

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In August, Panama will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Panama plans to organise one signature event, a high-level open debate titled “[Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation, and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges](#)” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. President José Raúl Mulino of Panama is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Arsenio Domínguez, Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) Valdecy Urquiza, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) Ricaurte Vásquez Morales.

In August, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on [conflict-related sexual violence \(CRSV\)](#) under the title “Identifying innovative strategies to ensure access to life-saving services and protection for survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones”. Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and a woman civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

Additionally, the Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General’s biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL/Da’esh\)](#) to international peace and security.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme of work in August are:

- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments;
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the monthly

meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments in Gaza and Israel; and

- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the work of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and renewal of the mission’s mandate. African issues on the programme of work this month are:
 - [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the work of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;
 - [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and
 - [West Africa and the Sahel](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

The only Asian issue scheduled for this month is consultations on the work of the 1718 [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) Sanctions Committee.

In terms of thematic issues, the chair of the [1540 Committee](#), Ambassador Eloy Alfaro de Alba (Panama), is scheduled to brief the Council in August on the work of the committee, which supports and monitors the implementation of resolution 1540. Adopted in 2004, the resolution aims to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction.

As in previous months, the Council may hold one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in August. Council members are also likely to hold a meeting under “any other business” to mark the 17th anniversary of the 2008 [Russia-Georgia](#) war.

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

31 July 2025

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In Hindsight: A Council in Waiting

The Council appears to have been in a holding pattern on many issues during the first half of 2025. It was waiting to see how the positions of the new US administration would develop, for the subsidiary body chairs to be finalised, for ceasefires to materialise, and for greater clarity on how resource constraints would affect the Council's work.

Understanding the Numbers: Continuing Divisions Hamper Active Deliberations

The Council's statistics provide insight into the body's level of activity and the continuing divisions among members. In the first half of 2025 (January to June), the Council adopted 16 resolutions. Last year in the same six-month period, the Council adopted 20 resolutions, and finished the year with 46 resolutions, the lowest number since 1991 (42). The fact that only 16 resolutions have been adopted in the first half of this year is consistent with the trend towards a declining number of resolutions in recent years.¹

Another notable trend that has continued this year has been the high percentage of non-unanimous adoptions; in this regard, seven of the 16 resolutions or about 44 percent, through the end of June 2025, have been adopted without the support of all 15 Council members. These seven were on a range of country files, including Libya, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen. Four of them were sanctions-related resolutions; this is not surprising, as sanctions, which have traditionally been a source of tension in the Council, have become increasingly controversial in recent years.

The difficulty in obtaining consensus is also seen in the low number of presidential statements. In the first half of 2025, the Council adopted four presidential statements, the same number it adopted in the first half of 2024. The seven presidential statements adopted in 2024 were only one more than the six adopted in 2023, which was the lowest number since the Council began using its current documentation for presidential statements in 1994.

Vetoes were cast in the first half of 2025 on two politically charged topics: the war in Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas war. On 24 February, Russia vetoed two separate amendments related to a US-drafted resolution on Ukraine. Both amendments to the resolution were proposed by the Council's five European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK). The resolution passed with ten positive votes but with abstentions from the five European members. On 4 June, the US vetoed a draft resolution penned by all ten elected members of the Council that demanded a ceasefire in Gaza, recalled the Council's demand for the release of all hostages in Gaza, and demanded the immediate and unconditional lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The Council held fewer meetings in the first half of this year (191) in comparison with the first half of last year (214), although it spent nearly as much time in meetings. From January to June, Council members spent a total of 355 hours in 122 formal (public and private) and 69 informal (consultations and informal interactive dialogues) meetings. Between January and June 2024, they spent 358.5 hours in 151 formal and 63 informal meetings.²

One notable factor in these statistics is the drop-off in the

number of meetings so far this year on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". By the end of June, the Council held a total of 22 meetings on this file, in comparison to 34 between January and June 2024. This may be in part because of the fatigue from focusing intensively on the issue without meaningful positive results on the ground. The clear US position of not countenancing any decision that it perceives as critical of Israel may also have been a factor.

Major Shifts and Uncertainty in US Positions

The start of Donald J. Trump's second term in the White House on 20 January heralded a significant change in US policy in the Security Council. While not unanticipated, the new administration has questioned the Council's work on climate change; objected to certain aspects of the women, peace and security agenda; and sought to qualify the language of international humanitarian law in some Council outcomes.

The US position on Ukraine has also shifted since 20 January, perhaps more so than on any other country-specific file. The clearest indication of this was Washington's introduction of what ultimately became resolution 2774. While the US proposal urged a lasting peace between Russia and Ukraine and implored a swift end to the conflict, it notably omitted references to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and avoided condemning Russia's invasion in February 2022. Resolution 2774 was adopted with ten votes in favour and five abstentions, all of which were cast by the European members of the Council (France, Denmark, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK). (For more on the US position in the Council on Ukraine and developments on this issue in the General Assembly, please see our March 2025 *In Hindsight*.)

While Trump has taken a more critical tone of late towards Russia's ongoing conflict in Ukraine, it is unclear how this will translate into US positions on the file in the Security Council for the remainder of the year.

Waiting to Formulate Positions

The Council also appears to have had difficulty in formulating a clear-cut approach to several country-specific issues. The reasons for this vary. Often it seems to be driven by the divisive dynamics among members—or, particularly in the case of Haiti, a lack of clarity over the US position—which makes it difficult for the Council to take decisive action. There is also uncertainty about the availability of resources to tackle key challenges in the context of the financial shortages at the UN, and the outcome of the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative, whose reported intention is to make the world body more efficient and fit-for-purpose, but will also result in significant austerity measures.

What effect have the above factors had on the Council's work in specific cases?

In Haiti, the Council renewed the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) in July for six and a half months—rather than the customary one-year period—because several elements of

1. The Council adopted 50 resolutions in 2023, 54 in 2022, and 57 in 2021.

2. For useful statistics on the Security Council's work in 2024 and 2025, please see UN Security Council Affairs Division, "Monthly Highlights of Security Council Practice", available at: [Monthly Highlights of Security Council Practice](https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/practice) | Security Council

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the prospective UN response to the crisis in the country remain unclear. One key area of uncertainty concerns the Security Council's response to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's 24 February letter on options for additional UN support to Haiti, notably regarding the establishment of a UN Support Office to provide logistical and operational support to the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission. In this regard, before deciding on a response, Council members have been waiting for the US, which is a co-penholder on Haiti with Panama and the primary financial supporter of the MSS mission, to determine its approach to the security situation in the country, including whether it will continue to support the mission financially and at what level. Other factors that the Council will need to consider moving forward are the possible re-authorisation of the cash-strapped MSS mission, which ends on 2 October, and the finalisation of the internal review of BINUH's mission concept.

In Yemen, the US questioned the future of the UN Mission for Support of the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) during negotiations to renew its mandate in July. Like BINUH, the Council renewed UNMHA for six and a half months, rather than the typical one-year period. In renewing the mandate, the Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review on how to improve efficiencies, structural coherence, and coordination across UN missions in Yemen. It seems that the intention is for this review to inform the Council's deliberations on UNMHA's next mandate renewal. The resolution also expresses the Council's intention to review the "full range of options" for the mandate, including "assessing the future viability and sunseting of the Mission". This language reflects the US position that the mission is no longer useful and should be terminated. Other Council members, such as Russia, do not agree with the US and have emphasised the importance of the mission's work.

Regarding Somalia, the financial status of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) continued to be a significant concern to Council members. The mission has been grappling with substantial funding shortfalls in an evolving security environment where Al-Shabaab—a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida—is a serious threat to Somalia and the region. The majority of Council members support co-financing AUSSOM through the framework of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, which determines that AU-led peace support operations authorised by the Council (such as AUSSOM) should have access to UN-assessed contributions up to 75 percent of their annual budgets. But the US has continued to be staunchly opposed to this approach; as a result, the Council was unable to make a decision to authorise the 2719 framework by 15 May, as had been called for by resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023.

There are many different views among members on who should foot the lion's share of the bill for the mission, especially given the sense that the 2719 framework may be off the table. Amidst these divisions, it is unclear whether and when a clear funding mechanism will be established. This could jeopardise the future of the mission and imperil hard-earned security gains in Somalia.

Subsidiary Body Activity: Playing Catch-up

Council members were unable to agree on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs for 2025 until 29 May, making it the longest period with no subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs since this decision was first recorded in a presidential note in 1979. The protracted and difficult negotiations were marked by differences among the incoming members for 2025, between these incoming members and continuing elected members, and between the current E10 and the P5.

As a result of the delay, contingency measures had to be developed whereby Council presidents handled urgent responsibilities of subsidiary body chairs during their presidencies until chair appointments were finalised, unless another member objected. In rare instances, Council presidents were able to process requests for exemptions to measures imposed by sanctions regimes, brief the Council on the work of subsidiary bodies, and facilitate the publication of reports of experts assisting sanctions committees. (For more on the impact of the delay in appointing subsidiary body chairs, please see our May 2025 *In Hindsight*.)

Since the chairs of subsidiary bodies were agreed in late May, these bodies have begun to function normally again. Nonetheless, the Council will have to play catch-up at the subsidiary body level for the remainder of the year.

One additional challenge has been the holds placed on the Panels of Experts of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee and the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, which have prevented them from functioning so far in 2025.³ Panels of experts are generally considered a quality, independent source of reporting for Sanctions Committees. The Sudan and Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committees have been deprived of this analysis intended to inform their decision-making. Additionally, while the Panel of Experts of the Yemen Sanctions Committee is operational, a hold remains on its arms expert, which has handicapped the scope of its reporting.

Some Positives

Notwithstanding the difficulties facing the Council in early 2025, there were some positive developments. Despite the 4 June US veto on a resolution on the situation in Gaza, it was encouraging that elected members came together to try to break an impasse in the Council on an intractable issue. This built on the practice of all elected members collaborating as co-penholders in March 2024 on a resolution on Gaza, which demanded an immediate ceasefire to the war in Gaza during the month of Ramadan, leading to a "lasting sustainable ceasefire".⁴ Such E10 penholdership could serve as a model for future action on other difficult issues.

Another encouraging development this year has been the "peacekeeping trio" initiated by three elected members—Denmark, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—to emphasise the importance of focusing on the future of peacekeeping. As part of this initiative, Denmark convened an open debate on 24 March during its Council presidency on "Advancing Adaptability in UN Peace Operations—Responding to New Realities", during which

³ Four members (China, Pakistan, Russia, and Somalia) continue to maintain a hold on the entire Panel of Experts of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, and two members (Algeria and France) have a hold on one expert on the Panel, although they are not the same person. One member (Russia) has maintained its hold on the entire Panel of Experts of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee.

⁴ This was resolution 2728 of 25 March 2024. The E10 also collectively penned a draft resolution on Gaza (S/2024/835) that was vetoed by the US on 20 November 2024.

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Secretary-General António Guterres briefed Council members on plans to conduct extensive consultations as part of the comprehensive review of UN peace operations as requested by the September 2024 *The Pact of the Future*. On 29 July, Pakistan convened a briefing on “Adapting Peace operations for the pursuit of political solutions – priorities and challenges”. The ROK is also expected to convene a meeting on peacekeeping during its Council Presidency in September.

Aside from these meetings, the Trio have also been convening a series of informal discussions outside the Council, the latest of which was a policy forum held on 8 July at the International Peace Institute on the “Ten-Year Review of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) Report”. The Trio appears to be moving towards proposing a Council product before the end of the year. The last thematic resolution on UN peacekeeping was resolution 2668 of 21 December 2022, which focused on the “importance of mental health and psychosocial support to United Nations peace operations personnel”.

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2788 on 22 July was one notable early achievement in the second half of 2025. Initiated by Pakistan, it represents a recommitment by the Council to the peaceful settlement of disputes, highlighting some of the key Chapter VI tools available to the body in a complex and challenging multilateral environment and requesting the Secretary-General to provide concrete recommendations in a briefing to the Council on strengthening the mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes one year after the resolution’s adoption. The resolution builds on the commitment of world leaders and heads of state in Action 16 of *The Pact for the Future*—which outlines member states’ vision of the future of multilateralism—to “promote cooperation and understanding between member states, defuse tensions, seek to pacific settlement of disputes and resolve conflicts”.

