

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In October, Russia will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Russia plans to organise one signature event, an open debate on the 80th anniversary of the UN under the “[Maintenance of international peace and security](#)” agenda item. The meeting will be held on UN Day (24 October), which marks the entry into force of the UN Charter. Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief.

The Security Council will hold its annual open debate on [women, peace and security \(WPS\)](#) in October. Guterres and one or more civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

This month, the Security Council is scheduled to hold its annual briefing on [cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations](#), focusing on the [African Union \(AU\)](#). Council members will travel to Addis Ababa for the 19th annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), to be held on 17 October. (The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa, the home of the AU headquarters.) The joint consultative meeting will be preceded by the tenth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC on 16 October.

The Security Council is also scheduled to hold its [annual private meeting with the president of the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#), Judge Yuji Iwasawa.

African issues on the programme of work in October are:

- [Western Sahara](#), consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and the mandate renewal of MINURSO;
- [Great Lakes Region](#), the biannual briefing and consultations;
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA);
- [Libya](#), mandate renewal of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) as well as briefing

and consultations on UNSMIL and the work of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;

- [Somalia](#), private meeting on the situation in Somalia, briefing by the chair of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, and review of progress in the transition of the UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS).

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Yemen](#), monthly closed consultations on developments;
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF);
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559;
- [Syria](#), meeting on political and humanitarian developments; and
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the quarterly open debate, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments.

Regarding European issues, the programme includes:

- [Kosovo](#), briefing on the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo;
- [Bosnia and Herzegovina \(BiH\)](#), semi-annual debate on BiH and reauthorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force in BiH (EUFOR ALTHEA); and
- [Ukraine](#), one or more meetings on the file depending on developments.

Two issues in the Americas will be discussed in October:

- [Haiti](#), renewal of the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime and a briefing, followed by consultations, on developments in the country and the work of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH); and
- [Colombia](#), quarterly meeting on developments in the country and renewal of the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia.

Other issues could be raised in October depending on developments.

### 1 October 2025

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# In Hindsight: The Increasing Use of Article 51 of the UN Charter and the Security Council

In recent years, the use of force in self-defence has become increasingly contentious. Article 51 of the UN Charter, which recognises member states' right of self-defence against an armed attack, sits at the heart of these debates. It provides that:

*Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.*

Action taken by member states in exercise of this right is one of only two exceptions to the general prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4), which the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has described as “the cornerstone of the United Nations Charter” (see *Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda*, para 148). The application of Article 51 is therefore critically important to the collective security system established by the Charter. (The other exception that must be noted, of course, is the use of force authorised by the U.N. Security Council pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter.)

There has been significant disagreement among member states, academics, and other commentators, however, regarding the interpretation of Article 51 and its precise scope. These debates have intensified over the last decade, particularly as the US and its allies have increasingly relied on the expansive “unwilling or unable” doctrine to justify military measures on the territory of other states, including counter-terrorism operations.

While these debates are not new, they have assumed renewed significance in light of recent developments. In the last few months alone, there have been several high-profile examples of member states using force in purported exercise of their right of self-defence, either explicitly or implicitly. These examples push the boundaries of this right to their limits, even for those who take a more expansive view of where they lie. They are also part of a broader trend. In February 2025, Mexico noted that since 2021, Article 51 has been invoked on at least 78 occasions, a marked increase compared to previous years.

Israel's 9 September strike against Hamas leadership in Qatar is one such example. In a joint statement issued on the same day as the strike, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz used language suggesting that Israel was acting in self-defence, saying that the action was justified due to Hamas's actions on 7 October and its ongoing attacks on Israel.

The US strikes against Iranian nuclear facilities on 22 June are another example. In an Article 51 report sent to the President of the Security Council following the strikes, the US noted that it had taken “necessary and proportionate” action to defend Israel and its own security in accordance with Article 51. It also said that “peaceful measures were exhausted” and accused Iran of refusing to negotiate in good faith.

Israel's related attack on Iran on 13 June is yet another example. While a 17 June letter from Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar to the President of the Security Council regarding the attack did not directly cite Article 51, it used language suggesting that Israel was acting in self-defence. The letter noted that the attacks were launched “in response to, and in order to thwart, the threat of

imminent Iranian attacks” and said that Israel acted “to defend its security and very existence”.

The 2 September US strike against a vessel purportedly involved in drug trafficking in the Caribbean Sea is a fourth example. In his war powers resolution report to Congress, US President Donald Trump directly invoked the right of self-defence and the unwilling or unable doctrine, saying:

*In the face of the inability or unwillingness of some states in the region to address the continuing threat to US persons and interests emanating from their territories, we have now reached a critical point where we must meet this threat to our citizens and our most vital national interests with US military force in self-defence.*

Several leading academics in the field, including a former State Department attorney and a professor of international law who has argued in favour of the unwilling or unable doctrine, have raised concerns regarding the invocation of the right of self-defence in these examples.

The Security Council has an important role to play in facilitating consideration of these questions. In addition to recognising member states' right of self-defence, Article 51 also imposes the following reporting requirement:

*Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.*

The concerns raised by experts working in the field highlight the significance of Article 51 reports and the importance of the Security Council's role. Given the rise in interstate conflict in recent years, and the more frequent references to Article 51 as a rationale for the use of force, ready access to information regarding action taken under Article 51 is crucial in order for the Council and other member states to evaluate and respond to claims that states are acting in self-defence. Although the reporting requirement appears clear enough on its face, implementation has been largely inconsistent. This has negative consequences for both the Council's work and the development of international law.

This *In Hindsight* examines some of the differing positions of member states in relation to the scope of the right of self-defence, analyses relevant practice regarding the reporting requirement set out in Article 51 and the implications of that practice, and offers suggestions for improvements in this area.

## Differing Member State Positions on Article 51

Member states disagree over several aspects of Article 51. To begin with, a significant number of states take the view that an armed attack must occur before a member state can exercise its right of self-defence. These states tend to argue that the wording of Article 51 is clear and should not be reinterpreted, and often claim that ICJ jurisprudence, including the decisions in *Nicaragua*, *DRC v Uganda*, *Oil Platforms*, and the *Israeli Wall Advisory Opinion*, supports their view. This position was recently reaffirmed in the outcome document of the 19th high-level summit of the Non-Aligned Movement

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(NAM) held in January 2024.

A smaller group of states, which largely comprises the US and its allies, have adopted a more expansive position, arguing that the right of self-defence can be exercised in certain circumstances where an armed attack is imminent but has not yet occurred. A 2016 report issued by the White House is often cited by commentators as evidence of this position.

The “unwilling or unable” doctrine, which posits that member states may use force against non-state actors on the territory of another state if that state is unwilling or unable to prevent attacks originating from its territory, has also sparked significant disagreement among states. Article 51 reports sent to the Council by the US and several of its allies invoking the doctrine as the basis for military operations on the territory of other states have sometimes proven particularly controversial, leading to pushback from other member states.

These divisions were on display during an Arrria-formula meeting on Article 51 convened by Mexico in February 2021. A number of participants expressed support for a broad conception of the unwilling or unable doctrine, including Australia, which said that the right of self-defence can be exercised against non-state actors in the territory of another state if that state is unwilling or unable to prevent attacks originating from its territory, without offering additional qualifications.

Other participants articulated a narrower formulation of the doctrine. Austria, for example, said that Article 51 can be invoked to justify the use of force against a non-state actor on the territory of another state if two conditions are satisfied: 1) a “transboundary element” and 2) the host state is “harbouring or otherwise substantially supporting” the non-state actor or is unable to prevent its operations because of a lack of state authority and effective control in respect of the relevant territory.

Although many participants expressed support for using the doctrine as a basis for invoking Article 51, others directly rejected this idea. Mexico argued that it is not legally sound and noted that the doctrine is not supported by the text of Article 51, while also suggesting that it could afford a unilateral margin of interpretation to states that rely on it and lead to unforeseen consequences. China was similarly forthright in its statement, saying that force can only be used against non-state actors on the territory of another state with that state’s consent and criticising the “use of force arbitrarily in the name of ‘preventive self-defence’”.

## Reporting to the Security Council under Article 51

Given these disagreements and the recent invocations of the right of self-defence described above, the reports to the Security Council required by Article 51 are crucial. As a starting point, they provide a basis for Council members to evaluate often contentious claims that a member state is acting in self-defence and determine whether and how the Council should respond. This is especially important because Article 51 provides that member states may only exercise their right of self-defence until the Council has taken the necessary measures to maintain international peace and security.

Article 51 reports also have a significant role to play, at least in

theory, in the development of international law and interpretation of the UN Charter. As a treaty, the Charter is subject to the rules of treaty interpretation set out in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT). Pursuant to Article 31(3)(b) of the VCLT, subsequent state practice which establishes the agreement of the parties to the Charter must be taken into account when interpreting its provisions. This means that state practice regarding Article 51, including what states say when other states invoke it, has a direct bearing on the meaning of Article 51 and its scope as a matter of international law. The potential legal significance of Article 51 reports was recognised by the ICJ in its *Nicaragua v USA* judgment, albeit in the context of customary international law. The judgment noted that “the absence of a report may be one of the factors indicating whether the state in question was itself convinced that it was acting in self-defence”.

The text of Article 51 does not stipulate the form of Article 51 reports or the information that they should contain. In the early days of the Council, member states would sometimes request a meeting so they could provide an oral report regarding action taken in self-defence. Since then, however, the common practice has been for member states to report under Article 51 through a letter to the Council President that later becomes a public document, often within days of the letter being sent.

Such reports have sometimes provided a fulsome account of the actions taken by a member state in exercising its right of self-defence and its reasons for doing so, including the legal justification. When detailed information is reported, Article 51 reports provide a means for Council members and the wider membership to evaluate and respond to claims that a member state is acting in self-defence. Together with the Article 51 report itself, these responses can be analysed and documented by academics, whose work can serve as a subsidiary means for assessing the scope of Article 51 in accordance with Article 38 of the ICJ statute.

Despite the significance of Article 51 reports to both the Council’s work and international law, the relevant practice has been notably inconsistent. Member states do not always report action taken in the purported exercise of their right to self-defence, and when they do, the content of the reports can vary widely.

Several examples help to illustrate this point. Between 2014 and 2016, a number of states participated in military operations targeting ISIL on Syrian territory following a request from Iraq. While several Article 51 reports were sent to the Council in respect of these operations, there were notable differences in the information that they contained. The US, which sent the first report on 23 September 2014, set out the details of Iraq’s request, described the threat posed by ISIL to Iraq and other states, and clearly indicated that it was acting on the basis of the “unable or unwilling” doctrine. The US report also claimed that the actions it had taken were necessary and proportionate and described its operations in general terms. The UK and France, conversely, sent reports that referred to the Iraqi request and noted that they had taken action in Syria with little additional detail or justification, while Canada provided a more detailed report that also referred to the “unable or unwilling” doctrine.

More recently, Russia sent a letter to the Council regarding its

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invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 that referred to Article 51 and annexed a speech delivered by Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on the day of the invasion. In July this year, Cambodia and Thailand each sent letters to the Council regarding violent clashes along the disputed part of the border between the two countries. While both letters were relatively detailed regarding the military action taken and the justification for it, Thailand specifically referred to Article 51 whereas Cambodia did not. It instead stated that it was acting in self-defence without mentioning Article 51. India, for its part, did not send a formal communication to the Council regarding Operation Sindoor, which was carried out in Pakistani territory in May in response to the 22 April terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir, despite using language suggesting that it was acting in self-defence in official statements.

In addition, there is little consistency in the way the Council responds to Article 51 reports. They do not automatically trigger a Council meeting, and while the issues raised in the reports are usually discussed informally by Council members' legal advisers, there is no guarantee that the discussion will progress beyond that stage. If the wider issue that the report is related to is sufficiently high profile, then aspects of the report may be discussed during a Council meeting, but when this happens, consideration of Article 51 is often subsumed by a broader political discussion, and the report may not be addressed directly.

Member states have complained that these inconsistencies have made it difficult to identify and access Article 51 reports, with some calling for a clearer, timely system for distributing them to states outside the Council. Mexico, which has been particularly active in relation to this issue, has gone further and suggested that the lack of clarity surrounding Article 51 reports and the Council's response to them has inhibited member states' ability to adequately react when other states claim to be acting in self-defence.

## Options for Possible Improvements

Given the importance of these reports, the relevant practice arguably

leaves much to be desired. How, then, could it be improved? One possibility would be for Council members with an interest in this issue to hold another Arria-formula meeting with a specific focus on the interpretation of Article 51. This could be particularly useful given the uptick in reporting under Article 51 since the last Arria meeting on this issue was held in February 2021. Member states could also be encouraged to provide a public briefing to the Council following a letter on the use of Article 51.

On the issue of Article 51 reports, the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG) could be tasked with developing guidelines for what should be included in such reports, when the reports should be sent to the Council, and how the Council should respond when they are received. If agreement is reached, those guidelines could be codified in a presidential note, a consensus document issued by the Council president. The Security Council Affairs Division could also take the lead on developing a publicly accessible database which documents past reports and is updated in real time as new reports are received.

Members of the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT), a cross-regional group of 27 small and mid-sized states that aims to improve the work of the Council, may wish to consider focusing on this issue as well, particularly given recent developments.

An advisory opinion from the ICJ regarding the scope of Article 51 could also be requested either by the Security Council or the General Assembly.

It should always be borne in mind that Article 51 provides an exception to the general prohibition on the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4), a peremptory norm of international law from which no derogation is permitted. States seeking to avail themselves of an exception to a peremptory norm should explain what they have done and why and provide as much detail as sensitive military operations allow, particularly when it comes to the legal justification for those operations. Failure to improve the practice surrounding Article 51 reports carries significant risk in the current geopolitical climate.

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## Status Update since our September Forecast

### UN Peacekeeping

On 9 September, the Security Council held an open debate on UN peace operations, titled "The future of peace operations: key issues, opportunities and challenges in the context of the review on the future of all forms of UN peace operations" (S/PV.9991 and Resumption I and II). The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Ambassador Thomas Zahn-eisen (Germany); and Jenna Russo, the Director of Research and Head of the Brian Urquhart Center for Peace Operations at the International Peace Institute (IPI).

### Sudan

On 12 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2791, renewing the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime—including targeted sanctions (asset freezes and travel bans) and an arms embargo—for another year, until 12 September 2026. It also renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until October 2026, expressing the Council's intention to review the mandate and decide on a further extension by 12 September 2026.

### Violation of Polish Airspace

On 12 September, the Security Council held an emergency briefing



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under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9995). Poland requested the meeting in a 10 September letter to the Council (S/2025/572), stating that it had pre-emptively shot down 19 “drone-type objects” that had entered its airspace and that had been fired from the territories of Belarus and Russia. The Council’s European members—Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK—supported the meeting request. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

### **Iraq/Kuwait**

On 17 September, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2792, authorising the appointment of a Senior Representative with a mandate to promote, support and facilitate efforts to repatriate or return missing Kuwaiti and third country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property.

### **Afghanistan**

On 17 September, the Council convened for an open briefing on Afghanistan (S/PV.9998). The briefers were Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva and Hanifa Girowal, Non-Resident Fellow of the Afghanistan Policy Lab at the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. Afghanistan, India, Iran, and Kyrgyzstan participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

### **Iran**

On 19 September, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution regarding the “snapback” of UN sanctions on Iran, which were lifted under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme. Following the 28 August decision of the “E3” parties to the JCPOA (France, Germany, and the UK) to trigger the snapback process, and pursuant to the JCPOA and resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed it, the draft resolution was put forward by the Republic of Korea (ROK) in its capacity as Council president. The text contained a single operative paragraph by which the Council would have decided to continue providing sanctions relief. It failed to be adopted due to insufficient votes, receiving four votes in favour (Algeria, China, Pakistan, and Russia); nine against (Denmark, France, Greece, Panama, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, the UK, and the US); and two abstentions (Guyana and ROK).

On 26 September, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution to extend the JCPOA and resolution 2231 for six months, until 18 April. The draft text was put forward by China and Russia in response to the E3’s snapback invocation. If adopted, the draft resolution would have delayed the activation of the snapback. It also failed to garner the requisite nine votes, however, receiving four votes in favour (Algeria, China, Pakistan, and Russia); nine against (Denmark, France, Greece, Panama, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Somalia, the UK, and the US); and two abstentions (Guyana and ROK). As such, sanctions were reimposed on 28 September at the end of the 30-day countdown that followed the snapback invocation.

### **Violation of Estonian Airspace**

On 22 September, the Security Council held an urgent briefing

under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.10002). The meeting was requested by Estonia in a 20 September letter to the Council (S/2025/594), which said that three Russian fighter jets had violated Estonia’s airspace on 19 September. The Council’s European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK) supported the request. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča briefed.

