming open debate can serve as an opportunity for reflecting on the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda over the last 20 years. Members can use the meeting to highlight progress made as well as the challenges and propose ways to address the issues that have been hindering the ability of the Council to fully utilise the agenda's tools. For instance, they can discuss ways to make the conclusions of the working group more succinct and fit for purpose. They may suggest a review of the "tool-kit", adopted by the working group in 2006, which provides options for possible actions by the working group. The working group has not seriously reviewed or amended this non-paper since its publication almost 20 years ago.

An issue for the Council is how to address the deleterious and disproportionate effects on children of the use of explosive ordnance—such as explosive weapons and remnants of war (ERWs), improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and landmines—including in populated areas. In an April 2024 policy note, Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict emphasised that children have distinct vulnerabilities to explosive weapons, including the specific impact of blast injuries on children's bodies. Such weapons also often damage or destroy civilian infrastructure critical to children's survival and well-being, such as schools, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, and electrical infrastructure. The use of such weapons was the main cause of cases of killing and maiming of children documented in the Secretary-General's 2024 annual report on children and armed conflict. In that report, the Secretary-General encouraged member

states to endorse the 2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA). Member states can use the upcoming open debate to echo this call. Council members may also seek more synergies between children and armed conflict and the broader protection of civilians (PoC) agenda, which frequently addresses the issue of EWIPA. An option would be for the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on PoC to convene a joint expert briefing on the matter.

The prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children is another major concern. This violation is often under-reported, owing to such factors as stigmatisation, fear of reprisals, and lack of access to services. The Secretary-General's latest annual PoC report, dated 15 May, noted that, in 2024, the UN verified a significant increase in sexual violence against children in the DRC, Nigeria, and Somalia. Overall, the UN verified approximately 4,500 cases of sexual violence in 2024, with women and girls representing 93 percent of the victims. The report describes initiatives to address the issue, including the establishment by the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) of patrols to strengthen the prevention and deterrence of conflict-related sexual violence. An option for Council members is to consider mandating other relevant UN operations to undertake such efforts. They can also take steps to further implement resolution 2467 of 23 April 2019 on sexual violence in conflict, which included references to information sharing by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict with relevant sanctions committees. Members could also request the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to provide joint briefings to relevant sanctions committees and the working group.

Council Dynamics

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

Given the delay in appointing subsidiary body chairs in 2025, the new chair, Greece, will have to make up for lost time in addressing five country reports, which will require fostering trust and cooperation among a new cohort of working group members. As this subsidiary body had yet to begin working at the time of writing, it is too early to assess dynamics within the working group, not least since Somalia is on the children and armed conflict agenda and Pakistan is a situation of concern. In last year's annual report, the Secretary-General welcomed Pakistan's engagement with his special representative to develop concrete measures to protect children, noting that such engagement "may lead to the removal of Pakistan as a situation of concern from my next report, should all agreed practical measures be fully implemented".

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 13 May, US President Donald Trump announced that he would lift all US sanctions against Syria—which include wide-ranging trade and financial restrictions—and consider normalising ties with Damascus. Trump’s announcement was made at a meeting with Gulf Cooperation Council leaders during a state visit to Saudi Arabia. He indicated that the lifting of sanctions was a request from Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. It was followed by a 15 May Riyadh meeting that included the participation of Trump, Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, bin Salman, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in which Trump outlined five asks of Syria’s interim president: to establish diplomatic ties with Israel under the Abraham Accords; tell all “foreign terrorists” to leave Syria; deport “Palestinian terrorists”; help the US to prevent the resurgence of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh); and assume responsibility for ISIL detention centres in northeast Syria. The meeting was the first between a US and Syrian president in 25 years.

On 15 May, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio clarified that the administration will adopt a phased approach to sanctions relief. On 24 May, 180-day presidential waivers to sanctions under the “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act” were adopted; Congressional permanent repeal of the Ceaser Act will be sought in the future, if “enough progress” is made. Waivers are likely to allow the improvement of immediate needs; however, without a full repeal of the US legislation, Syria may still struggle to attract multi-year economic investments.

On 20 May, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas announced that EU foreign ministers had agreed to lift all remaining economic sanctions against Syria (the bloc had suspended some of its sanctions on Syria’s energy and transport industries in February), a decision Kallas described as reversible and conditional on progress. The EU also said that it will maintain sanctions related to the former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s government—as well as sanctions based on security grounds—and that it will “introduce additional targeted restrictive measures against human rights violators and those fuelling instability in Syria”.

On 16 May, the World Bank said that Syria is eligible for new loans after Saudi Arabia and Qatar helped clear the country’s outstanding debt to the institution, allowing it to “reengage with the country and address the development needs of the Syrian people”.

Briefing at a Security Council meeting on 21 May, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen welcomed international steps to lift sanctions and to provide financial support to Syria, highlighting their potential to improve conditions in the country and to support the political transition. He stressed, however, that revitalising Syria’s devastated economy will require the interim authorities to work on “overall economic reform and governance standards across the financial system”, which will also need international support.

The security situation in the country remains precarious amid simmering sectarian tensions and the threat of terrorism due to Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) and remnants of ISIL.

The end of April saw clashes in the suburbs of Damascus and the Sweida governorate targeting the Druze community—an ethnic minority group—which reportedly killed at least 119 people, including over a dozen civilians. Despite subsequent agreements between the interim authorities and Druze factions aimed at de-escalating tensions, the fighting has stoked fear of further violence against Syria’s minorities.

These clashes also came against the backdrop of widespread sectarian violence against the Alawite ethnic minority in Syria’s coastal region, which reportedly caused over 1000 fatalities in early March. A fact-finding committee mandated by Sharaa to investigate the events was immediately established; however, it is reportedly facing criticism that its work lacks transparency and sufficient cooperation with human rights organisations.

In line with the interim government’s goal to consolidate and reintegrate armed groups into the state, on 18 May, Syrian Defence Minister Murhaf Abu Qasra called on “remaining military groups to join the ministry within a maximum period of 10 days”.

Israel has conducted hundreds of airstrikes in Syrian territory since Assad’s ouster. At the beginning of May—in response to the recent attacks against the Druze—Israel renewed airstrikes on Syria, justifying them as necessary to protect the Druze communities. These included a 2 May airstrike close to the Syrian presidential palace, which Israel reportedly intended as a warning. Since then, reports have emerged that the countries are engaged in discussions about security issues and the potential normalisation of relations.

On 7 May, Sharaa met with French President Emmanuel Macron, on his first visit to Europe since becoming the interim President of Syria. Aside from the issue of sanctions, the two discussed security concerns, including the need to protect all Syrians from violence, the threat of ISIL, and French FTFs in Syria.

ISIL continues to pose a threat to Syria’s security. On 21 May, Pedersen warned the Security Council that the group “has been escalating its attacks in various areas in recent weeks, with signs of more coordinated operations involving IEDs and the use of medium-range weapons.” In May alone, ISIL has reportedly conducted at least ten attacks in northeast Syria. On 17 May, Syrian interim government forces conducted their first operation against the group in Aleppo, killing three militants. This operation was in keeping with Trump’s request that Damascus take a more active role against ISIL, as US military forces commence their gradual withdrawal from Syria.

The interim government is also taking steps to pursue transitional justice and accountability efforts. On 18 May, Sharaa announced the formation of a National Transitional Justice Commission and a National Commission for Missing Persons.

In his 21 May briefing to the Council, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Director of Coordination Ramesh Rajasingham highlighted that humanitarian needs in Syria remain immense, with 90 percent of the population living in poverty, over half the population facing severe food insecurity, and millions displaced. A 14 May report published by the International

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Organisation for Migration highlights challenges faced by large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees returning to their homes following Assad's ouster. These include unreliable access to electricity, clean water, healthcare, essential services, and housing, compounded by a lack of economic opportunities.

On 23 May, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) published its monthly report on the implementation of resolution 2118 of 27 September 2013, which required the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles. The report says that 19 outstanding issues—involving large quantities of potentially undeclared or unverified chemical weapons—from Syria's initial declaration of its chemical weapons programme remain unresolved. It also noted that an OPCW team was deployed to Syria from 14 to 25 April to engage on a future OPCW presence in the country, during which the caretaker Foreign Minister "committed to securing the necessary offices in Damascus for the OPCW by the next deployment". According to the *New York Times*, OPCW experts believe that more than 100 chemical weapons sites remain in Syria.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 4 April, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted resolution 58/25 on the situation of human rights in Syria. Among other recommendations, the resolution welcomes provisions of the Constitutional Declaration signed in March 2025, affirming that the state shall guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms. It likewise encourages Syria to ensure a sustainable path towards credible accountability for all crimes that do justice to the victims, survivors and their families, as well as contribute to reconciliation and a peaceful future for all Syrians.

In a 2 May press release, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic voiced grave concern over the recent surge in violence in the country following deadly clashes with sectarian dimensions in the Damascus countryside and Sweida governorate. Israeli airstrikes and threats of further military intervention across the Syrian territory likewise jeopardise the country's path towards sustainable and rights-respecting peace, risking Syria's already fragile security situation.

Women, Peace and Security

In his 21 May Council briefing, Pedersen announced that the Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB) held a meeting in Syria for the first time since its establishment. The meeting took place on 1 May in Damascus. Established by the Office of the Special Envoy in 2016, the WAB advises on all aspects of the Syrian political process, with a particular focus on gender equality and women's rights. It had thus far convened outside of Syria.

Pedersen said that during the 1 May meeting, the WAB held discussions with Syrian officials, women's organisations, and diplomatic personnel. He added that, in their engagements, WAB members sought clarification on ministerial strategy, including the expected role of civil society, and requested reassurances that women's political engagement would be guaranteed. Pedersen stressed that WAB members, and Syrian women more broadly, continue to underscore the importance of their political participation and their unique position to observe the situation on the ground, and to express their willingness to provide advice to the interim authorities.

During his briefing on humanitarian issues, Rajasingham said that women and girls in Syria continue to be at risk of gender-based violence (GBV), noting that, due to issues such as social stigma and lack of protection services, GBV often remains under-reported. Among other issues, Rajasingham said that, due to funding shortfalls, twenty safe spaces for women and girls have closed since January, severely reducing access to support services for GBV survivors. He called on the international donor community to "act fast and increase humanitarian funding".

Key Issues and Options

The main priority for the Council is to ensure that Syria's interim government pursues a credible, transparent, and inclusive political process grounded in the principles of Council resolution 2254. (Adopted on 18 December 2015, resolution 2254 focused on a

political solution to the Syrian crisis). Syrian unity and inclusivity will be a major factor in determining the success of the political transition—especially given recurring episodes of sectarian violence which threaten political stability.

The next significant step in the political transition is the establishment of the High Committee responsible for selecting members of the new People's Assembly, a transitional legislative authority responsible for working on the legislative reform agenda. In his 21 May briefing to the Council, Pedersen spoke of his engagement with the interim authorities on this matter and highlighted the need for the future People's Assembly to be representative of the unity and diversity of the nation. Council members could express their support for Pedersen's efforts in this regard and encourage him to update them on progress in the establishment of the High Committee, as needed.

Other key issues for the Council are how the interim government handles the issues of security sector reform, violence against minorities, and accountability efforts, including through the work of the newly established commissions and the fact-finding committee.

Should sectarian tensions continue to mount or culminate in another outbreak of violence, Council members could consider convening a private meeting to hear a briefing from the Special Envoy on the situation and to engage with the Syrian representative on ways to calm the situation.

The future of the UN's role in Syria is another key issue for the Council. Under the instruction of the Secretary-General, the UN Secretariat has been conducting an integrated strategic assessment of the changing situation in the country. An internal report was due to be prepared by the end of May. Based on this report, the Secretary-General will consider what type of UN presence in Syria would be most suitable to meet the country's current needs. The option(s) presented by the Secretary-General could necessitate Council action on a product that mandates adjustments to the UN's presence in the country.

Given the high number of estimated chemical weapons sites from the Assad era, Council members may call for the Syrian authorities to fully and transparently cooperate with the OPCW—including on establishing a presence in the country—and for additional support from member states to ensure that the organisation has the financial and human resources to carry out its missions.

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 based on the key principles of resolution 2254. They also agree that the Syrian interim government must credibly pursue accountability, transitional justice and reconciliation efforts and take measures to prevent any further violence against minorities as part of this process.