Conclusion

There are several uncertainties facing the Security Council for the rest of 2025. Significant budget cuts to areas relevant to the Council’s work—such as peacekeeping and humanitarian operations—are most likely forthcoming as part of the UN80 initiative. There could be deeper cuts depending on the size of anticipated funding reductions to the UN in the US federal budget for fiscal year 2026

(1 October 2025 to 30 September 2026). Diminished resources—along with US concerns about the effectiveness of UN peace operations—could necessitate major adjustments to the size and scope of activities that the Council mandates and oversees and may have an impact on the review of UN peace operations that is expected to be finalised in 2026.

There is no shortage of crises to occupy the Council’s attention in the second half of 2025. The Council will likely continue to devote significant attention to Ukraine and Gaza, although any significant movement on these crises will likely take place as a result of negotiations outside the Council. Yemen and Lebanon will probably continue to be affected by the ripple effects of the war between Hamas and Israel. On Syria, the Council may be able to explore options for a UN presence in the country; in this respect, the findings of the recently completed integrated strategic assessment that the Secretariat has produced are likely to be shared with the Council. Its approach to Iran’s nuclear issues requires careful consideration, following the setbacks to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran, including US withdrawal in 2018 and Iran’s non-compliance, and the recent strikes on the country’s nuclear facilities by Israel and the US. Resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the JCPOA on Iran, expires on 18 October. The Council will also need to develop a strategy for Haiti and Somalia, once there is more clarity on members’ positions and the availability of resources to promote peace and security. In addition to funding shortages for AUSSOM, members will be grappling with several other challenges in Africa. In this regard, terrorist activity in West Africa and the Sahel is on the rise, the peace agreement in South Sudan is on tenuous ground, and the civil war in Sudan continues to rage. On this last issue, other than the renewals of the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime, the Council has not taken a formal decision (resolution or presidential statement) in more than two years.

Facing these and other difficult issues, a divided Council will need to find ways to build trust and cooperate to maximise its effectiveness in difficult fiscal circumstances and a fluid international peace and security environment. If it does not, there is a danger that the Council will become increasingly sidelined, and some issues related to the maintenance of international peace and security will move outside of the Council.

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International Court of Justice

On 2 July, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2784 setting 12 November as the date of the election to fill a vacancy on the International Court of Justice (ICJ), to be held at a meeting of the Security Council and at a meeting of the General Assembly (S/PV.9952).

Haiti

On 2 July, the Security Council held its regular 90-day briefing on the situation in Haiti (S/PV.9953). Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča and UN

Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Ghada Fathi Waly briefed.

On 8 July, the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee approved the addition of the Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif gangs to its list of sanctioned entities. While the committee had previously designated the leaders of Viv Ansanm and Gran Grif, this was the first time that gangs in their entirety were listed under the Haiti sanctions regime. The listing was proposed by the US and co-sponsored by several Council members, including Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the UK.

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On 14 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2785, renewing the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for another six and a half months, until 31 January 2026.

Arria-formula Meeting on Critical Minerals and Resource-Driven Insecurity in Africa

On 9 July, Sierra Leone convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “The Global Race for Critical Minerals: Addressing Resource-Driven Insecurity in Africa”. Guyana and incoming Council members, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Liberia, co-sponsored the meeting. The briefers were Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko, Co-Chair of the UN Secretary-General’s Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals; Ambassador João Samuel Caholo, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR); Tunde Arisekola, Acting Head of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC) at the African Union (AU); Bojun Tang, Executive Secretary of the Kimberley Process Secretariat; and Mickaël Daudin, Programme Manager at the International Tin Supply Chain Initiative (ITSCI).

Sudan

On 10 July, the Council held its semi-annual briefing on the International Criminal Court (ICC)’s Darfur-related activities (S/PV.9955). ICC Deputy Prosecutor Nazhat Shameem Khan briefed. Sudan participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

On 10 July, Kaha Imnadze, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), briefed Council members in closed consultations on the work of the UNRCCA.

Cyprus

On 14 July, Council members held closed consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart briefed Council members, presenting the Secretary-General’s report on UNFICYP (S/2025/447) and on his good offices in Cyprus (S/2025/448).

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 16 July, the Security Council held a briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, focused on the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza (S/PV.9959). Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher and UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell briefed. The meeting was requested by Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK.

On 23 July, the Council held its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9963). Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, chaired the meeting. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed.

Colombia

On 18 July, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.9961). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2025/419). Colombia participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, represented by Deputy Minister of Multilateral Affairs Mauricio Jaramillo Jassir.

Conflict Prevention and Peaceful Resolution of Disputes

On 22 July, the Security Council held a high-level open debate on “Promoting International Peace and Security through Multilateralism and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes”, chaired by Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar (S/PV.9962 and Resumption I and II). UN Secretary-General António Guterres briefed the Council. During the meeting, the Council adopted resolution 2788, urging member states to effectively utilise the UN Charter’s mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement.

UN-OIC Cooperation

On 24 July, the Security Council convened for a briefing (S/PV.9964) under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations”, focusing on the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Pakistan’s July Council presidency. Briefings were provided by Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari and OIC Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Yousef bin Mohammed Al-Dubaie.

At the meeting, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2025/5), initiated by Pakistan, on UN-OIC cooperation.

Ukraine

On 25 July, the Council held a briefing on Ukraine at the request of Denmark, France, Greece, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, and the UK (S/PV.9965). Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed. Latvia, Poland, and Ukraine participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, while Stavros Lambrinidis, Head of the EU Delegation to the UN, participated under rule 39.

On 31 July, at Russia’s request, the Council held a briefing under the agenda item “Threats to international peace and security” to address claims that certain Western countries are undermining the peace process related to the war in Ukraine, including by supplying weapons (S/PV.9970).

Cambodia-Thailand

On 25 July, the Security Council held an urgent private meeting

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under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item to discuss the clashes that erupted on 24 July along the Cambodia-Thailand border (S/PV.9966). Pakistan, July’s Council president, scheduled the meeting following a request from Cambodia in a 24 July letter. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. Cambodia and Thailand participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure. Several member states belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also participated in the meeting without making a statement: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Viet Nam.

Central African Republic

On 29 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution

2789, extending the sanctions measures imposed on armed groups operating in the Central African Republic (CAR) until 31 July 2026, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts monitoring the implementation of these measures until 31 August 2026.

UN Peace Operations

On 29 July, the Security Council held a briefing on “Adapting peace operations for the pursuit of political solutions – priorities and challenges” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9969). The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs - Department of Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, and President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Peace Institute (IPI) Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

Women, Peace and Security

Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which will be titled: “Identifying innovative strategies to ensure access to life-saving services and protection for survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones”. Amid escalating armed conflicts in which critical healthcare infrastructure is often destroyed or deliberately targeted by warring parties, it appears that Panama, the Council president in August, intends to focus the open debate on the need to ensure non-discriminatory access to quality multi-sectoral services for CRSV survivors. The open debate will also emphasise the importance of sustaining efforts to prevent, monitor and respond to CRSV in the aftermath of transitions and drawdowns of UN peace operations, including through support to community-based organisations and women human rights defenders.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten and a woman civil society representative are the anticipated briefers. No formal product is expected.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General’s annual reports define CRSV as “rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict”. According to the reports, CRSV “also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict”.

This year’s report on CRSV will cover the period from January to December 2024 and will provide the basis for the August open debate. The report is expected to document over 4,500 UN-verified cases which, according to remarks delivered by Patten at

the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict in June, represents a 20 percent increase from 2023, which was itself a 50 percent increase from 2022. This figure is understood to be an undercount of CRSV cases as it reflects incident reports, rather than the number of actual incidents. The vast majority of cases documented in the report (91 percent) affected women and girls.

Several situations on the Security Council’s agenda are likely to be discussed in this year’s annual report on CRSV. As mandated by resolution 1960 adopted in 2010, this year’s report will again include an annex listing “parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council”.

With consistently elevated numbers of UN-verified incidents of CRSV, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been a recurring focus of the Secretary-General’s annual reports and is expected to register the highest number of verified cases in 2024. According to the summary letter of the 26 March meeting of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on women, peace and security (WPS) on the situation in the DRC, in 2024 the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) documented 823 CRSV incidents, affecting 416 women, 391 girls, 7 boys, and 9 men. Non-state actors were responsible for 625 of the 823 documented cases in 2024. The IEG summary letter noted positive steps taken by the DRC authorities to address CRSV perpetrated by state actors, with “hundreds of prosecutions” of members of the Congolese armed forces (FARDC). It also stressed that adequate funding to support the UN in the DRC is essential for the organisation to continue to be able to respond to “the shocking levels of sexual violence throughout the country”.

CRSV continues to be a serious concern in the context of the conflict in Sudan between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the

UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2467 (23 April 2019) recognised the need for a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to CRSV. It passed with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). S/RES/1960 (16 December 2010) requested the Secretary-General to add an annex to the annual report on CRSV listing conflict parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of CRSV. S/RES/1820 (19 June 2008) was the first Security Council resolution focused on CRSV.

Women, Peace and Security

Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In 2024, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented 246 cases of CRSV, affecting 140 women, 101 girls, and five men. According to the final report of the Panel of Experts on Sudan assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, which analysed developments in 2024, CRSV was part of the RSF's strategy to consolidate dominance in areas under its control, where women and girls "faced widespread sexual violence". UN Women has also highlighted reports of attacks against women human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists, and humanitarian workers to "silence documentation and reporting of GBV incidents and the scale of atrocities". Sexual and gender-based violence, including CRSV, has continued to mark the conflict in Sudan in 2025. 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 had been documented in 2025, with the real number likely to be significantly higher.

In response to high levels of sexual violence perpetrated by armed gangs, the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) established monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements (MARA) on CRSV in August 2024. From August to October 2024, 102 incidents committed by armed individuals and involving 123 survivors were reported under the MARA. The 2025 Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, which covers developments in 2024, verified instances of sexual violence against 566 children in Haiti (523 girls and 43 boys), the vast majority (411) being attributed to the Viv Ansanm gang coalition. A 28 March UN High Commissioner for Human Rights report on trafficked firearms and ammunition in Haiti has noted, among other things, that the "ubiquitous presence of guns is central in the gangs' use of violence, such as rape". More recently, in a 4 June statement, Patten expressed grave concern at escalating levels of sexual violence in the country. Sexual violence is being used "deliberately and systematically to assert dominance and punish communities", with survivors often assaulted in their homes or public spaces, according to her statement. Patten also warned that access to key services for survivors remains extremely limited amidst generalised insecurity, which has led to the closure of critical health facilities.

A 13 March report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel, examined sexual, reproductive, and other forms of gender-based violence carried out by the Israeli security forces since 7 October 2023. The report documented the systematic destruction of sexual and reproductive healthcare facilities across the Gaza Strip. It highlighted a "sharp increase" in sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by members of the Israeli security forces and Israeli settlers across the OPT, including cases of rape, and noted that "many acts of sexual violence it documented constitute conflict-related sexual violence". It also highlighted "widespread and systematic abuse and sexual and gender-based violence" in Israeli detention. The report stressed that the "frequency, prevalence and severity of sexual and gender-based crimes" perpetrated across the OPT led the Commission to conclude that "sexual and gender-based violence is

increasingly used as a method of war by Israel to destabilize, dominate, oppress and destroy the Palestinian people".

The Secretary-General's annual report on CRSV might also address the situation of the hostages held captive in Gaza by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups. According to the findings of Patten's mission to Israel and the occupied West Bank (29 January to 14 February 2024), "the mission team received clear and convincing information that sexual violence, including rape, sexualized torture, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment occurred against some women and children during their time in captivity and has reasonable grounds to believe that this violence may be ongoing".

