

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In December, Slovenia will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Slovenia plans to convene an open debate on “Leadership for Peace” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item as the signature event of its presidency. Former UN Secretary-General and member of The Elders, Ban Ki-moon, as well as a woman civil society representative, are expected to brief.

Council members are also expected to undertake a [visiting mission to Lebanon and Syria](#) between 3 and 7 December. As has been the practice, the Council may schedule a meeting to brief on the visiting mission after its conclusion.

In addition, Slovenia intends to convene the annual briefing with the [OSCE Chairperson-in-Office](#), a position currently held by Finland. Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon is expected to chair this meeting.

During the month, the Council is scheduled to hold its semi-annual debate on the [International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals \(IRMCT\)](#). It also plans to vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the [Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate \(CTED\)](#).

In December, the [outgoing chairs of the Security Council's subsidiary bodies](#) are expected to brief the Council on their experiences in facilitating the work of those bodies.

African issues that are expected to be discussed in December are:

- [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and renewal of MONUSCO’s mandate;
- [Somalia](#), vote on two draft resolutions: one renewing the sanctions measures against Al-Shabaab and another on the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), whose mandate expires on 31

December;

- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), briefing on the work of the 2745 CAR Sanctions Committee;
- The [Central Africa Region](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN’s regional strategy to combat the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA);
- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the work of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee; and
- [West Africa and the Sahel](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS).

Middle Eastern issues that will be addressed this month include:

- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Iraq](#), final briefing and consultations on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI);
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question](#)”, the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments;
- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting; and
- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) and UNDOF’s mandate renewal.

The only Asian issue scheduled for December is [Afghanistan](#). The Council will hold its quarterly meeting on the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which will be chaired by Fajon.

Regarding the Americas, there will be a briefing by the chair of the 2653 [Haiti](#) Sanctions Committee.

Other issues—including [Guinea-Bissau](#), [Iran](#) (non-proliferation), [Myanmar](#), and [Ukraine](#)—could be raised in December depending on developments.

1 December 2025

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In Hindsight: The Search for the Next UN Secretary-General Begins

On 25 November, the presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council issued a joint letter marking the start of the selection and appointment process of the next UN Secretary-General. The joint letter invites member states to present their candidates for the position while also setting out the modalities for submitting and considering nominations. (For more information, see our 25 November *What's in Blue* story.)

Ten years ago, the selection process was transformed from an opaque, somewhat mysterious process, controlled by the five permanent members, to a more open, transparent one with active involvement of civil society and the General Assembly. Since 2017, a number of member states have pushed for further improvements to the transparency of the process and added refinements largely through the Ad Hoc Working Group on Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and its resolutions, the latest of which is General Assembly resolution 79/327 of 5 September.

Drawing on Security Council Report's coverage of the last selection and appointment process and our close monitoring of developments on this issue, this month's *In Hindsight* provides a guide to the main steps of the process and the potential issues that may arise.

Nomination of Candidates

Now that the joint letter has been issued, member states are expected to begin formally nominating candidates.¹ The joint letter specifies that they are to do this through a letter to the presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly, and that a vision statement and financial disclosure should be provided at the time of nomination. Vision statements for how candidates would address the UN's most pressing questions were a novel feature in the 2015/2016 selection process. The need for candidates to disclose finances, however, is a new element that was included in resolution 79/327 and may help alleviate concerns that emerged in the last selection process that candidates with more resources may have had an unfair advantage. The joint letter also makes clear that member states may nominate only one candidate at a time and provides details for the withdrawal of candidates. This information was lacking in 2016 and led to some confusion when Bulgaria nominated a second candidate without withdrawing its earlier nominee.

Another new element in this selection process that derives from the 2016 experience is the request for candidates from the UN system to consider suspending their work during the campaign in order to avoid "any conflict of interest that may arise from their functions and adjacent advantages". In 2016, there was a sense that candidates from within the UN could have access to information and resources not available to the other candidates and were able to advance their respective candidatures through attendance at UN meetings. It is not yet clear, though, if there will be adherence to this request, as there appear to be differing positions on the fairness of requiring a candidate to stop working during their campaign.