### **Ukraine**

On 23 September, the Security Council held a high-level briefing on Ukraine, which was requested by the Council’s European members (France, Denmark, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK) (S/PV.10004). Republic of Korea (ROK) Foreign Minister Cho Hyun chaired the meeting and Secretary-General António Guterres briefed. Several Council members and other participants were represented by their heads of state or foreign ministers, who were in New York for the high-level segment of the 80th session of the General Assembly. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy represented his country at the meeting.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

On 24 September, the Security Council held a high-level open debate on artificial intelligence (AI) under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.10005) that continued on 25 and 26 September (Resumption I and II, respectively). Republic of Korea (ROK) President Lee Jae Myung chaired the open debate, which was the signature event of ROK’s September Council presidency. UN Secretary-General António Guterres; Yoshua Bengio, Professor at Université de Montréal and Co-President and Scientific Director of LawZero (via videoconference); and Yejin Choi, Professor of Computer Science and Senior Fellow at Stanford University’s Institute for Human-Centered AI, briefed at the open debate.

### **League of Arab States**

On 25 September, the Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS). Cho Hyun, the Republic of Korea’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, chaired the meeting. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari and LAS Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit briefed. The foreign ministers of Bahrain, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, the members of the Arab Summit Troika—a group of three rotating countries that monitor the implementation of resolutions and commitments adopted by the LAS—also participated at the ministerial level.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

On 30 September, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/PV.10008). Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO Bintou Keita briefed based on the Secretary-General’s latest report on the mission, which was circulated to Council members on 19 September and covers developments since 20 June (S/2025/590).

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## Haiti

On 30 September, the Security Council adopted resolution 2793, authorising UN member states to transition the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti into a “Gang Suppression

Force” (GSF) for an initial period of 12 months. The text also requests that the Secretary-General establish a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH). The resolution received 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia).

## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ). The expected briefer is Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO).

Council members may convene additional meetings during the month depending on developments on the ground.

### Key Recent Developments

Recent weeks have seen renewed efforts by the international community to address the root causes of the Israel-Palestine conflict by mobilising support for a credible political process towards the realisation of the two-state solution. On 12 September, the General Assembly endorsed the New York Declaration—the outcome document of the high-level international conference on the two-state solution held at UN Headquarters in July—by a vote of 142 in favour, ten against, and 12 abstentions. The Declaration sets out a roadmap envisioning a ceasefire in Gaza that would entail the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, the group’s disarmament, and the deployment of a Security Council-mandated stabilisation mission, establishing conditions that would eventually lead to Palestinian statehood and normalisation between Israel and Arab states. Ten countries—Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, and the UK—subsequently announced their formal recognition of the State of Palestine during the resumed session of the two-state solution conference held on 22 September or during the General Debate of the 80th session of the General Assembly that began the following day. In total, 157 countries now recognise Palestinian statehood.

In his 26 September statement at the General Debate, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu characterised the recent recognitions as a “reward” for the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attack on Israel and seemed to reject the premise of the two-state solution, claiming that allowing the establishment of an independent Palestinian state would constitute “national suicide” for Israel. Some Israeli officials have also threatened to annex the West Bank in response to the recognitions—a move that the Israeli parliament already called for in a non-binding resolution that it adopted in July.

The US has similarly opposed the recognitions, as well as the New

York Declaration, which it described as a performative gesture when voting against its endorsement by the General Assembly. In a 29 September joint press conference with Netanyahu in Washington DC, however, US President Donald Trump announced a separate proposal for ending the war in Gaza and for the enclave’s post-conflict governance that appears to share certain similarities with the New York Declaration, although it is more equivocal about the prospects for a future Palestinian state. Among other provisions, the so-called “20-point plan” calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities and full restoration of humanitarian access; the release of all remaining hostages; the disarmament and decommissioning of Hamas supervised by independent monitors; the deployment of an international stabilisation force that will progressively assume security responsibility from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) while training Palestinian security forces; and the establishment of an interim technocratic government comprising Palestinian and international experts under the oversight of a transitional body chaired by Trump. This body is to eventually cede control of Gaza to a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA), at which point “the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood”.

At the press conference announcing the plan, Trump said that Israel would have US backing to continue its war against Hamas if the group opposed the framework, which it was reportedly not consulted on and which contains elements that it has publicly rejected in the past. Netanyahu said that he supported the plan, and the PA, a group of Arab and Muslim countries, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres all issued statements largely welcoming it. At the time of writing, Hamas was reportedly still considering its response.

Meanwhile, conditions in Gaza have continued to deteriorate amid Israel’s escalating military campaign and the restrictions that the country has imposed on the entry of humanitarian aid into the territory. On 16 September, Israel launched the main stage of its operation to take over Gaza City, the enclave’s largest urban centre, leading to a sharp rise in attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure as well as in forced displacement, pushing the total death toll in the enclave since the beginning of the war in October 2023 past 65,000, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) citing local health authorities. In separate statements issued on 16 September and 23 September, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) decried Israeli military tactics associated with the ongoing offensive, which

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2735](#) (10 June 2024) welcomed the proposal for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas that the US announced on 31 May 2024. The resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia). [S/RES/2728](#) (25 March 2024) demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire. It also demanded the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. It was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (US). [S/RES/2720](#) (22 December 2023) requested the Secretary-General to appoint a Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator to establish a UN mechanism for accelerating humanitarian consignments to Gaza. It was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Russia and the US). [Security Council Press Statement SC/16163](#) (11 September 2025) was about Israel’s 9 September 2025 strike on Hamas’ political leadership in Doha, Qatar. The text condemned the strike—without attributing responsibility to Israel—and expressed solidarity with Qatar, underscoring the importance of releasing the hostages and ending the war. [Other S/2025/583](#) (18 September 2025) was a draft resolution on the war between Israel and Hamas that was initiated by the Council’s ten elected members (E10). The draft demanded that Israel immediately and unconditionally lift all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza and ensure its safe and unhindered distribution to the population in need of such assistance. It also called for an immediate, unconditional, and permanent ceasefire and for the unconditional, dignified, and immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas and other armed groups. The draft failed to be adopted owing to a veto by the US. The remaining 14 members voted in favour.

# The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

it said are “negating any prospect for the survival of civilians” and appear to be “focused on causing a permanent demographic shift, which is tantamount to ethnic cleansing”.

The expanded military campaign is expected to worsen the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, which has deteriorated rapidly since the end of the previous ceasefire in March, when Israel imposed a total blockade on the entry of humanitarian aid and commercial goods into the territory. In late August, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) confirmed that famine is occurring in Gaza governorate—the metropolitan area that includes Gaza City—and was projected to spread to Deir al-Balah and Khan Younis governorates by the end of September. While Israel has since eased some of the restrictions it had previously imposed on the entry of humanitarian aid, remaining bureaucratic obstacles as well as looting and insecurity continue to impede aid delivery: as at 13 September, OCHA reported that less than 35 percent of the 2,000 metric tonnes of food supplies required daily to meet basic humanitarian needs has been able to enter the Gaza Strip since 20 July, when regular food cargo uplifts from Gaza’s crossings resumed.

Regional tensions have also escalated in recent weeks. On 9 September, Israel launched a strike against Hamas’ political leadership in Doha, Qatar, who were meeting to discuss their response to a previous ceasefire framework proposed by the US. Hamas claimed that the attack failed to kill senior officials, while confirming the deaths of five lower-level members, as well as a Qatari security official. On 11 September, the Security Council held an urgent briefing on the strike and members issued a press statement that condemned it, without attributing responsibility to Israel. The statement also expressed support for Qatar’s mediation role in the ceasefire negotiations and underscored the importance of releasing the hostages and ending the war. On 15 September, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) held an emergency joint summit in Doha that resulted in a communiqué also condemning the strike and calling on states to “take all possible legal and effective measures to prevent Israel from continuing its actions against the Palestinian people”.

By contrast, although the US had supported the Security Council’s 10 September press statement, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio later signalled the US’ continued support for Israel’s actions when he declined to publicly denounce the country for the Qatar strike during a 15 September joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem. On 18 September, the US vetoed a draft resolution authored by the Council’s ten elected members (E10) that called for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, and the lifting of all restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Violence has also intensified in the West Bank in parallel with the escalation in Gaza. According to OCHA, as at 15 September, 186 Palestinians and 16 Israelis have been killed in conflict-related incidents in the West Bank so far this year while Israeli settlements, demolitions of Palestinian structures, and access restrictions continue to expand. On 20 August, Israeli authorities issued final approval for the controversial “E1” settlement plan, which entails the construction of thousands of residential and commercial units in the E1 area that is located in the West Bank between East Jerusalem and the Ma’ale Adumim settlement. OCHA warned that the plan would

effectively separate the northern and central West Bank from the south, as well as further disconnect East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, threatening the territorial contiguity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The plan—which has been under consideration for decades but not implemented because of international pressure—was approved by far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who said that it was intended to “permanently bury the idea of a Palestinian state”.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 16 September, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel concluded that Israeli authorities have committed genocide in Gaza, finding evidence of four of the five genocidal acts listed in the 1948 Genocide Convention: killing; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of the Palestinians in whole or in part; and imposing measures intended to prevent births. The Commission attributed genocidal intent and responsibility to senior Israeli political and military leaders and called on states to cease arms transfers to Israel and to pursue accountability through legal proceedings. Previously, the Commission had found Israel responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, and Palestinian armed groups responsible for war crimes in Israel.

In a separate report published on 23 September, the COI found Israeli authorities have demonstrated a clear intent to entrench permanent control over Gaza while ensuring a Jewish majority in the occupied West Bank and inside Israel. In Gaza, the COI reported extensive demolition and expansion of buffer zones and corridors, reaching some 75 percent of the Strip by July 2025, amounting to deliberate deprivation of indispensable resources and an underlying genocidal act. In the West Bank, the report documented policies and actions (including support to violent settlers, mass displacement, punitive demolitions, and large military operations in camps) aimed at forcible transfer, settlement expansion, and effective annexation. The COI identified six Israeli ministers as likely bearing principal responsibility for international crimes related to land and housing, and reiterated that Netanyahu bears ultimate responsibility, including for genocide. It recommended ending the genocide and occupation, removing settlements, reversing discriminatory land and housing policies, and complying with orders and opinions issued by the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The report is scheduled for presentation to the General Assembly on 28 October.

## Key Issues and Options

The Council’s continued failure to expedite an end to the war in Gaza and its inability to enforce its prior decisions endorsing the two-state solution remain fundamental issues undermining the Council’s credibility.

In the short term, the resumption of a ceasefire in Gaza, the return of hostages, and the restoration of full, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access remain the Council’s most urgent priorities. Associated concerns are the spread of famine in the territory and the lack of accountability for apparent violations of international humanitarian law (IHL).

The US veto of the E10 draft resolution in September—just three months after the country vetoed a similar E10 draft in June—illustrates the polarised dynamics preventing the Council from fulfilling its responsibilities in this regard. As such, members are likely to struggle to agree on other measures that would require consensus or are subject to the veto, such as imposing sanctions against individuals involved in IHL violations, establishing an independent mechanism to investigate such violations, or imposing an arms embargo to prohibit the transfer of arms or munitions that have caused them.

In this context, Council members as well as the broader UN membership could instead focus efforts on advancing the New York



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## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Declaration, including by beginning informal consultations to develop a time-bound and politically realistic plan for its implementation. Among other issues, such consultations could seek to identify points of convergence between the Declaration and the “20-point plan” proposed by the US—including the parameters of an international stabilisation mission in Gaza—in order to ensure coherence in the international community’s efforts to end the conflict and work towards the two-state solution.

If these initiatives stall or fail, members could consider other actions outside of the Security Council to apply political pressure on the parties. These may include measures under the “Uniting for Peace” authority of the General Assembly’s Tenth Emergency Special Session on “The Question of Palestine”—which is expected to resume this month following the US veto of the E10’s draft resolution—or the imposition of national or regional sanctions or trading restrictions.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Intractable dynamics have characterised the Council’s response to the war in Gaza, which has been marked by contentious and prolonged negotiations with multiple failed adoptions. Attempts at Council products on this file have clearly shown that it is not possible for the Council to adopt an outcome that the US, Israel’s key ally at the Council, does not largely support.

In its 18 September explanation of vote on the E10’s draft resolution, the US described the text as “deeply flawed”, saying that it failed to condemn Hamas, guarantee Israel’s security, or support US-led ceasefire diplomacy. The US further argued that repeated

attempts at Council resolutions had emboldened Hamas and undermined ongoing negotiations.

All 14 other Council members voted in favour of the draft. Denmark—which coordinated the negotiations on behalf of the E10—emphasised that the draft reflected the Council’s shared priorities of halting hostilities, returning hostages, and restoring humanitarian access. France and the UK referenced the omission of a condemnation of Hamas as a shortcoming in the text but argued that it was nevertheless necessary as a humanitarian measure. Other members, including Russia, China, and Algeria, criticised the US veto as obstructive and contended that continued Council inaction undermines its credibility.

More broadly, during the General Debate of the 80th session of the UN General Debate, many member states welcomed the New York Declaration’s call for a just, peaceful, and lasting settlement based on the two-state solution, while also highlighting the pressing need for humanitarian aid access, cessation of hostilities, and greater accountability for violations of international law. Several states endorsed implementation steps such as financial and institutional support for Palestinian governance and urged targeted measures against actors undermining peace efforts, including those responsible for illegal settlements and violence. Across statements, there remained concern that rhetoric alone is insufficient, with calls for concrete action, reforms to the Security Council for equitable decision-making, and a collective commitment to the principles of the UN Charter to ensure relevance and legitimacy of the organisation moving forward.

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## Women, Peace and Security

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS). UN Secretary-General António Guterres and one or more civil society representatives are the anticipated briefers.

### Key Recent Developments

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325, the first of ten Security Council resolutions on WPS. This resolution stressed the importance of women’s equal participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It called for the adoption of a gender perspective in peace agreements and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence. It also expressed the Council’s “willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations” and emphasised the responsibility of all states “to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes including those relating to sexual and other violence against women and girls”.

The Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS is expected to provide an update on the implementation of the agenda over the past year. In light of the agenda’s 25th anniversary, the report is

likely to take stock of positive change achieved since the adoption of resolution 1325 and highlight negative trends—such as rising authoritarianism and militarisation, growing number of armed conflicts, and disregard for international law—that undermine women’s rights and gender equality. It may identify situations of particular concern for women’s rights, such as Afghanistan, as well as crisis or conflict-affected situations where women face high level of violence, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Among other issues, the report is likely to identify the growing pushback on gender-related terminology as a concerning trend in light of the risk that it poses to long-established legal protections for women.

In addition, the Secretary-General’s report is expected to include a focus on how to bring about “a gender data revolution” on WPS, which was one of the five goals for the decade set out in the Secretary-General’s 2020 WPS annual report. In this context, it may highlight data gaps and call for greater access to, and use of, gender data as key tools to help break patterns of stagnation and regression in the implementation of the WPS agenda.

The 2025 NGO Working Group on WPS’ open letter to UN permanent representatives in advance of this year’s open debate notes

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2242 (13 October 2015) expressed the Council’s intention to invite women civil society briefers to Council meetings. S/RES/1325 (31 October 2000) was the first Security Council resolution on WPS.



# Women, Peace and Security

that the world is “a long way” from fully realising the WPS principles, norms and commitments established during the past 25 years. It warns about an “alarming backlash against women’s autonomy and rights, and against those who advocate for them”, noting that “[t]he very term gender” is being “blatantly undermined”. The letter calls on UN member states to take a series of actions, including stopping arms transfers in several circumstances, including when weapons may be used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence, or if they risk being used in the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes. It calls on member states to uphold international law “consistently across all conflict situations on the Security Council’s agenda”, to integrate women’s rights, gender equality and respect for international law in all decisions of the Security Council, and “firmly reject any outcomes that damage or fail to advance the core tenets of the WPS agenda”.

The negative impact of cuts to humanitarian funding on women and girls is an issue that has been increasingly highlighted by the UN. For instance, during his 6 March Security Council briefing on Yemen, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher said that funding suspensions had led to the closure of twenty-two safe spaces “denying services and support to over 11,000 women and girls in high-risk areas”. During his 21 May briefing on Syria, OCHA Director of Coordination Ramesh Rajasingham highlighted a similar situation concerning the closure of safe spaces due to funding shortfalls.

On 19 August, the Security Council convened for its annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), which this year was titled “Identifying innovative strategies to ensure access to life-saving services and protection to survivors of sexual violence in conflict zones”. This was the latest in the year that the annual open debate on CRSV has been held in over a decade. It seems that this was due to a combination of factors—including UN resource constraints, decisions on politically sensitive listings in the annex to the Secretary-General’s annual report on CRSV, and reluctance from some Council members to host the meeting. (For more information, see our 18 August What’s in Blue story on the annual open debate on CRSV.)