Other situations of concern that might be detailed in the Secretary-General's report include Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.

Key Issues and Options

The holistic and substantive implementation of the Security Council's resolutions on WPS remains the overarching issue.

Although dynamics on WPS at the Security Council are difficult, Council members supportive of WPS can strategise to preserve and strengthen WPS language in thematic and country-specific Council outcomes and follow up on the implementation of these decisions, in line with resolution 2242 of 2015 in which the Council decided to integrate WPS concerns "across all country-specific situations on the Security Council's agenda". To guide their work, Council members can use the recommendations put forward by UN Women as the IEG secretariat, as well as the recommendations presented by women civil society representatives who have briefed the Council.

The persistence of CRSV—rooted in enduring patriarchal norms and other interlocking forms of control—is an issue of serious concern. Adopted in 2019, resolution 2467 recognised that CRSV occurs on a continuum of interrelated and recurring forms of violence against women and girls. To address CRSV from a structural perspective, one option is to include in Council discussions of CRSV a focus on the theme of the continuum of violence and other intersecting forms of inequality that women and girls face both during conflict and in peacetime.

Regarding the theme of this year's open debate, the destruction—often deliberate—of healthcare facilities during armed conflict and, more broadly, the continued erosion of international humanitarian law (IHL) are issues of concern. The Council's failure to address this trend and facilitate a peaceful resolution to several conflict situations on its agenda has had devastating consequences for women in those contexts, with some Council members being directly involved in these conflicts or supporting the conflict parties.

Council Members could lead by example and stop transferring arms when there is a risk that weapons are used to commit serious violations of IHL, including the targeting of healthcare facilities, and acts of gender-based violence. The Council could also impose and enforce arms embargoes in these situations. If Council dynamics do not allow a collective decision on this issue, a group of Council members supportive of international law and the WPS agenda could issue a joint statement announcing their decision to stop arms transfers and specifying that the decision was taken in response to serious

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violations of IHL and acts of gender-based violence.

During the open debate, members could also highlight the importance of guaranteeing sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights to all survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Against the backdrop of the UN80 initiative, a reform agenda aimed at streamlining the UN in response to funding constraints which is expected to result in consolidation and austerity measures, Council members could continue to support the deployment of women's protection advisers and gender advisers in peace operations, as well as in transition processes from peacekeeping operations to special political missions and country teams. Further options include strengthening the gender expertise informing the work of sanctions committees, inviting Patten to share information with these committees, and enhancing alignment between the parties identified in the annual report on CRSV and those designated under sanctions regimes.

It seems that a combination of factors—including resource constraints, decisions on politically sensitive listings, as well as reluctance from some Council members to host the meeting—contributed to the open debate being scheduled in August this year. This is the latest in the year that the annual open debate on CRSV has been held in over a decade. Given that the information contained in the report refers to the previous calendar year, Council members supportive

of the WPS agenda could pursue early coordination to ensure the timely holding of the CRSV open debate in the future.

Council Dynamics

Council members' views converge on the need to eradicate CRSV. Nevertheless, dynamics on WPS are difficult.

There have been notable changes to the US position on WPS since the start of President Donald Trump's term on 20 January. The US has sought to remove language on WPS during negotiations, with a particular focus on references to gender. Although the US signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS in 2023, so far it has not participated in any of the joint press stakeouts held by the Council members who are part of this initiative this year.

Russia has opposed the term "CRSV", arguing that it leads to a blurring of crimes of a sexual nature that occur in peacetime and during armed conflict, therefore unduly expanding the purview of the Council's mandate; this is an argument that most other Council members and civil society groups working on women's rights reject. Russia has also opposed Patten's participation in Security Council meetings.

The UK is the penholder on WPS, and the US is the penholder on CRSV. Denmark and Sierra Leone are the co-chairs of the IEG on WPS.

Non-Proliferation

Expected Council Action

In August, the chair of the 1540 Committee, Ambassador Eloy Alfaro de Alba (Panama), is scheduled to brief the Council on the work of the Committee.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Adopted in 2004, resolution 1540 aims to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction (individuals and sub-state groups are not covered under existing treaties dealing with nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons). It requires all states to prevent non-state actors from obtaining access to nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their delivery systems. Furthermore, it requires states to establish domestic controls to prevent the proliferation of such weapons.

On 30 November 2022, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2663, extending the mandate of the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts for ten years, until 30 November 2032. Resolution 2663 tasks the Committee with conducting two comprehensive reviews on the status of implementation of resolution 1540, one after five years (to be held before December 2027) and the other prior to the renewal of its mandate.

The most recent comprehensive review on the implementation of resolution 1540, which was published on 29 November 2022, and covered developments since 2016, says that while progress has been recorded, the resolution's full implementation is a long-term task.

It notes that, overall, member states have strengthened measures to prohibit non-state actors from manufacturing, acquiring, developing, transporting, or using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons and their means of delivery. Some member states, however, have continued to face difficulties in fully implementing the resolution owing to several factors, including lack of adequate financial resources, technical expertise, legal frameworks, and implementation capabilities. In this regard, the report highlights the continued importance of the 1540 Committee in supporting member states in implementing resolution 1540 and facilitating assistance to that end.

Resolution 2663 also decides that the Chair of 1540 Committee shall brief the Council in the first quarter of each year. This year, due to an unprecedented delay in the appointment of the chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies until 29 May, the briefing could not be held in the first quarter. The new chair (Panama) has decided to hold the briefing in August. (For more information on the delay regarding subsidiary bodies, see our April 2025 *In Hindsight*.)

On 15 July, the Group of Experts (GoE) briefed the 1540 Committee on the status of assistance requests. Part of the Committee's mandate is facilitating assistance to member states in implementing resolution 1540. Among other things, the Committee matches assistance requests from states with offers of assistance from other states, as well as from international, regional, and sub-regional organisations.

The Committee also discussed the organisation of the next 1540

UN DOCUMENTS ON NON-PROLIFERATION Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2663 (30 November 2022) extended the mandate of the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts for ten years until 30 November 2032. S/RES/1540 (28 April 2004) established the 1540 Committee and its mandate, affirmed that proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security.

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National Points of Contact training programme, which is expected to take place in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 2024, two such training courses were held; the first was in Beijing, China, for member states in the Asia-Pacific region; and the second was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, for member states from the African region. These training programmes aim to enhance the understanding of participants on the scope and obligations of resolution 1540 and the implementation tools of the 1540 Committee.

Resolution 2663 also mandates the Committee to convene regular open briefings, at least once a year or as needed, for member states and international, regional and subregional organisations. The most recent open briefing took place on 9-10 October 2024. This year, it is yet to be scheduled.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council (and its 1540 Committee) is the need to continue to strengthen the efforts of states to implement resolution 1540. The Committee's efforts to facilitate the provision of technical assistance to states are critical in this regard, as it links states to appropriate service providers, organises workshops for them on relevant topics, and shares information with them on capacity-development initiatives.

A current issue for the Committee is that three out of the nine expert positions in the GoE are vacant. The Committee will need to hold consultations to fill the vacant positions so that the GoE can carry out the full scope of its work as efficiently and expeditiously as possible.

Council members could use the meeting as an opportunity to

express their support for the objectives of resolution 1540 and highlight the importance of its implementation. Members could also raise the need to address new proliferation risks arising from technological advances, including emerging technologies.

Council Dynamics

Council members support an active role for the Committee and its Group of Experts in engaging with member states to provide technical assistance and capacity development in implementing resolution 1540.

In recent years, some members have advocated for less committee oversight of the work of the Group of Experts (currently, proposals by the 1540 Committee's Group of Experts must be approved by the committee members through a no-objection procedure). During open consultations on the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540 that were held in late May 2022, the US argued that the Group of Experts should have a clear mandate to do its work "without having to seek individual approval for each and every action it seeks to undertake", adding that "no other subsidiary body of the Security Council is forced to operate under such self-defeating constraints". Russia, however, believes that actions should be undertaken under the Committee's strict direction and purview. In the last Council briefing on the Committee's work on 26 March 2024, Russia cautioned against the Committee's work being "used as a pretext for interfering in the internal affairs of States" and against it becoming "an instrument for such interference by being given control and oversight functions".

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on West Africa and the Sahel. It appears that Panama, the Council's president for August, will encourage a focus on women, peace and security (WPS) issues at the meeting. The Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Leonardo Santos Simão, and the UN Women Executive Director, Sima Sami Bahous, are expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

In recent months, there has been a marked increase in attacks by armed groups and terrorists on military bases and raids targeting civilian centres across the Central Sahel region—particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger—raising concerns about the stability of these countries. In September 2023, the three countries established the Alliance of Sahel States (l'Alliance des États du Sahel, AES), a collective defence arrangement aimed at strengthening regional security cooperation. Nonetheless, they continue to face serious security threats.

Between May and July, militants from Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal

Muslimin (JNIM), an Al-Qaida affiliate, carried out a series of large-scale and coordinated attacks across Burkina Faso and Mali. On 11 May, militants overran a military base in Djibo town, in Burkina Faso, reportedly killing up to 200 soldiers, and launched assaults on eight other locations, including Sollé town—approximately 30 miles west of Djibo—where 60 soldiers were reportedly killed.

On 1 June, JNIM reportedly attacked Mali's military base in Boulkessi, near the border with Burkina Faso, killing around 60 security personnel. The next day (2 June), they struck multiple military sites in Timbuktu, including a base hosting Russian personnel. On 1 July, coordinated attacks targeted security installations in Mali's Kayes and Ségou regions, with authorities claiming 80 militants were killed in response.

The Islamic State-Sahel Province (ISSP), an Islamist militant group operating in central Sahel (including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), has also intensified its attacks. In early May, it claimed its first acknowledged attack in Niger's Dosso region, near the Burkina Faso border, signalling an expansion into the country's southern corridor. The attack targeted several military positions, resulting in numerous casualties. Between late May and mid-June, ISSP militants carried

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out major attacks in Eknewan and Banibangou in western Niger—killing at least 34 soldiers—and in Tessit, Mali, where 42 soldiers were reportedly killed.

This uptick in attacks by militant groups, including through the use of drones and improvised explosive devices, underscores the limited effectiveness of current security arrangements in the region and the growing capabilities of militant groups. Meanwhile, the terrorist threat has continued to spread southward toward coastal states, raising alarm about potential spillover into previously unaffected regions.

On 15 July, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) to exchange views with regional security actors on strengthening regional counter-terrorism responses in West Africa and the Sahel. (For more information, see our 14 July 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

On 22 June, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) convened its 67th Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja. In a communiqué adopted following the meeting, the Authority endorsed the appointment of a Chief Negotiator to engage with the AES countries, which formally withdrew from ECOWAS in January. The communiqué called for urgent consultations to determine modalities for enhanced cooperation in counter-terrorism. It also raised concerns over delays in activating the ECOWAS Standby Force. Despite prior discussions on deploying a regional counter-terrorism force and mobilising resources, progress has been slow. Regional efforts continue to face major obstacles, including political instability, poor coordination, funding gaps, and shifting security partnerships—particularly growing ties with Russia following the withdrawal of Western military support.

At the same time, several West African countries are undergoing political transitions and holding elections in 2025. In Togo, protests erupted in June after constitutional amendments transitioned the country from a presidential to a parliamentary system, consolidating executive authority under President Faure Gnassingbé. These changes allow him to extend his rule indefinitely if his party retains parliamentary control. Media reports said security forces responded forcefully to demonstrations in Lomé and other cities, resulting in at least ten deaths and over 100 arrests. On 17 July, Togo held municipal elections, though turnout was reportedly low in the wake of the recent crackdown.

Guinea-Bissau's presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for 30 November; however, the country has been embroiled in political turmoil.

Côte d'Ivoire is scheduled to hold presidential elections on 25 October. President Alassane Ouattara is currently serving a third term, which the opposition argues violates the constitutional two-term limit. On 4 June, the country's electoral commission released the final voter list, excluding several prominent opposition figures. This sparked accusations of political exclusion and raised concerns about the potential for renewed tensions. (For more information, see the brief on UNOWAS in our April 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

In Burkina Faso, the military government dissolved the country's electoral commission on 17 July, placing its functions under the interior ministry. In May 2024, participants in a national forum—which most political parties boycotted—had signed a charter extending the country's transition by five years, far beyond the

planned transition in 2024.