In this regard, several Council members have called for the fact-finding committee on the coastal violence to conduct credible, impartial, independent and transparent investigations. During the 21 May Council meeting, China called for expedited investigations, while Russia called for the findings to be brought to the attention of the Special Envoy and the Security Council.

Syria

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 which several Council members are now pursuing. (EU members, the UK, and the US have all initiated processes to lift sanctions).

Trump's meeting with Sharaa marks a consequential shift in the US position on Syria, which will most likely impact Council dynamics on the file. During the 21 May Council meeting, the US

representative said that the US “has taken first steps towards normal diplomatic relations with Syria” and reiterated Trump's five asks of Sharaa.

Council members also align on the need for the Syrian interim authorities to address the issue of FTFs—China, France, Russia, and the US have all been vocal on this issue.

Israel's presence and military activities in Syria remain a point of contention for Council members. Most 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.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Special Representative and Head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry is expected to brief. The mandate of UNOCA expires on 31 August 2027.

Key Recent Developments

On 7 February, an extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. Among other issues, the summit addressed the worsening security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has significantly deteriorated since January, as well as other humanitarian crises unfolding across the Central Africa region. Abarry participated in the summit and delivered remarks emphasising the need for an urgent and collective response to the multiple challenges facing the region.

On 12 April, Gabon held a presidential election, marking the end of the transition period following the August 2023 coup that removed President Ali Bongo Ondimba, who had been in power since 2009. The transitional military leader, Brice Oligui Nguema, who led the coup, won the election with 90 percent of the vote, while his main opponent, Alain Claude Bilie-By-Nze, secured only three percent. Bongo and his family were permitted to leave the country and flew to Luanda, following mediation efforts by Angolan President João Lourenço, acting in his capacity as the current Chair of the African Union (AU).

The AU Peace and Security Council, which met on 30 April to consider the situation in Gabon, welcomed the successful conduct of the presidential election and decided to lift Gabon's suspension from the AU's activities. The suspension was imposed on 31 August 2023 following the coup, based on the relevant provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. Nguema was officially sworn in on 3 May at an inauguration ceremony, which saw the participation of several African leaders.

Former Prime Minister Succès Masra—who ran against President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno in last year's presidential election—was

arrested on 16 May for his alleged involvement in recent intercommunal violence in the southwestern province of Logone Occidental, which left 42 people dead, mostly women and children. According to media reports, the violence was triggered by a dispute between ethnic Fulani nomadic herders and local Ngambaye farmers over the demarcation of grazing and farming areas. Masra's party, Les Transformateurs, has denied any involvement, and his arrest has raised fresh concerns about the shrinking political space in Chad.

In late March, Niger announced its withdrawal from the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), a regional security coalition comprising forces from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria mandated to combat Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin. This decision has raised concerns about the weakening of the region's counter-terrorism framework and the potential creation of a security vacuum that could be exploited by terrorist groups. In October 2024, a terrorist attack on a military base in Chad's border region with Nigeria—resulting in the deaths of 40 Chadian soldiers—prompted President Mahamat Idriss Déby to threaten Chad's possible withdrawal from the MNJTF as well.

On 25 March, Boko Haram reportedly killed at least 20 Cameroonian soldiers in an attack on a military base in the Nigerian border town of Wulgo. In addition to the persistent threat from Boko Haram and ISWAP, Cameroon continues to struggle with violence in its Anglophone northwest and southwest regions, where separatist groups are carrying out frequent ambushes against government forces, further destabilising the security environment. As the country prepares for a presidential election later this year, it faces a tense and volatile political and security landscape. President Paul Biya, who has been in power for 42 years, has not yet officially announced whether he will seek re-election, although he is widely expected to do so.

From 28 to 31 January, Abarry visited northern Nigeria together with Leonardo Santos Simão, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Sahel and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), as part of their joint efforts to support Lake Chad Basin countries in addressing the threats posed by terrorism. The Special Representatives travelled to Bama, a town in Borno state of Nigeria, to assess humanitarian

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOCA [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2024/7](#) (1 November 2024) expressed the Council's full support for UNOCA. [Secretary-General's Report S/2024/420](#) (30 May 2024) was the semi-annual report on UNOCA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9648](#) (10 June 2024) was a meeting on the situation in Central Africa.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

response efforts. They also participated in the 5th Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum that took place in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, from 29-31 January. The forum was focused on rebuilding the Lake Chad Basin, consolidating gains, and promoting peace, cross-border cooperation, security, and sustainable development.

As part of his UN80 Initiative, announced in March, to streamline the UN's work and enhance cost-efficiency and effectiveness, the Secretary-General has established a task force to develop proposals for potential structural reforms and programmatic alignment across the UN system. According to a compilation of proposals by the UN80 task force, the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) is among the entities being reviewed for possible mandate consolidation. The task force has identified overlaps between UNOCA's mandate and those of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). However, as the Secretary-General explained in his briefing to member states on 12 May, any proposals related to mandate reviews will need to go through the intergovernmental process within the UN General Assembly.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situations in several parts of Central Africa continue to be key concerns for the Council. In June, Council members are likely to be interested in hearing Abarry's assessment of country-specific situations in the region that are not on the Council's agenda. The recent election in Gabon and the upcoming election in Cameroon may be of particular interest to Council members.

The continued threat of terrorism in the Lake Chad basin remains a matter of serious concern. The fact that Boko Haram and ISWAP have not only become increasingly adept at using social media to

spread extremist ideology and recruit youth, but have also begun employing drones, further heightens these concerns. Council members may be keen to know about the MNJTF's fate in view of the recent decision by Niger to withdraw from the joint force. A possible option for the Guyanese Council presidency in June is to invite a regional expert to provide analysis and insights into the rapidly shifting regional security and geopolitical dynamics.

A related issue is how to address the root causes of the conflicts in the region. Council members continue to support the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin, developed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission with the support of the AU, and to call for expediting its implementation. They may also welcome the outcome of the 5th Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum.

Council Dynamics

Council members support a holistic regional approach to addressing the peace and security challenges in Central Africa, based on cooperation between UNOCA and the various regional mechanisms. Several members tend to underscore challenges in the region related to political transitions; humanitarian crises, including the rising number of refugees and internally displaced persons; the threats posed by terrorism and violent extremism; and the adverse effects of climate change.

Council members recognise the important role played by the MNJTF in fighting Boko Haram and ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin. They will likely condemn the recent attack in the region and underscore the need to continue supporting the MNJTF in neutralising these groups.

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its biannual meeting on the situation in Iraq. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Mohamed Al Hassan will brief on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country, as well as on progress in implementing resolution 2732 of 31 May 2024, which streamlined UNAMI's mandate and decided to close the mission by 31 December 2025.

Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2732 revised UNAMI's mandate to focus on four priority areas during the drawdown period: electoral assistance to Iraqi authorities; facilitation of progress on Iraq-Kuwait issues; support for development and humanitarian tasks; and promotion of accountability and human rights protections. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive transition and

liquidation plan by 31 December 2024. (For more information about the resolution, see our 30 May 2024 *What's in Blue* story.)

The Secretary-General transmitted the transition plan in a letter dated 24 December 2024, outlining three core transition priorities. The first is the effective implementation of the mission's remaining mandated tasks. In the area of electoral assistance, the plan emphasises that support will peak in the final weeks before the expected federal elections in late 2025 and that UNAMI will retain relevant personnel to ensure continuity in legal, technical, and gender-focused advisory roles. With respect to the Iraq-Kuwait file, the plan reiterates UNAMI's role in facilitating efforts to clarify the fate of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and the return of Kuwaiti property and notes that the Secretary-General will recommend an appropriate follow-on mechanism to ensure continued progress on these issues by 31 May, as requested by resolution 2732. UNAMI will also assist in development and humanitarian coordination, including in

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ Security Council Resolution S/RES/2732 (31 May 2024) renewed UNAMI's mandate for a final 19-month period until 31 December 2025. **Secretary-General's Report S/2024/857** (26 November 2024) was the Secretary-General's biannual report on UNAMI. **Security Council Letter S/2024/966** (24 December 2024) transmitted the Secretary-General's transition and liquidation plan for UNAMI, requested by resolution 2732.

relation to durable solutions for internally displaced persons and in alignment with the 2025–2029 UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Iraq. Finally, the mission will continue to promote accountability and human rights protections, including through support for national institutions in monitoring and reporting human rights violations.

The second drawdown priority concerns the phased transfer of responsibilities to the UN country team and Iraqi authorities. The plan identifies specific tasks and corresponding recipient entities, such as the transfer of electoral support roles to the UN Development Program (UNDP) and UN Women, and human rights monitoring to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Coordination structures have been established to oversee this process, including the development of an integrated electoral assistance project. These structures also encompass ongoing consultations aimed at sustaining women's protection, child rights monitoring, and climate-security work through existing UN mechanisms.

The third priority entails a gradual drawdown of UNAMI's personnel and physical footprint, including the closure of field offices and disposal of mission assets. The plan schedules the closure of Mosul and Kirkuk offices by mid-2025, with operations in Erbil and Baghdad continuing until the end of the mandate. It further includes provisions for the safe repatriation of guard units, environmental remediation of compounds, and a residual staffing presence within the Resident Coordinator's office to support continuity into 2026.

As UNAMI's drawdown progresses, significant developments at the regional level continue to impact Iraq's political and security landscape. The Secretary-General's most recent biannual report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), dated 31 January, noted that the group could exploit a potential power vacuum in Syria following the collapse of the al-Assad regime in December 2024 to regroup and strengthen its operational capacity. These risks compound the security challenges faced by Iraq, particularly in western provinces bordering Syria, and could undermine progress made in weakening ISIL's presence in the region. They could also impact the situation assessment underlying the agreement reached by Iraq and the US in September 2024 to draw down the international anti-ISIL military coalition in Iraq. On 14 March, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia'a al-Sudani announced that the leader of ISIL had been killed in an operation by Iraqi security forces, supported by the anti-ISIL coalition.

The regional fallout from the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza has also had significant repercussions for the country, particularly through the escalation of attacks by Iran-aligned armed groups operating as part of an informal coalition known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq. In the months following the outbreak of hostilities in Gaza, these groups intensified rocket and drone attacks against US forces stationed in Iraq and Syria, citing solidarity with the Palestinians. While

these attacks subsequently subsided following retaliatory US strikes, and Baghdad is engaged in negotiations to disarm or integrate these militias into the country's regular armed forces, some groups and their political affiliates have reportedly denied any intention to disarm, framing such demands as compromising Iraq's sovereignty and resistance posture.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Security Council ahead of UNAMI's termination is ensuring that the mission's streamlined mandate is implemented effectively and that the drawdown proceeds in a safe and orderly manner. The June briefing provides an opportunity to assess transition progress and consider whether adjustments to resource allocation or staffing are needed to sustain gains and prevent reversals.

Council members may also decide on a post-UNAMI mechanism to monitor progress on Iraq-Kuwait issues based on the Secretary-General's recommendations. One option could be the appointment of a high-level coordinator or the integration of follow-up responsibilities into the portfolio of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq.

Another issue is how the Council should respond to regional spillover risks and Iraq's ongoing security sector challenges. Council members could encourage Iraq to continue efforts to assert state authority over armed actors and support disarmament and reintegration processes, including through bilateral assistance or capacity-building by other UN entities.

While June's meeting will be the Council's last mandated briefing on UNAMI, members are likely to remain engaged on Iraq beyond the mission's closure, particularly in relation to the Iraq-Kuwait file, counterterrorism, and regional security. These issues could also be affected by Iraq's parliamentary elections later in 2025, which Council members are likely to monitor.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of the Iraqi government and its decision to request a time-bound termination of UNAMI. Resolution 2732 was adopted unanimously, and Council dynamics on the file remain generally cooperative, with continued interest in supporting Iraq's transition into a post-mission phase.

Regional developments and the risk of spillover from neighbouring conflicts continue to inform Council discussions, however. The US—the Council's penholder on Iraq—has pressed the government to disarm Iran-aligned militias in the country. By contrast, members such as China and Russia have voiced concern about the foreign military presence in Iraq and urged respect for Iraq's sovereignty.

The UK—the penholder on the Iraq-Kuwait file—has emphasised the importance of progress on the missing persons and property file and expressed support for a follow-on mechanism post-UNAMI.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

The IRMCT—with branches in The Hague, the Netherlands, and Arusha, Tanzania—focuses on completing the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which closed in December 2017 and December 2015, respectively. The IRMCT was established in 2010 by resolution 1966, which said that “the Mechanism shall continue the jurisdiction, rights and obligations and essential functions of the ICTY and ICTR” and that it “should be a small, temporary and efficient structure, whose functions and size will diminish over time, with a small number of staff commensurate with its reduced functions”.