Council members were able to retain or include WPS language in several resolutions, including resolution 2771, which in January extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus. In June, resolution 2783, which extended the 1533 DRC sanctions regime, included a new reference to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) despite opposition from some Council members. It reaffirmed the Council’s concern over the suffering that armed groups impose in eastern DRC and over violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights, including those involving SGBV.

Language on WPS was a key point of contention during the negotiations of resolution 2779, which renewed the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Negotiations resulted in largely preserved WPS language, while some previously agreed references were replaced with less robust ones. The US, as the penholder on South Sudan, put forward changes and deletions on a wide range of issues—including WPS—which, for different reasons, proved contentious among many members. It seems that, following opposition to the deletion of WPS language from Denmark, France, Greece,

Panama, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, and the UK, and in order to secure sufficient votes for the draft to be adopted, the US reinstated most of those references. At the same time, some previously agreed references to gender-sensitive and gender-responsive conflict analysis were replaced with analysis responsive to the needs of “women, men, girls, and boys”.

Some negotiations resulted in the dilution of previously agreed WPS language or missed opportunities to include such language altogether. In resolution 2781, which extended the South Sudan sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, a reference to “gender expertise” in the Panel of Experts was replaced with a reference to expertise on “WPS”. It appears that this was a compromise struck in response to an initial edit by the US, which replaced gender expertise with expertise on CRSV—which some members had argued was an inadequate substitute.

During the negotiation of resolution 2788 on strengthening mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, while France and Slovenia, together with other European members, advocated for stronger language on WPS and civil society participation, the US and others expressed reservations. The final text emphasised the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, but references to “safe” participation—which were put forward by the proponents and have become a standard WPS formulation regarding women’s participation—were dropped in an apparent compromise.

Resolution 2790, which extended the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a final time and called on the mission to start its drawdown from 31 December 2026, does not include any WPS language.

According to figures cited by the NGO Working Group on WPS on 25 September, the percentage of Security Council resolutions that reference women’s rights adopted thus far in 2025 has fallen by 21 percent since 2020.

Since January, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS has met six times, with recent meetings focusing on Haiti, “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, and the Sahel region. The IEG’s next meeting is expected to take place on 1 October and focus on the situation in the Central African Republic.

In recent months, women civil society representatives have briefed Council members on several situations on the Council’s agenda, including Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. Among other things, women briefers called for ceasefires; unhindered humanitarian access; protection of civilians; an end to SGBV, including CRSV; an increase in humanitarian and development funding; and to guarantee women’s full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in peace, political and decision-making processes.

## Key Issues and Options

The pivotal issue for the Security Council remains the full implementation of the WPS agenda and its impact on the ground.

The Council’s failure to address 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.

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## Women, Peace and Security

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 and acts of SGBV. The Council could also impose and enforce arms embargoes in these situations. If Council dynamics do not allow a collective decision on these measures, 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 violations of IHL and acts of SGBV.

An important issue for Council members supportive of the agenda is to preserve effective WPS language in thematic and country-specific outcomes and to 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 UNWomen as the IEG secretariat, as well as the recommendations presented by women civil society representatives who have briefed the Council. Council members could also ask UN briefers to provide substantive updates to the Council on specific WPS issues, such as women’s participation in peace processes.

A recent Secretary-General’s report on “Cooperation with the United Nations, its representatives and mechanisms in the field of human rights” says that seven women civil society representatives reported reprisals in connection with their briefings to the Council in 2024. In line with resolution 2242 and the 1 December 2021 Statement of Shared Commitments on WPS, members should continue to invite diverse women civil society representatives to brief the Council regularly and follow up on their information and recommendations. It is essential that Member States and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briefer, including carrying out risk assessments, developing protection plans, and responding to any reprisals. Planning well in advance of the start of a presidency could help members facilitate the safe and meaningful participation of women civil society briefers in Council meetings.

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.

### Council Dynamics

There have been notable changes to the US position on WPS since the start of President Donald Trump’s term on 20 January, with Washington often seeking the deletion of references to gender in Council products.

This position has converged with Russia’s long-held oppositional stance regarding the inclusion of WPS language in Council outcomes. For instance, Russia and the US did not include a reference to “gender” in a presidential statement on Syria they co-authored in March, in which the Council called on the interim authorities to protect all Syrians regardless of ethnicity or religion. The addition was proposed by Denmark and Slovenia.

Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, Panama, the ROK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and the UK have given continuity to some aspect of the Shared Commitments on the WPS initiative, which was started in 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico. Denmark, Greece and Panama encouraged Council members to focus on WPS issues in a mandated country-specific meeting during their presidencies in 2025; that is, Afghanistan in March, Yemen in May, and West Africa and the Sahel in August, respectively. Participants in this initiative have also held regular WPS-focused press stakeouts, most recently on Afghanistan. Although the US signed on to the Shared Commitments in 2023, it has not thus far participated in any of the joint press stakeouts held by the Council members who are part of this initiative this year.

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. Slovenia is the coordinator of the Shared Commitments initiative.

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## Colombia

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. Miroslav Jenča—who was appointed Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia on 8 September and is expected to assume his post in the country in mid-October—will provide his first briefing in this role. He will brief on recent developments in Colombia and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2025/595), which was circulated to Council members on 24 September and covers the period from 27 June.

The Council is also expected to discuss the renewal of the verification mission’s mandate ahead of its 31 October expiry.

### Key Recent Developments

As in the past, the most recent Secretary-General’s report paints an uneven picture of implementation of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). While the report describes some progress in comprehensive rural reform, implementation continues to lag in other areas such as the provision of security guarantees and the reintegration of former combatants.

A major development in the past quarter relates to the work of

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UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9961 (18 July 2025) was the latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

# Colombia

the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP)—the judicial component of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition established by the 2016 agreement. On 16 September, the SJP announced its first restorative sentences within Case 01 (on hostage-taking, other severe deprivations of liberty and concurrent crimes committed by the FARC-EP) against the seven members of the last FARC-EP Secretariat for “the kidnapping policy they spread throughout the country, resulting in at least 21,396 victimizing incidents”. Soon after, on 18 September, the Court announced the first restorative sentences within Case 03 (on killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties by state agents) against 12 members of the public security forces for “their maximum responsibility in 135 murders and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties” in the Caribbean region.

The indictees in both cases acknowledged responsibility for crimes committed during the conflict and received a sentence of eight years—the maximum outlined in the 2016 peace agreement—of restorative activities as well as restrictions on their rights and freedoms. (Those who refuse to acknowledge responsibility for crimes are subject to the Colombian penal code and may face imprisonment of up to 20 years.) According to the SJP, such activities, which are aimed at benefitting victims and conflict-affected communities, will include work related to the search for missing persons, humanitarian demining, environmental protection, and memorialisation projects. The sentences are subject to appeal by all relevant parties; the first such appeal regarding Case 01 was filed by families of victims on 19 September.

In a 17 September statement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed the issuance of the SJP’s first sentences, describing it as a “historic milestone” in the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. He called on all indictees to fully comply with their sentences, and for the Colombian government to ensure that conditions are in place for the sentences to be implemented. In this regard, the Secretary-General’s report outlines challenges related to funding, the design of restorative projects, and security risks faced by relevant actors. It notes that, despite the expressed commitment by the government to support the implementation of the sentences, “preparations to date remain largely insufficient”.

The Secretary-General’s report describes how violence across several regions in the country continues to affect communities (including indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities), former FARC-EP members, human rights defenders, and social leaders. In these areas, armed groups compete for control of illegal economies amid limited state presence. The report references several serious security incidents, including an instance in late August in the southern department of Guaviare, where 33 Colombian soldiers were held against their will for three days by local residents. The incident took place amid military operations targeting armed groups and illicit crops in the area, with Colombian authorities accusing the general staff of the dissident group of the former FARC-EP that identifies itself as the *Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (EMC) of pressuring civilians to resist the presence of state forces in the area. The soldiers were released on 28 August; the verification mission helped facilitate the release alongside Colombian authorities.

During the reporting period, the verification mission documented

nine killings and two attempted homicides of former combatants, bringing to 480 the number of ex-combatants killed since the signing of the peace agreement. The report stresses the importance of implementing the security guarantees provisions of the 2016 agreement, including the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organisations, which the National Commission on Security Guarantees (NCSG)—a body established by the agreement—developed and presented in September 2023. The NCSG has not convened a plenary session in over a year, according to the report. The report adds that this issue has taken on greater urgency in light of concerns about a potential spike in political violence as Colombia prepares for congressional and presidential elections in March and May 2026, respectively. This is underscored by the assassination of Senator Miguel Uribe Turbay, who passed away on 11 August after succumbing to gunshot wounds sustained in a 7 June attack, as well as other threats and attacks targeting political leaders. In this regard, the report urges strategic use of the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics (SISEP) to ensure that adequate security measures are in place.

The government has continued some of its dialogues with armed groups operating in the country as part of the “total peace” policy of Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego. Between 14 and 17 September, the government held its first round of talks with the *Ejército Gaitanista de Colombia* (EGC)—a group formerly known as *Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia* or *Clan del Golfo*—in Doha, Qatar. The talks resulted in several commitments from the armed group, including not to interfere in the elections, to respect international humanitarian law, and not to hinder humanitarian demining. Some analysts have argued, however, that an ongoing offensive led by the EGC in the southern Bolívar department calls into question the group’s commitment to those pledges.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 September, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk welcomed the first sentences issued by the SJP, describing them as a “crucial milestone on the path to accountability”. He further stressed that the government must now provide the legal, financial, and security conditions to ensure the effective implementation of the restorative sentences.

While recognising the progress, Türk cautioned that Colombia continues to face serious human rights challenges, including the killing of human rights defenders, recruitment of children by non-state armed groups, and violations disproportionately affecting indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and women. He underlined the importance of sustaining implementation of the 2016 peace accord, noting that peace processes “rarely follow a smooth or straightforward path” but require sustained commitment to prevent further violations and suffering.

## Key Issues and Options

A key task for the Council in October is to renew the verification mission’s mandate. Members could choose to adopt a straightforward renewal, without altering the mission’s tasks. They could also consider whether any adjustments are needed.

Supporting transitional justice processes in Colombia is a key focus for many Council members. The long-awaited handing down of sentences by the SJP marked the culmination of a rigorous years-long process of investigations, collection of evidence, and the hearing of testimonies from victims. International interlocutors had anticipated this process to begin as far back as 2021; in that year, the Council

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## Colombia

expanded the verification mission's mandate through resolution 2574 of 11 May to verify compliance with the restorative sentences.

Support from the international community is crucial during this potentially polarising stage in the Court's work, especially as Colombia prepares for presidential and congressional elections in 2026. The SJP's president, Judge Alejandro Ramelli, made this point to Council members at a 16 July informal meeting. Council members may therefore wish to convey their support for the SJP and the verification mission's role in verifying the sentences handed down by the Court. Since this innovative transitional justice model can serve as an example in other contexts and transitional justice is an issue of importance to many member states, an option would be to do so in a press stake-out, together with non-Council members.

Council members can also seek the views of relevant actors in Colombia—such as SJP representatives and victims' organisations—on how the international community can support transitional justice processes in the country. An option would be to hold such a discussion in an informal interactive dialogue (IID), a closed informal meeting format that could allow for a frank exchange of ideas.

An overarching priority for the Council remains supporting the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. Members may wish to continue emphasising the importance of continued focus on that objective in the remainder of Petro's term, which ends in August 2026.

### Council Dynamics

Council members have generally been united in their support for the peace process in Colombia and for the verification mission's work.

However, recent strains in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the US may complicate the Council's work on the file, including during the upcoming negotiations on the renewal of

the verification mission's mandate.

On 15 September, Washington designated Colombia as a country that failed to cooperate fully with the US in drug control efforts, de-certifying it as a partner in the war on drugs for the first time in almost 30 years. According to analysts, the de-certification declaration—which directly blamed Petro for mismanaging drug control efforts while commending the work of Colombia's security institutions and municipal authorities—signalled both US dissatisfaction with the government's current coca crop eradication policy and the personal antagonism between Petro and US President Donald Trump. The US similarly personally criticised Petro in its statement during the Council's latest quarterly meeting on Colombia, held on 18 July. At that meeting, the US claimed that “errant political leadership” threatens to undermine progress made to date in peace efforts in the country, while arguing that the “Colombian Government's disorganized rush to negotiate with a multitude of armed groups has in fact created perverse incentives for these groups to ramp up their attacks in an effort to improve their negotiating position”.

In the most recent sign of the fraying relationship between Colombia and the US, Petro's 23 September statement at the General Debate of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly sharply criticised Trump's domestic and foreign policy, including the decision to de-certify Colombia, US support for Israel's conduct in the war in Gaza, and US airstrikes on alleged drug-trafficking boats in the Caribbean Sea. The US delegates left the General Assembly Hall during Petro's speech. On 27 September, the US Department of State announced its decision to revoke Petro's US visa over comments he made at a pro-Palestinian gathering in New York. The recent developments could also signal future difficult dynamics once Colombia joins the Council as a non-permanent member in 2026.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

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## UN-AU Cooperation

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Council is expected to hold a briefing on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the African Union (AU). Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the AU and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga is the anticipated briefer. Onanga-Anyanga is expected to present the Secretary-General's annual report on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU on issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UNOAU, during the meeting.

### Key Recent Developments

The annual report, published on 25 August (S/2025/532), describes the partnership between the UN and the AU in conflict prevention and peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace support operations, peacebuilding and the rule of law, and countering terrorism and violent extremism. It also highlights the state of peace and security in Africa, including, among other things, the situation in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Sudan crisis and its regional spillover effect, the political and security situation in South Sudan, the political impasse in Libya, and the security situation and political transition processes in West Africa and the Sahel.

Additionally, the Secretary-General's report provides updates on the cooperation between the UN Secretariat and the AU Commission. The eighth UN-AU annual conference, which brought together the senior leadership of both organisations—including the UN Secretary-General and the AU Chairperson—was held in October last year in Addis Ababa. This annual meeting, which alternates between Addis Ababa and New York, serves as a valuable platform for reviewing progress in the implementation of the various cooperation frameworks signed by the two organisations. This year, New York will host the ninth annual conference, although the exact dates are yet to be confirmed. It will also mark the first time the AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf and other newly elected members of the Commission will participate in the annual conference, following their election earlier this year.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON UN-AU COOPERATION** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2719 (21 December 2023) was on the financing of AUPSOs. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9739** (2 October 2024) was a meeting on the cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security.



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## UN-AU Cooperation

During the Russian Security Council Presidency in October, the 19th annual joint consultative meeting of the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) will also be held. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa; this year's meeting will be held in Addis Ababa on 17 October. The annual consultation is expected to be preceded on 16 October by the tenth informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC. Usually, members of the two Councils exchange views on thematic issues during the joint informal seminar.

Over the last couple of years, the AU Committee of Experts has visited New York before the annual consultations to meet with Security Council counterparts and negotiate the draft outcome document. Two years ago, for the first time, Security Council experts travelled to Addis Ababa in preparation for the 17th annual consultations and met with their AUPSC counterparts. This year, for the second time, they are expected to arrive in Addis Ababa on 13 October before the 18th annual consultations to meet with their Security Council counterparts and negotiate the joint communiqué to be adopted at the end of the annual consultations. At the time of writing, Council members had not received an initial draft, which the AU Committee of Experts is expected to circulate as the host.

### Key Issues and Options

In October, Council members will have an opportunity to focus on UN-AU cooperation, in light of the Secretary-General's annual report on the topic and their trip to Addis Ababa for the annual consultations with AUPSC counterparts. A key issue for the Council is how to strengthen the partnership with the AUPSC across the peace continuum, ranging from conflict prevention, mediation, and conflict resolution to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, to provide a coherent and effective response to wars and other crisis situations in Africa. While the UN is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of UN peace operations, the AU is also undertaking a review to revitalise its peace and security architecture.

A possible option for Council members is to hold an informal discussion on how to ensure the necessary synergy between these processes in advancing the UN-AU partnership in peace and security.

In relation to the annual consultations between the two Councils, another major issue is how to deepen the partnership with the AU and its sub-regional mechanisms to address the most pressing peace and security situations in Africa. The members of the two Councils are expected to focus on several conflict and crisis situations in their annual consultations. These include the ongoing crisis in Sudan, the situation in eastern DRC and the Great Lakes, the threat of terrorism and violent extremism in West Africa and the Sahel, the dire security environment in Somalia and the funding challenges facing the AU Support Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), the political gridlock in Libya, and the deteriorating political and security situation in South Sudan.