On 3–4 July, Mali's transitional parliament approved a bill granting military leader Assimi Goïta a five-year renewable presidential term without requiring elections, allowing him to rule until at least 2030, despite earlier pledges of a return to civilian rule in March 2024.

On 26 March, Niger's military leader Abdourahmane Tchiani was sworn in as president under a new charter extending military rule for five years, with no election timeline set.

The worsening security and political situations have deepened an already dire humanitarian situation in the sub-region. Nearly 28.7 million people across the Sahel require life-saving aid and humanitarian protection in 2025. Humanitarian funding remains critically low, with just 8 percent of the required \$4.3 billion having been received by May, forcing aid agencies to reduce assistance to 8.8 million of the most vulnerable individuals.

Women, Peace and Security

On 12 June, the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) convened on the situation in the Sahel. Simão and UN Special Coordinator for development in the Sahel, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, briefed. It seems that IEG members were briefed on the impact of the Sahel's compounding challenges—including the effects of climate change and the proliferation of violent extremism and terrorism—on women and girls. Among other issues, the meeting apparently addressed the sharp decrease in development assistance to the region in recent years, and the disproportionate impact this has had on women's education, health, and livelihood programmes, as well as women's underrepresentation in peace processes, political positions, and security institutions. It seems that members were also briefed on patterns of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in the Sahel, and the difficulties faced by the UN in Mali in monitoring and reporting on CRSV, and in providing services to survivors following the drawdown of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

With UNOWAS' mandate up for renewal in January 2026, UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, apparently stressed the importance of extending the mandate and ensuring the continued integration of WPS priorities. It seems that UN Women also recommended that the Council urge all relevant actors in the region to ensure women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in governments, transitional structures, and peace and security efforts—including through the full implementation of affirmative action laws—and to safeguard an enabling environment for women's organisations and networks. UN Women apparently also called for strengthening the UN system's capacity in all the countries in the Sahel to work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key Issues and Options

The rise of terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel region, particularly in the AES countries, is a major concern for Council members. A key challenge is how to support regional counter-terrorism efforts effectively, following years of failures, and in the context of constrained financial resources.

One option for the Council could be to request a briefing from the Secretary-General on how the UN and the international community at large can better support regional efforts to enhance security and governance in the Sahel, while drawing lessons from past shortcomings and adapting to current realities.

Regional member states and Special Representative Simão have expressed support for leveraging resolution 2719, which authorises the use of UN-assessed contributions to finance AU-led peace support operations on a case-by-case basis. However, key questions remain regarding the practical implementation of this resolution, given that AES countries currently remain outside existing regional

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security cooperation frameworks.

Council members have been concerned about the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in the region and democratic backsliding in some countries. In this connection, addressing structural conflict drivers in the Sahel, such as poor governance, underdevelopment, and climate change, remains a major issue. One option for Council members would be to strengthen collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission to support locally led initiatives that promote good governance and enhance regional and cross-border cooperation, including within the framework of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

In addition to the dire humanitarian situation, several Council members are troubled by ongoing restrictions on civic space and human rights abuses by state and non-state actors. They could use the briefing in August as an opportunity to underscore the need for countries in the region to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law. They could also invite a civil society representative to share insights in this regard.

While the Council remains engaged on developments in the sub-region, its current meeting frequency does not reflect fast-changing dynamics. Members could consider convening closed consultations or a meeting under “any other business” to respond promptly and effectively to developments. Members might find value in organising informal briefings with expert analysts to examine emerging trends in the region. They could also adopt a presidential statement to reaffirm their commitment to addressing the evolving challenges in the sub-region, underscoring the importance of a coordinated regional and international response.

Council and Wider Dynamics

While there is broad concern in the Council about the threat of terrorism and the dire humanitarian crises affecting West Africa and

the Sahel, the US and European members are particularly worried about Russia’s growing influence in the region and its ties with the military juntas. The withdrawal of Western military assistance has created a security vacuum in the region, prompting several Sahelian countries to seek alternative partnerships, most notably with Russia. Moscow has expanded its footprint in the region through bilateral defence agreements and the deployment of personnel from the Africa Corps, a group that is the successor to the Wagner Group and reportedly operates under the direct oversight of the Russian Ministry of Defence.

Currently, regional and external actors appear to be recalibrating their strategies amid deteriorating security conditions and a surge in militant activity. Russian forces deployed in the region have increasingly come under attack, underscoring the volatility of the operating environment. In June, Russia announced the conclusion of the Wagner Group’s mission in Mali, while noting that the Africa Corps would continue operating in the country to support the military. On 9 July, the Principal Deputy Director for Counterterrorism at the US National Security Council, Rudy Atallah, visited Bamako and met with Mali’s Foreign Minister, Abdoulaye Diop, and Minister of Internal Security, Daoud Aly Mohammedine. This was the first high-level US visit to Mali since 2022.

In the Council, while Russia supports the views of the AES, several members are concerned about developments in these countries. Sierra Leone, a West African country, and several other members believe it is important for the Council to maintain attention on the region, including how it might support regional efforts to combat the threat of terrorism and violent extremism. Sierra Leone took over the rotating Chairmanship of ECOWAS from Nigeria at the June summit.

Denmark and Sierra Leone are co-penholders on UNOWAS.

Maritime Security

Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold a high-level open debate titled “Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation, and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. This will be the signature event of Panama’s presidency. President José Raúl Mulino of Panama is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), Arsenio Domínguez; the Secretary-General of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Valdecy Urquiza; and the Chief Executive Officer of the Panama Canal Authority, Ricaurte Vásquez.

A concept note has been circulated by Panama to inform the discussion at the high-level debate. No formal outcome is expected from the meeting.

Key Recent Developments

The Council has traditionally approached maritime security by focusing on specific geographic hotspots and addressing threats in isolation. In recent years, however, elected Council members have advocated for a more holistic approach that reflects the interconnected and transnational nature of maritime threats.

On 9 August 2021, the Council adopted a presidential statement, initiated by India, which identified a range of maritime threats—including piracy, armed robbery at sea, terrorist exploitation of maritime routes, and attacks on shipping, offshore installations, and critical infrastructure—and recognised the importance of international and regional cooperation in addressing these threats. It also emphasised the need to enhance information-sharing and strengthen national capacities to promote maritime safety and security. (For

UN DOCUMENTS ON MARITIME SECURITY [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9919](#) (20 May 2025) was a meeting titled “Strengthening Maritime Security through International Cooperation for Global Stability”, organised by Greece as one of its signature events. [Security Council Letters S/2025/483](#) (23 July 2025) was a concept note prepared by Panama for its signature event titled “Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation, and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges”. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/15](#) (9 August 2021) reaffirmed that international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in the oceans and encouraged member states to continue building and strengthening their capacities to enhance maritime security, including against piracy and armed robbery at sea, terrorist activities, and transnational organised crime.

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background and more information, see the brief on Maritime Security in our May 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 20 May, the Council held a high-level open debate titled “Strengthening Maritime Security through International Cooperation for Global Stability”, which was chaired by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. (For more information, see our 19 May 2025 *What’s in Blue* story.)

In his briefing at the meeting, Christian Bueger, a research fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), urged Council members to pursue a more systematic, evidence-based, and coordinated approach to maritime security governance. He said that despite substantial international efforts, “blue crimes” such as piracy and smuggling continue to undermine regional stability. He noted that the proliferation of autonomous weapons systems, naval mines, maritime cybersecurity threats, sub-standard shipping linked to sanctions evasion and the need to protect critical maritime infrastructure require sustained and systematic attention. Bueger argued that the UN system’s current approach to maritime security is fragmented and in need of recalibration, noting the absence of a global strategy or coordination mechanism. In this context, he suggested that the Council consider supporting efforts to strengthen coordination, information-sharing, and strategic thinking, including through the establishment of a standing item on the Council’s agenda dedicated to maritime security or creating an office of a special rapporteur.

In July, the Piracy Reporting Centre of the International Maritime Bureau, a specialised division of the International Chamber of Commerce, released its report covering the period from January to June. The report documented 90 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against vessels, representing a 50 percent increase compared to the same period in 2024. These included cases of vessel boardings, attempted attacks, hijackings, and incidents involving gunfire. The report recorded the highest number of incidents in the Singapore Strait, with 57 cases, an almost fourfold increase compared to 15 during the same period in 2024. While the reported incidents in the Gulf of Guinea remained low, the report noted that they continued to pose significant risks to crew safety, accounting for 87 percent of all crew kidnappings in the first half of 2025.

The escalation in the Red Sea against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war on 7 October 2023 exposed the fragility of global maritime trade routes and demonstrated how disruptions at critical choke points can impact international commerce and undermine economic stability. Beginning in mid-November 2023, Yemen’s Houthi rebel group launched a series of sophisticated attacks against merchant and commercial ships transiting the Red Sea. As at 6 May, reports indicate that the Houthis had attacked 176 vessels in the Red Sea.

In response, the Council adopted resolution 2722 of 10 January 2024, which, among other things, demanded that the Houthis cease attacks on vessels and acknowledged member states’ right to defend their vessels from attacks, including those that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to provide written monthly reports on further Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, most recently extended by resolution 2787 of 15 July.

Houthi attacks in the Red Sea had largely subsided for approximately seven months, following sustained efforts by international

partners to safeguard maritime routes. These efforts included the multinational maritime security initiative Operation Prosperity Guardian, as well as two air campaigns: Operation Poseidon Archer, led by the UK and the US, and Operation Rough Rider, led by the US. However, the attacks resumed on 6 and 7 July—marking the first such incidents since late 2024—with strikes on the MV Magic Seas and the MV Eternity C, respectively, resulting in at least four fatalities and several injuries. (For more information, see our 8 July 2025 *What’s in Blue* story.)

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to address the increasingly complex and interconnected threats to maritime security. One pressing concern relates to growing disruptions to freedom of navigation, particularly in strategic chokepoints and heavily trafficked maritime routes. Such disruptions pose a serious threat to international trade and global economic stability, with cascading impacts on food and energy security.

A related concern is the growing threat from emerging technologies and the proliferation of advanced weaponry, including unmanned systems and precision-guided missiles, which have transformed the nature of maritime conflict. Recent years have seen a rise in attacks on critical maritime infrastructure—such as port facilities and navigation systems—often exploiting cyber vulnerabilities, with potentially far-reaching geopolitical and economic consequences.

The evolving threat landscape, driven by emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems, and advanced surveillance tools, underscores the need to strengthen situational awareness and international cooperation. Enhanced information-sharing and capacity building, including through the transfer of technology and best practices, are critical to enabling states to effectively govern and protect maritime domains.

Another area of concern for Council members is the persistent violation of UN Security Council resolutions aimed at curbing the illicit transport of sanctioned commodities and weapons. Several members have also raised alarm over the growing number of maritime activities designed to circumvent sanctions imposed on both state entities and terrorist-designated groups.

An important issue is organised crime at sea, along with the growing nexus between terrorism and maritime crime. Addressing underlying causes, such as weak governance, poverty, and limited economic opportunities, remains a key challenge in countering these threats, ensuring regional security, and promoting sustainable economic development.

Additionally, environmental and climate-related risks are exacerbating maritime insecurity through rising sea levels and the degradation of marine ecosystems. Illegal fishing, pollution, and unsustainable resource exploitation remain significant threats, particularly for vulnerable coastal and island states.

Another important issue for the Council is how to support coordinated responses to maritime threats while promoting compliance with existing international legal instruments, primarily the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This requires enhanced cooperation not only among states but also with regional organisations, civil society, the private sector, and local authorities, to develop

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coherent, coordinated, and holistic responses to the threats to maritime security.