Its tasks have included hearing the remaining trials and appeals from the ICTY and the ICTR, locating fugitives indicted by the ICTR, assisting national jurisdictions with requests related to prosecuting international crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, monitoring cases referred to national courts, enforcing sentences, protecting witnesses and victims, and preserving archives.

Pursuant to resolution 1966, the IRMCT was mandated to operate for an initial period of four years and for subsequent periods of two years unless the Council decides otherwise. The Council last reviewed the work of the IRMCT in mid-2024, following which it adopted resolution 2740, which extended Brammertz’s term for another two years, among other matters. Resolution 2740—which was adopted with 14 votes in favour and Russia abstaining—also incorporated several new elements, including requests for two reports from the Secretary-General by 31 December 2025: one regarding “the administrative and budgetary aspects of the options for possible locations of the archives of the ICTR, the ICTY, and the [IRMCT]”; and another concerning options for transferring certain remaining functions of the IRMCT, including supervision of sentences and the provision of assistance to national jurisdictions. Resolution 2740 also recalled the Council’s request in resolution 2637 of 22 June 2022 for “the production of clear and focused projections of completion timelines for all the [IRMCT’s] activities” and took note of the information that the IRMCT submitted to the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals in response to this request. (For more information on resolution 2740, see our 27 June *What’s in Blue* story.)

Gatti Santana and Brammertz briefed at the Council’s most recent semi-annual debate on the IRMCT, held on 10 December 2024. In her briefing, Gatti Santana provided an update regarding certain aspects of the IRMCT’s remaining work, including the supervision of sentences imposed by its predecessor tribunals, archive management, and the provision of assistance to national jurisdictions. She also said that the IRMCT stands ready to provide any information and support required by the Secretary-General to prepare the reports

requested by resolution 2740 and noted that the IRMCT has continued to streamline its operations, including by reducing staffing levels by approximately 60 percent, cutting its budget by more than 30 percent, and closing its Kigali field office in Rwanda.

During his briefing, Brammertz updated Council members on his office’s work assisting national authorities with pursuing accountability for crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. He noted that his office received more than 400 requests for such assistance in 2024 and referred to several examples of support that it provided in specific cases. In addition, Brammertz highlighted three pending matters that “should be nearing completion”: the Kayishema case, where the accused is contesting his transfer to the custody of the IRMCT; the Kabuga case, in which the accused has been declared unfit to stand trial; and the Šešelj et al. case, which the IRMCT referred to Serbia for trial.

On 22 November 2024, the Appeals Chamber of the IRMCT delivered its judgment on review in the Ntakirutimana case. The Appeals Chamber determined that Ntakirutimana had not established that a witness who gave evidence against him during earlier proceedings had recanted that testimony and upheld his convictions that were based on that testimony.

On 7 May, the IRMCT announced that Judge Lydia Mugambe had resigned after being jailed for committing modern slavery offences.

Key Issues and Options

Continuing to monitor the work of the IRMCT and the implementation of its mandate is an ongoing issue for the Council. Members could use the closed format of the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals to have a frank discussion with Gatti Santana and Brammertz regarding the IRMCT’s completion timelines. Members could also use this format to seek the views of Gatti Santana and Brammertz regarding options for the possible transfer of certain functions of the IRMCT and possible locations for the archives. Members might also ask how the Council can assist the IRMCT in completing its remaining work.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have a positive assessment of the IRMCT and the progress it has made, with the exception of Russia. During the semi-annual briefing on 10 December 2024, Russia strongly criticised the IRMCT and called for the transfer of its remaining functions to national authorities and UN entities. Other Council members commended the IRMCT for its work and urged member states to cooperate with the mechanism as it carries out its remaining functions.

The negotiations concerning resolution 2740, which most recently extended Brammertz’s term, were lengthy, difficult, and contentious. Russia apparently objected to many aspects of the draft text, provided comments on almost every paragraph, reiterated long-held criticisms of the IRMCT, and pushed strongly for a concrete time-frame and deadline for the transfer of the mechanism’s remaining functions. While some of Russia’s suggestions were supported by China, they were largely opposed by other Council members. (For more information on the negotiations, see our 27 June *What’s in Blue* story.)

UN DOCUMENTS ON INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNALS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2740 (27 June 2024) extended the term of the IRMCT’s prosecutor until 30 June 2026. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9805** (10 December 2024) was the semi-annual debate on the work of the IRMCT. **Security Council Letters S/2024/836** (18 November 2024) was a letter transmitting the assessments of the President and of the Prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its monthly meeting on Yemen. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and an official 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

On 6 May, US President Donald Trump announced that the US would stop its bombing campaign against the Houthis—a Yemeni rebel group also known as Ansar Allah—which aimed to degrade the group’s capability to attack military and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. Oman later announced that it had mediated a ceasefire between the US and the Houthis, which included a cessation of attacks on ships in the Red Sea and the facilitation of freedom of navigation for international shipping.

In recent months, the Houthis have repeatedly targeted US military assets in the Red Sea and Yemen as part of a wider campaign to attack Israel and disrupt maritime security in the Red Sea—actions they claim are in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

Council resolution 2768 (2025) requests the Secretary-General to issue a monthly report on any new incidents involving Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. A 9 May letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council said that the International Maritime Organisation indicated that no new incidents occurred during the reporting period of 10 April through to 9 May. The most recent verified attack against a commercial vessel was in December 2024.

The ceasefire agreement between the US and the Houthis does not extend to Israel, and the Houthis have said that they will continue their operations against Israeli targets until Israel’s military operations in Gaza cease. On 4 May, a Houthi-launched ballistic missile landed near Israel’s Ben Gurion International Airport, injuring eight people and causing temporary flight suspensions. Further ballistic missile and drone attacks against Israel continued throughout May, including after the US-Houthi ceasefire. Since the resumption of hostilities in Gaza on 18 March, Israeli media reports that the Houthis have launched 38 ballistic missiles and at least 10 drones at Israel, several of which were either intercepted or fell short of their targets.

Throughout May, Israel has conducted heavy retaliatory airstrikes on Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, including on the ports of Hodeidah and as-Salif, on Sanaa International Airport, and on several power plants. Israel has claimed that the ports are being used to transfer Iranian weapons intended for the Houthis. On 16 May, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz said that the Houthis “will pay a very heavy price” and promised to target the rebel group’s leadership. Following a second airstrike on Sanaa airport on 28 May—which Israel claimed destroyed the Houthis’ last remaining aircraft—Netanyahu accused Iran of being directly responsible for Houthi aggression emanating from Yemen.

Briefing the Council during a 14 May meeting, Grundberg welcomed the ceasefire agreement between the US and the Houthis

while highlighting that de-escalation in the Red Sea and the wider region is necessary to resolve Yemen’s ten-year-old conflict and advance a Yemeni-owned peace process. He warned, however, that retaliatory attacks between the Houthis and Israel continue to represent a dangerous escalation. In a press stakeout following the meeting, Grundberg stressed that regional de-escalation—including with regard to the situation in Gaza—is needed if there is to be progress on the peace process in Yemen, as the two “have become increasingly entangled”.

During the Council meeting, Grundberg also stressed that the UN remains unwavering in supporting Yemen’s conflict parties in fulfilling the commitments made in 2023 towards establishing a roadmap for peace. The commitments included a nationwide ceasefire, measures to address economic and humanitarian issues, and the advancement of an inclusive political process. Grundberg recognised, however, that “the mediation environment has changed significantly since late 2023” and that there is a “need for additional guarantees to enable the buy-in of the parties and to ensure the support of the region, and the international community and this Council”.

On 3 May, Yemen’s Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) appointed Salem Saleh Bin Braik as prime minister of Yemen’s internationally recognised government. He replaced Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak, who reportedly resigned after “many difficulties”, including disagreements with PLC Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi over a potential government reshuffle.

Yemen’s economy is on the brink of collapse. During the 14 May Council meeting, Grundberg highlighted how the country’s currency is deteriorating while citizens continue to suffer from severe electricity blackouts, unpaid salaries, and lack of access to basic commodities. At that same meeting, Yemen’s UN representative accused the Houthis of imposing a “systematic economic blockade” by targeting oil terminals leading to the suspension of oil exports, which account for nearly 90 percent of Yemen’s total commodity exports and 80 percent of the total revenues in the State’s general budget. He stressed that this has impacted the government’s ability to provide public services such as electricity and pay public salaries, while also devaluing the national currency.

Also briefing at the Council’s 14 May on Yemen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher warned that the humanitarian situation in Yemen is deteriorating, highlighting a myriad of threats faced by the civilian population—particularly children—which include malnutrition, cholera, landmines, lack of access to education and healthcare, and active hostilities. Fletcher emphasised that people in Yemen are dying because of funding cuts to humanitarian aid. According to OCHA, as at 13 May, the 2025 Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) was only nine percent funded. OCHA has published an addendum to the HNRP, which presents the most urgent funding requirements for critical life-saving assistance, totalling \$1.42 billion to assist 8.8 million people until the end of the year. On 21 May, the European Union (EU) Commission announced €80 million in humanitarian funding for 2025 to support people in need in Yemen. On 20 May, 116 aid organisations, including ten UN agencies, called for “urgent, collective action” to pull Yemen back from the brink of catastrophe.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2768 (15 January 2025) extended the Secretary-General’s monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9915 (14 May 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

Women, Peace and Security

As the Council's president for May, Greece elected to include a focus on women, peace and security (WPS) at the 14 May Council briefing on Yemen. Prior to the meeting, Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, Panama, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and the UK delivered a joint statement calling for, among other things, women's participation in ceasefire negotiations and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid.

Several participants addressed WPS issues during the meeting. Fletcher said that 9.6 million women and girls in Yemen are in severe need of humanitarian support and warned that funding cuts have left many survivors of gender-based violence without access to healthcare, psychosocial support, and legal aid. Dina El Mamoun, the Yemen Country Director of the NGO Centre for Civilians in Conflict, said that women and girls in Yemen continue to be killed, wounded, displaced, and systematically marginalised. She highlighted that economic collapse is driving more families to resort to early marriage, deepening existing inequalities and depriving girls of their rights and futures. El Mamoun stressed that, even while facing dire circumstances, women in Yemen are at the forefront of humanitarian response efforts, community-based conflict resolution, and peacebuilding initiatives. She noted, however, that despite this work, they continue to be excluded from meaningful participation in peace talks.

Panama condemned the restrictions limiting women's freedom of movement and access to basic services in areas controlled by the Houthis. Similarly, the "A3 Plus" members (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) expressed concern at movement restrictions and arbitrary detention. Denmark and Greece highlighted the importance of women's participation in peace efforts, while Slovenia stressed that women's rights should not be negotiable in any future peace and political process. ROK noted that women's participation in public life, including access to education, is essential for peace and stability in Yemen.

Key Issues and Options

Yemen has been confronted with immense challenges on the political, security, and economic fronts for several years. De-escalating hostilities in Yemen and the Red Sea and relaunching the stalled intra-Yemeni political process remain priorities for the Security Council. The US-Houthi ceasefire represents an opportunity for Council members to support further de-escalation and encourage the parties to resume negotiations towards a nationwide ceasefire and a political settlement.

At the same time, the Council will need to maintain pressure to protect the safety of navigation and shipping in the Red Sea and avoid a resumption of Houthi attacks on merchant ships and global supply chains. Given that the conflict in Gaza has been used by the Houthis as a justification for their attacks in the Red Sea and on Israel, this situation cannot be addressed separately from the broader regional context. This, however, remains a challenge as the Council continues to be 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.

Given the increasingly fraught humanitarian context, Council members could also 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 economic and 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 the reasons for the protracted political stalemate and insecurity in Yemen. The "A3 plus one" members, as well as China, Pakistan, and Russia, have all stressed that the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea cannot be discussed in isolation from the situation in Gaza, and some have directly blamed Israel for current instability in the region. Russia has also heavily criticised the US military campaign against the Houthis as ineffective, claiming that it only served to degrade Yemen's already dire humanitarian situation.

On the other hand, the P3 members (France, the UK, and the US) have accused Iran of financially and militarily supporting the Houthis, fostering further regional tensions. The US has taken a hawkish stance against Iranian support of the group, viewing it as the key facilitator of the Houthi movement—which the US has designated as a foreign terrorist organisation. The US has called for the Security Council to respond to "Iranian defiance" of the Council-mandated arms embargo. They have also called for the strengthening of the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), which inspects ships travelling to Houthi-controlled ports to ensure compliance with the arms embargo against the group.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), which expires on 31 December. In mid-June, an official from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to

brief Council members in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF, due on 2 June, and the most recent developments.