Another issue related to the annual meetings is how to encourage a more interactive exchange during the informal seminar preceding the annual consultations between the Security Council and the AUPSC. Last year, this seminar was held as a retreat outside of New York City, with an agenda aimed at fostering greater interactivity. Some of the same thematic issues may be on the agenda this year, and members may wish to explore ways of following up on some of the recommendations from last year, including on the women, peace and security agenda, which is commemorating 25 years since the adoption of its landmark resolution 1325 this year. Members may also want to explore ways of cooperating on the growing threat of terrorism and violent extremism across different regions of Africa, which is an area of common concern.

The financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs) from UN-assessed contributions has been a recurring issue on the agenda of the two Councils. This year, both Councils might be interested in the implementation of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, on the financing of AUPSOs, including potential cases. The Secretary-General is expected to submit his annual report on this issue in December.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the cooperation and partnership between the UN and the AU on peace and security, and the role of the three African members (A3) has been vital in this regard. In recent years, the A3 (and A3 Plus) has enhanced its position in the Council through joint statements and coordination in negotiations on various Council products with a particular focus on Africa. It has also emerged as a cohesive negotiating bloc, significantly enhancing its influence within the Council.

While other Council members are eager to work with the A3 (and A3 Plus), some permanent members appear reluctant to formally acknowledge the A3 as a formal group. This became evident during recent negotiations on a General Assembly resolution proposed by Egypt on UN-AU cooperation, where a reference to the role of the A3 became a point of contention. These members resisted formally recognising the A3, arguing on procedural grounds that no formal groupings exist within the Security Council.

Although the implementation of resolution 2719 this year faced a setback in the Security Council due to strong opposition from the US to its application in support of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), the AU has not abandoned its efforts. In its meeting on 3 July, the AUPSC emphasised the need to intensify efforts to secure funding for AUSSOM and directed the AU Commission to engage the UN, as well as bilateral and multi-lateral partners, to organise a resource mobilisation conference. In line with this directive, a high-level meeting on AUSSOM financing was convened in New York on 25 September, on the margins of the UN General Assembly.

# Somalia

## Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold a private meeting to discuss the situation in Somalia. Special Representative for Somalia and Head of the UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS) James Swan is expected to brief.

The African Union (AU) is expected to update the Council on the implementation of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) mandate in accordance with resolution 2767 of 27 December 2024.

In addition, the Chair of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Eloy Alfaro de Alba (Panama), is expected to brief on the work of the committee.

In resolution 2753 of 30 October 2024, the Council expressed its intention to review the progress of UNTMIS's transition by 31 October.

## Key Recent Developments

Since launching an offensive earlier this year, Al-Shabaab (a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida) has gained ground in the Middle and Lower Shabelle regions and parts of the Hiiraan region, reversing much of the progress made during the offensive led by Somali forces in 2022-23. (For background, see the brief on Somalia in our April 2025 Monthly Forecast.)

In July, Al-Shabaab attacked the towns of Sabiid and Anole, in the Lower Shabelle region, following a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on a convoy of Ugandan troops serving with AUSSOM. Media reports indicated that the attack resulted in the deaths of around 20 Ugandan soldiers. (A similar attack in the same area in June had reportedly killed close to a dozen Ugandan troops.) AUSSOM released a press statement noting that, together with Somali forces, it had repelled the attack on forward operating bases in the area, resulting in several militants being killed. Earlier, in June, AUSSOM and Somali forces had launched a joint operation in Lower Shabelle, codenamed 'Operation Silent Storm', to reassert control over Sabiid and Anole and secure supply routes southwest of Mogadishu.

In July, Al-Shabaab militants captured two towns—Moqokori and Tardo—in Hirshabelle state. Later that month, Al-Shabaab militants took control of the town of Mahaas in Hiiraan, a key government outpost and an important hub in operations against the group in central Somalia. Recent reports suggest that in September, Al-Shabaab had expanded its presence in and around Harardhere in the Mudug region, a strategically important coastal town with a port and road connections leading southwest to El Dheere and northeast to Puntland.

The Somali National Army has carried out multiple retaliatory operations against Al-Shabaab, aimed at repelling the militants, degrading their capabilities, and reclaiming strategic areas. These efforts have been supported by AUSSOM troops, local clan militias, and international security partners. On 1 August, AUSSOM, in coordination with Somali forces, launched an operation to recapture Bariire town in Lower Shabelle. Following a week-long ground offensive targeting militant positions, the forces regained control of the town, with more than 100 militants killed.

Since the beginning of this year, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) airstrikes targeting Al-Shabaab militants have increased significantly. Alongside these operations in central and southern

Somalia, AFRICOM has also targeted Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) elements in Puntland state.

Meanwhile, there have been several notable developments in the Somali political landscape amid ongoing tensions between the federal government and the federal member states of Puntland and Jubaland, which have expressed concerns that the federal government is consolidating power and putting at risk the country's fragile political environment. In May, several key opposition figures and political leaders established a coalition, known as the 'Somali Salvation Forum' (SSF), led by former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. The Forum has positioned itself as a platform to push for reforms in response to mounting concerns over governance, security, and tensions in federal government-member state relations. After several rounds of talks without a breakthrough on constitutional reforms and upcoming elections, differences over the electoral framework and constitutional amendments led to the formation of a splinter faction.

On 25 August, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the splinter faction of the SSF signed an electoral framework agreement, committing both sides to advancing the transition to universal suffrage (one person, one vote) elections for local councils, state assemblies, and both houses of the federal parliament. The signing of the agreement was welcomed by the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

From 16 to 19 June, a 'National Consultative Forum' was convened in Mogadishu by President Mohamud, which brought together several federal and state leaders, political parties, religious scholars, and civil society representatives. The discussions centred on key national issues, including counter-terrorism, constitutional reform, elections, and federal government-member state cooperation. However, several key opposition actors, including leaders from Puntland, Jubaland, and the Somali Salvation Forum, did not participate, underscoring the continued strains in Somalia's domestic politics.

On 30 July, a regional conference in Las Anod, the capital of the Sool region, declared the formation of the 'North East State' (NES), formally replacing the interim Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (SSC)-Khaatumo administration and establishing a permanent administration affiliated with the federal government. (The SSC-Khaatumo administration was formed amid the 2023 Las Anod conflict and formally acknowledged by Somalia's federal government in October that year.) Subsequently, the federal government recognised NES as a federal member state. This development heightened tensions with Puntland and Somaliland, which hold overlapping claims to the territory comprising NES. Media reports indicated clashes between Puntland forces and local clan fighters in contested areas.

The AU was scheduled to complete the realignment of its troops from the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to AUSSOM by 30 June, ahead of the planned launch of the mission's second phase on 1 July. (The first phase focused on the redeployment of troops and the transfer of locations to Somali security forces, while the second phase is expected to concentrate on securing the mission's positions, supporting offensive operations, and sustaining activities.) However, in a 4 July communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) decided that all AUSSOM forces currently deployed in the mission area, including those initially expected to withdraw by 30 June, would remain eligible for logistical support from UNSOS for

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2767** (27 December 2024) endorsed the AUPSC's decision to replace ATMIS with AUSSOM, beginning 1 January 2025. **S/RES/2753** (30 October 2024) authorised the transition of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) to the UN Country Team (UNCT) over a two-year period, starting on 1 November.

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# Somalia

up to six months, pending the full deployment of all AUSSOM troop-contributing countries (TCCs). Burundian forces, which had been scheduled for repatriation, appear to have been temporarily incorporated under AUSSOM because of this decision. Reports suggest that the Egyptian army has completed its assessment for deploying troops to Somalia, potentially under AUSSOM as well as through a separate bilateral arrangement with the Somali government.

## Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for Council members in October is the future of UNTMIS. In resolution 2753, which most recently renewed the mission's mandate, the Council decided that UNTMIS deliver the first phase of its anticipated two-phased transition by 31 October, with the mission expected to complete its transition by 31 October 2026.

A related issue for Council members is how to continue supporting the Somali government in achieving its national priorities, including the constitutional review and electoral processes. Additionally, addressing the ongoing tension between the federal government and some federal member states is a matter of concern for Council members.

In October, Council members are likely to take into consideration the progress in UNTMIS' transition, outlined in the Secretary-General's 30 September report, in order to determine timelines for the handover of UNTMIS' remaining tasks under the second phase of the transition. One option could be to request the Secretary-General to brief on the situation in the country and progress in implementing the transition plan and to present options for continued UN support beyond UNTMIS, as part of the first briefing in the reporting cycle.

The persistent insecurity in Somalia remains a critical issue for Council members. Despite efforts by Somali forces and partners, which have carried out offensive operations across multiple fronts, Al-Shabaab remains a potent force posing serious security threats to Somalia and the region. The group has been able to exploit internal divisions, including clan rivalries, societal tensions, and political tensions, to expand its influence and sustain its operations. In addition, the presence and activities of ISIS/Da'esh elements in Puntland remain a major security concern.

Against the backdrop of UNTMIS' transition, ongoing financial constraints facing the UN, and organisational reforms under the UN80 initiative, Council members face the key question of how to streamline the UN's operations and presence in Somalia while responding more coherently and effectively to the country's political and security situation.

One option for Council members would be to address the broader situation in Somalia, including the financing of AUSSOM, during the annual UN-AU consultations scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa in October.

## Council Dynamics

Council members support the Somali federal government's priorities and recognise the many challenges the country faces, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. They support ongoing efforts to fight the group, including the implementation of sanctions to degrade Al-Shabaab. Several Council members have underscored the need for inclusive and consultative constitutional and electoral processes, stressing that relevant stakeholders should resolve their differences through dialogue and work towards achieving a broad consensus on key national priorities.

With regard to UNTMIS' transition, Somalia, which joined the Council as an elected member for the 2025-26 term, has already expressed its position for a two-year phased handover of responsibilities of the UN's political mission to Somali institutions and the UN Country Team. In recent years, Somalia's federal government has consistently stressed the importance of national ownership in political processes and has sought to demonstrate its ability to deliver on key national priorities.

During the negotiations on resolution 2753, African members, joined by China and Russia, insisted on noting that UNTMIS' two-phase transition is designed to end by 31 October 2026. However, the US opposed including the end date for UNTMIS' transition and requested the deletion of the phrase "two-year period". It also apparently suggested language calling for the termination of UNTMIS' mandate to be "informed by the conditions on the ground", a request that was also incorporated into resolution 2753. It remains uncertain how the current US administration under President Donald Trump will approach the renewal of UNTMIS' mandate, particularly in light of the US scaling down its financial contributions to UN-led operations. (For more information, see our 29 October 2024 What's in Blue story.)

It appears that some Council members have been having informal discussions on UNTMIS' transition and how to streamline the UN's presence in Somalia. While it seems that initial proposals and ideas have been circulated to gauge political appetite within the Council, the key question remains Somalia's position, which will be central to shaping the Council's discussion on the matter.

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# Yemen

## Expected Council Action

In October, Security Council members will hold their monthly 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

The situation in Yemen remains complex as wider dynamics and instability in the Middle East—including the war in Gaza—undermine

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**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 Statements SC/16166 (12 September 2025) condemned the detention of at least 21 UN personnel, forced entry into UN premises, and seizure of UN property by the Houthis, while demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. 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

progress in addressing the country's civil war, political challenges, and socioeconomic risks. Briefing the Council on 15 September, Grundberg recognised that stability and progress in Yemen and the wider region are interconnected; however, he cautioned against addressing Yemen primarily through the lens of regional concerns and stressed the need to refocus on Yemen's internal challenges.

The Houthis—a Yemeni rebel group which has de facto control of the northwest of the country, including the capital Sana'a—continue to launch multiple ballistic missiles and drone attacks against Israel and to threaten maritime security in the Red Sea, as part of a campaign started in October 2023, which they say is in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza.

In September, the Houthis launched multiple drones and ballistic missiles at Israel. A drone attack on 7 September struck the Ramon International Airport in the south of the country, causing one injury, and another drone launched on 18 September struck a hotel in the Israeli town of Eilat. According to Israeli media, the Houthis have launched 87 ballistic missiles and at least 40 drones at Israel since the IDF relaunched operations in Gaza on 18 March, following the collapse of a ceasefire.

Recurrent Houthi attacks have provoked retaliatory strikes from the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), which in August included deadly strikes against Houthi political leadership in Sana'a. On 10 September, the IDF conducted strikes on targets in Sana'a and al-Jawf. On 16 September, the IDF also launched strikes on the Houthi-controlled Red Sea port of Hodeidah, which it justified by accusing the Houthis of using the port to transfer weapons, supplied by Iran, to execute attacks against Israel. On 25 September, in retaliation for a second Houthi drone attack on a hotel in Eilat, which injured over 20 Israelis a day earlier, the IDF conducted further strikes in Sana'a. Briefing the Council on 15 September, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher expressed concern that since August, air strikes in Sana'a and al-Jawf had resulted in more than 300 casualties and damage to critical infrastructure.

On 31 August, 22 UN personnel were abducted and detained following Houthi raids on UN premises in Sana'a. On 12 September, Council members issued a press statement—proposed by the UK as the penholder on Yemen—that strongly condemned the detentions, forced entry into UN premises, and seizure of UN property, while demanding the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained by the Houthis. Council members also called on the Houthis to enable a safe and secure operating environment, while reiterating their support to the UN “in maintaining measures to optimise staff safety and security in light of the current security context”. According to Fletcher, the Houthis now hold a total of 44 UN staff, and as a result of the recurrent detentions, the UN is striving to find a balance between protecting its staff and delivering vital life-saving services in Yemen. On 16 September, the UN relocated the office of the Resident Coordinator for Yemen from Sana'a to Aden, the interim capital of the internationally recognised government of Yemen.

Such impediments to the UN's aid work in the country come at a time when the population is suffering from a deepening humanitarian crisis. In his briefing, Fletcher stressed that Yemen is the third-most food-insecure country in the world and that the situation is getting worse, with nearly half the country suffering from severe food

deprivation, an increase of 36 percent from last year. He added that funding cuts are costing lives and called for increased funding to address the country's food insecurity and malnutrition crisis.

The situation in the Red Sea remains tense as the Houthis resumed their campaign in July of targeting vessels, which they say have links to Israel. The group continues to hold ten crew members whom they detained following their attack and sinking of the MV Eternity C on 7 July. On 1 September, the group claimed that it had fired a missile at the Israeli-owned, Liberia-flagged tanker MV Scarlet Ray in the northern Red Sea close to Saudi Arabia's port city of Yanbu. There was no reported damage to the vessel. On 29 September, the Dutch-owned MV Minervagracht was reportedly hit by an explosive device in the Gulf of Aden, injuring two of its crew. It is suspected that the Houthis were behind the attack; however, at the time of writing the group had not claimed responsibility.

On 11 September, the US Treasury Department imposed its largest sanctions to date against the Houthis and their “illicit revenue and procurement networks”. It listed 32 individuals and entities—located in China, the Marshall Islands, the UAE, and Yemen—for financing and facilitating the Houthis' acquisition of “advanced military-grade materials” used to attack US forces and allies, and commercial shipping in the Red Sea.

In his 15 September briefing, Grundberg said that “relative calm and stability” continue to hold on the frontlines between the Yemeni conflict parties, but he warned that military activity may lead to miscalculations that “could trigger a return to full-scale conflict”. On 3 and 4 September, Yemeni media reported clashes along the country's southern front lines, in the Dhale and Shabwah governorates, resulting in casualties on both sides.

On 25 September, in his speech at the UN 80th General Assembly, Yemen's President of the Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Al-Alimi declared that efforts to manage and contain the Houthis have failed. He urged the international community to reconsider its position on Yemen and take decisive action by forming an international coalition to restore peace, dismantle militias and terrorist groups, rebuild the state, and guarantee security for the region.

In an 18 September report of the Secretary-General titled “Shifting Paradigms: United to Deliver”, which is part of the UN80 Initiative and “sets out possible structural changes and programme realignments across the [UN] system”, one of the proposals listed with regard to the consolidation and reconfiguration of UN missions was to “[i]ntegrate UNMHA into the Office of the Special Envoy of Yemen, in line with Security Council resolution 2786”. Adopted on 14 July, resolution 2786 renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 28 January 2026, and further requested the Secretary-General to present a review of the mission aimed at delivering “efficiencies and structural coherence and coordination across [UN] missions in Yemen” by 28 November 2025.

## 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. A serious concern is that regional tensions in the Middle East, including the Israeli-Houthi cycle of violence,



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# Yemen

are drawing attention away from finding a peaceful resolution of the Yemeni civil war.

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 re-engaging on commitments made towards establishing a roadmap under UN auspices for inclusive peace in the country. Given the degradation of economic conditions in Yemen, members could also demand enhanced economic and humanitarian initiatives, 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, including demanding that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks against merchant and commercial vessels, underscoring 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 members could also consider holding a public briefing 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 insecurity—providing Council members the opportunity to highlight the urgent need for bolstering funding pledges.