Some members may suggest the need for regular reporting from the Secretary-General on maritime security, moving beyond incident-based updates to comprehensive assessments that identify emerging trends and vulnerabilities. Such reporting could help raise awareness, highlight gaps in existing provisions, and inform early response strategies.

To galvanise efforts and keep the Council's attention on the issue, Council members may also consider organising informal briefings, including Arria-formula and expert-level briefings, to consider adequate responses to contemporary challenges in the maritime domain and invite industry experts to share insights, best practices, and emerging trends that could promote policy coherence.

Council Dynamics

Council members acknowledge that the wide-ranging peace and security threats posed by maritime crime demand coherent and effective multilateral approaches, particularly because of the transnational nature of these challenges. Given that all Council members are littoral states, they have a direct stake in maritime security. All Council members are also state parties to UNCLOS, except for the US, which nonetheless considers many of the convention's provisions as part of customary law. (For more information, see the brief on Maritime Security in our *May 2025 Monthly Forecast*.)

The Council's 20 May debate on maritime security revealed differing views among members on a range of issues. China and Russia, for instance, voiced reservations about an expansive Council role in maritime issues. In this regard, Russia argued that “most of the issues raised in today's debate—transnational organized crime, the illicit arms trade, drug trafficking, trafficking in persons and the illegal exploitation of marine resources—are not part of the Security Council's remit”. China also argued that the Council is not the appropriate venue for addressing specific maritime disputes, such as those in the South China Sea.

The US and China differ sharply in their legal interpretations of UNCLOS, particularly regarding the principle of freedom-of-navigation and China's expansive claims in the South China Sea, which are rejected by the US and several other countries as excessive. To reinforce its interpretation of navigational rights and freedoms, the US routinely conducts freedom-of-navigation operations in the region using its naval and air forces. In its remarks at the 20 May meeting, the US condemned what it described as China's “dangerous and unlawful actions” in the South China Sea and called on Beijing to comply with the 2016 ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration. This ruling, initiated by the Philippines under UNCLOS, found China's claims and several of its activities in the South China Sea, including land reclamation and resource exploitation, to be unlawful. China, for its part, rejected the 2016 award as “illegal” and “invalid” and accused the US of using its military presence in the region to project power and provoke confrontation.

Another key point of contention that has emerged between Russia and European Council members relates to the issue of so-called “shadow fleets”. IMO defines these as “ships that are engaged in illegal operations for the purposes of circumventing sanctions, evading compliance with safety or environmental regulations, avoiding insurance costs or engaging in other illegal activities”. On 18 July, the European Union (EU) announced a new sanctions package targeting Russia's energy, banking, and military sectors in the context of the war in Ukraine. The package includes measures against 105 vessels, which are now subject to a port access ban and broad restrictions on maritime transport-related services—bringing the total number of listed vessels to 444. On 21 July, the UK also imposed new sanctions, targeting 135 oil tankers, as well as a shipping services company and an oil trading firm.

During the 20 May meeting, Russia denounced the EU's sanctions measures as an attempt by EU member states to impose their own political paradigms and preferences on others. It called these sanctions “unilateral coercive measures” and alleged that they are inherently illegal and contrary to international law.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations, 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.

Key Recent Developments

In July, the Houthis—a Yemeni rebel group also known as Ansar Allah—resumed targeting commercial vessels in the Red Sea for the first time since late 2024. Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the region are part of the group's offensive against Israel, which they

say is in solidarity with Palestinians. They have threatened to continue until Israel ends its military campaign in Gaza that followed the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks.

The Houthis have reportedly said that ships linked to Israel are a legitimate target. On 6 July, the group attacked and sank the Liberian-flagged, Greek-operated MV *Magic Seas*. 23 persons who abandoned the ship were rescued by the United Arab Emirates. The following day, on 7 July, the Houthis attacked and sank the MV *Eternity C*, another Liberian-flagged, Greek-operated ship, killing at least five and injuring several of the crew members. On 29 July, the Houthis reportedly released video footage of ten crew members they captured, saying that they had rescued them. Both ships had

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2787](#) (15 July 2025) extended the Secretary-General's monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea until 15 January 2026. [S/RES/2786](#) (14 July 2025) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 28 January 2026. [Security Council Press Statement SC/16079](#) (5 June 2025) marked a year since the June 2024 wave of arbitrary detention of UN and NGO personnel by the Houthis. [SC/15995](#) (13 February 2025) condemned the detention of UN and NGO personnel by the Houthis.

Yemen

docked in Israel in the past, although neither is Israeli-owned. In a 10 July statement, UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg called on the Houthis to cease such escalatory attacks, while an 11 July statement attributable to Secretary-General António Guterres strongly condemned the attacks.

On 15 July, the Security Council adopted resolution 2787, extending the monthly reporting by the Secretary-General on attacks by the Houthi rebel group in Yemen on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea until 15 January 2026. The resolution was adopted with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (Algeria, China, and Russia), consistent with their votes on the previous three renewals of the resolution. (For more information, see our 12 July *What's in Blue* story.)

Reciprocal strikes between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Houthis also continued in July. After a 1 July Houthi-launched missile was intercepted by Israel, the country's Defence Minister, Israel Katz, vowed retaliation against the group and warned that Yemen would meet the same fate as Tehran, referring to Israel's 12-day military campaign against Iran in June. On 7 July, the IDF conducted strikes against the Houthi-controlled ports of Hodeidah, Ras Isa, and Salif, as well as the Ras Qantib power plant and the MV *Galaxy Leader*—a ship seized by the Houthis in April 2023, which Israel claims was being used by the group to track vessels in the Red Sea. The Houthis retaliated on the same day by firing two ballistic missiles at Israel, and continued to intermittently launch missiles at Israel, with no injuries reported at the time of writing. Israel struck Houthi targets in Hodeidah with drones on 21 July.

Reportedly, Israel has urged a renewal of US attacks against the Houthis and the formation of a multi-state coalition to counter the Houthi threat. In May, the US and the Houthis had agreed to an Oman-mediated ceasefire, following months of US bombing on Houthi targets.

On 14 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2786, renewing the mandate of the UN Mission to support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA) until 28 January 2026. The resolution requested the Secretary-General “to present to the Council, before 28 November 2025, a further review of UNMHA with a view to delivering further efficiencies and structural coherence and coordination across UN missions in Yemen”.

The Houthis' involvement in broader regional tensions has continued to stall progress towards a roadmap for peace in Yemen, including a nationwide ceasefire. In his briefing to the Council on 9 July, Grundberg said that while the “frontlines in Yemen continue to hold, the situation remains fragile and unpredictable” with continued military activity and troop movements in a number of governorates.

During his briefing, Grundberg covered his visit to Aden in early July, where he met Yemeni Prime Minister Salem Bin Buraik. Among the issues discussed was Yemen's deepening economic crisis, with Grundberg calling on the parties to engage on tangible and practical measures to revive the economy, including by enabling the government of Yemen to resume oil and gas production exports. According to media reports, on 12 July, the Houthi-controlled Central Bank in Sanaa announced the issuance of a new 50-Yemeni Rial coin, raising risks of further monetary division between areas controlled by the group and areas controlled by the internationally recognised government of Yemen. In a 17 July statement, Grundberg expressed deep

concern about such unilateral actions, which risk further undermining Yemen's fragile economy.

The economic crisis is also further exacerbating the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen. Briefing the Council on 9 July, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher warned that Yemen's food security crisis is accelerating and projected that between September and February 2026, over 18 million people could go hungry, echoing projections by the 27 June Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis. He stressed that critical funding shortfalls are affecting food, health, and protection services, especially for women and girls. He also cited important breakthroughs such as the reopening of key roads in June and the restoration of water access in Taiz governorate on 1 July. Fletcher called for urgent increased funding, the immediate release of Houthi-detained aid workers, and respect for international humanitarian law to protect civilians and aid operations.

Women, Peace and Security

Summer Nasser, the Chief Executive Officer of Yemen Aid, briefed the Security Council during the 9 July meeting on Yemen. Nasser highlighted how the sudden decline in international humanitarian funding, mainly driven by shifts in donor priorities, has led to the cessation of food distributions, the closure of health facilities, and the disruption of cash transfer programs, leaving many Yemenis facing an uncertain future. She warned that the deliberate targeting of commercial and humanitarian vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden by the Houthis is severely disrupting the delivery of vital supplies to the country's ports and has led to a “dramatic spike in the prices of basic commodities in a country that is already suffering from economic paralysis and deliberate starvation tactics”. Nasser called on the Council to enhance long-term humanitarian and development funding to ensure the continuity of critical programs, particularly in the sectors of health, food security and education. Among other issues, Nasser highlighted how the Houthis continue to violate the rights of humanitarian workers through arbitrary detention, harassment, as well as restrictions imposed on both international and local organisations, including UN agencies. She urged the Council to exert pressure on the Houthis to immediately and unconditionally release all detained humanitarian workers.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to help mitigate the risk of an escalation of hostilities in Yemen and the Red Sea while advancing efforts to relaunch the stalled intra-Yemeni political process amid broader regional tensions. Renewed Houthi attacks against commercial vessels and global maritime supply chains in the Red Sea further complicate efforts to secure the UN's roadmap for peace in Yemen.

One option for the Council would be to issue a presidential statement calling for de-escalation, 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. Given the degradation of economic conditions in the country, members could also demand renewed economic and humanitarian measures, such as the implementation of the economic de-escalation agreement reached on 23 July 2024 between the Houthis and the Yemeni government.

The statement could also reiterate provisions from relevant resolutions on the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea, demanding that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks against merchant and commercial vessels, reiterating 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 resolution 2216.

Given the increasingly fraught humanitarian context, Council

Yemen

members could also consider holding a public briefing, possibly at high level, focused specifically on Yemen's humanitarian crisis—which could include a briefing from the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) or the World Food Programme (WFP) on the country's rapidly worsening food security—providing 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, members have divergent views on the reasons for the protracted political stalemate and insecurity in Yemen. The “A3 plus one” members, 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. Russia and China have also criticised foreign military action in Yemen—Israel, the UK, and the US have all conducted strikes targeting Houthi infrastructure since the beginning of the Red Sea crisis—claiming that it only serves to degrade the

country's already dire humanitarian situation, exacerbate the situation in the Red Sea, and negatively impact the peace process.

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 repeatedly called for the Security Council to respond to Iranian defiance of the Council-mandated arms embargo.

The 14 July renewal of UNMHA, until 28 January 2026, revealed opposing views over the mission's future. The US has stressed its position that it is time to “sunset” the mission, whereas other Council members, including Russia and China, have expressed positions supportive of the mission's continuity, highlighting its stabilising role in the Hodeidah region. The Secretary-General's Council-mandated November review of the mission will help inform the Council's deliberations on the mission's future viability.

Several Council members 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. Greece and the US are the co-penholders on the Red Sea crisis.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

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

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 30 April 2026.

Key Recent Developments

The South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF)—the government's forces—have reportedly continued targeting opposition strongholds across several states. In early June, the SSPDF—with reported support from Uganda, which deployed its forces in South Sudan in March—conducted airstrikes in Fangak County, Jonglei State, an area that has seen intense violence since tensions escalated between the SSPDF and the South Sudan Liberation Army-In Opposition (SPLA-IO) in April. Media reports indicate that on 11 June, there was a new wave of violence between the SSPDF and Agwelek militias on one side, and the SPLA-IO, joined by a local Nuer armed youth group known as the White Army, on the other. On 23 June, the SSPDF reportedly carried out airstrikes in Panyijiar County, Unity State, a SPLA-IO-dominated area. The airstrikes continued in the following days, with support from Ugandan forces, and resulted in several injuries. (For background and more information, see the brief on South Sudan in our May 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

In a 3 June press release, UNMISS expressed deep concern about escalating intercommunal violence in Tonj East, Warrap State, which resulted in hundreds of deaths, the destruction of homes, and widespread displacement. The press release noted that since December 2024, the area has experienced repeated incidents of violence, including cattle raids and revenge attacks involving large groups of armed youth from neighbouring communities. It said that more than 200 people were estimated to have been killed in clashes in March. According to the release, the violence has intensified, driven by efforts to recover stolen cattle and the desire to retaliate for previous attacks, resulting in possibly over 80 additional casualties, although these figures remain unverified. UNMISS said that it had increased patrols but noted that the presence of checkpoints operated by armed youth has hindered access to some affected areas.