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2766](#) (20 December 2024) renewed the mandate of UNDOF for six months, until 30 June 2025. [S/RES/350](#) (31 May 1974) established UNDOF. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/154](#) (12 March 2025) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNDOF, covering the period 19 November 2024 to 18 February 2025. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9840](#) (17 January 2025) was a meeting on UNIFIL and UNDOF.

UNDOF (Golan)

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

On 20 December 2024, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2766, renewing UNDOF's mandate for another six months. The mandate renewal came shortly after Israeli troops entered the demilitarised zone following the fall of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad earlier that month and a statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declaring that the disengagement agreement had "collapsed". A 13 December UNDOF press statement confirmed a "significant increase in Israel Defence Forces (IDF) movements within the area of separation and along the ceasefire line" in direct violation of the 1974 agreement.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 12 March 2025 and covering the period from 19 November 2024 to 18 February 2025, noted that the ceasefire between Israel and Syria was "generally still maintained, notwithstanding multiple significant violations" of the 1974 agreement. It also reported that following Assad's ouster and the entry of the IDF into the area of separation, the "situation was altered significantly, and the operations of UNDOF were affected, in violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2766".

Israel has cited security concerns, including the need to protect residents in northern Israel, as the reason for its operations within the buffer zone. Although Israel had initially indicated that its presence in the area would be temporary, Defence Minister Israel Katz said on 28 January, and again on 16 April, that the IDF would remain in the buffer zone "indefinitely". During a 16 February meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke of preventing Iran from establishing a "new terror front" near the Golan Heights.

On 24 February, Netanyahu raised demands for the complete demilitarisation of southern Syria and affirmed that Israel would not allow any Hayat Tahrir al-Sham forces—the Security Council-listed terrorist group which led Assad's ouster—or Syrian forces to enter the area south of Damascus. He added that Israel would not allow any threat to the Druze—a minority sect present in both Syria and Israel—community in southern Syria. Israel has recently justified several military actions in Syrian territory—including airstrikes in Damascus—as necessary to protect the Druze community, following a wave of deadly clashes between militias aligned with the Syrian interim government and the Druze at the end of April.

Since December 2024, Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa has repeatedly emphasised that Syria remains committed to the 1974 agreement. In a 13 February letter from the Permanent Representative of Syria to the UN addressed to the Security Council, Syria accused Israel of entering Syrian territory through the area of separation and of attacking and displacing residents, destroying infrastructure and agricultural land and taking control of dams, including the Al-Mantara dam—a vital water source for southern

Syria. On 7 May, Sharaa said that his government is conducting indirect talks with Israel to "contain the situation".

Residents in the Golan have reportedly said that Israeli soldiers have prevented them from accessing their own homes, displaced residents, raided houses, and fired upon protesters demonstrating against the IDF's presence, raising fears of occupation. According to the Secretary-General's latest report, during the reporting period, UNDOF received 18 complaints and requests for assistance from residents on the Bravo (Syrian) side of the buffer zone due to the presence and activities of the IDF. The Secretary-General's report notes that "as at 18 February, the IDF had constructed 10 positions in the area of separation and occupied two houses in the area of limitation", in violation of the 1974 agreement. Satellite images published in Haaretz have shed light on IDF-constructed outposts—including on Mount Hermon, where UNDOF maintains the UN's highest-elevation permanently staffed position.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 February, the Secretary-General submitted a report (A/HRC/58/72) to the Human Rights Council (HRC) on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan. The report was prepared pursuant to HRC resolution 55/31, which asked the Secretary-General to report on the issue at its 58th session. In preparing the report, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, on behalf of the Secretary-General, sought the views of member states in Geneva on the implementation of the resolution's relevant provisions. The report includes responses from Syria and Iran asserting that systematic human rights violations are occurring in the Golan and denouncing measures taken by Israel to extend its jurisdiction and laws to the region.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented a report to the HRC on 6 March that provides an update on Israel's settlements in the Golan. The report's findings detail an increase in the number of Israeli settlements and the Israeli settler population, together with the development of commercial projects, noting its impact on various human rights, including the rights to adequate food, health, housing and a clean, sustainable environment.

On 4 March, the HRC adopted a resolution on human rights in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/RES/58/26). The resolution condemns the practices of the Israeli occupation authorities affecting the human rights of the Syrian citizens in the territory and calls upon Israel to comply with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the HRC and the Security Council, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and cease changing the Golan's physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in June is the renewal of UNDOF's mandate. Members could choose to have a technical rollover in order to avoid difficult negotiations at this stage. Members could also consider updating the renewal resolution in light of the significant shift in security dynamics in the Golan, increased challenges for UNDOF in addressing ongoing violations of the 1974 agreement, and obstructions preventing the mission from carrying out its mandate, while ensuring the safety and security of the peacekeepers.

Another issue for the Council is that the significant Israeli presence in the buffer zone could lead to an escalation between the parties that might imperil the ceasefire between Israel and Syria.

Members could also consider issuing a presidential statement urging the parties to uphold international law and their obligations under the 1974 agreement, underscoring that there should be no military forces or activities in the area of separation, other than those of UNDOF. The statement could also express concern over risks posed to local civilian populations by violations of the

UNDOF (Golan)

1974 agreement and call upon the parties to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate safely and securely and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the agreement.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. Despite historical divisions about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, Russia and the US have traditionally considered UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree, serving as co-penholders on the issue.

Following the ouster of Assad, the dynamic between Russia and the US on the Syrian file has seen a shift. The two countries, once holding strongly opposing views, have shown increased alignment, as demonstrated by their co-penholdership of a 14 March presidential statement (S/PRST/2025/4) addressing sectarian violence and key issues on Syria's political transition, and their agreement

on 17 December 2024 Council press statement which was penned by France.

The IDF's recent actions and presence in the Golan—as well as statements by Israeli officials on this issue—have generated criticism from some Council members. In its explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 2766, Algeria said that Israel's presence in the area of separation violates the disengagement agreement and Security Council resolutions, and raised questions about the occupation of Syrian territory.

During the Council's monthly Syria meeting on 21 May, several Council members expressed concerns regarding Israel's presence in the area of separation, with some demanding its full withdrawal, while calling for all parties to adhere to the 1974 agreement.

On the other hand, the US has often publicly recognised Israel's security concerns over the Golan and has not taken issue with the IDF's encroachment into Syrian territory.

Poverty, Underdevelopment, and Conflict: Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

As the signature event of its presidency, Guyana is planning to hold a high-level open debate on “Poverty, Underdevelopment, and Conflict: Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security”. Invited briefers include Secretary-General António Guterres, an official from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and an African Union (AU) Commission official. President Mohamed Irfaan Ali of Guyana is expected to chair the meeting.

A presidential statement is a possible outcome.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The peace, security and development nexus has been a recurring theme in the work of the UN, including the Security Council, since the 1990s. As early as January 1992, the Council held a meeting at the heads of state and government level that resulted in a statement in which members recognised that “lasting peace and stability require effective international cooperation for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of a better life for all in larger freedom”. Over time—and particularly since the adoption of resolution 2282 in April 2016, which reframed peacebuilding as a proactive, inclusive, and integrated process aimed at preventing conflict—the Council has moved towards a more comprehensive approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding that recognises the importance of addressing structural issues (that is, taking action to target underlying causes of conflict such as socioeconomic inequality, ethnic discrimination and the lack of participatory politics).

In the past decade, several Council presidents have initiated signature events that have highlighted how limited economic progress—especially when combined with inequality, resource scarcity, and political instability—can heighten the risk of violent conflict. These

meetings have also explored how conflict disrupts development efforts.

Among others, these have included:

- An open debate initiated by China in November 2023 on promoting sustainable peace through common development.
- A high-level open debate convened by Mozambique in March 2023 on “Peace and security in Africa: the impact of development policies in the implementation of the Silencing the Guns initiative”.
- An open debate on “Peace and Security in Africa: capacity-building for sustaining peace” in August 2022 at China's initiative.
- A ministerial-level open debate on “Security, Development, and the Root Causes of Conflict” convened by the UK in November 2015.

Over the years, several Council outcomes (resolutions and presidential statements) have also emphasised the interlinkages among peace, security, and development. This theme was highlighted, for example, in the presidential statements adopted on “Peace consolidation in West Africa” in May 2024 and on the “Central African region” in November 2024. It has also been a recurring aspect of the Council's thematic products on conflict prevention and peacebuilding and sustaining peace, such as resolution 2282 in April 2016 and resolution 1625 on conflict prevention in September 2005, both of which recognise that peace, security and development are “mutually reinforcing”.

In August 2024, Sierra Leone hosted an open debate on “A New Agenda for Peace—Addressing Global, Regional and National Aspects of Conflict Prevention” in August 2024. The meeting aimed to facilitate a broad reflection on *A New Agenda for Peace* (NAfP)—one of the policy briefs produced by Secretary-General António Guterres in July 2023 for member states' consideration in preparation for the UN's Summit of the Future in September 2024—and

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEBUILDING Security Council Resolution S/RES/2171 (21 August 2014) requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Council on actions to promote and strengthen prevention tools within the UN system. **Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2024/7 (1 November 2024) was on Central Africa. S/PRST/2024/3 (24 May 2024) was on West Africa and the Sahel. S/23500 (31 January 1992) was a statement on “The responsibility of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security”. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.9710 and **Resumption I** (21–22 August 2024) was an open debate on “A new agenda for peace — addressing global, regional and national aspects of conflict prevention”.

Poverty, Underdevelopment, and Conflict: Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security

how it can help promote conflict prevention at the national, regional and global levels. A common thread of the meeting was the call for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of conflict, with numerous speakers drawing attention to the intrinsic link between sustainable development and lasting peace.

One of the NAfP's innovations is the Secretary-General's proposal that UN member states develop national prevention strategies. According to the NAfP, national prevention initiatives should entail "approaches grounded in sustainable development" and be "multi-dimensional, people-centred and inclusive of all the different components of society". The NAfP recommends that the Peacebuilding Commission create a mechanism to mobilise political and financial support for national and regional prevention strategies of states that are interested in receiving international assistance for developing and implementing their strategies.

The Summit of the Future culminated in the adoption by member states of the *Pact for the Future*, a document agreed through intergovernmental negotiations that is meant to adapt international cooperation and institutions to today's realities and the challenges of the future. In Chapter II of the Pact, which focuses on international peace and security, member states recognise "interdependence of international peace and security, sustainable development and human rights". They further call for "accelerating investment in and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals" and helping states, upon their request, to build national capacity "to promote, develop and implement their nationally owned prevention efforts and address the root causes of violence and conflict in their countries".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to enhance its understanding of the ways in which poverty, underdevelopment, and other root causes of conflict can be more effectively tackled.

Another key issue is how to establish more systematic and strategic partnerships with other parts of the UN system (such as the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and relevant funds, programs and agencies), international financial institutions, and regional and sub-regional organisations to support the UN's conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

One option is to pursue a presidential statement that focuses on improving the UN's efforts to address the linkages between underdevelopment and conflict.

Also an option would be for Guyana, as the initiator of the open debate, to produce a chair's summary that captures the key themes of the meeting and to circulate the summary as a public document.

Another option would be for the Council to hold an informal

interactive dialogue to explore synergies with other parts of the UN system, the international financial institutions, and regional and sub-regional organisations in pursuing efforts to promote sustainable development and build resilience to conflict risk factors in countries on the Council's agenda that are emerging from conflict.

During the debate, Council members could also advocate for a more consistent role for the PBC in supporting the peacebuilding dimensions of mission mandates from formation to drawdown in a way that underscores the linkages between the review of the Peacebuilding Architecture currently underway and the upcoming view of UN peace operations.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is widespread recognition in the Security Council that adverse socioeconomic conditions can heighten the risk of conflict, with many members frequently citing the need to address poverty and underdevelopment as key elements of effective conflict prevention strategies. This was a notable theme, for example, in the Council's March 2024 open debate on "Promoting conflict prevention—empowering all actors including women and youth" held at Japan's initiative. At the debate, several Council members, including China, Guyana, Sierra Leone, and Slovenia, cited the need to address poverty as a means of preventing conflict. In this regard, China, a long-time proponent of the need to address the root causes of conflict, stated, "Experience and lessons learned both show that resolving development issues, such as poverty, unemployment and income inequality, as a priority can help to prevent and respond to conflicts at their roots."