## Council Dynamics

Despite Council members being critical of the Houthis, most have maintained their support for an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process and continue to call for advancing mediation efforts between the conflict parties towards a resumption of dialogue and a peace process under UN auspices. The US, however, has adopted a hawkish

position on the Houthis, through sanctioning the group and accusing it of continuing to threaten—with the support of Iran—regional stability, maritime security, and the welfare of the Yemeni people.

Members have divergent views on the reasons for the protracted political stalemate and insecurity in Yemen. The “A3 plus one” members (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana), China, Pakistan, and Russia have all stressed that the situation in Yemen and the Red Sea cannot be discussed in isolation from the war 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 such actions degrade the country's already dire humanitarian situation, exacerbate the situation in the Red Sea, and negatively impact the political 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 and has underscored its support for Israel's right to defend itself against the Houthis.

There is broad agreement among Council members on the need to improve economic and humanitarian conditions in the country, and the need to restore freedom of navigation and security in the Red Sea. At least three of the Council's elected members—Denmark, Greece, and Panama—have suffered Houthi attacks on their commercial vessels.

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 on the group.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Greece and the US are the co-penholders on the Red Sea crisis.

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# UNDOF (Golan)

## Expected Council Action

In October, Council members will hold the quarterly consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan. An official from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) is expected to brief on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on UNDOF and the most recent developments.

UNDOF's mandate, which is typically renewed every six months, expires on 31 December 2025.

## Background and Key Recent Developments

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

Syrian troops and equipment are restricted) in the Golan.

On 30 June 2025, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2782 renewing UNDOF's mandate for another six months.

Following the ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, the situation in the Golan has changed significantly due to an increased presence of Israel Defence Forces' (IDF) troops in the demilitarised buffer zone and operations across the ceasefire line, in violation of the 1974 agreement. Since Assad's removal, Israel has repeatedly conducted airstrikes and ground operations on Syrian territory. Israel has cited national security concerns as the basis for its continued violations and has said that it will occupy the buffer zone indefinitely to ensure the demilitarisation and mitigation of threats from southern Syria. In July, some of its operations were ostensibly aimed at protecting the Druze community in Syria's southern Suweida governorate from intercommunal violence.

Under its new interim president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria has

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2782](#) (30 June 2025) renewed the mandate of UNDOF for six months, until 31 December 2025. [S/RES/350](#) (31 May 1974) established UNDOF. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/154](#) (12 March 2025) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNDOF, covering the period 19 November 2024 to 18 February 2025. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9840](#) (17 January 2025) was a meeting on UNIFIL and UNDOF.

## UNDOF (Golan)

repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the 1974 agreement, and despite strongly condemning Israeli attacks, it has not retaliated militarily. Recent Israeli operations have reportedly included ground incursions into Deraa governorate and Syrian towns along the ceasefire line on 14 September, deadly IDF raids of positions held by the Syrian army outside Damascus on 28 August, and a 24 August IDF strike which killed one person in Quneitra, a city located within the buffer zone.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 26 September and covering the period from 20 May to 17 August, reported continued violations of the 1974 agreement, including at least nine breaches of the ceasefire and the continued presence of the IDF in the area of separation. The report said that as of 4 August, the IDF "maintained and reinforced" ten positions it had established in both the area of separation and limitation on the Syria side. It also documented numerous observations of IDF strikes on former Syrian armed forces positions, and IDF interceptions of "aerial objects" flying towards the Israeli side. Additionally, UNDOF personnel reported experiencing continued restriction of movement in their area of operations, from both the IDF and the Syrian authorities, in violation of the 1974 agreement. According to the report, some UNDOF patrols were also obstructed by groups of armed individuals in the area of limitation on the Syrian side, which the mission assessed were related to a spillover of tensions from the clashes involving the Druze in Suweida.

Through US mediation efforts—following a commitment by US President Donald Trump to support progress towards Syria's stability and peace with its neighbours—Sharaa has reportedly said that the interim government is pursuing a security agreement with Israel, which would ensure respect for Syria's airspace and territorial integrity. On 24 September, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that a deal with Damascus "depends on ensuring Israel's interests, which include, among other things, the demilitarization of southwestern Syria and safeguarding the safety and security of the Druze in Syria". According to reporting by Axios, Israel is proposing that the area southwest of Damascus be divided into three zones with distinct security arrangements. On 23 September, US Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack—who has been directly involved in the discussions—reportedly said that the two parties are close to striking a "de-escalation" agreement as a first step towards reaching a security deal.

According to a 17 September report by Human Rights Watch, IDF actions in southern Syria since December 2024 have severely impacted Syrian civilians, including through forced displacement, home seizures and demolitions, denial of access to farmland, and "unlawful transfer of Syrian detainees to Israel". The report stresses that such actions violate international humanitarian law and that forced displacement is a war crime.

### Key Issues and Options

In light of the significant shift in security dynamics in the Golan and increased challenges for UNDOF, a key issue for the Council is how to address ongoing violations of the 1974 agreement and

obstructions preventing the mission from carrying out its mandate. A related issue is UNDOF's ability to carry out its mandate in light of restricted movement due to Israeli activities in the area.

Another issue for the Council is that the significant Israeli presence in the buffer zone and repeated violations of the 1974 agreement could risk further destabilising internal security dynamics in Syria or lead to a significant escalation between the parties that could re-ignite the Israeli-Syrian conflict.

Members could consider adopting a presidential statement urging the parties to uphold international law and their obligations under the 1974 agreement, underscoring that there should be no military forces or activities in the area of separation, other than those of UNDOF. The statement could also express concern over risks posed to local civilian populations by violations of the 1974 agreement and call upon the parties to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate safely, securely and freely in accordance with the agreement. The Council could further urge de-escalation and express support for present diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a security agreement between Israel and Syria in such a statement.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability.

Despite historical divisions about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, Russia and the US have traditionally considered UNDOF as a separate issue on which they agree, serving as co-penholders on the issue.

Following the ouster of Assad, the dynamic between Russia and the US on the Syrian file has seen a shift. The two countries, once holding strongly opposing views, have shown increased alignment, as demonstrated by their co-penholdership of a 14 March presidential statement addressing sectarian violence and key issues on Syria's political transition. They also agreed on a 10 August presidential statement, authored by Denmark—the humanitarian penholder for Syria—focused on violence in Suweida in July, which included a call "for the respect of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement, including the principles regarding the Area of Separation, as well as the mandate and role of UNDOF, and stresse[d] the obligation on all parties to fully abide by its terms and to maintain calm and reduce tensions".

The IDF's recent actions and presence in the Golan—as well as statements by Israeli officials on this issue—have generated criticism from several Council members. Most Council members have consistently demanded Israel's full withdrawal from Syria, while calling on all parties to adhere to the 1974 agreement. One of the main contentious issues during negotiations on the Council's 10 August presidential statement, was over whether Israel's military actions in Syria should be explicitly referenced and condemned in the text, with the "A3 Plus" members (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) and Pakistan arguing for such language while, on the other hand, the US was unwilling to accept a direct reference to Israel or its actions. (For more information, see our 9 August What's in Blue story.)

# Western Sahara

## Expected Council Action

In October, Security Council members will receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's annual report on the situation in Western Sahara.

The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), which expires on 31 October.

## Key Recent Developments

On 14 April, Council members held closed consultations on Western Sahara, during which the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Staffan de Mistura, briefed members. He apparently flagged his intention to step up mediation efforts and suggested that there could be an opportunity in the coming months for regional de-escalation and for outlining a roadmap toward a resolution of the conflict in Western Sahara. (For background and more information, see the brief on Western Sahara in our April 2025 Monthly Forecast.)

De Mistura continued his diplomatic efforts in a bid to advance the political process. On 5 September, De Mistura met with the US Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos in New York. Following the meeting, Boulos posted on X that their discussions addressed MINURSO's stabilising role and prospects for regional peace. He added that "genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty is the only feasible solution for Western Sahara".

On 16 September, de Mistura travelled to Algiers, where he met with Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf. According to a press release issued following the meeting, Attaf reiterated Algeria's support for the UN's efforts to find a "just, lasting and definitive solution" to the Western Sahara issue that ensures the Saharawi people's right to self-determination. He underscored the need for "direct" and "unconditional" negotiations under UN auspices between Morocco and the Polisario Front—the entity representing the Saharawi people of Western Sahara.

On 18 September, de Mistura held discussions with Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin in Moscow. A readout issued by the Russian foreign ministry said that the talks focused on the "state and prospects of the Western Sahara settlement", as well as on the UN's role in efforts to relaunch the political process. It underlined the importance of maintaining the mission's personnel and resource capacity to ensure that it continues to provide a stabilising influence in the region.

De Mistura travelled to the Saharawi refugee camps in the town of Tindouf in Algeria on 21 September. During his visit, he reportedly met with the Secretary-General of the Polisario Front Brahim Ghali and senior members of the Saharawi leadership.

On 23 September, de Mistura met with Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita. According to a government press release, Bourita reiterated Morocco's position for achieving a "political, realistic, pragmatic, and lasting solution" based exclusively on Morocco's Autonomy Plan, within the framework of Morocco's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In parallel, the US, which is the penholder on Western Sahara, has also intensified engagement with interlocutors. In late July, Boulos visited Algiers and met with several senior Algerian officials, including President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and Foreign Minister Attaf.

In mid-August, a delegation of US diplomats and military officials visited MINURSO headquarters in Laayoune, the largest city in Western Sahara. The delegation reportedly met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO, Alexander Ivanko, and the mission's Force Commander, Lieutenant General Fakhru Ahsan. According to local media reports, discussions centred on the implementation of the mission's mandate, operational challenges on the ground, and the potential implications of budget reductions on the mission's composition.

Later in August, a bipartisan US congressional delegation visited Rabat, where they met with senior Moroccan officials, including Foreign Minister Bourita. Among other issues, the discussions centred on the question of Western Sahara. Leading the delegation, Congressman Mike Lawler, chair of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, described Morocco's Autonomy Plan as a pragmatic framework for achieving lasting "safety and progress".

The situation on the ground remains tense, characterised by ongoing low-intensity hostilities between Morocco and the Polisario Front. On 4 June, a drone strike reportedly carried out by the Moroccan army hit an Algerian-registered truck near the town of Bir Lahlou in north-eastern Western Sahara, killing three people. Another drone strike by the Moroccan army on 19 June targeted a vehicle reportedly belonging to the Polisario Front near Mijek town.

On 27 June, four rockets struck the city of Smara, in Moroccan-administered territory of Western Sahara, including one that landed 200 metres from the MINURSO team site. The rockets were launched from an area located around 40 kilometres east of the berm. (The berm, an approximately 1,700-mile-long earthen wall, separates the Moroccan-administered part of Western Sahara from territory controlled by the Polisario Front.) The Polisario Front claimed responsibility for the attack. Later that day, the Moroccan army reportedly carried out a drone strike targeting individuals linked to the Polisario Front and alleged to have been responsible for the rocket fire on Smara.

## Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is to renew the mandate of MINURSO and consider what changes to the mission's mandate, if any, are necessary.

The underlying issue remains how to facilitate a viable and lasting resolution to the long-standing deadlock over the status of Western Sahara.

Two fundamentally diverging positions have made a resolution to the conflict difficult. On the one hand, the Polisario Front's demand for the Saharawi people's right to self-determination, which has been recognised by the International Court of Justice in its 16 October 1975 advisory opinion and supported by several member states. Numerous UN General Assembly resolutions, such as resolution A/RES/34/37, have affirmed the "inalienable right of the people of Western Sahara" to self-determination and independence. The Council has also called for a "just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara". On the other hand, Morocco claims sovereignty over the territory, and its Autonomy Plan has received

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## Western Sahara

support from an increasing number of member states in recent years. In 2007, the Council adopted resolution 1754, which, in its preambular paragraphs, took note of Morocco's proposal and welcomed Morocco's efforts as serious and credible to move the process forward towards resolution.

Significant obstacles remain in the peace process. Hostilities have persisted at a low to medium intensity, falling short of large-scale confrontation. Moreover, Morocco controls over three-quarters of the Western Sahara territory and has made substantial investments in the region, including a \$1.2 billion port project in Dakhla. In addition, settlers of Moroccan origin account for nearly two-thirds of the approximately half-million residents of Western Sahara.

MINURSO's limited ability to implement its mandate is also an issue. This is due to the protracted nature of the conflict and the intransigence of the parties. The lack of progress perpetuates instability and heightens the risk of renewed hostilities. At the same time, Council members must navigate competing interests of key stakeholders, which continue to shape the Council's deliberations on this file.

Also, an important issue for the Council is how, amid severe financial constraints and the broader reform process under the UN80 initiative, to preserve MINURSO's operational effectiveness and ensure that the mission can continue to address evolving dynamics on the ground and advance the implementation of its mandate.

One option for Council members could be to hold a stake-in-ahead of consultations in October to express support for de Mistura's efforts and urge the relevant parties to resume negotiations, show flexibility in their engagement with the Personal Envoy and each other, and expand on their positions, in the hopes of ending the current impasse and achieving progress towards a political solution.

### Council Dynamics

Council members differ starkly in their national positions on Western Sahara. The US, the penholder on Western Sahara, recognised

Morocco's sovereignty over the region in December 2020 during the first administration of President Donald Trump and has committed to opening a consulate in the disputed territory. France supports the Moroccan autonomy plan as the "only basis" for achieving a political solution, while the UK recently adjusted its position to describe the autonomy proposal as the "most credible, viable and pragmatic basis for a lasting resolution of the dispute". Countries such as France and the US have also sought to make significant investments in projects in Western Sahara. Denmark views Morocco's Autonomy Plan as "a good basis for an agreed solution between all parties", while Greece considers it a "serious and credible" approach.

The African members of the Council do not have a common position. Sierra Leone recognises Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Algeria strongly supports the Sahrawis' right to self-determination and maintains diplomatic relations with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Guyana, which is a member of the "A3 plus one" grouping, withdrew its recognition of the SADR, dating from 1979, in November 2020. Somalia maintains cordial relations with both Algeria and Morocco but does not recognise the SADR nor endorse Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

In November 2024, Panama suspended diplomatic relations with SADR. During a visit to Morocco in June, Panama's Foreign Minister Javier Martínez-Acha supported Morocco's proposal as "the most serious, credible, and realistic basis" for a lasting solution.

The difficult dynamics surrounding the file led to contentious negotiations on resolution 2756, which renewed the MINURSO mandate last year. Algeria argued that its views were "deliberately ignored" by the penholder. Ahead of the vote on the draft resolution, authored by the US, Algeria tabled two draft amendments to the text, but they did not garner the requisite number of votes to be adopted. During the vote on the draft resolution, Russia and then-Council member Mozambique abstained, while Algeria chose not to participate. (For more information, see our 31 October 2024 What's in Blue story.)

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## Great Lakes Region (DRC)

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Huang Xia, is expected to provide the biannual briefing to the Council on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework (PSC-F) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Great Lakes region.

### Key Recent Developments

Since the Council's last meeting on the Great Lakes region on 16 April, there have been significant developments in the DRC and the Great Lakes. On 27 June, the DRC and Rwanda—which had been engaged in mutual accusations of supporting proxy armed groups in the conflict in eastern DRC—signed a peace agreement under US auspices in Washington. From 30 July to 1 August, Washington hosted meetings focused on implementing the security elements of the agreement. In this context, the first meeting of the Joint

Oversight Committee took place on 31 July. This committee was established based on the peace agreement to resolve any disputes arising between the parties during implementation. In addition to delegations from the DRC and Rwanda, representatives from Qatar, Togo (as the African Union [AU] facilitator), the US and the AU Commission participated in the meeting. On 1 August, the delegations from the DRC and Rwanda also initialled the text of the Regional Economic Integration Framework in the context of the 27 June Peace Agreement to collaborate on a wide range of sectors.

On 7–8 August, the first meeting of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism was held in Addis Ababa. The Mechanism set up under the agreement is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the concept of operations for the harmonised plan to neutralise the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC that was implicated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and to facilitate

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GREAT LAKES** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2773 (21 February 2025) was on the situation in eastern DRC. **Secretary-General's Report S/2025/202** (1 April 2025) was on the implementation of the PSC-F. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9899** (16 April 2025) was a briefing on the situation in the Great Lakes region.



## Great Lakes Region (DRC)

the disengagement of forces and lifting of defensive measures by Rwanda, in line with the 27 June Peace Agreement. The meeting was attended by representatives from Qatar, the US, the AU mediator's representative, and the AU Commission. During the meeting, the DRC and Rwanda adopted the Mechanism's terms of reference and discussed next steps for implementing the agreement.

Qatar has also played a mediation role aimed at facilitating dialogue between the Congolese government and the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) rebel group. Following an initial direct meeting in early April between representatives of both parties in Doha under Qatari facilitation, the Congolese government and the M23 issued a joint declaration on 23 April, reaffirming their commitment to an immediate cessation of hostilities and their categorical rejection of hate speech and intimidation, and calling on local communities to uphold these commitments.