On 12 June, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) held a meeting on the situation in South Sudan. In his remarks at the meeting, then-Deputy Special Representative and Deputy Head of UNMISS Guang Cong warned of the steady erosion of gains made under the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), including the loss of trust among the parties. (Cong has since been appointed the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa). He highlighted a worsening security and political environment, which has stalled key transitional priorities, including security sector reform, elections, and constitution-making. He noted a sharp escalation in

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2781 (30 May 2025) renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2026 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2026. S/RES/2779 (8 May 2025) renewed UNMISS' mandate until 30 April 2026. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9898](#) (16 April 2025) was a meeting on the situation in South Sudan. [Security Council Letter S/2025/452](#) (7 July 2025) was a letter from the Secretary-General appointing the Panel of Experts supporting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

South Sudan

armed clashes and a continued lack of progress in implementing the agreement, despite repeated calls for a ceasefire and dialogue. In its communiqué, the AUPSC called for the immediate and unconditional release and reinstatement of Riek Machar, South Sudan's First Vice President, who was arrested in March. The AUPSC also called for an independent investigation into all violations of the R-ARCSS.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan continues to deteriorate. According to OCHA, as of June, more than half of the population—approximately 7.7 million people—are facing severe levels of acute food insecurity. This includes an estimated 83,000 individuals experiencing famine-like conditions, particularly in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area and in Nasir, Ulang, and Malakal counties in Upper Nile State. An additional 39,000 South Sudanese returnees who fled the conflict in Sudan are also facing critical food insecurity.

The country is also facing a rapidly expanding cholera outbreak, affecting communities across the country. According to OCHA's 8 July press release, South Sudan's Ministry of Health has reported approximately 80,000 cases and over 1,400 deaths since the end of September 2024. OCHA's latest humanitarian access snapshot, published on 15 July, noted that ongoing clashes between armed groups and the SSPDF in Jonglei and Upper Nile states continue to obstruct aid delivery to thousands in need. Access remains particularly constrained in Fangak, Pigi Canal, Ulang, and Nasir counties. In June, 53 incidents affecting humanitarian operations were documented, including violence against aid workers and assets, abductions, attacks on health facilities, and bureaucratic impediments.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 13 June, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan stressed that escalating military offensives, political crackdowns, and foreign military presence are not only accelerating the breakdown of the agreement but also reigniting greater fear, suffering, and widespread insecurity for the people of South Sudan. Underscoring the need for urgent, coordinated regional intervention, the Commission reiterated its call for "regional and international actors to intensify diplomatic pressure on South Sudan's leaders to ensure immediate de-escalation and the full implementation of the Revitalized Agreement".

On 2 July, the UNMISS Human Rights Division (HRD) released its quarterly brief on violence affecting civilians, covering the period from January to March. The brief documented 312 incidents of violence affecting 1,067 civilians, the highest number of civilian victims recorded in a single quarter by the HRD since 2020. In comparison to the previous quarter (October to December 2024), the brief reported a 34 percent increase in the number of documented violent incidents (from 233 to 312) and an 86 percent increase in the total number of victims (from 866 to 1,607). The reported conflict-related incidents included 40 cases of conflict-related sexual violence. The brief also documented 42 incidents of sexual- and gender-based violence across South Sudan.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 30 May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2781, renewing the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2026 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2026. (For more information, see our 29 May *What's in Blue* story.)

On 1 July, Secretary-General António Guterres sent a letter to the Council confirming the appointment of four experts to the Panel, covering the areas of arms, natural resources/finance, regional issues, and armed groups. The letter also informed Council members that a fifth expert, who will cover humanitarian affairs, would be appointed to the Panel soon.

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Council is how to prevent South Sudan from descending into civil war while addressing the structural issues that contribute to recurring violence and political instability. Although large-scale clashes have so far been averted, localised violence persists, and recent unrest has heightened concerns about a return to full-scale conflict. Ensuring accountability for abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as breaking the cycle of impunity, remain underlying challenges.

A related issue is how the Council and the broader international community can continue supporting the transition amid increasing political fragmentation. Progress has been undermined by persistent delays in the transitional process, deep mistrust among political leaders, unilateral actions by the government, including the consolidation of power over state institutions, and recurring clashes between parties to the agreement, which have collectively derailed the peace process. Despite repeated extensions of the transitional period, the parties have failed to demonstrate the political will to implement critical benchmarks outlined in the R-ARCSS necessary for holding national elections, such as deployment of unified forces, civic education, election security, and voter registration. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources and delays in legal and political decisions continue to stall key processes.

In addition, the broader regional context poses a serious challenge to the political and security situation in South Sudan, particularly the spillover effects of the ongoing conflict in Sudan.

The obstacles to UNMISS's ability to fulfil its mandate and responsibilities, including restrictions on freedom of movement and violations of the status of forces agreement, continue to be an issue.

During the Council briefing in August, members could consider inviting a civil society representative to highlight ongoing challenges on the ground, including those stemming from a lack of timely implementation of the revitalised agreement, and the dire security and humanitarian situation. Council members could also consider inviting the Interim Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Major General (Retired) George Aggrey Owinow, to share perspectives on efforts to monitor and reinvigorate the peace process.

One option that Council members could consider is issuing a press statement expressing their concern over the political and security tensions in the country and urging parties to focus on the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

Another option for Council members would be to hold informal, expert-level briefings with independent regional analysts to gain a deeper understanding of the evolving political and security dynamics in the country.

Additionally, Council members could explore the possibility of undertaking a visiting mission to South Sudan to assess conditions first-hand and engage directly with parties to the R-ARCSS. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan took place in 2019.)

Council Dynamics

Council members share similar concerns regarding delays in implementing the revitalised agreement, ongoing sub-national and

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intercommunal violence, and the deepening economic and humanitarian crises. However, they hold differing views on the overall assessment of the situation and the degree to which the Council should exert pressure on the parties to advance implementation of the agreement. Some members, such as the US, have been more critical of what they view as the South Sudanese government's lack of political will to advance the peace process.

During the Council's most recent briefing on South Sudan, held on 16 April, a majority of members expressed concern over the intensification of violence and its devastating impact on civilians, alarm at the arrest of First Vice-President Riek Machar, and a shared view that unilateral actions undermine the peace process. Several members stressed the importance of preserving the fragile gains made towards peace and stability.

Russia, however, argued that "the situation in South Sudan is under the control of the current government" and emphasised that the Council should prioritise support for the authorities' stabilisation efforts rather than exert undue pressure. China, while expressing regret over the state of the implementation of the R-ARCSS, highlighted the progress made by the parties despite significant internal and external challenges. Similarly, during negotiations on the UNMISS mandate renewal in May, both Russia and China opposed language proposed by the US (the penholder on South Sudan), which they perceived as overly critical of the government. They instead advocated for a more balanced and constructive approach that would avoid placing disproportionate pressure on the host authorities. (For more information, see our 8 May *What's in Blue* story.)

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is scheduled to vote on a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) ahead of its 31 August expiry. Additionally, on 18 August, Council members are expected to hold closed consultations on UNIFIL. Mohamed Khaled Khiari, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, is the anticipated briefer.

Key Recent Developments

The 26 November 2024 cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon has continued to hold despite violations. Broadly based on the framework established by resolution 1701, the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement, which was brokered by the US and France, stated that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) would withdraw south of the Blue Line and, in parallel, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) would deploy to positions south of the Litani River. (The Blue Line is a withdrawal line set by the UN in 2000 to confirm Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. While not an international border, the Blue Line acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between the two states.)

The cessation-of-hostilities arrangement established that Israel would not carry out any offensive military operations against Lebanese targets in the territory of Lebanon and that the Lebanese government would prevent Hezbollah and all other armed groups from conducting operations against Israel. In addition, the LAF would dismantle unauthorised infrastructure and confiscate unauthorised arms, among other tasks. According to Israeli media reports, also cited by Lebanese news outlets, the US bilaterally provided additional guarantees to Israel with respect to the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement's implementation, including recognising "Israel's right to respond to Hezbollah threats".

Since the arrangement, Israel has carried out near-daily airstrikes

and shelling in Lebanese territory—particularly in southern Lebanon—saying that it was targeting members of Hezbollah and weapons depots. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701, which was issued on 11 July, and covers the period from 21 February to 20 June, at least 79 Lebanese civilians have been killed by Israeli military operations since the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement came into effect. The most recent report of rocket launches from Lebanon towards Israel occurred in March. There were no reported Israeli casualties during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report.

With UNIFIL's support, the LAF has gradually redeployed throughout southern Lebanon. According to the Secretary-General's report, as at 20 June, 7,522 LAF personnel had been deployed to 116 positions south of the Litani River. UNIFIL also detected numerous unauthorised weapons and ammunition caches in its area of operations and discovered 67 tunnels or underground structures. In his report, the Secretary-General recognised that the LAF "made progress" on this front, noting that the reporting period was denoted by "the concerted effort of the Lebanese authorities" to extend the state's authority throughout Lebanon. Nevertheless, he stressed the importance of the LAF continuing to take "the measures necessary" towards achieving a state monopoly over the possession of weapons in Lebanon.

In mid-February, Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon but has since occupied five positions and two "buffer zones" in Lebanese territory near the Blue Line, with the IDF reportedly saying that it will remain there "until Israel is certain that Hezbollah will not return to the area south of the Litani River". According to the Secretary-General's report, UNIFIL observed IDF personnel outside those positions on at least 98 occasions. It also noted the IDF's continuing occupation of northern Ghajar, a village which straddles the Blue Line, and its "adjacent area" north of the Blue Line. The Secretary-General stressed that the continued presence of, and use

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2749](#) (28 August 2024) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for another year until 31 August 2025. [S/RES/1701](#) (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. [S/RES/1559](#) (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/460](#) (11 July 2025) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701.

Lebanon

of force by, the IDF in Lebanon threatens stability and “undermines the efforts of the Lebanese authorities to extend the authority of the State”, adding that it “risks fuelling a narrative that could further complicate” Lebanese discussions on establishing a monopoly on arms, a reference to ongoing talks about disarming non-state groups.

UNIFIL experienced several incidents of aggressive behaviour and restrictions on its freedom of movement by groups of residents in its area of operations in southern Lebanon, a region where Hezbollah has historically maintained significant influence. In particular, the Secretary-General’s report said that, since late April, UNIFIL experienced an increase in these incidents. On 16 May, for instance, UNIFIL peacekeepers returned fire “after an isolated shooter fired approximately 20 shots towards the peacekeepers as they were moving away from an angry crowd”. The report adds that UNIFIL also faced incidents involving the IDF, including the pointing of weapons and direct fire at a UN position on 13 May.

IDF presence and military activities in the mission’s area of operations, as well as incidents of aggressive behaviour and obstruction, have continued to be reported by UNIFIL after the cut-off date of the latest Secretary-General’s report. UNIFIL has continued to find unauthorised weapons caches and refer them to the LAF.

UNIFIL has also cleared unexploded ordnance, repaired roads, and facilitated numerous civilian and humanitarian movements, among other activities.

In a 27 June letter to the Secretary-General, Lebanon requested the extension of UNIFIL’s mandate for an additional year, until 31 August 2026. The letter stressed that “UNIFIL’s continued presence remains essential to maintaining security and stability in southern Lebanon” and to support the LAF in extending Lebanon’s authority within the mission’s area of operations.

In an 11 July letter, the Secretary-General recommended that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 August 2026.

In recent months, US Ambassador to Türkiye and Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack and Lebanese authorities—including President Joseph Aoun—have engaged in diplomatic discussions on a pathway towards Hezbollah’s disarmament in exchange for US pressure on Israel to withdraw from the five positions it has occupied in Lebanese territory and cease its military operations in Lebanon. Although initial accounts of the discussions highlighted relatively optimistic US assessments of the talks, more recent reports indicate increasing US pressure for the Lebanese cabinet to imminently adopt a commitment to disarm Hezbollah. While signalling openness to a discussion on its weapons within a Lebanese-led dialogue, Hezbollah has thus far rejected its disarmament, citing continuing Israeli attacks in Lebanese territory and the occupation of the five positions.