One challenge, however, is that there are different views about what the structural causes of conflict are and what the Council's role in addressing them should be. While some members believe that issues such as climate change, human rights, and gender inequality should be discussed by the Council, others do not believe that such factors are within the Council's mandate and maintain that they should be handled by other parts of the UN system. More broadly, the Security Council has struggled to engage effectively in conflict prevention, in part because of concerns about interference in states' internal affairs, a particular impediment to addressing intra-state conflict.

There appears to be rising interest among UN member states in having the PBC become more explicitly involved in prevention, given its mandate to address issues that lie between peace and development and the PBC's practice of discussing situations only with the consent of the country concerned. Some member states remain hesitant, however, to endorse the PBC as a conflict prevention platform.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Afghanistan. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and a senior official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief. A civil society representative may brief as well. The delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan will be one aspect of the briefing in accordance with resolution 2615.

UNAMA's mandate expires on 17 March 2025.

Key Recent Developments

Afghanistan continues to grapple with one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. According to OCHA's humanitarian update on Afghanistan, which was published on 21 May and covers the period from 1 to 28 February, 23.7 million Afghans—over half of the country's population—require humanitarian assistance.

Despite the scale of the crisis, humanitarian actors in Afghanistan are facing a critical funding shortfall that is affecting their efforts to provide aid. During his visit to Afghanistan from 27 April to 2 May, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher warned that some local non-governmental organisations were planning to lay off half of their staff and noted that 400 health clinics had closed “in the last few weeks”. Several weeks earlier, World Food Programme (WFP) Acting Country Director for Afghanistan Mutinta Chimuka told reporters that her agency had been forced to cut rations and indicated that it may not be able to provide food assistance to all those in need in 2025.

The Trump administration's decision to suspend all remaining funding for humanitarian aid in Afghanistan is expected to have a significant impact on humanitarian operations in the country. In a 22 April update, OCHA warned that several million less people will receive humanitarian assistance in 2025 without US funding, noting that through the end of February, 7.3 million people have received humanitarian support in Afghanistan, compared to 8.6 million in the same two-month period in 2024.

The update also said that the suspension is already having far-reaching consequences, with 68 percent of the UN's humanitarian partners reducing their target, 45 percent reducing their geographical coverage, and 42 percent reducing their staff. On 23 April, OCHA announced that it had undertaken “an urgent prioritisation” of the 2025 Afghanistan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) and revised the financial requirement to \$1.62 billion, a 31 percent reduction in the amount called for when the HNRP was first released.

On 13 May, Fletcher briefed Council members and other member states on his visit to Afghanistan. The briefing was convened by China and held at its mission. Fletcher met with local humanitarian actors and several Taliban officials during the visit, including Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. In their meeting, Fletcher and Muttaqi spoke about efforts in Afghanistan to address insecurity and drugs, as well as the adverse effects of climate change on the humanitarian situation in the country. Fletcher also underscored the challenges facing women in Afghanistan, emphasising

that development is not possible without the education and full participation of girls.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan remains dire, particularly for women and girls. On 10 April, UNAMA released a report on the implementation, enforcement, and impact of the “Law on the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice” (PVPV Law), which was promulgated by the Taliban in August 2024. The report notes that UNAMA has observed systematic and consistent efforts to enforce the PVPV law, including the establishment of “provincial implementation committees” in 28 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and that enforcement has led to infringements of personal and private spaces, public areas, and economic activities for various groups in Afghan society, with women disproportionately impacted. It states that implementation of the PVPV Law has hampered the ability of UN agencies and non-governmental organisations to deliver humanitarian assistance and is likely to compound Afghanistan's dire economic situation. The report further observes that both the law and the efforts to implement it suggest that the Taliban is continuing to pursue a path that distances Afghanistan from its international obligations.

According to UNAMA's latest report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan, Taliban inspectors enforcing the PVPV Law have continued to instruct health clinics, shops, markets, government offices, and taxi drivers to deny services to women not accompanied by a male relative and have prevented women from accessing other public spaces. The report also highlights specific violations of Afghan women's right to work and particular instances of gender-based violence against women and girls.

In an 8 March statement, UNAMA reiterated its call for the Taliban to lift restrictions on the rights of women and girls and called on member states to “translate solidarity into action by amplifying Afghan women's voices, supporting their leadership, and investing in their resilience and future”.

On 23 March, the US lifted multimillion-dollar bounties on three senior Taliban figures and members of the Haqqani network—Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, Abdulaziz Haqqani, and Yaha Haqqani. The move came several days after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that a US citizen had been released from Taliban captivity following a visit to Kabul by a US delegation that included former US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Trump advisor Adam Boehler. According to media reports, Taliban officials pushed for US recognition as the government of Afghanistan during talks with the delegation.

On 17 April, the Supreme Court of Russia suspended the Taliban's designation as a terrorist organisation, a decision widely seen as paving the way for closer ties between Moscow and the Taliban. On 23 April, Russia announced that it had raised the Taliban's diplomatic representation in Moscow to the ambassadorial level. Several weeks later, on 2 May, Russian Presidential Special Envoy to Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov told state media that Russia will help the Taliban fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K)—ISIL's Afghan affiliate—“through specialised structures”.

Tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban have continued to simmer in recent months. On 19 March, the Torkham border crossing between the two countries was reopened after clashes between Pakistani and Taliban security forces led to its closure for nearly a

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month. In late March, media outlets reported that Pakistan plans to expel nearly three million Afghans during 2025 as part of an ongoing crackdown that first began in October 2023. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 144,000 thousand Afghans returned from Pakistan in April, 30,000 of whom were deported. On 4 April, a group of independent human rights experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) called on Pakistan to halt plans to forcibly remove Afghans. Pakistan has expressed concerns about security and crime linked to the high number of Afghan refugees, a claim challenged by Afghanistan. On 27 April, Pakistani security forces announced that they had killed 54 Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants as they attempted to cross the border between the two countries.

Member states are currently negotiating a General Assembly resolution on “the situation in Afghanistan”, led by Germany. The General Assembly last adopted a resolution on “the situation in Afghanistan” on 4 November 2022 with 116 votes in favour, zero votes against, and 10 abstentions (Belarus, Burundi, China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Russia, and Zimbabwe).

At the time of writing, UNAMA, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and the participants in the Doha process are working on the roadmap for political engagement referred to in the report of the Afghanistan independent assessment requested by resolution 2679. (Among other matters, the independent assessment outlined an “architecture for engagement” to guide political, humanitarian, and development activities in Afghanistan. For background on the independent assessment and the Doha process, see our 27 November 2023, 8 December 2023, 28 December 2023, 25 February 2024, and 7 March 2025 *What’s in Blue* stories and our June 2024 and September 2024 *Monthly Forecasts*.)

Women, Peace, and Security

Azadah Raz Mohammad, Co-Founder of the Ham Diley Campaign, briefed the Security Council during the 10 March meeting on Afghanistan. She highlighted that, since 2021, the Taliban have issued at least 126 decrees depriving women and girls of fundamental rights and freedoms as well as access to healthcare and justice. Raz Mohammad said that the Taliban have “systematically persecuted ethnic and religious groups” and that the LGBT community, which was already “at great risk” before the Taliban takeover in August 2021, currently faces systematic violence. She expressed concern about steps by member states to “normalize the Taliban”, citing the exclusion of Afghan women from formal discussions at the third Doha meeting in June 2024 as a particularly harmful example of compliance by the international community with a demand by the Taliban. Raz Mohammad welcomed the January announcement by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court that he had applied to the Court for arrest warrants for two Taliban leaders for gender persecution and called on member states to exercise universal jurisdiction to bring Taliban leaders who are committing international crimes to justice. Among other recommendations, she called on the Security Council to demand that the Taliban immediately reverse all policies and practices that prevent the full enjoyment of women’s human rights. Raz Mohammad urged the Council to impose sanctions on Taliban leaders who have committed human rights violations against Afghan women and girls, and not to lift sanctions, including travel bans, on those who have perpetrated such crimes. She also stressed the importance of guaranteeing the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of diverse Afghan women in all international discussions about Afghanistan’s future. Additionally, she called for gender apartheid to be codified as a crime against humanity, including through the draft treaty on crimes against humanity.

Key Issues and Options

The Taliban’s continuing refusal to adhere to many of Afghanistan’s international obligations, especially those relating to women and girls, is a major issue for the Council and directly contradicts the recommendations outlined in the report of the Afghanistan independent assessment. Council members could ask for an informal meeting with representatives of DPPA and UNAMA to discuss possible Council action in response to the Taliban’s actions. Members could use this meeting to ask for an update on the roadmap for political engagement, next steps in the Doha process, and the activities of the working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector that participants in the third Doha meeting agreed to establish in mid-2024. At the time of writing, it appears that the working groups may convene during the coming months.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is another significant issue. During the Council’s December 2024 open briefing on Afghanistan, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher called for the Council to support efforts to reduce aid obstruction and restrictive measures. Members could hold an informal meeting with humanitarian actors to discuss possible steps that the Council could take in this regard.

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

The threat of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan remains an issue. The 6 February report of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da’esh Sanctions Committee notes that there are more than two dozen terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and says that these groups pose “a serious challenge to the stability of the country, as well as to the security of Central Asian and other neighbouring states”. Council members could hold an informal meeting with a counter-terrorism expert, which would give members a chance to discuss possible options for bolstering the Council’s efforts to manage this threat.

Council Dynamics

Although Council members are generally united in their desire to see a prosperous, peaceful Afghanistan free from terrorism and ruled by an inclusive government, they are divided over how to achieve this goal. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded states, have previously argued that the Taliban must adhere to international norms in order to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community.

China and Russia, on the other hand, have contended that the international community should provide economic and development assistance to Afghanistan without linking it to other issues, such as human rights, and prefer dialogue and engagement without any increased pressure. Both members have also repeatedly called for the release of frozen assets belonging to Afghanistan’s central bank, the bulk of which were seized by the US following the Taliban’s takeover in August 2021.

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These divisions were on display during the negotiations leading to the renewal of UNAMA's mandate in March, where Council members disagreed over preambular language regarding development aid, economic recovery, frozen assets, engagement, and women, peace and security. (For more information, see our 17 March *What's in Blue* story.)

Council members have not been able to agree on the penholdership on the Afghanistan file since Japan—which held the pen in

2024—ended its two-year Council term in December 2024. Two pairs of Council members have indicated that they are willing to work together as co-penholders: China and Pakistan on the one hand, and the Republic of Korea and the US on the other. During discussions concerning UNAMA's mandate, members agreed that the presidents of the Council in February and March—China and Denmark—would lead the negotiations. At the time of writing, members have not been able to resolve the dispute regarding penholdership.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold its bimonthly briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Serwaa Tetteh will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest report on UNSMIL.

Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, with advisory support from the High State Council (HSC), and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and backed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The parties remain deadlocked over proposed legislation to hold national elections that would reconcile the country's divided government. A key point of contention concerns the formation of a unified interim government to organise the elections—a move favoured by the GNS and HoR but opposed by the GNU and some segments of the HSC. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments—which has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections—is one of the root causes of Libya's political, security, and economic instability.

On 12 May, fighting erupted between rival militias in Tripoli following the killing of Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, the head of the Stability Support Authority (SSA), an armed group affiliated with Libya's Presidential Council. Kikli was reportedly killed in a facility operated by the 444 Brigade, a rival militia aligned with Dbeibah.

Although it appears that the SSA quickly stood down, fighting continued between the 444 Brigade and Radaa, another militia that does not support Dbeibah. Radaa was apparently concerned that it would be targeted following Dbeibah's 13 May announcement declaring an end to “parallel security institutions”—armed groups operating outside of the government's regular security forces—during a meeting with government security officials. While the GNU announced a ceasefire the same day, clashes continued the following day. The violence, which reportedly drew in fighters from outside the city, took place in densely populated urban areas and resulted in at

least eight civilian deaths.

The UN has expressed serious concern about the recent outbreak of violence in Tripoli. In a 15 May statement, UNSMIL condemned the “rapid escalation of violence” and warned that “the situation could quickly spiral out of control.” It urged all parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to “engage without delay in serious, good-faith dialogue to resolve this conflict peacefully,” underscoring the mission's “readiness to provide its good offices to facilitate dialogue and bring an end to the fighting.”