Qatar has since proposed a separate draft peace agreement to be signed by the DRC and M23; however, the agreement was not signed on 18 August as anticipated. Several contentious issues appear to have emerged during the negotiations. For instance, the M23 apparently insisted on the implementation of confidence-building measures—such as the release of prisoners of war—as a precondition for further progress. However, the Congolese government maintained that such measures could only be considered once an agreement was signed. It appears that the DRC has changed its position, with reports that the two sides have now agreed on a Prisoner Exchange Mechanism in which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will facilitate the identification, verification, and safe release of detainees held by both sides.

On 1 August, the Chairs of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—Kenya's President William Ruto and Zimbabwe's President Emmerson Mnangagwa, respectively—met in Nairobi with the Panel of Facilitators jointly appointed by the EAC and SADC. (For background, see our 11 April What's in Blue story.) Among other outcomes, the meeting agreed to merge the EAC-SADC and AU mediation efforts in the DRC and called on other ongoing initiatives to align themselves with the consolidated African-led mediation process. This decision was endorsed by a joint EAC-SADC extraordinary summit held virtually on 13 August.

On 17 August, SADC held its annual summit in Antananarivo, Madagascar, with the country's president, Andry Rajoelina, taking over the rotating chairmanship from Mnangagwa. The summit welcomed the decision to consolidate the African-led mediation processes, and underscored the need to ensure complementarity and harmonisation between this process and other initiatives led by Qatar and the US.

In the meantime, the security situation in eastern DRC has deteriorated recently with a surge of armed group attacks. The Security Council met on 22 August in an emergency session and condemned the upsurge of attacks by armed groups, including the M23 and other armed groups operating in eastern DRC. (For more, see our 22 August What's in Blue story.) In early September, the Allied Democratic Forces, a foreign armed group affiliated with ISIL/Daesh, reportedly carried out multiple attacks in North Kivu, which left 89 people dead. Media reports also indicate rising tensions in South Kivu, particularly in Uvira—a town bordering Lake Tanganyika.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 5 September, the UN Human Rights Office published the findings of its Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on the situation in North and South Kivu, mandated by the Human Rights Council. The report concludes that all parties to the conflict, including the M23 armed group, supported by the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF), as well as the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and affiliated groups, have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The report documents widespread abuses during and after the takeover of Goma by the M23 and RDF in January, including attacks on schools and hospitals, summary executions, torture, enforced disappearances, and forced recruitment. It highlights systematic sexual violence, including gang rape and sexual slavery, committed by M23 members, targeting women, girls, men, boys, and LGBT persons. Children were also detained, forcibly recruited, and subjected to grave abuses. The FFM found recurring patterns of violations, suggesting a high degree of organisation and planning.

The report further records grave violations by FARDC and Wazalendo militias, including deliberate killings of civilians, looting, and widespread sexual violence, particularly during retreats in early 2025. Wazalendo groups also recruited children under the age of 15 for use in combat and other roles.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in October is the security situation in eastern DRC, which continues to be a source of tension among countries of the Great Lakes region. There are concerns that the deterioration of the security situation in South Kivu, particularly in Uvira, has the potential to heighten regional tensions.

Another major issue for Council members is whether there needs to be greater coordination among the various regional initiatives in the Great Lakes region. There appears to be a growing concern that African-led mediation efforts are being overtaken by externally led processes. During the meeting in October, Xia may brief Council members about his series of engagements with regional leaders, mediators and facilitators as part of his good offices mandate to support ongoing mediation processes.

The revitalisation of the 2013 PSC-F to address the root causes of instability in the DRC and the Great Lakes region has been an ongoing issue. In this regard, Council members may focus attention on the 12th meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC-F, which took place in Entebbe, Uganda, on 28 May. The meeting considered the independent assessment on the implementation of the PSC-F, including its findings and recommendations, and adopted an action plan on revitalising the PSC-F, emphasising its continued relevance to address the root causes of the instability in eastern DRC and the Great Lakes. A possible option for Council members is to adopt a press statement to welcome the outcome of this meeting and highlight the main findings.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members have welcomed the progress in the ongoing mediation efforts to address the situation in eastern DRC and ease tensions among countries of the Great Lakes region. However, they apparently could not agree on a press statement proposed by France, the penholder on the DRC and the Great Lakes, to condemn the recent upsurge of armed group attacks in eastern DRC. It seems that the US wanted a reference to the “Rwanda-backed M23”, but the “A3 Plus” grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) opposed this reference.

Council members remain concerned about the worsening

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## Great Lakes Region (DRC)

humanitarian and human rights situation in eastern DRC, with multiple reports of serious human rights abuses and crimes targeting civilians, particularly women and children. Discussion about punitive measures has been put on hold amid progress in the peace process, but the resurgence of violence appears to have prompted some Council members to call for accountability for crimes against civilians.

Council members also continue to highlight the need to address the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which is fuelling the

conflict in eastern DRC. In July, Sierra Leone convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “The Global Race for Critical Minerals: Addressing Resource-Driven Insecurity in Africa”. A key focus of the meeting was the DRC and the Great Lakes region, which hold vast reserves of critical minerals. (For more, see our 8 July What’s in Blue story.) The US appears to have a strong interest in securing access to the DRC’s critical mineral resources, as part of a broader strategy to diversify its supply chains and counter China’s dominance in the sector.

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## Libya

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Council will hold its 60-day 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.

Additionally, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which expires on 31 October.

### 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 has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections.

While the country’s rival governments remain deadlocked over nationwide presidential and parliamentary elections, Libya’s High National Election Commission (HNEC) has continued working on organising municipal elections. After the first phase of elections held in November 2024, HNEC organised a second phase of municipal elections in August, which started on 16 August with voting in 26 municipalities. There were attempts to disrupt elections in some municipalities in the western part of the country due to attacks on HNEC offices in Zawiya, Zliten, and Sahel Al Gharbi, causing the HNEC to postpone the vote in seven municipalities for 23 August. The elections saw a turnout of around 72 percent, indicating a significant engagement in the municipal process despite ongoing political

and security challenges. No elections took place in GNS/HoR-controlled areas and many southern municipalities because the GNS suspended elections in these areas.

On 11 September, UNSMIL issued a statement welcoming the announcement by the HNEC of the results for 34 municipalities that participated in this round of elections. UNSMIL also called on all relevant actors to remove obstacles that are delaying the resumption of municipal elections in areas where they were suspended.

During the Security Council’s most recent briefing on Libya, held on 21 August, Tetteh presented the Council with a roadmap to lead Libya to national elections and unified institutions. The road map rests on three core pillars: (1) adopting a viable electoral framework for presidential and legislative polls; (2) unifying institutions under a new government; and (3) launching a structured dialogue on governance, economic, security, and reconciliation issues to pave the way for these elections and address long-term conflict drivers.

UNSMIL envisions implementation of the road map as a sequenced package, with each step enabling the next toward national elections within 12–18 months. Main priorities during this period will be reconstituting the HNEC board, ensuring its financial independence, and amending the electoral framework. According to UNSMIL, these steps could be completed before November 2025, if there is the necessary political will. After this, there would need to be an agreement on a unified government that would then create conditions for credible elections, while UNSMIL convenes a structured dialogue to tackle governance obstacles, shape a national vision, and advance reforms in security, the economy, and reconciliation.

UNSMIL has said that it will build safeguards into the process to counter obstruction, considering the August municipal elections when some actors sought to delay or derail progress. If obstruction occurs at any stage of the process, UNSMIL indicated that it will pursue alternatives and seek Security Council support to prevent further transitional deadlock.

On 3 September, Security Council members issued a press statement welcoming Tetteh’s 21 August briefing on the road map and urging Libyan stakeholders to fully engage in and make the compromises necessary to advance a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned process, facilitated by UNSMIL, while also calling upon the international

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2755](#) (31 October 2024) extended UNSMIL’s mandate for three months, until 31 January 2025, with a “further automatic extension” of an additional nine months, until 31 October 2025, if a new Special Representative and Head of UNSMIL has been appointed by 31 January 2025. [Security Council Press Statement SC/16161](#) (3 September 2025) welcomed the 21 August Tetteh’s briefing in which she outlined the road map to advance a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process. [Secretary-General’s Report S/2025/509](#) (8 August 2025) was the Secretary-General’s report on political, security and economic developments in Libya from 5 April to 1 August 2025. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9984](#) (21 August 2025) was the meeting on the situation in Libya.

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# Libya

community to support this process. The statement further urged all Libyan parties to respect the 2020 ceasefire and refrain from any actions that could endanger the fragile security situation. It welcomed the completion of municipal elections in August while noting the suspension of elections in several municipalities.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 23 June, UN experts called on Egypt and Libya to ensure accountability for the reported unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by security forces and individuals in plainclothes against peaceful activists participating in the Global March to Gaza. The activists had gathered to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and deliver humanitarian aid. The experts urged the Egyptian government and de facto authorities in eastern Libya to immediately and unconditionally release any participants still arbitrarily detained.

According to the experts, activists were subjected to unlawful detention, mistreatment, and forcible deportation, in violation of their rights to liberty, security, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly. Reports were also received of sexual and gender-based violence targeting women participants.

The experts stressed that Egypt, Libya, and all relevant authorities must carry out prompt, independent, and thorough investigations into these incidents. They emphasised the responsibility of both governments to ensure that fundamental freedoms are respected and that the right to peaceful assembly is protected.

## Key Issues and Options

The most immediate issue for the Council in October is the renewal of UNSMIL's mandate. The Council is likely to retain the mission's core tasks as set out in resolution 2542 of 15 September 2020 and paragraph 16 of resolution 2570 of 16 April 2021. Council members may consider updating the mandate, however, to reflect recent security and political contexts, and to request periodic updates on the implementation of the road map leading to national elections and unified institutions.

Pursuant to resolution 2755 of 31 October 2024, which most recently renewed UNSMIL's mandate, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a strategic review of the mission by the end of September. The recommendations from this strategic review are expected to inform the upcoming mandate renewal negotiations. Members may wish to discuss the recommendations following the

briefing but ahead of the mandate renewal in a closed informal format such as an informal interactive dialogue with relevant parties.

When considering UNSMIL's mandate renewal, another option for the Council would be to lengthen the reporting cycle on UNSMIL from the current 60 days to 120 days. Council members could consider convening closed consultations or a meeting under "any other business" as needed to respond promptly and effectively to ongoing developments that merit the Council's attention.

## 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 escalation of violence in Tripoli in May.

At the August meeting on Libya, Council members expressed mixed views on UNSMIL's proposed road map for advancing the country's political process. Several members, including the UK, France, Denmark, Greece, and Panama, voiced strong support for the road map, describing it as balanced, viable, and a crucial step toward breaking the political deadlock. These members emphasised the importance of unifying institutions, holding elections, and ensuring inclusive participation through structured dialogue.

The US, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, the A3 Plus (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana), and Pakistan offered more general encouragement, underscoring the need for dialogue, a Libyan-led process, and further details on implementation.

Other members were more cautious. Russia stressed that any roadmap must have the advance support of all key actors on the ground and warned against externally imposed deadlines, consistent with its longstanding concerns about potential UN overreach and imposed political solutions in Libya. China also framed its support as conditional, calling for broad acceptance by Libyan parties.

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# Lebanon

## Expected Council Action

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

## 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

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2790 (28 August 2025) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for a final time until 31 December 2026 and established several functions that UNIFIL is authorised to fulfil during the drawdown and withdrawal period. It also requested the UN Secretary-General to explore, by 1 June 2026, "options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701" following the withdrawal of UNIFIL. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. It also expanded UNIFIL's mandate. 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.

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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 its facilities. These include the 21 September drone strike that killed five people, including three children, in southern Lebanon, and the 18 September airstrikes that caused peacekeepers of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to move to shelters for safety. The most recent report of rocket launches from Lebanon towards Israel occurred in March.

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. There were no reported Israeli casualties during the period covered by the Secretary-General's report.

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".

With the support of UNIFIL, the LAF has gradually redeployed throughout southern Lebanon. UNIFIL has continued to detect unauthorised weapons and ammunition caches in its area of operations and face incidents of aggressive behaviour by groups of residents in southern Lebanon, a region where Hezbollah has historically maintained significant influence. UNIFIL has also continued to observe IDF military activities in the mission's area of operation, as well as incidents in which the IDF interfered with UNIFIL operations and put peacekeepers at risk, such as by dropping grenades close to peacekeepers working to clear roadblocks.

In a significant development marking a shift from past mandate renewals, on 28 August, the Security Council adopted resolution 2790 extending UNIFIL's mandate for a final time until 31 December 2026 and directing the mission to begin an orderly drawdown and full withdrawal from that date "and within one year". UNIFIL's liquidation will begin after the end of the drawdown and withdrawal phase. The resolution establishes several functions that UNIFIL is authorised to fulfil during the drawdown and withdrawal period, such as the provision of security for UN personnel, facilities, convoys, and equipment and associated personnel; the maintenance of

situational awareness near UNIFIL locations; and contributing to the protection of civilians.

The resolution requests the UN Secretary-General to explore, by 1 June 2026, "options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701" following the withdrawal of UNIFIL, including regarding "assistance in respect of security and monitoring of the Blue Line and the ways to enhance the support to the LAF redeployment" south of the Litani River through the UN's "tools". It also urges the international community to intensify its support, "including equipment, material and finance" to the LAF in order to ensure their effective and sustainable deployment and enhance their capacities to implement resolution 1701. (For more information, see our 28 August What's in Blue story.)

On 5 September, the Lebanese cabinet welcomed a plan formulated by the LAF that lays out phased stages for the state to achieve the monopoly of arms across the country, an indirect reference to the process of disarmament of non-state groups in Lebanon, including Hezbollah. Although the plan has not been made public, according to media reports, the LAF will initially continue to focus on the area south of the Litani River. It will then concentrate on the region between the Litani and the Awali River, followed by Beirut and its surrounding areas, the Bekaa region, and finally the entirety of Lebanese territory. The plan also reportedly notes the need for the LAF to be adequately resourced, the "cessation of Israeli aggressions", and Israel's withdrawal from Lebanese territory as essential conditions for the full deployment of the army throughout Lebanon.

While the cabinet welcomed the LAF's plan, it gave no clear timetable for its implementation, except for the plan's first phase which, according to 9 September remarks by Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Youssef Rajji, is expected to be completed in three months.

Five Shi'a ministers, including two from Hezbollah, walked out of the 5 September cabinet meeting in protest. Hezbollah representatives have stated several times that the group will not disarm, arguing that Israeli strikes and occupied positions must be addressed first.

In a 6 September statement, France welcomed the cabinet's endorsement of the LAF's plan as "a new positive step" in line with previous decisions by the Lebanese authorities. On 10 September, the US approved a Presidential Drawdown Authority package for Lebanon, the value of which it estimates at \$14.2 million, to build the LAF's capability "to dismantle weapons caches and military infrastructure of non-state groups", including Hezbollah.

## Key Issues and Options

Supporting the full implementation of resolutions 1559 and 1701, as well as of the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon, remain key priorities for the Security Council. Capitalising on what appears to be a narrow window for a peaceful transition in Lebanon, while avoiding destabilisation risks, is a key issue for the Council, the country and the broader region.

Council members could issue a press statement that:

- welcomes the 5 September endorsement by the Lebanese cabinet of the LAF's plan and encourages its timely completion towards the extension of the control of the government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory;



# Lebanon

- calls on all parties to refrain from actions that could undermine the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement;
- urges Israel to stop air and drone strikes on Lebanese territory and to withdraw from the positions it occupies north of the Blue Line;
- calls on the LAF, with UNIFIL's support, to deploy to these positions;
- calls on all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including regarding the protection of civilians.

## Council Dynamics

Council members agree that the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon needs to hold. Most Council members continue to recognise the importance of UNIFIL's stabilising role in southern Lebanon.

Despite the eventual unanimous adoption of resolution 2790, the negotiation process highlighted sharp divisions among Council

members. The US signalled its readiness to veto the mandate renewal if it did not contain a clear date for the end of the mission, while the other 14 members—none of whom had approached the negotiations seeking the termination of UNIFIL—argued in favour of prioritising conditions on the ground rather than a specific end date for the mission. The result was a compromise that tempered US insistence on a set date for the mission's exit, with a final, longer-than-usual renewal (16 months) reflecting the other members' concern that an accelerated end of the mission could have undermined the process of Lebanon achieving full control over its territory.

Differences persist in Security Council members' views of Hezbollah. 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.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

# Kosovo

## Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold its second briefing of the year on the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the situation in Kosovo. Deputy Special Representative of UNMIK Milbert Dongjoon Shin is the anticipated briefer.