On 28 July, a military court in Lebanon sentenced a man to death in absentia for the killing in December 2022 of an Irish peacekeeper during an attack on a UNIFIL convoy near the town of Al-Aqbiyah in southern Lebanon. The court also handed fines and lighter custodial sentences to several other people. Council members condemned the attack in a 15 December 2022 press statement, which recalled “the necessity for all parties to ensure that UNIFIL personnel are safe and secure”.

Key Issues and Options

UNIFIL’s mandate renewal is the pivotal issue for the Security Council in August.

Supporting the full implementation of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Hezbollah also remains a key priority.

Throughout the escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, UNIFIL remained in position despite repeatedly coming under fire and being urged by Israel to relocate. Following the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement, UNIFIL rapidly adjusted its posture to new realities on the ground, helping to facilitate implementation by supporting the deployment of the LAF south of the Litani River.

The Council could extend UNIFIL’s mandate for another year within the framework of resolution 1701. A one-year extension would signal continued support for UNIFIL’s stabilising role in southern Lebanon, including in the context of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement.

In the context of the mandate renewal, members may stress the importance of the parties guaranteeing the safety and security of UNIFIL peacekeepers, as well as of ensuring that the mission enjoys freedom of movement and access to all locations of interest within its area of operations. Members could further demand that all sides refrain from attacking UN peacekeepers and premises and stop all intimidatory behaviour.

The Council may underscore the importance of the mission continuing to strengthen its strategic communication to promote understanding of its mandated functions and counter misinformation and disinformation. The Council may also retain UNIFIL’s mandate on women, peace and security, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his 11 July letter.

Members may also wish to clarify UNIFIL’s specific role within the mechanism established under the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement to monitor, verify, and assist in “ensuring enforcement” of the commitments outlined in the arrangement. (The mechanism is a reformulated version of the tripartite mechanism established following the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. The revised mechanism is chaired by the US and hosted by UNIFIL. It also includes the IDF and the LAF, as well as France.)

Ensuring that UNIFIL has the resources it needs to effectively carry out its mandate is an increasingly important issue. Considering the continued volatility along the Blue Line, a reduction in the authorised force strength could risk undermining the mission’s ability to fulfil its mandate, including regarding patrolling functions.

Through a 30 June resolution, the General Assembly appropriated \$552.8 million for the maintenance of UNIFIL for the period from 1 July to 30 June 2026. However, according to the Secretary-General’s 11 July letter, as at 7 July, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for UNIFIL amounted to \$136 million. Additionally, while the US Congress is yet to approve the 2026 budget, the Trump administration proposed eliminating all US funding for UN peacekeeping operations in the 2026 fiscal year.

The Secretary-General’s report says that Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert offered her good offices with relevant authorities and actors in Lebanon, Israel and the region to support the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement. Council members

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could consider encouraging the parties to avail themselves of Hennis-Plasschaert's good offices. Members could also recommend the deployment of UNIFIL to the five positions currently occupied by the IDF, as proposed by France in February.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members recognise UNIFIL's vital role for stability in Lebanon and, more broadly, in the region.

At the same time, US President Donald Trump on 24 July signed into law the "Rescissions Act of 2025" rescinding approximately \$203 million of the \$1.4 billion appropriated in the fiscal year 2024 and \$158 million of the \$1.2 billion appropriated in the fiscal year 2025 for contributions to UN peacekeeping activities. Trump's 28 May rescission proposal to Congress cited, among other reasons, dissatisfaction with UNIFIL.

The US also voted against the 30 July General Assembly

resolution, which appropriated the budget for UNIFIL. All other Council members—except Sierra Leone and Somalia, who did not vote—voted in favour of the resolution, which was adopted with a total of 147 votes in favour, three votes against, and one abstention.

Council members agree on the need for the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon to hold. Sharp differences persist in Security Council members' views of Hezbollah, however. Some members distinguish between Hezbollah's political and military wings and have designated only its military wing as a terrorist organisation; other members, including the UK and the US, have listed Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. On the other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon.

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

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

In July, Syria experienced a significant escalation in violence following the eruptions of intense clashes in Suweida, a Druze-majority governorate in southern Syria. The violence reportedly started on 13 July between Bedouin tribal fighters and Druze militias, and intensified between 14 and 16 July, following the deployment of the Syrian interim authorities' security forces to the area, and Israeli airstrikes on Syrian security forces and buildings, including in Damascus.

On 18 July, US Ambassador to Türkiye and Envoy for Syria Tom Barrack announced via X that Israel and Syria reached a ceasefire agreement "embraced by Türkiye, Jordan and its neighbors" and on 26 July the two countries held talks in Paris, facilitated by the US, aimed at reducing tensions. Notwithstanding reports of renewed violence between Bedouin and Druze communities, the Syrian interim government announced a renewed truce in Suweida on 19 July, redeploying troops there in an apparent effort to restore calm.

While occasional skirmishes were reported between 20 and 22 July, major fighting has subsided since then. Approximately 176,000 people were displaced by the fighting that began on 13 July.

In reaction to a request for a meeting by Syria contained in a letter dated 16 July, the Security Council held an emergency briefing on 17 July on the Israeli airstrikes and the violence in Suweida. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace

Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed the Council and reported hundreds of casualties among security forces, Druze fighters, and civilians, including women and children. He referenced alarming reports of extrajudicial killings, mass displacement, and damage to critical infrastructure. Khiari further stressed that Israel's actions "further destabilise Syria at a sensitive time". (For more information, see our 17 July *What's in Blue* story.)

On 22 July, the fact-finding committee established by the interim government to investigate the mass killings in Latakia and Tartous in early March shared the findings of its investigation. The committee announced that more than 1,426 people, most of whom were civilians, were killed in the violence, which pitted Alawite fighters loyal to former President Bashar al-Assad against the caretaker authorities and their affiliates. According to the committee, 265 people were responsible for attacking government security forces, while 298 people were suspected of committing crimes against Alawites. The Syrian court system is expected to conduct additional investigations of these individuals, whose names have not been disclosed. Another 31 people accused of committing violations against civilians have been arrested.

The 10 March agreement between the interim government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—a Kurdish-led military group which controls most of Syria's autonomous northeastern territory—to integrate the SDF and its associated civil and military structures into Syria's state institutions has yet to be implemented. On 9 July, following discussions between the parties in Damascus, Barrack—who also reportedly participated in the meetings—told the Associated Press that there are still significant differences between the sides.

On 25 July, the US led an operation in Aleppo governorate, reportedly in coordination with interim government forces and the SDF, which killed a senior leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syria crisis and was adopted unanimously. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2025/4](#) (14 March 2025) condemned sectarian violence perpetrated in Latakia and Tartous and called for accountability and the protection of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion.

the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

The international community continues to take steps to normalise relations with Syria and to bolster the country's efforts towards stability and global economic reintegration. Following US President Donald Trump's 30 June executive order to terminate US sanctions, on 7 July the US State Department revoked the Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) designation of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Council-listed terrorist group which overthrew the Assad government under Sharaa's leadership. The executive order also directed the US Secretary of State to explore avenues for sanctions relief at the UN. On 5 July, the UK re-established diplomatic relations with Syria during a visit to the country by British Foreign Secretary David Lammy.

On 27 July, Mohammed Taha al-Ahmad, the chairman of the Higher Committee for People's Assembly Elections, said that Syria will hold parliamentary elections—the first to be held following the fall of Assad—between 15 and 20 September. In his 28 July briefing to the Council, Pedersen stressed that it is “absolutely vital that all major Syrian groups and components” and women are included as electors and candidates during the process.

UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria Adam Abdelmoula launched an extension of the 2025 Humanitarian Response priorities for Syria on 24 July, requesting \$3.19 billion to provide assistance to 10.3 million people in need through the remainder of 2025. The press release announcing the extension noted that it comes “amid critical funding shortfalls”, while observing that current funding for the Syria Humanitarian Response plan stands at 11 percent.

In her 28 July briefing to the Council, Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division at OCHA Edem Wosornu said that despite having supported aid delivery through local partners, OCHA's access to Suweida remains constrained due to security concerns. She called for expanded and sustained humanitarian access to sufficiently address the needs of the civilian population.

The humanitarian situation in Syria has been exacerbated by extensive wildfires, which started on 3 July in Latakia governorate and raged for ten days before being contained by firefighters. Wosornu said in her briefing that the UN and partners are providing a range of support to deliver assistance to thousands of people impacted by the fires, which displaced hundreds and damaged farmland, infrastructure and livelihoods in the region.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 June, the Chair of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI), Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, updated the Human Rights Council on Syria's security and human rights situations at the Council's 59th session. In his statement, Pinheiro noted the establishment of the National Transitional Justice Authority and the National Authority for Missing Persons, which mark an important step towards dealing with human rights abuses committed by the previous government while providing much-needed support and redress to survivors, victims and their relatives.

Pinheiro also highlighted the Commission's findings of revenge attacks across several governorates, as well as a series of Israeli airstrikes in and around Damascus and on military bases and weapons depots in Daraa, Hama, Tartous, and Latakia, leading to civilian casualties. Pinheiro further emphasised the need for decisive action to restore trust among Syria's minority communities and to prevent a cycle of revenge and retaliatory violence. He called upon all member states present at the Human Rights Council to deepen their engagement on the protection of human rights in Syria.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure that Syria's interim government pursues a credible, transparent, and inclusive political process while navigating an increasingly fraught security context compounded by sectarian violence, terrorism, and violations of Syria's sovereignty. Council members will be closely monitoring developments to ensure that steps being taken by the interim government are grounded in the principles of Council resolution 2254 of 18 December 2025, which focused on a political solution to the crisis in Syria.

A related key issue is how the interim government advances transitional justice efforts, including accountability. In addition to discussing the findings of the fact-finding committee into the violence in Latakia and Tartous in early March, Council members may also be expecting updates on efforts to ensure accountability for the violence against the Druze in July. Members may consider the option of issuing a presidential statement regarding the recent events in Suweida, including efforts towards accountability.

The future of the UN's role in Syria is another key issue for the Council. Under instructions from the Secretary-General, the UN Secretariat has conducted an integrated strategic assessment of the changing situation in the country, which has been finalised in an internal report. 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.

One option the Council could consider is delisting some members of the interim government. Various Council member states have taken steps to lift unilateral sanctions on Syria. Currently, both HTS and Sharaa himself are listed under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

Council members could request a briefing on the results of the integrated strategic assessment. They could also consider convening an Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) with the participation of Syria and relevant UN departments to discuss the most viable options on future Council engagement with Syria.

Council 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 pursue efforts to incorporate armed groups into the Syrian army, to promote transitional justice efforts, and to prevent further violence against minorities as part of this process.

There is broad agreement among Council members that the new Syrian government requires international support to rebuild the country and its crippled economy, including through the easing of sanctions.

Many Council members also agree on the need for the Syrian interim government to take decisive measures to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), in line with the Council's 14 March presidential statement. On 2 June, Reuters reported that the Syrian interim government plans to integrate some 3,500 foreign fighters into the Syrian national army and that the US approved, provided that it is done “transparently”. Many of the fighters in question are Uyghurs who constitute part of the Eastern Turkistan

Syria

Islamic Movement—also known as the Turkistan Islamic Party—which China considers a terrorist organisation and is also listed under UN sanctions. China has repeatedly expressed concern about the reported integration of FTFs into the Syrian army.

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 Syria, but the US has predominantly seen its actions as defensive in nature or tied to

ensuring its national security.

The US is reportedly seeking to broker talks to end the decades-long conflict between Israel and Syria. In its statement at the 17 July Council emergency meeting following Israeli strikes on Syria, the US noted that it “did not support recent Israeli strikes” and that it is “engaging diplomatically with Israel and Syria at the highest levels, both to address the present crisis and reach a lasting agreement between the two sovereign states”.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In August, 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. Additionally, the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee will brief on the committee's activities.

Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister 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 is over 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.

Starting on 12 May, there were two days of deadly clashes between rival militias in Tripoli that were sparked by the killing of Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, head of the Stability Support Authority (SSA), allegedly in a facility operated by the 444 Brigade, a rival militia aligned with Dbeibah. On 14 May, the GNU announced a ceasefire and called on all parties to adhere to it and refrain from any actions that could reignite the tensions. Despite the heightened tensions triggered by the incident, no further major outbreaks of violence have been reported, and both groups appear to have pulled back, contributing to a fragile, calm situation on the ground.

During the Security Council's most recent briefing on Libya, held on 24 June, Tetteh highlighted growing fears among Libyans that armed clashes could resume. She also expressed concern over the continued transfer of weapons into Tripoli, which has led to a

significant build-up of heavy arms and stockpiles in densely populated urban areas, posing a serious threat to civilians. Tetteh further warned that the current instability risks undermining the 2020 Ceasefire Agreement.

Tetteh also briefed the Council on nationwide consultations regarding the work of the Advisory Committee set up by UNSMIL on 4 February to address outstanding issues hindering the holding of elections in Libya. The committee completed its mandate and submitted its final report to the mission on 6 May, outlining options for holding elections and ending the transitional phase. Subsequently, UNSMIL has been conducting nationwide consultations to facilitate an inclusive dialogue among Libyans on the committee's proposed options. The mission intends to use the comments gathered through these consultations as input to develop “a time-bound and politically pragmatic road map reflecting the Libyan people's demand for tangible change, with the goal of ending transitional processes”. Tetteh said she hoped to be able to present this road map for the Council's endorsement during her August briefing.

On 20 June, Germany and UNSMIL hosted the Berlin Process International Follow-up Committee on Libya (IFCL) meeting in Berlin. The last meeting of the IFCL in the plenary format took place in June 2021. Tetteh said that the meeting marked a “significant shift towards reinvigorating international coordination on Libya and consolidating international support for United Nations efforts in advancing a political process”. Three regional organisations and 19 member states attended the meeting and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the UN-facilitated political process in Libya.

In recent months, there has been a noticeable spike in irregular migration from Libya across the Mediterranean, with most migrants arriving in Greece. On 8 July, a European Union (EU) delegation—led by the EU Migration Commissioner and the interior ministers of Italy, Greece, and Malta—travelled to Libya to urge stricter migration controls by Libyan authorities. The delegation first visited Tripoli, where they met with Dbeibah. However, upon arriving in Benghazi, authorities in eastern Libya ordered them to leave, citing breaches of diplomatic norms, violations of domestic laws, and disregard for Libyan sovereignty.

According to some reports, the incident appears to have been intended as a signal to the EU that eastern authorities cannot be ignored in addressing major issues in Libya. The reports also indicate

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2780](#) (29 May 2025) renewed 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, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. [S/RES/2769](#) (16 January 2025) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 May 2026, and the authorisation of measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 1 May 2026. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/223](#) (11 April 2025) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL [Security Council Press Statement SC/16064](#) (17 May 2025) was on the escalation of violence in Tripoli.

Libya

that eastern authorities are demanding international recognition and equal standing with the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) based in Tripoli.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 4 June press release, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk voiced grave concern and shock over revelations of gross human rights violations uncovered at official and unofficial detention facilities run by the SSA in Tripoli. Dozens of bodies were discovered at such sites, along with the discovery of suspected instruments of torture and abuse, and potential evidence of extrajudicial killings. Türk described these discoveries as confirming past reports by UNSMIL and the former UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission, as well as from various witness accounts. In response to these revelations, the High Commissioner called for the sites to be sealed and for prompt, independent, impartial and transparent investigations by the Libyan authorities. Among other recommendations, Türk urged the authorities to grant the UN full and unimpeded access to the sites as part of its mandate to document human rights violations.

Key Issues and Options

The fragile security situation in the country remains a key issue for the Council. These concerns have become even more acute after the recent escalation of violence in Tripoli. While the violence has now ceased, the UN has warned that it could have spiralled out of control and seriously undermined the permanent ceasefire reached in 2020. Citing reports of military build-up in and around Tripoli in July, UNSMIL has called on all parties to refrain from using force and avoid actions that could lead to renewed clashes. The violence underscores the need for sustained attention to the political and security dynamics in Libya. Members may choose to hold informal briefings with civil society on the potential undercurrents that could affect the stability of the country.

Another continuing core issue for the Council is supporting political progress towards national elections to unify Libya's divided government. One of the main 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.

Given recent and revitalised efforts by UNMSIL to facilitate dialogue between Libyan political stakeholders, Council members may be interested to hear more from Tetteh on this process, especially the road map that UNSMIL is expected to present. Council members could consider adopting a presidential statement expressing support for the development of the roadmap and urging Libyan political stakeholders to commit themselves to implementing it with a view to bringing an end to the transition period and facilitating the holding of the long-delayed general elections.

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. Council members also share concerns about the fragile security situation in the country, especially after the recent escalation of violence in Tripoli.

While Russia shares some common ground with other Council members, it has consistently emphasised that no political solution should be imposed on Libyans and has cautioned against potential UN overreach. While most Council members have generally welcomed the Advisory Committee's recommendations, Russia expressed concern at the June meeting, arguing that most major political forces in Libya do not view the Advisory Committee's work positively.

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.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Tensions on the Korean peninsula have persisted in recent months. On 8 May and 19 June, the DPRK test-launched several short-range ballistic missiles, which followed similar tests conducted in March and January. The June launch coincided with a trilateral aerial exercise held by Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the US close

to the ROK's Jeju Island.

These were the first such joint military exercises since ROK President Lee Jae-myung was inaugurated on 4 June.

Lee—a member of the liberal Democratic Party of Korea—is considered more favourable to engagement with the DPRK than his predecessor, Yoon Suk-yeol of the People Power Party. In June, Lee ordered the cessation of anti-DPRK propaganda broadcasts across the border as part of efforts to “restore trust in inter-Korean relations and promote peace on the Korean Peninsula”. On 20 July, a spokesperson for the ROK's Unification Ministry said in response to media reports that the country was considering resuming individual tours to the DPRK and that several potential measures to improve

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9912 (7 May 2025) was an open briefing on non-proliferation issues related to the DPRK. **Other S/2024/255** (28 March 2024) was a draft resolution vetoed by Russia that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

relations were under review.

Since his inauguration in January, US President Trump has made several public statements indicating that he may again seek to reestablish dialogue with DPRK leader Kim Jong-un, having failed to do so in his first term. During a 13 March meeting with NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, Trump expressed an interest in restarting the talks, saying that he has a “great relationship” with Kim and calling him a “nuclear power”. On 1 April, Trump told reporters that “there is communication” in response to a question about possible talks with Kim.

According to subsequent media reports, officials in the Trump administration have been undertaking preparatory work for a possible resumption of dialogue with the DPRK. North Korean officials have appeared less inclined to engage, however, and media outlets reported in June that diplomatic staff at the DPRK’s mission to the UN had refused to accept a letter from Trump to Kim aimed at restarting peace talks.

Meanwhile, the DPRK has continued its military cooperation with Russia. In April, both countries confirmed for the first time that the DPRK has provided support for Russia’s war against Ukraine—including the deployment of an estimated 14,000 troops and the transfer of missiles—after the two countries signed a mutual defence treaty in June 2024. On 12 July, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Kim in the North Korean city of Wonsan, where he thanked the DPRK for its military support and described the countries’ relations as “an invincible fighting brotherhood”, adding that his visit represented the continuation of their “strategic dialogue”.

On 28 May, the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) published its first report, which focuses on what it describes as the “unlawful military cooperation” between the DPRK and Russia. The MSMT was established in October 2024 by 11 countries—including Security Council members France, the ROK, the UK, and the US—following Russia’s March 2024 veto of a draft Council resolution that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. The MSMT is intended to report on alleged DPRK-related violations and evasions of sanction measures stipulated by relevant Council resolutions. The team’s 28 May report details several aspects of the military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, including the DPRK’s arms transfers to Russia, Russia’s transfer of military technology to the DPRK, and Russia’s training of North Korean troops in Russia. On 17 July, the participating members of the MSMT held a closed briefing for UN member states on the report.

On 7 May, the Security Council held an open briefing on the DPRK. The meeting was requested by Denmark, France, Panama, the ROK, Slovenia, the UK, and the US to discuss the DPRK’s continued violations of Council resolutions over one year after the Russian veto that shut down the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. On 29 May, Council members convened in closed consultations for the regular 90-day briefing on the work of the Committee.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Between 30 June and 4 July, Elizabeth Salmón, the UN Special Rapporteur on the

situation of human rights in the DPRK, completed a five-day country visit to Japan. During her visit, Salmón engaged with government officials, families of abduction victims, and members of civil society, among others, to exchange views on human rights issues in the DPRK. The Special Rapporteur will present a report of her findings and recommendations to the UN General Assembly in October 2025.

On 20 May 2025, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ilze Brands Kehris delivered an address to a high-level UN General Assembly plenary meeting on human rights abuses and violations in the DPRK. In her statement, Kehris highlighted how the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is building a central repository of information and evidence of human rights abuses in the country to enable deeper analysis of patterns of violations, involving executions, arbitrary detention, and torture, among others.

Kehris also noted that, despite limited improvements in some areas, reports continue to demonstrate that the DPRK’s human rights situation remains dire and is worsening. According to OHCHR analysis, hundreds of thousands of people have been forcibly disappeared by the DPRK, forced labour remains deeply entrenched throughout the country, and widespread hunger persists, with 40 percent of the population suffering from food insecurity. Kehris stressed that OHCHR will continue to engage with the DPRK authorities to encourage meaningful steps toward the implementation of recommendations made by human rights mechanisms and to advance the promotion and protection of human rights for all in the country.

Key Issues and Options

The Council faces several key issues related to the DPRK. The DPRK’s ongoing weapons tests, many of which violate Council resolutions, remain a serious concern for the Council. Sanctions evasion is another key issue, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have continued developing nuclear weapons since the sanctions regime was first introduced. The DPRK’s ongoing refusal to participate in denuclearisation dialogue and the humanitarian situation in the country are also challenges for the Council.

In light of these issues, Council members could begin discussions on a resolution that condemns the DPRK’s ongoing missile tests, urges member states to comply with existing resolutions, and calls on the DPRK to take part in denuclearisation talks. It could also update and strengthen the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime with a view to exerting additional pressure on the DPRK or other actors found to be in breach of sanctions measures.

The lack of a panel of experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is another major issue. While the MSMT could help fill the information gap left by the panel, it lacks the perceived legitimacy of a Council-mandated entity. Most Council members are therefore expected to continue to advocate for the re-establishment of the panel. In the meantime, however, Council members that are also members of the MSMT could consider measures to enhance the team’s credibility, including by expanding its membership beyond traditional Western allies and exploring options for strengthening its dialogue with the broader UN membership. Council members could also hold an informal meeting with MSMT members to discuss its first report.

The ongoing military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia remains another major issue for the Council. Council members could choose to hold a meeting to discuss any relevant developments in this regard. Given the direct involvement of a permanent member, however, a more substantive response is likely to be difficult.

Council Dynamics

The Council is sharply divided over the DPRK, and this dynamic

DPRK (North Korea)

appears to have worsened as cooperation between the DPRK and Russia has grown. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded Council members, including the ROK, generally favour using sanctions to help manage the threat posed by the DPRK and regularly call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the country to engage in dialogue and abandon its nuclear weapons programme while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some have also called for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK's weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened the DPRK by blocking Council action on the file. Several of these members have strongly criticised the growing cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, including by highlighting evidence of arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia and noting that these transfers violate Council resolutions. At the Council's 7 May briefing on the DPRK, Russia called into question the legitimacy and credibility of the MSMT.

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

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

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