On 16 May, Tetteh briefed Council members in closed consultations on the situation in Libya following a request by the UK, France, and the US. The following day, Council members adopted a press statement expressing concern over escalating violence and civilian casualties in Tripoli, urging all parties to protect civilians, respect agreed truces, and work towards a permanent ceasefire with accountability for attacks. They also reaffirmed their strong support for an inclusive, Libyan-led political process under UN facilitation, the unification of Libyan institutions, and respect for Libya's sovereignty and unity.

On 6 May, the Advisory Committee set up by UNSMIL on 4 February to address outstanding issues hindering the holding of elections in Libya completed its mandate and submitted its final report to the mission. The Committee was composed of a diverse group of Libyan personalities, whose selection was based on several criteria, including expertise in legal, constitutional, and electoral issues; the ability to build compromise; and an understanding of the political challenges facing Libya.

The Committee's report outlined four options regarding conducting elections and ending the transitional phase: holding presidential and legislative elections simultaneously; holding parliamentary elections first, followed by the drafting and adoption of a permanent constitution; adopting a permanent constitution before elections; and establishing a political dialogue committee, based on the Libyan Political Agreement, to finalise electoral laws, executive authority, and the permanent constitution.

On 15 May, International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan briefed the Council on the ICC's Libya-related activities. Khan presented his 29th report to the Council, outlining the main developments and steps taken during the reporting period. In his briefing, Khan welcomed Libya's 12 May declaration

Libya

formally accepting the jurisdiction of the Court for alleged crimes committed in its territory from 2011 until the end of 2027. The Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through the adoption of resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011.

On 29 May, the Council adopted resolution 2780, renewing for six months the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo imposed on the country in resolution 1970.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council remains supporting political progress towards national elections to unify Libya's divided government. One of the core objectives for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country's rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement on electoral laws, including the possible establishment of a unified interim government to organise the elections.

Another concern for the Council is the fragile security situation, especially after the most recent escalation of violence in Tripoli. Although the violence has now ceased, the UN had warned that it could have spiraled out of control, posing a serious threat to the permanent ceasefire reached in 2020. The underlying issues that led to the violence underscore the need for sustained attention to the political and security dynamics in Libya.

June's briefing will provide Council members with an opportunity to hear about UNSMIL's revitalised efforts to facilitate dialogue between Libyan political stakeholders. In this regard, Council members will most likely be interested to hear more from Tetteh about the recently published recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

To demonstrate the Council's continued support for the mission's

intensified engagement under Tetteh's leadership, members could consider issuing a press statement expressing support for the Special Representative and the efforts of the Advisory Committee. They could also consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with representatives of the rival governments and Tetteh for a frank discussion on potential ways to break the long-standing political impasse.

Council Dynamics

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

At the most recent briefing in Libya in April, most Council members welcomed the establishment and the work of the Advisory Committee. Russia, however, emphasised that its recommendations should remain technical and serve only to inform the Special Representative. It also stressed the importance of the Committee's inclusiveness and impartiality. Russia further emphasised that the Council should only become involved once the Committee's work has been fully socialised among the Libyan people.

More broadly, geopolitical tensions continue to influence Council dynamics on Libya. Several Western members remain concerned about Russia's growing presence in the eastern part of the country under Haftar's control, which has reportedly been accelerated by the redeployment of Russian military assets from Syria following the ouster of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Russia, for its part, routinely blames Libya's current instability on the NATO-led military intervention in 2011 and accuses Western countries of pursuing economic interests, particularly to exploit Libya's oil reserves.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Iran

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to convene a briefing on the Secretary-General's biannual report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. The Council will also receive a report from the Joint Commission, which was established to oversee the implementation of the JCPOA and comprises the current parties to the agreement: China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Iran. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and a representative of the European Union (EU) in its capacity as coordinator of the Joint Commission are expected to brief.

The Council is also supposed to receive the biannual report and briefing from the Council's 2231 facilitator. This may not take place in June, however, as the position remained vacant at the time of writing due to the delay in the appointment of subsidiary body chairs.

This month's briefing is the last mandated Council meeting on

the Iran non-proliferation issue before the scheduled expiry of the JCPOA and resolution 2231 on 18 October.

Background

The US was originally a signatory to the JCPOA, but US President Donald Trump withdrew the country from the agreement—which he argued was not strict enough—and imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran during his first term (2017–2021). Although Iran formally remained in the JCPOA, it took steps that directly contravened the agreement's terms, including enriching uranium to levels beyond the JCPOA-mandated limits and removing cameras and monitoring equipment required by the deal.

During the subsequent administration of US President Joseph Biden (2021–2025), the US, Iran, and other parties to the JCPOA began talks to revive the agreement. Those discussions ultimately failed after Iran insisted, as a condition for accepting a deal, that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) close its investigation

into traces of enriched uranium that it had discovered at three undeclared sites in Iran in 2019. The US and European parties to the JCPOA objected to this demand, which they viewed as a separate issue related to Iran's obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In a November 2022 resolution, the IAEA Board of Governors censured Iran and directed it to comply with the IAEA's investigation. In response, Iran announced that it had started enriching uranium to 60 percent purity, approaching the approximately 90 percent level required to produce a nuclear weapon and well above the 3.67 percent limit imposed by the JCPOA.

Since the collapse of negotiations to revive the JCPOA, Iran has continued to expand its production of highly enriched uranium, and its cooperation with the IAEA has grown increasingly strained. In November 2024, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted another resolution censuring Iran, which referred to the country's "continued failure" to cooperate with the IAEA and requested the agency to produce a "comprehensive and updated assessment on the possible presence or use of undeclared nuclear material in connection with past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme". The IAEA Board of Governors is expected to receive that report ahead of its June quarterly meeting.

Recent Developments

In its latest publicly available quarterly reports on Iran's nuclear activities, dated 26 February, the IAEA found that Iran's stockpile of uranium, enriched to 60 percent purity, had risen significantly during the reporting period, increasing by approximately 50 percent and totalling enough fissile material to produce six nuclear weapons if enriched further. Using stronger language than is typical for these reports, the agency said that the "significantly increased production and accumulation of high enriched uranium by Iran, the only non-nuclear weapon State to produce such nuclear material, is of serious concern". On 12 March, the Security Council held a private meeting on the IAEA's findings.

After returning to office earlier this year, Trump initiated bilateral negotiations with Iran aimed at curbing the country's nuclear programme in exchange for US sanctions relief. Since April, the parties have conducted several rounds of political and technical-level talks in Italy and Oman. The fifth and most recent round took place in Rome on 23 May.

Both parties initially expressed cautious optimism about the prospects of reaching a deal, but their public messaging has since hardened. The key point of contention concerns Iran's enrichment capabilities. The US demands that Iran dismantle its entire nuclear infrastructure and cease all uranium enrichment, while Iran claims it has a right to enrichment under the NPT and insists on retaining low-level enrichment capability for civilian purposes. Moreover, while certain compromise solutions reportedly under discussion could potentially resolve this impasse, the talks could also be complicated by differing positions on the scope of a potential agreement and whether it would go beyond the ambit of the JCPOA by also imposing restrictions on Iran's ballistic missile programme and the country's support to regional proxy groups. On 20 May, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei expressed pessimism about the state of the negotiations, saying that he did not expect them to "reach a conclusion".

Trump has threatened military action if the parties are not able to reach a deal but has expressed a preference for a diplomatic solution to the issue. In April, he reportedly rejected a plan proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to strike Iranian nuclear facilities—which would have required US military support—opting instead to pursue negotiations. According to recent media reports, the US has obtained intelligence that Israel is currently planning a military operation that it could undertake with or without US backing should the talks fail. Proponents of military action argue that Iran is now uniquely vulnerable to an offensive operation after Israel struck several of its air defence facilities in October 2024, and key Iranian allies such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the al-Assad regime in Syria have been weakened or overthrown.

In response to the reports of a possible Israeli military operation, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi sent a letter dated 22 May to the Security Council, Secretary-General António Guterres, and IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi warning that the country would retaliate against any use of force—for which it would also hold the US legally responsible—and calling on the Security Council to take "immediate and effective action in response to these threats". The letter also said that Iran would implement "special measures" to protect its nuclear material and facilities, which could further complicate the IAEA's monitoring and verification activities in the country.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 March, Mai Soto, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran, submitted a report to the General Assembly that notes an extraordinary rise in executions in 2024, with over 900 recorded cases, including the highest number of women executed in the past decade.

On 14 March, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran (IFFM) raised alarm at the Government's continued use of systematic repression to suppress public dissent. The IFFM found that two and a half years after the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests began in September 2022, Iran heightened its use of surveillance, including through State-sponsored vigilantism, further restricting the rights of women and girls, and others demanding human rights.

On 3 April, the Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted resolution 58/21 on the human rights situation in Iran. Among other recommendations, the resolution condemns widespread violations of human rights and urges Iran to address systematic impunity by establishing a system of accountability consistent with international law.

In a 10 April press release, UN experts expressed concern over Iran's practice of amputation sentences in cases of theft, in violation of international human rights standards. The development follows a case in which three men were sentenced to finger amputation by Iran's Supreme Court. The UN experts requested immediate intervention to prevent these punishments and urged Iran to take concrete steps to abolish all forms of corporal punishment in law and practice.

Key Issues and Options

The primary issue for the Security Council is achieving a peaceful resolution to Iran's nuclear programme that prevents the country from developing nuclear weapons while maintaining its ability to pursue nuclear activities for civilian purposes.

This task is gaining increasing urgency as the JCPOA and resolution 2231 are set to expire in October. At that point, the provisions of resolution 2231 will be terminated and—as stated by the resolution—"the Security Council will have concluded its consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue, and the item "Non-proliferation" will be removed from the list of matters of which the Council is seized".

Iran

One of the provisions of resolution 2231 that will elapse is the “snapback” mechanism under which any party to the JCPOA can notify the Council of significant non-compliance by Iran and thereby trigger the reimposition of UN sanctions that were in place prior to the resolution’s adoption. Once the snapback is triggered, the Council would need to adopt a resolution to continue the termination of sanctions on Iran. If no such resolution is adopted within 30 days—whether because of a veto or failure to secure the necessary votes—the sanctions would be automatically reimposed.

Against this backdrop, Council action will depend on the outcome of the ongoing bilateral negotiations between Iran and the US. If the parties reach an agreement to curb Iran’s nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of US sanctions, the Council is expected to also maintain the UN sanctions relief provided by resolution 2231. However, since there would be little time to demonstrate compliance with any future agreement before resolution 2231 expires—and JCPOA parties lose the ability to trigger the snapback—the Council may consider adopting a bridging mechanism to temporarily extend the resolution for a certain period of time to allow for implementation and verification of its commitments.

If bilateral negotiations between Iran and the US move forward but require a longer process to reach a final agreement, extending the snapback deadline could also be one component of an interim arrangement to allow negotiations to continue toward a more comprehensive settlement.

Alternatively, if negotiations fail and Iran continues to expand its nuclear programme, the Council could reimpose UN sanctions through the snapback. The European parties to the

JCPOA—Germany, France, and the UK, known as the “E3”—have signalled their willingness to take this step, which could be further bolstered if the IAEA’s forthcoming “comprehensive report” on Iran’s nuclear activities confirms that the country is in significant non-compliance with the JCPOA.

Once the Council’s 2231 facilitator is confirmed, they may wish to convene an expert-level discussion about the Council’s role if the snapback is initiated.

Council Dynamics

The Council remains divided on how to address Iran’s nuclear programme. The P3 members—France, the UK, and the US—and their allies remain concerned about Iran’s continued production of highly enriched uranium; the country’s lack of cooperation with the IAEA; and what they consider to be its destabilising support for its proxy groups in the Middle East and for Russia in Ukraine. These members support diplomatic efforts to reach a new agreement but are likely to invoke the snapback if negotiations fail. The US has repeatedly indicated willingness to take military action in that case.

China and Russia, for their part, remain supportive of Iran. Both countries have previously blamed the US for the collapse of the JCPOA, criticising it for withdrawing from the deal and imposing unilateral sanctions against the Iranian regime. At the Council’s 12 March private meeting on Iran, it seems that Russia disputed the E3’s right to invoke the snapback, arguing that the countries’ retention of certain national sanctions against Iran renders them in breach of the JCPOA and therefore unable to trigger the mechanism.