## Key Developments

There has been no meaningful progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue on normalisation between Belgrade and Pristina. In late July, Belgrade reportedly ruled out the possibility of dialogue with Pristina following the 18 July arrest and pre-trial detention of Igor Popović, the Assistant Director of Serbia's Office for Kosovo and Metohija and a member of the Serbian Government's negotiation team in the EU-facilitated dialogue. Kosovo authorities accused Popović of "inciting ethnic hatred and division" after referring to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) as a terrorist organisation during a public event in Rahovec earlier this month. Belgrade condemned the arrest as politically motivated, arguing that it represents an "unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights and democratic norms". Serbian officials, including President Aleksandar Vučić, Minister of Foreign Affairs Marko Đurić and Serbia's chief negotiator, Petar Petković, demanded Popović's immediate release, with Đurić asserting that "there can be no dialogue with Pristina while arrests and pressures on Serbian officials and the Serbian people are taking place".

Efforts to implement prior agreements have also stalled. To revive the normalisation talks, Peter Sørensen, the EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue, met separately with Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani and Prime Minister Albin Kurti on 6 August in Pristina, during which he underscored the criticality of the Ohrid Agreement's implementation and stressed that it was "time

to move forward" with the EU-led normalisation process with Belgrade. In early September, Sørensen also hosted talks in Brussels with Kosovo and Serbian chief negotiators on implementing the Ohrid Agreement and the 2023 Declaration for Missing Persons. (For background information on the Ohrid Agreement, see the brief on Kosovo in our April 2023 Monthly Forecast.) However, a meeting of the Joint Commission on Missing Persons did not take place as scheduled, owing to disagreements between both parties on what issues should be prioritised in implementing prior agreements.

Amidst these discussions, on 5 August, Popović accepted a guilty plea with the prosecution and was subsequently sentenced on 8 August to six months in prison by the Pristina Basic Court. The sentence was later commuted to a €3,000 fine. The court also ordered his deportation and banned him from re-entering Kosovo for two years.

The Central Election Commission of Kosovo (CEC) voted not to certify two Kosovo Serb political parties, Srpska Lista (Serbian List) and Srpska Demokratija (Serbian Democracy), for participation in the 12 October local elections. According to media reports, the CEC's 21 August decision was predicated on the determination that some candidates did not meet the required legal standards to participate in the electoral race. Commission members from the Lëvizja Vetevendosje party (LVV), Sami Kurteshi and Alban Krasniqi, opposed Srpska Lista's certification, citing "alleged links with Serbia-run parallel institutions operating outside central government control". (Parallel institutions refer to a network of administrative, educational, and healthcare structures in Kosovo administered and funded by Serbia that operate alongside structures affiliated with Pristina, often in areas with a significant ethnic Serbian population.)

The move sparked significant concern and criticism from several international actors. The embassies of the Quint countries—France, Germany, Italy, the UK, and the US—and the EU issued a statement

UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9894 (8 April 2025) was the first regular briefing of the year on the situation in Kosovo. Secretary-General's Report S/2025/200 (1 April 2025) was the Secretary-General's report on UNMIK.

that stressed that “all procedures must be carried out strictly in line with the rules and mandate of the CEC and encouraged the affected parties to make full use of the Election Complaints and Appeals Panel (ECAP) to seek redress”. The UN also issued a statement warning that any decision regarding certification needed to be taken in full accordance with the law.

Following appeals from both Srpska Lista and Srpska Demokracija, the ECAP annulled the CEC’s decision and ordered the commission to certify the candidates nominated by Srpska Lista. Kurtishi and Krasniqi apparently filed a complaint with the Supreme Court of Kosovo against the ECAP’s decision. However, the court reportedly rejected the appeal on the basis that the legal criteria for disqualification were not met, affirming the ECAP’s decision and allowing Srpska Lista to remain in the race.

Meanwhile, the situation in northern Kosovo remains tense. In early May, local authorities, assisted by Kosovo police, took control over Serbian-run facilities in North Mitrovica, including the town’s Sports Center and regional Water Supply Companies in North Mitrovica and Zubin Potok. Belgrade strongly condemned the closures, maintaining that it is a “brazen attack on the fundamental human rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija”. The closures were also met with international criticism. Special Representative and head of UNMIK Caroline Ziadeh reiterated her call for all parties “to avoid unilateral actions that risk escalating tensions or further erode trust between communities and the Kosovo authorities”.

On 27 May, local authorities in Leposavić, with the assistance of Kosovo police, seized control of the city’s sports hall, which was previously operating under Serbia’s institutional framework. International interlocutors again criticised the move. Ziadeh stressed the need to address all outstanding issues within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue. The latest wave of closures of institutions operating under the Serbian system in northern Kosovo includes the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the Republic Health Insurance Fund.

Towards the end of August, Ziadeh concluded her tenure as the Special Representative and head of UNMIK. At the time of writing, no one has yet been appointed to take over the position. Shin is currently leading the mission.

## Key Issues and Options

Maintaining stability in Kosovo and promoting the de-escalation of tensions in the north remains a key priority for the Council. It will continue to monitor diplomatic efforts to advance the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and any efforts to achieve the normalisation of relations between the two parties. To this end, the Council could consider pursuing a presidential statement calling for all parties to refrain from unilateral actions and reiterating support for the EU-facilitated dialogue as the primary framework for resolving outstanding issues. The Council could also affirm its support for the EU Special Representative and urge both Belgrade and Pristina to engage in good faith toward the resumption of normalisation talks.

Another underlying issue facing the Council is promoting constructive dialogue on this politically charged issue during Council meetings. Belgrade and Pristina generally advance contrasting narratives regarding the drivers of regional instability during the Council’s open briefings on the subject. These briefings often devolve into political theatre for both parties, where public posturing takes precedence over substantive discussion, as was observed during the 8 April Council’s meeting on the situation in Kosovo. This dynamic can overshadow any positive momentum and redirect focus on mutual blame. Council members may wish to consider changing the format of the meeting from an open briefing to closed consultations, potentially enabling a more candid discussion of the challenges to implementing commitments made under the EU-facilitated dialogue and resuming efforts towards the normalisation of relations. A closed setting could also allow for discussion of UNMIK’s future, given divisions among Council members on the future of the mission.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Most Council members are generally supportive of the EU-facilitated dialogue to establish conditions for normalising relations between Belgrade and Pristina. However, deep divisions persist among permanent members and continue to shape the Council’s approach to the issue.

Among the five permanent Council members, France, the UK, and the US recognise Kosovo’s independence and tend to be supportive of its government. China and Russia, on the other hand, do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia’s position and its claim to territorial integrity. Six elected members—Denmark, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Slovenia—recognise Kosovo’s independence, while two (Algeria and Greece) do not.

Regarding the other two elected members, Kosovo maintains that Sierra Leone officially recognised its independence in June 2008. According to media reports, however, Serbia claimed in March 2020 that Sierra Leone had withdrawn its recognition, citing a note verbale on the matter from Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Kosovo contests the validity of the withdrawal. Somalia recognised Kosovo on 19 May 2010. However, on 4 January 2023, Vučić reportedly claimed that Somalia—along with eight other countries—had rescinded recognition. Kosovar authorities have also disputed these claims.

The modification of UNMIK’s mandate, with a view to its possible drawdown, is another matter of contention among Council members. The US has been the most forthcoming advocate for reviewing UNMIK’s operations and ultimately phasing out the mission. Several other Council members, including Denmark, Slovenia, the ROK and the UK, have expressed support for a strategic review and potential modification of UNMIK’s mandate, contending that the situation on the ground has changed considerably since the mission was first established in 1999. Russia continues to oppose any changes to UNMIK’s mandate or budget reduction, maintaining that the mission continues to play a critical role.

# Syria

## Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. An official from the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria and a representative from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief.

## Key Recent Developments

The 18 July ceasefire in Suweida—a southern governorate in Syria, which saw deadly clashes between Druze militias and Bedouin tribes erupt on 13 July—has largely held. Following a 16 September trilateral meeting in Damascus among Syrian interim foreign minister Assad al-Shibani, Jordanian foreign minister Ayman Safadi, and US Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack, the three parties announced plans for a roadmap aimed at restoring security in the region. The roadmap includes, among other provisions:

- plans for accountability, including through investigations by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry;
- the delivery of humanitarian and medical aid to Suweida and the restoration of all basic services;
- reconstruction efforts;
- the deployment of an inclusive local police force;
- the return of those displaced and the release of detainees, and
- efforts to identify missing persons; and
- planning for meetings on reconciliation efforts.

In his 18 September briefing to the Security Council, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen welcomed the roadmap. He said, however, that a Druze committee in Suweida had rejected it, amid ongoing calls for “self-administration or secession”. He added that any solution must include reassurances for the Druze community that the Syrian interim government will not pose a threat to their safety and rights.

External interference continues to pose a challenge for the Syrian interim government. Since the ouster of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, Israel has expanded its occupation of the Golan and conducted hundreds of airstrikes and incursions into Syrian territory, ostensibly aimed at ensuring its national security and—in the wake of the clashes in Suweida—to protect the Druze community from sectarian violence. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has demanded the demilitarisation of the area south of Damascus. Reportedly, on 9 September, Israel conducted several air strikes on military sites in and around the cities of Homs and Latakia, and on 14 September, Israeli soldiers conducted a ground incursion into the southeastern Deraa governorate.

Amid these interventions into Syrian territory, Damascus has not retaliated militarily against Israel and has instead sought to negotiate a security pact with the country, mediated by the US. On 17 September, Syrian interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa reportedly said that these negotiations could achieve results “in the coming days”, adding that Israeli actions were “very dangerous” and contradicted the US’ stated aim of stabilising Syria. (For more information, see the UNDOF brief in our October Monthly Forecast.)

Meanwhile, the 10 March agreement between the Syrian interim government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—a

Kurdish-led group which controls most of Syria’s de facto autonomous northeastern territory—has yet to be implemented. The agreement envisages the integration of the SDF into interim government-run institutions by the end of the year, in line with Damascus’ priority to pursue disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts and centralise authority. Türkiye—which backs Damascus and views the SDF as a terrorist organisation—has expressed increased frustration at the lack of progress on the March agreement. Clashes between the SDF and the Syrian interim authorities’ forces have reportedly continued to take place during September.

On 21 September, Syria’s Higher Committee for People’s Assembly Elections announced that the elections for the new People’s Assembly will take place on 5 October across all electoral districts. Initially, the committee had said that the vote would take place in September and that polling in the provinces of Suweida, Hasakah, and Raqqa would be delayed because of security concerns, drawing criticism from communities in those areas. In his 18 September Council briefing, Pedersen acknowledged “major challenges in areas where disputes remain between the central authorities and areas outside their control”, counselled caution and noted the need for more time for engagement. He also highlighted that transparency and broad inclusion, including the meaningful participation of women, “will be essential [for the elections] to confer legitimacy”.

In September, Sharaa attended the 80th session of the UN’s high-level General Assembly debate in New York, the first time a Syrian president had attended the event in nearly 60 years. On 24 September, in his General Debate speech, he described the interim government’s “clear strategic policy built upon three pillars: balanced diplomacy; security stability; and economic development.” He also highlighted Syria’s efforts to restore its international relations and called for the complete lifting of all remaining sanctions.

The humanitarian situation in Syria remains one of the world’s most dire, with more than 70 percent of the population needing humanitarian aid. In his 18 September briefing to the Council, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher highlighted the plight of displaced Syrians, noting that “some 7 million are displaced internally and more than 4 million are refugees in neighbouring countries.” He added that, since December 2024, over 900,000 refugees and 1.9 million internally displaced persons have returned to their homes, with the UN working to help them reintegrate and rebuild, and that, according to the UN Refugee Agency, around 18 percent of refugees in the region plan to return within a year. Fletcher warned, however, that a severe lack of funding is constraining the UN’s efforts to support the urgent needs of returnees and the overall population, highlighting that this year’s humanitarian appeal is only 18 percent funded. He also stressed the need to enable a Syrian-led recovery through investment and support for “large-scale recovery, reconstruction and development programmes”.

On 11 September, the new Permanent Representative of Syria to the United Nations in New York Ibrahim Olabi presented his credentials to the Secretary-General António Guterres.

On 18 September, Pedersen announced his intention to step down from his role of Special Envoy for Syria, following over six and a half years in this post.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) focused on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. [Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2025/6](#) (10 August 2025) condemned violence against civilians in Suweida in July 2025, called for unhindered humanitarian access to the region, and called on the Syrian interim authorities to ensure accountability. [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.

# 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 a fraught security context compounded by intercommunal tensions, terrorism, and external interference. Central to this issue are Damascus' efforts in fostering social cohesion and transitional justice, including accountability and reconciliation. Council members will closely monitor developments on these issues and could hold consultations to determine how these challenges and priorities could inform a re-evaluation of Security Council resolution 2254, which could lead to a new resolution that reflects the current context. (Adopted in December 2015, resolution 2254 focused on a political solution to the Syrian crisis, and several of its principles are still viewed by the international community as benchmarks required for a successful Syrian political transition.)

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.

Council members could request an informal 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 entities to discuss the most viable options for future Council engagement with Syria.

Another issue is that UN sanctions on Ha'yat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)—a terrorist group formerly affiliated with Al-Qaida and ISIL, which led to the ouster of Assad under Sharaa's leadership—are impacting the interim government's functions. HTS, Sharaa, and Syria's interim interior minister Anas Khattab are all listed under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, which imposes an asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo on listed individuals and entities. One option the Council could consider is delisting members of the interim government and applying a carve-out to facilitate economic engagement with the interim government. Various Council member states have taken steps to lift unilateral sanctions on 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 broadly agree that the threat of intercommunal violence cannot be addressed without advancing inclusive accountability measures, DDR and security sector reform (SSR) efforts, together with a credible political process in the country. The US and Russia have worked together on the 14 March presidential statement following violence perpetrated in Latakia and Tartous, while Denmark authored the 10 August presidential statement in response to violence in Suweida.

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) and ISIL (Da'esh), in line with the Council's 10 August presidential statement. The US has said it is prioritising working with Syria to prevent the resurgence of ISIL. Several FTFs constitute part of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, which China considers a terrorist organisation and is also listed under UN sanctions. China has expressed concern about the reported integration of FTFs into the Syrian armed forces and has emphasised that the Council should carefully consider the implications of any adjustments to UN sanctions related to Syria.

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 unilateral sanctions. On 18 September, during a visit by Shibani to Washington DC, where discussions on permanently repealing sanctions prescribed by Congress are underway, the US Treasury Department said it is working to "reconnect [Syria's] economy to the global financial system while combating the financing of terrorism". During the 18 September Council meeting, the US said it is also pursuing efforts to ease UN sanctions on Syria, while the UK stressed the importance of the Council taking measures to support Syria's economy, including through reforming UN sanctions.

Israel's presence and military activities in Syria remain a point of contention for Council members. Most members believe Israel's actions are fostering instability in Syria and that it must comply with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. In contrast, the US has predominantly seen Israel's actions as defensive in nature or tied to ensuring its national security.

## The United Nations: Looking into the Future

### Expected Council Action

On 24 October, the day the UN Charter entered into force eighty years ago, the Security Council is expected to hold an open debate on "The United Nations Organization: Looking into the Future". Secretary General António Guterres is expected to brief via videoconference.

This meeting is Russia's signature event during its October presidency. It has circulated a concept note to all member states suggesting that the open debate will explore issues such as the implementation

of the UN Charter, efforts to promote dialogue and unity (especially in the Security Council), and the long-term vision for the UN in the context of the UN80 initiative (S/2025/592).

### Key Recent Developments

In March, Secretary-General António Guterres launched UN80 as a major reform initiative coinciding with the organisation's 80th anniversary and aimed at overhauling the UN system to make it

**UN DOCUMENTS ON MULTILATERALISM** Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9386 (26 July 2024) was an open debate on "Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order". S/PV.9308 (24 April 2023) was an open debate on "Effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the UN Charter".



# The United Nations: Looking into the Future

more “effective, cost-efficient, and responsive”. While this significant milestone is a moment of celebration, the prevailing mood has been sombre, as the organisation faces what many regard as an existential crisis. UN80 is focused on achieving efficiency gains and cost reductions by eliminating redundancies, streamlining processes and relocating services to low-cost locations, among others.

The reform effort has been launched in the context of a liquidity crisis facing the UN—largely driven by member states’ failure to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time—that has forced the world body to operate in a resource-constrained environment, leading to a hiring freeze and reduced services. Funding cuts are already severely undermining the UN’s humanitarian efforts to alleviate human suffering. They are also expected to have an acute impact on UN peacekeeping operations—with the US (apportioned to pay 27 percent of the assessed peacekeeping budget) indicating that it will entirely forego its contribution in its 2026 fiscal year. In anticipation of potential funding shortfalls, the UN has apparently developed a contingency plan involving deep budget cuts across all peacekeeping missions.