Iran has said that it might exit the NPT if the snapback is activated.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 20 February, Rugwabiza briefed the Security Council on recent political and security developments, as well as MINUSCA’s efforts to implement its mandate. She highlighted both the progress and challenges in implementing the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR (APPR), which marks its sixth anniversary this year. Rugwabiza also outlined ongoing preparations for national and local elections scheduled to take place later this year. (For more information, see our 19 November *What’s in Blue* story.)

In March, Assistant Secretary-General for the Peacebuilding Support in the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Elizabeth Spehar, visited the CAR, accompanied by representatives

of donors to the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). She was joined by Shoko Noda, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Bureau for Crisis Management of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Alexandre Zouev, the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The delegation met with the president, prime minister, and other senior CAR officials to discuss peacebuilding efforts, including preparations for the upcoming elections, progress in security sector reform, the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programme and the promotion of rule of law and justice.

MINUSCA is supporting the CAR authorities in organising local elections, which have been repeatedly postponed and are now scheduled for July. A significant funding shortfall has posed a major challenge. According to the Secretary-General’s February report, the National Electoral Authority revised the electoral budget from \$14 million to \$19 million—\$12 million of which is managed by UNDP and \$7 million by the National Electoral Authority. As of February, \$7.1 million had been disbursed to the UNDP-managed basket fund by the government, the European Union, MINUSCA, and other

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2759 (14 November 2024) renewed MINUSCA’s mandate for one year until 15 November 2025. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9864** (20 February 2025) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

international partners. Despite logistical and security constraints, the National Electoral Authority conducted voter registration in 11 of the 20 prefectures in the country in November and December 2024 and the remaining nine prefectures in March. Local elections will be held in the CAR for the first time in four decades; however, opposition and civil society groups have been calling for a boycott, citing concerns over the fairness and inclusivity of the process.

Following the 2023 constitutional referendum in the CAR, which removed presidential term limits, the country is also expected to hold presidential and legislative elections this year. President Faustin Touadéra is widely expected to seek a third term, although he has not yet formally announced his candidacy. In April, thousands of activists reportedly protested this potential move. The Republican Bloc for the Defense of the Constitution (BRDC), an opposition coalition, has indicated plans to organise additional demonstrations in the coming weeks and months.

The security situation in the CAR remains volatile, particularly in the northwest, east, and central regions. Competition over natural resources and control of key road corridors continues to fuel instability. Civilians are disproportionately affected by the ongoing violence. According to a 7 May press release from MINUSCA, the mission has continued to conduct patrols in the Basse-Kotto prefecture to prevent attacks and protect civilians. The conflict in neighbouring Sudan is also further complicating the security landscape in CAR due to its spillover effects. In April, Touadéra, in his capacity as the current Chair of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), addressed a letter to the Secretary-General expressing deep concern over the crisis in Sudan and its broader implications for regional peace and security. The letter was circulated to Security Council members ahead of their 19 May private meeting on the situation in Sudan. During the meeting, a CAR representative echoed these concerns, underscoring the urgent need to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

Touadéra has reportedly attempted to engage armed opposition groups in dialogue, sending a delegation to N'Djamena to meet with opposition leaders based in Chad. This appears to be part of an effort to revive the Luanda Roadmap, adopted in December 2021 by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) in support of the APPR. It remains unclear whether these outreach efforts have yielded any concrete progress.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 5 March, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and MINUSCA released a report on the human rights situation in the CAR. The report's findings documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls and noted that in two waves of attacks in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures, in October 2024 and in January 2025, at least 24 people were killed by elements of Wagner Ti Azandé (WTA), an armed group with ties to the national army. In a subsequent press release, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and Rugwabiza stressed the need to bring those accountable to justice, urging Central African authorities to sustain efforts to investigate the incidents and prosecute perpetrators in line with international standards.

In a 10 March press release, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the CAR, Yao Agbetse, acknowledged the CAR's commitment towards enhancing respect for human rights. Following a ten-day visit to the country, Agbetse warned of security concerns related to Azandé Ani Kpi Gbe (AAKG) and WTA, and cautioned against over-reliance on international development assistance,

underscoring how such matters could hinder progress on human rights, transitional justice, and CAR's long-term stability. In this regard, he highlighted the importance of national capacity development and local governance as tools for restoring and consolidating state authority, among other recommendations.

Key Issues and Options

The upcoming local and national elections in the CAR will be a key issue for Council members in June. Members will most likely be interested in following the state of preparation for the elections closely. The Guyanese Security Council Presidency could invite Spehar to brief in closed consultations about her recent visit to the CAR and her discussions focused on peacebuilding efforts in the country, including the organisation of local elections. Council members could also consider issuing a press statement reiterating their call for the CAR authorities to create the necessary conditions for the holding of free, transparent and inclusive elections by opening up civic space for the participation of all sections of society, including women and youth.

Council members remain concerned about the security situation in the CAR. They may reiterate their call on non-signatory armed groups to the APPA to lay down their arms and join the political process through dialogue. Council members could consider holding a briefing on the spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan on regional peace and security.

The humanitarian and human rights situation in the CAR is also an ongoing concern, with persistent human rights violations and abuses against civilians, including women and children. Council members may welcome the high-level dialogue held in Geneva on 1 April as part of the 58th session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to discuss the human rights situation in the CAR. A possible option is for Council members to request an informal briefing from the High Commissioner for Human Rights or the Independent Expert.

Another major challenge facing MINUSCA is the lack of adequate resources to effectively carry out its mandated tasks. According to the UN Secretariat report early this month to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly on administrative and budgetary matters, unpaid assessed contributions to MINUSCA's special account totalled \$411.5 million on 30 April. In June, Rugwabiza may reiterate her call for member states' support in this regard.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Compared to other UN peacekeeping missions facing significant challenges, MINUSCA is viewed as a relative success. In a notable development, the Security Council unanimously adopted the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate in November 2024, the first unanimous renewal in four years, signalling strong support for the mission's work.

It seems that the CAR has been trying to mend its relations with Western partners to ease its economic difficulties, which appears to have contributed to the resumption of bilateral and multilateral support from these countries, including France and the European Union. At the same time, it has maintained its security cooperation with Russia, which is of concern to its Western partners. The CAR is also expanding its relations with other non-traditional partners, such as the United Arab Emirates, which appears to have become active in the CAR recently.

Central African Republic

Council dynamics may be complicated by the US' position on funding peacekeeping operations. It indicated in a 2 May letter to the US Senate Appropriations Committee that it would withhold funding for UN peacekeeping missions, citing "recent failures and the high level of assessments". The letter specifically accused UN peacekeepers of involvement in smuggling gold, diamonds, and

drugs in the CAR. These allegations apparently date back to 2021, implicating Portuguese peacekeepers serving in MINUSCA. Portugal has reportedly conducted investigations into these allegations and detained some suspects.

France is the penholder on the CAR.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council is expected to receive the regular 120-day briefing on the situation in Sudan.

The Council is also expected to be briefed on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. While such briefings are ordinarily delivered by the Chair of the relevant Committee, the appointment of subsidiary body Chairs had not been finalised at the time of writing. Should a Chair not be appointed by the time of the meeting, Guyana, in its capacity as Council President for the month of June, is expected to deliver the briefing.

Key Recent Developments

Hostilities continued between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese Transitional Sovereign Council, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary led by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo. By late March, the SAF had recaptured Khartoum, regaining control over key sites such as the presidential palace and the international airport. On 20 May, it announced full control over Khartoum state after expelling RSF fighters from their remaining strongholds in the southern parts of Omdurman. Meanwhile, the conflict in the Kordofan region reportedly intensified, with repeated artillery attacks, shelling, and drone strikes, resulting in dozens of civilian casualties.

In early May, the RSF reportedly launched a series of drone strikes over six consecutive days beginning on 4 May in Port Sudan—the country's de facto administrative capital, which had previously remained largely insulated from the conflict. The attacks targeted key civilian and military infrastructure, including the international airport, a military airbase, fuel depots, and power stations. On 14 May, RSF drone strikes reportedly hit three power stations in Omdurman, causing widespread electricity outages across the capital region.

The security situation in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, and surrounding areas remained extremely volatile. In mid-April, the RSF intensified its siege and attacks on the city through shelling, drone strikes, and ground operations, resulting in hundreds of civilian casualties, the killing of aid workers, and mass displacement. Subsequently, the RSF seized control of the Zamzam camp for internally displaced people (IDP) and continued its offensive, including coordinated assaults on civilians, further worsening an already dire humanitarian crisis. According to some estimates, the scale of violence and displacement in Darfur has reached its highest level since the conflict in the 2000s, which claimed the lives of

approximately 300,000 people. (For background and more information, see our 15 April and 18 May *What's in Blue* stories.)

On 19 May, Burhan issued a decree appointing Kamil Eltayeb Idris as Sudan's Prime Minister. In a 7 May statement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed the hope that Idris' appointment would mark a first step toward inclusive consultations aimed at establishing a broad-based technocratic government and advancing the peace process. The following day (20 May), African Union (AU) Commission Chairperson (AUCC) Mahmoud Ali Youssouf commended this development as a step toward inclusive governance and urged all Sudanese stakeholders to intensify their efforts toward a "peaceful, civilian-led, and inclusive transition".

On 17 May, Arab leaders adopted a communiqué at the conclusion of the 34th summit of the League of Arab States, underscoring the importance of reaching a political solution to the conflict in Sudan that safeguards the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the safety of its civilians. The communiqué highlighted the urgent need to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access and called on all parties to engage constructively with efforts to resolve the crisis, including the Jeddah process, brokered by Saudi Arabia and the US.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In an 8 May press release, a group of independent human rights experts strongly condemned the targeted attacks carried out by the RSF on the Zamzam and Abu Shouk IDP camps in North Darfur. The experts expressed grave concern over the escalating humanitarian crisis, highlighting that the violence has forced millions of IDPs into life-threatening conditions, depriving them of access to food, water, shelter, and basic protection. They received reports of systematic violations, mostly committed by RSF-affiliated militias, including sexual violence, sexual slavery, forced recruitment, and the targeting of civilians. They expressed serious concern about conflict-related trafficking, particularly the trafficking of children for recruitment and use, and of women and girls for sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery. They called for increased support for accountability mechanisms and the immediate establishment of safe corridors for humanitarian assistance.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 10 April press briefing on the situation of women and girls in Sudan, UN Women highlighted the devastating impact of the war, particularly the widespread gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The agency emphasised the crucial role of Sudanese women's organisations in identifying urgent needs within displacement camps, supporting survivors, and delivering psychosocial care and livelihood training. Noting that these organisations currently receive less than 2 percent of humanitarian assistance in Sudan, UN Women called for long-term support for them.

From 13 to 17 April, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, visited Sudan. During the visit, the Sudanese government renewed the Framework of Cooperation between Sudan and the UN on the

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN **Security Council Press Statement SC/16046** (17 April) expressed deep concern over escalating violence, including in and around El Fasher, North Darfur. **Security Council Letters S/2025/291** (7 May) was a letter from Sudan requesting a meeting of the Security Council to consider alleged support provided by the UAE to the RSF in Sudan. **S/2025/277** (2 May) was a letter from Sudan refuting claims made by the UAE concerning the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. **S/2025/260** (29 April) was a letter from the UAE refuting allegations made by Sudan regarding the UAE's alleged support to the RSF. **S/2025/239** (14 April) was a letter from the President of the Security Council that transmitted the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Sudan

Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence in Conflict. Originally signed in 2020, the framework commits the parties to coordinate efforts to strengthen monitoring, analysis, documentation, and information sharing on sexual violence.

In a 14 May press release, several UN independent experts condemned the “widespread and systematic violations” against women and girls in Sudan, including CRSV, abductions, and killings, noting that many of these violations have been attributed to the RSF. The press release reported that at least 330 cases of CRSV have been documented in 2025 thus far, with the real number likely to be significantly higher due to underreporting.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue for the Council is how it can contribute to bringing an end to the ongoing fighting and support efforts towards a sustainable ceasefire across Sudan. The continued violence, insecurity, and targeted attacks against civilians remain a major concern for Council members. Another key issue is the changing nature of the conflict, including the use of advanced weaponry and persistent attacks on the country’s critical infrastructure.

As hostilities persist, mediation efforts have consistently failed to achieve any meaningful breakthroughs. In recent months, Council members have issued several press statements on the situation in Sudan. However, these responses have largely been ad hoc, issued in reaction to specific outbreaks of violence or political developments. Being able to promote an effective and coordinated political strategy to resolve the crisis in Sudan remains an ongoing issue for Council members. In this regard, developing a shared understanding of the complexities of the situation and a unified strategy for engagement is critical. In doing so, members need to navigate the competing interests of regional and international actors that continue to shape Sudan’s political and security landscape while underscoring respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sudan.

One option for the Council would be to invite AUCCYousouf to provide a briefing on the key challenges facing peace efforts in Sudan, the AU’s role in revitalising these efforts, and the broader impact of the conflict on neighbouring countries and regional stability.

Council members could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue with key regional and international stakeholders—including representatives of regional and sub-regional organisations and states involved in mediation efforts—to explore ways to leverage their comparative advantages and harmonise their efforts in support of a coherent political strategy to the crisis.

Given the increasingly dire situation for civilians in Sudan, the Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians could consider convening a meeting to receive briefings from relevant UN entities on the conflict’s impact on civilian populations.

During the regular Council briefing in June, members could consider inviting the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, to brief on the broader human rights situation in Sudan.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the dire political, security, and humanitarian situations in Sudan and have emphasised the need for a ceasefire, unfettered humanitarian access, respect for international humanitarian law, and the importance of protecting civilians in the conflict. However, critical divisions persist within the Council, shaped by differing priorities and approaches to key issues, including the protection of civilians, the implementation of ceasefire mechanisms, and addressing accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. Several Council members, such as Algeria, China, Pakistan, and Russia, tend to be more sympathetic to the Burhan-led government, underscoring its sovereign authority and its efforts to protect civilians and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid. Other Council members, such as the US, however, consider both the RSF and SAF to be responsible for the ongoing atrocities in Sudan and unfit to govern the country.

On 22 May, the US announced the imposition of sanctions on Sudan following its determination that the Sudanese government used chemical weapons in 2024 in violation of its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. These sanctions, set to take effect around 6 June, include restrictions on US exports to Sudan and access to government lines of credit.

The differing positions of the key interlocutors on Sudan were evident at the 15 April ministerial conference in London, which was jointly organised by France, Germany, the UK, and the European Union (EU) to mark the second anniversary of the intensification of the conflict in Sudan. Media reports indicate that the participating member states failed to adopt a joint communiqué due to disagreements: Egypt and Saudi Arabia reportedly supported language underscoring the importance of preserving state institutions, while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) advocated for stronger language in support of civilian governance.

Tensions have continued to mount between the Sudanese government and the UAE, with Sudan accusing the UAE of supporting the RSF, including through military assistance and alleged involvement in recent drone strikes on Port Sudan. On 6 May, the Sudanese government announced its decision to declare the UAE as an “aggressor” state and sever diplomatic relations. The UAE has repeatedly denied allegations of supporting the conflict in Sudan and transferring weapons to the RSF. In a 7 May press release, the UAE affirmed that it does not recognise the decision of the “Port Sudan authority” to sever diplomatic ties with the UAE, arguing that it “does not represent the legitimate government of Sudan” and remains “one of the two warring parties in Sudan”. (For more information, see our 18 May *What’s in Blue* story.)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In June, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) Bintou Keita is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

On 11 April, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the DRC to interact with regional actors on securing an urgent ceasefire in eastern DRC and the implementation of resolution 2773 of 21 February. The resolution condemned the ongoing offensive by the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) rebel group in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces and called on the group to immediately cease hostilities, withdraw from the areas it controls, and fully reverse the establishment of illegitimate parallel administrations. (For more, see our 11 April *What's in Blue* story.)

Following a first direct encounter between representatives of the Congolese government and the M23 in Doha under Qatar's facilitation, the two sides issued a joint declaration on 23 April reaffirming their "commitment to an immediate cessation of hostilities, a categorical rejection of any hate speech, intimidation, and call on local communities to uphold these commitments". This announcement came after Qatar facilitated direct talks between DRC President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame in Doha on 18 March under the auspices of the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. (The DRC and Rwanda have engaged in mutual recriminations over alleged support for their proxies in the conflict. The DRC accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23 while Rwanda asserts that the DRC supports the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC that was implicated in the 1994 genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda.)

On 25 April, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted DRC Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and La Francophonie Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner and Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Olivier Nduhungirehe, in Washington, D.C. He facilitated the signing of a Declaration of Principles between the two countries in support of a "pathway to peace, stability, and integrated economic development in the eastern DRC region and the resumption of normal bilateral relations". The two sides also committed to developing a draft peace agreement, which was expected to be submitted for mutual review by 2 May. In a 5 May post on X (formerly Twitter), US Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos welcomed the submission of the draft agreement by both the DRC and Rwanda. In a subsequent post on 15 May, he referenced his conversations with Presidents Tshisekedi and Kagame regarding the draft and the ongoing efforts to build consensus around it. It seems that the US has given a consolidated draft to the DRC and Rwanda. While the US seems eager to facilitate the signing of the agreement as soon as possible, there are contentious issues that may need some time to be resolved.

On 30 April, representatives from the DRC, Rwanda, Togo (the AU-appointed mediator), Qatar, the US, and France convened in Doha to discuss ongoing efforts to address the situation in eastern

DRC. In their joint statement, these countries welcomed the joint declaration issued by the DRC and the M23 and the Declaration of Principles signed by the DRC and Rwanda. The representatives also expressed support for the ongoing regional mediation efforts by the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) under the AU leadership through its appointed mediator, Togo's President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé.

Gnassingbé convened his first meeting with the EAC and SADC co-facilitators on 17 May. According to the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, the discussion was focused on adopting a coherent approach in the African-led mediation efforts and ensuring the necessary coordination with other external actors, such as Qatar and the US.

Human Rights-Related Development

In a 26 March press release, UN human rights experts called for urgent measures to address grave violations against children in the DRC following escalating hostilities in the North and South Kivu provinces. These Special Rapporteurs said that the uptick in violence contributed to indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations, massacres and conflict-related sexual violence, in violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. In this regard, they called on all parties to the conflict, including those engaged in hostilities and persons in command roles in armed groups, to halt these atrocities and to uphold their legal obligations to protect civilians, particularly children.

On 4 April, the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Nada Al-Nashif, updated the Human Rights Council (HRC) on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC at the Council's 58th session in Geneva. In her statement, Al-Nashif highlighted how the scale of violence has hampered the ability of their Office to fully discharge its mandate of providing technical support to the Congolese authorities to strengthen the rule of law, advance on transitional justice and enhance the fight against impunity. She also said that nearly 26 million people are experiencing crisis levels of food insecurity. Among other matters, Al-Nashif emphasised the importance of the international community taking decisive, concrete action to facilitate a durable peace in the DRC.

Paula Gaviria Betancur, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, completed a ten-day country visit to the DRC, making it the first official visit from a special procedures mandate-holder in over 13 years. She travelled to Kinshasa, North Kivu, Ituri, and Tanganyika, where she assessed the human rights situation of persons displaced by armed conflict and intercommunal violence and presented recommendations to relevant stakeholders on addressing the root causes of displacement and improving protection, assistance, and solutions for IDPs. Gaviria Betancur will present her report on the visit to the HRC in June 2026.

Sanctions-Related Developments

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

It seems that the final report of the Group of Experts, due by 15 June, has already been circulated to Council members. At the time of writing, Council members were not able to meet and discuss the report and its recommendations, pending the appointment of chairs of Security Council subsidiary bodies.

Women, Peace and Security

On 26 March, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in the DRC. Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO Bintou Keita briefed. According to the summary of the meeting, issued on 24 April by Denmark and Sierra Leone as the IEG co-chairs, together with the UK as the penholder on WPS, Council members discussed issues including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and women's participation in regional peace initiatives. Some Council members expressed concern about the situation of human rights defenders and women peacebuilders in eastern DRC. The summary says that "unprecedented levels" of SGBV, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), continue to be recorded throughout the country. In 2024, MONUSCO documented 823 CRSV incidents,

Democratic Republic of the Congo

affecting 416 women, 391 girls, 7 boys, and 9 men. The summary notes that adequate funding to support the UN in the DRC is essential for the organisation to be able to respond to “the shocking levels of sexual violence throughout the country”. The summary also provides an update on women’s participation in peacebuilding efforts and politics, including engagement by the UN to support this goal. It notes that “[n]otable progress” has been made in women’s political leadership following the 2023 general elections, with women’s representation in the cabinet growing from 28 to 33 percent.

UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, recommended that, in any future decision on the DRC, the Security Council demand the immediate cessation of hostilities and that all parties guarantee the protection of civilians from violence, including SGBV. Among other recommendations, UN Women advised the Council to call on the parties to ensure women’s full, equal, and meaningful participation in the negotiations for a permanent ceasefire and to urge member states and regional organisations brokering the talks to include women and gender expertise in their teams and to report to the Security Council on these efforts.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in June remains the security situation in the eastern DRC, which continues to fuel tensions in the Great Lakes region. Recent fighting appears to have subsided following diplomatic engagements by multiple actors. Council members may welcome this de-escalation and are likely to continue supporting efforts to find lasting solutions through dialogue.

A related issue is how the various diplomatic initiatives by regional and external actors can be harmonised and streamlined. Although the objective of the informal interactive dialogue (IID) in April was to help Council members gain a clearer understanding of the coordination and complementarity among these ongoing mediation efforts, the meeting appears to have resulted in more confusion instead. In June, Council members may seek clarity on how the co-facilitators appointed by the EAC and SADC are coordinating with the AU-appointed mediator and how these African-led efforts align with external mediation initiatives launched in Doha and Washington, DC. The Guyanese Security Council Presidency could invite Gnassingbé to brief the Council.

MONUSCO’s disengagement process and the way forward, considering the changed security dynamics, remains an ongoing issue for Council members. In line with resolution 2765 of 20 December 2024, which last renewed the mission’s mandate, MONUSCO and the Congolese government were expected to submit a tailored strategy to the Security Council by 31 March for a gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal—taking into account evolving conflict dynamics and protection risks. However, the escalation of the security situation in the eastern DRC since January significantly altered the context and affected the development of this tailored strategy. On 2 May, the Congolese government and MONUSCO submitted a joint note to the Security Council titled “On the Transition in South Kivu and the Disengagement of MONUSCO”. In June, Council members might be interested in a discussion with Keita on the recommendations for MONUSCO to be entrusted with the task of supervising a ceasefire in line with resolution 2773 and the

decisions of the AU and its regional mechanisms.

Another issue of interest for Council members could be the termination of the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), which has been operating in eastern DRC since December 2023. Under resolution 2746 of 6 August 2024, MONUSCO was mandated to provide logistical and operational support to SAMIDRC. However, the mission encountered significant setbacks due to the evolving security dynamics in the region. In response, a SADC summit held virtually on 13 March decided to terminate SAMIDRC’s mandate and directed a phased withdrawal of its troops from the DRC. In April, SADC began the withdrawal process through Rwanda, as the airport in Goma—the capital of North Kivu—remains closed. Council members may wish to request the Secretary-General to provide an assessment of MONUSCO’s support to SAMIDRC, including challenges faced and lessons learnt from the experience.

In light of the reports of alleged human rights violations against women and children in eastern DRC, Council members could consider requesting a briefing from UN Women and the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC).

Council Dynamics

Following the joint declaration between the Congolese government and M23, as well as the signing of the Declaration of Principles between the DRC and Rwanda, France—the penholder on the DRC—proposed a draft press statement welcoming these developments. However, consensus could not be reached, as some Council members expressed reservations. The “A3 Plus” group (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) apparently felt that issuing a statement at this time might be premature given ongoing regional efforts. China also raised concerns, arguing that the Declaration of Principles relates to trilateral economic cooperation between the DRC, Rwanda, and the US, and may not be appropriate for formal endorsement by the Council.

Since the visit of Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix to the DRC from 27 February to 1 March, the Department of Peace Operations has apparently been exploring two potential options in response to the serious challenges MONUSCO faces amid the evolving security dynamics in eastern DRC: mandating the mission to monitor the ceasefire and redeploying its forces to South Kivu. It seems that Lacroix has raised the issue of ceasefire monitoring during the recent Security Council consultations on the DRC, a point also reinforced in a joint note by the DRC government and MONUSCO. However, it remains unclear whether these proposals will gain traction among Council members who have apparently expressed concerns about the mission’s inability to implement all aspects of its mandate in Goma and other M23-occupied areas of North Kivu. The US has consistently advocated for a strategic review of options for MONUSCO.

Security Council Report Staff

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Executive Director

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Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
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Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
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Research Intern

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Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 9429

Web securitycouncilreport.org

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