Over the past decade, several Council members, especially China and Russia, have chosen to convene signature events during their presidencies that focus on the UN Charter or multilateralism. This is the third consecutive presidency, dating back to 2023, that Russia has held a signature event that explores these issues. In this regard, Russia held an open debate on “Effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the UN Charter” on 24 April 2023 and another on “Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order” on 26 July 2024. These meetings featured contrasting interpretations of the UN Charter and questions about the future of multilateralism in an increasingly polarised world in which the UN system has faced intense criticism. A key focus of this criticism has been the Security Council, which has struggled to fulfil its Charter-given mandate to maintain international peace and security, as the world is facing more armed conflicts than at any time since World War II.

## Key Issue and Options

An overarching issue is the credibility and legitimacy of the Security Council, as it fails to play a meaningful role in resolving some of the world’s deadliest conflicts.

Another issue is the lack of respect for international law in the international system. In his 23 September address at the opening of the 80th General Assembly, Guterres called on member states to “choose peace rooted in international law” and said that at its best, the UN is a “guardian of international law”. In their subsequent statements to the General Assembly, several world leaders similarly emphasised the importance of upholding international law as a key pillar of the international order, referring to several conflicts in which international law is being violated.

A related issue that hinders the Council’s work is the contrasting and selective interpretations of the UN Charter, which have led to deep divisions among the body’s members.

An additional important issue for the Council is how to build trust and cooperation among its members. As the Secretary-General noted in A New Agenda for Peace—his July 2023 policy paper

presenting ideas for member states to prevent conflict and advance peace—the lack of trust and cooperation among member states, including the major powers, is a key obstacle to a more peaceful international system.

In this regard, it might be helpful if Council members were able to meet more frequently in an informal format, such as “sofa talks”, which are usually held off-site but have been barely used in recent years. This could allow for more frank discussions about the state of the Council and help build trust among members.

Although different views on multilateralism in the Council may be an obstacle, an option for the Council would be to consider a presidential statement that:

- affirms the centrality of the UN Charter in international law and urges member states to adhere to its norms and principles; and
- emphasises the need to enhance the effectiveness of long-standing Council tools such as peace operations and sanctions.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

The open debate comes at a time of significant geopolitical tensions among the permanent members of the Council. Differing interests among these members continue to undermine the Council’s ability to respond to crises in Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine, and several other places.

Contrasting views regarding which countries adhere to the values of the UN Charter are likely to be expressed during the open debate. In this regard, China and Russia have maintained that the “rules-based international order” referred to by many Western countries is a façade for the selfish pursuit of their strategic interests. They maintain that Western states adhere to international law only when it is convenient and beneficial for them to do so. On the other hand, many member states continue to see Russia’s February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing conflict there as a violation of a core tenet of the UN Charter, namely the prohibition of the use of force against the territorial integrity of states outlined in Article 2(4).

This year has also witnessed the return to the White House of Donald Trump, whose administration has demonstrated a deep scepticism of multilateral institutions and whose policies on several issues have clashed with its traditional European allies. For example, the US has expressed criticism of norms and policies related to gender equality, climate action, and sustainable development.

As the Council fails to meet expectations to maintain international peace and security, calls for structural reform of the body have continued to grow. This was reflected in the September 2024 Pact for the Future; agreed by world leaders through intergovernmental negotiations led by Germany and Namibia, the document is intended to provide a roadmap for adapting international cooperation and institutions to today’s realities and the challenges of the future. In the Pact, member states call for structural reform of the Security Council with greater representation “of... underrepresented and unrepresented regions and groups”, including the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and especially Africa.

With the selection process for a new Secretary General about to kick into gear, during the open debate, some members may raise the importance of a transparent and efficient selection process for

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# The United Nations: Looking into the Future

a new Secretary General to lead the world body into the future at a particularly challenging time in its history.

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## Central African Republic

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

On 26 June, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed the Council on the situation in the CAR, highlighting the progress in the peace process; the ongoing preparations to organise general elections before the end of the year; the security, human rights, and humanitarian situations in the country; and efforts to extend state authority. (For more information, see our 25 June What's in Blue story.)

The CAR is scheduled to hold presidential and parliamentary elections on 28 December. These elections pose significant financial, logistical, and security challenges for a country still emerging from conflict and facing fragile security conditions. In July, President Faustin Archange Touadéra announced his intention to seek a third term during a national convention of his party, the United Hearts Movement (MCU), in the capital, Bangui. This declaration followed a 2023 constitutional referendum that removed presidential term limits. His decision has drawn criticism from opposition parties and civil society organisations, which accuse him of attempting to consolidate power. They have also raised concerns about the shrinking political space and the lack of inclusivity in the electoral process.

In parallel, the CAR is expected to hold long-overdue local elections, which have been repeatedly postponed due to financial constraints and the need to update the voter registration rolls. MINUSCA is supporting the CAR authorities in organising these elections, which will be held for the first time in nearly four decades.

On 19 September, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) convened to discuss the situation in the CAR in light of ongoing preparations for the elections scheduled for 28 December. The AUPSC called for enhanced international support, increased resource mobilisation, stronger regional coordination, and greater private sector investment to ensure the successful organisation of elections in the CAR. It also encouraged the CAR government to continue fostering conditions conducive to holding credible and inclusive elections.

The security situation in CAR remains volatile. In the southeast, violence carried out by the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe—a militia group accused of serious human rights violations—has raised concerns with reports of targeted attacks against minority communities. In

the northeast, along the border with Sudan, the CAR continues to face incursions by armed groups. The spillover effects of the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Sudan have further exacerbated the country's already fragile security environment.

In April, Touadéra engaged armed opposition groups in dialogue, dispatching a delegation to N'Djamena to meet with opposition leaders based in Chad. Touadéra's efforts seem intended to advance the peace process and foster conditions conducive to holding general elections. The discussions in N'Djamena—facilitated by Chadian authorities—resulted in commitments from the leaders of Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation (3R) and Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) to cease hostilities and rejoin the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR-RCA). In July, Chad announced that the CAR government and these two armed groups had reached a peace agreement.

### Key Issues and Options

The upcoming local and national elections in the CAR are expected to be a key focus for Security Council members in October. Members are likely to closely monitor the state of electoral preparations. They may wish to issue a press statement reiterating their call for the CAR authorities to ensure the necessary conditions for free, transparent, and inclusive elections, particularly by opening civic space and enabling the full participation of all sections of society, including women and youth.

Council members remain concerned about the fragile security situation in the CAR, particularly the armed incursions along the border with Sudan. They may call on signatories to remain committed to implementing the peace agreement signed in N'Djamena. They are also likely to reiterate their call for non-signatory armed groups to the APPR-RCA to lay down their arms and engage in the political process through dialogue.

In light of recent attacks against peacekeepers, the safety and security of UN personnel have become a critical concern for several Council members. A number of members may stress the importance of accountability for crimes committed against peacekeepers and emphasise the need to equip MINUSCA with adequate air support, as well as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities to enhance force protection.

The humanitarian and human rights situation in the CAR remains a serious concern, with ongoing violations and abuses against civilians, including women and children. The lack of adequate resources facing the Special Criminal Court (SCC), which hampers its ability to effectively deliver justice and ensure accountability, is a related issue. The SCC is a hybrid court composed of national and

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## Central African Republic

international judges, operational since 2018, and mandated to investigate, prosecute, and adjudicate the most serious crimes committed in the CAR. The Informal Coordinator of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) within the Council (Republic of Korea) could collaborate with the PBC CAR Configuration to organise an informal meeting aimed at shining a spotlight on the financing issue and mobilising support for the SCC.

As Council members prepare for the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate in November, a key issue will be how to sustain the progress achieved in the CAR—including the successful holding of peaceful elections in December—with the continued support of the mission. However, the UN's ongoing liquidity crisis poses a significant challenge, constraining MINUSCA's operational capacity. In this context, Council members may wish to hold an informal discussion on measures to mitigate the impact of these financial constraints.

### Council Dynamics

Compared to other UN peacekeeping operations facing significant challenges, MINUSCA is generally regarded as a relative success. However, concerns have emerged regarding the upcoming mandate renewal in November, particularly in the context of the UN's ongoing liquidity crisis. Some Council members may advocate for the mission to begin a gradual drawdown, citing the financial constraints facing the mission and the recent progress in the peace process.

Last year, following MINUSCA's 2024 strategic review, China called on the mission to adopt a transition mindset. It encouraged MINUSCA to begin discussions with the CAR authorities on a potential transition plan ahead of 2026, to ensure that the mission

would be prepared for a possible drawdown, should conditions permit or a formal request be made. However, this proposal was not accepted during negotiations, apparently because the CAR government did not want the Council to consider the recommendations contained in the review.

Council dynamics around the upcoming mandate renewal may be complicated by the US position on funding peacekeeping operations. On 29 August, U.S. President Donald Trump approved a “pocket rescission” package, cancelling \$5 billion in foreign aid and funding to international organisations—including approximately \$800 million in contributions to UN peacekeeping. The package claims that “UN peacekeeping has been fraught with waste and abuse,” citing, among other issues, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the CAR. It also asserts that “the Central African Republic mission has become fully aligned with Russia, which continues to extract the country's natural resources”.

At the Council's June briefing, the US expressed particular concern over the CAR government's fuel import regulations, which it argued are restricting MINUSCA's operations. The US delegation noted that the regulations compel the mission to rely on a government-designated monopoly importer and pay inflated fuel prices, thereby undermining its ability to carry out critical tasks. This issue is expected to colour the upcoming mandate renewal negotiations in November.

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

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## Bosnia and Herzegovina

### Expected Council Action

In October, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The Council is also expected to vote at the end of the month on the reauthorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) prior to its 1 November expiration.

### Key Recent Developments

BiH continues to experience political instability. On 1 August, the Appellate Division of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) confirmed a verdict sentencing former Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik to one year in prison and a six-year ban on holding office as RS president. Dodik was appealing a sentence handed to him in February for knowingly defying decisions issued by the High Representative, Christian Schmidt, in July 2023. (For background and earlier political developments, see the brief on BiH in our May 2025 Monthly Forecast.)

Following the court's ruling, the Central Election Commission (CEC) of BiH on 6 August subsequently revoked Dodik's mandate as RS President. Dodik reportedly dismissed the court and CEC's

decision and asserted that he would continue to fulfil his responsibilities as RS president notwithstanding the verdict. Dodik's lawyer, Goran Bubić, also added that they intend to appeal the ruling to the Constitutional Court and seek a temporary measure to postpone the verdict's implementation pending the appeal. Amidst these developments, the BiH state court accepted a proposal from Dodik's defence team to commute his one-year prison sentence to a fine of 36,500 Bosnia-Herzegovina Convertible Marks (around 18,660 euros). The court, however, upheld the federal and appellate courts' ruling to remove Dodik from the RS presidency and bar him from holding political office.

In light of these developments, Council members held close consultations on the situation in BiH on 7 August. Russia requested the meeting to discuss the 1 August appeals court verdict revoking Dodik's presidential mandate. There was no briefer at the meeting. Following the consultations, Russia, at a press stakeout, maintained that the current situation in BiH, with Dodik's prosecution, threatens the country's stability. It also reiterated its previous concerns over Schmidt's actions by accusing him of exacerbating tensions in BiH's internal affairs, faulting him for the country's instability.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2757 (1 November 2024) renewed the authorisation of EUFOR ALTHEA until 1 November 2025. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9911** (6 May 2025) was the semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina. **Security Council Press Statement SC/16033** (28 March 2025) was a press statement on BiH.

# Bosnia and Herzegovina

Tensions escalated further when Dodik vowed to block elections in RS and to hold a series of referendums—the first of which would be the vote on the court ruling and another on independence for RS. On 22 August, the RS National Assembly (RSNA) rejected the CEC’s decision and voted in favour of calling a referendum to ask citizens whether they accept Dodik’s conviction and the High Representative’s authority. Srđan Mazalica, the head of Dodik’s Alliance of Independent Social Democrats party (SNSD), presented the referendum question for a vote that read: “Do you accept the decisions of the unelected foreigner Christian Schmidt and the unconstitutional verdict of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Court against the President of the RS, as well as the decision of the CEC to revoke the mandate of the president of the RS, Milorad Dodik?” Of the 65 representatives present, 50 voted in favour of the referendum. Opposition parliamentary members, however, refused to cast their votes on the measure. The decision was subsequently adopted, setting the referendum’s date for 25 October. On the same day, RSNA also passed votes dismissing Schmidt’s authority, demanding that Dodik continue as RS president, and rejecting elections to choose a successor.

The action was met with criticism from opposition leaders as well as international interlocutors. Nebojša Vukanović, President of Justice and Order List, reportedly warned Dodik and other parliamentary members that they were “walking on a minefield” with the decision to hold a referendum. The EU similarly underscored that the verdict issued by the Court of BiH must be respected, cautioning that “subjecting a court decision to a public vote runs counter to the rule of law and the independence of judicial authorities”. In light of such developments, the CEC called for early elections to choose Dodik’s successor. Speaking at a press conference in Sarajevo, the head of the CEC, Irena Hadžiabdić, announced that a presidential election for the RS entity would be held on 23 November.

In early September, the RSNA approved a government restructuring aimed at establishing a broader coalition parliament. Dodik apparently initiated the motion to form a government based on a wider coalition with increased decision-making power. Emphasising the need for changes within the RS government to address imminent challenges, he asked the entity’s Prime Minister, Radovan Višković, to resign and proposed former Agriculture Minister Savo Minić as his replacement. The reshuffled government, comprising only four new parliamentary members, was later approved by fifty deputies from the ruling coalition led by the SNSD. The move elicited considerable criticism from the opposition, with many not attending the vote. Prior to the government reshuffle, it appears that Dodik had invited the opposition to join his ruling coalition in a “new regional government”, but the main opposition parties dismissed his calls. The primary rationale for their abstention and dismissal of Dodik’s calls was the assertion that the government would be illegal, given that it was initiated by Dodik, after he had been prohibited from engaging in political activities.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

Between 9 and 20 June, Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, conducted a country visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina. She began her visit in Sarajevo, and also went to Banja Luka, Bijeljina, and other parts of

the country, meeting with relevant stakeholders to assess the environment for people seeking to exercise the right to defend human rights in the country, and the extent to which they can do so freely without fear. While acknowledging some positive practices, she emphasised that political will to support defenders remains totally absent, and that much of their protection comes from solidarity among themselves.

In a subsequent press release, Lawlor expressed concern about the deteriorating environment for human rights defenders, particularly in Republika Srpska, where defenders and independent journalists are often targeted in widespread smear campaigns and increasingly stigmatised, including by high-level political figures. She also noted that while the Constitutional Court annulled the Law on the Special Registry and Transparency of the Work of Non-profit Organisations, authorities in the RS are pursuing secondary legislation to establish a registry of groups receiving foreign funding. To this end, the Special Rapporteur called for this initiative to be abandoned. Lawlor also urged the BiH authorities to ensure accountability for attacks against human rights defenders and counter negative narratives surrounding their work.

## Key Issues and Options

Addressing the divisions over the role of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) remains a key divisive issue for the Council. Neither China nor Russia recognise Schmidt’s authority as High Representative, and both have called for the closure of the OHR. Western Council members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US), have opposed imposing a time frame for the OHR’s closure without referencing the 5+2 Agenda, which is a set of five objectives and two conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) that need to be fulfilled before the OHR’s closure. (The Peace Implementation Council is an international body, established in December 1995, responsible for mobilising international support for the Agreement. For background on the PIC, see the brief on BiH in our November 2024 Monthly Forecast.)

Given the current divisions over the OHR, the Council could request the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on the procedures and modalities for appointing High Representatives of BiH under the Dayton Peace Agreement.

A potential issue for the Council would be if RS institutions refuse to participate in, or recognise, the results of the presidential election on 23 November and demand that Dodik stay on as RS president. This could increase the risk of institutional fragmentation and contribute to further breakdown of cooperation between the state level (BiH) and RS organs. Council members may wish to start informal discussions on how to handle such a scenario.

An upcoming issue for the Council will be the renewal of EUFOR ALTHEA’s authorisation, which is set to expire on 1 November. The most likely option would be to reauthorise the mandate for an additional year without any significant changes.

## Council Dynamics

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

Overall, Council members have similar concerns about BiH’s divisive ethnic politics. Most members are also critical of Dodik’s rhetoric and threats of dissolution, which they regard as a challenge to BiH’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia, on the



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other hand, tends to be supportive of Dodik’s positions.

Council products on BiH are prepared by the BiH Coordination and Drafting Group (CDG), which comprises France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK, the US, and elected Council members Denmark, Greece, and Slovenia. Each member chairs the group for one month, rotating in alphabetical order. Greece is the CDG Chair in October.

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