With a more open selection process, 2016 saw the largest field of candidates formally nominated; 13 altogether, with nine from Eastern Europe, the region laying claim to the position, and seven women, more than double the total number of women candidates who had

ever been on the ballot. There is a strong sense once again that it is time for a woman Secretary-General, and the joint letter encourages member states to "strongly consider nominating women as candidates". Although the joint letter notes "the importance of regional diversity in the selection of Secretaries-General" without identifying a specific geographic area, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) has been vigorously advocating for a Secretary-General from its region. Given the views expressed by many member states and civil society organisations in support of these positions, there is an expectation that a large number of women candidates will come from the GRULAC region.

Getting to Know the Candidates

Greater exposure to the candidates was an important aspect of the transparency of the process the last time round. It appears that this openness will be maintained with the presidents of the Council and the Assembly circulating the names of all the candidates to all member states and jointly maintaining and regularly updating a public list of candidates on a dedicated UN website.

There was an attempt by the ten elected members (E10) in negotiating the joint letter to include 1 April 2026 as the deadline for nominations while "allowing for exceptional circumstances", but this was strongly resisted by the P5, who preferred to allow candidates to continue to come in throughout the process. It is therefore likely that, although the bulk of candidates will be nominated by the end of the first quarter of 2026, some may enter the race in the following months. This was the case in 2016 when nine of the 13 candidates had been nominated by the time the informal dialogues with the General Assembly began in April, but four candidates were nominated between May and September.

General Assembly

The most significant change to the selection process in 2016 was the participation of all the candidates in informal dialogue sessions, generally referred to as "hearings", in the General Assembly. Hearings for the first nine candidates were held in April, and for the four later candidates shortly after they were nominated, in June, July, and October, respectively. Informal dialogues are expected to be held again in 2026 with the joint letter stating that "webcast interactive dialogues" will be offered to all candidates without prejudice to those that do not participate and that they can be held before the Council begins its selection by the end of July and may continue "throughout the process of selection".

The transparency of the 2016 process starkly contrasts with prior selection processes for the Secretary-General, where there was no public record of who was being considered, and names were simply suggested, almost always by the permanent members. The General Assembly hearings provided an insight into member states' expectations of the next Secretary-General, as well as an opportunity to assess the approach of each candidate to the challenges facing the UN.

If the General Assembly follows the same format as 2016, each informal dialogue will be two hours long, with the candidates given ten minutes to present their vision statement, followed by questions

¹ On 26 November, the Argentine Republic presented the nomination of Rafael Mariano Grossi as candidate for the position of Secretary-General in a letter to the presidents of the Security Council and General Assembly.

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from member states. Candidates also answered three to four recorded pre-selected questions from civil society.

There may be pressure to refine this process in 2026. Among the criticisms were the lack of time to answer questions and the repetitive nature of the questions. Members may be looking to pose more focused questions to better explore the candidate's ability to perform under pressure and manage competing priorities. There was also some unhappiness from civil society organisations about the limited number of questions they were permitted, and these groups are likely to push for more time during the hearings or other opportunities to question the candidates.

In 2016, there was a Global Town Hall meeting organised by the President of the General Assembly (PGA) in July and broadcast live on Al Jazeera TV, in which ten of the then-12 candidates participated. The joint letter does not include any reference to such a meeting, and it is unclear whether a similar type of event will be held this time. Some members may be looking for less public formats, which might allow them to assess the candidates away from the spotlight.

Security Council

If the timeline of the 2016 process is followed, the next step for the Council will be to decide on the timing and modalities for meeting the candidates. At the start of the 2016 process, Council members were not planning to meet the candidates. However, by May 2016, the first round of informal dialogues had taken place, and several candidates had asked for meetings. This led to Council members meeting separately with all 13 candidates. The meetings were held with each candidate in the permanent missions of the Council president for the month and lasted an hour.

While it is difficult to determine the exact impact on the selection process, the interaction with candidates was seen to have contributed to shaping Council members' positions on the candidates. The joint letter indicates that candidates will be offered the opportunity to meet with members of the Council. However, Council members will have to decide if they want to use the same format for these meetings and assess how to make the best use of their time with the candidates.

The Security Council's Straw Polls

Following the meetings with the candidates, the Council will most likely move to the conduct of straw polls, which have been used as a means of testing the viability of candidates since 1981. This innovation was born of a need to break the deadlock between Kurt Waldheim (Austria) and Salim Ahmed Salim (Tanzania). Colour-coded ballots differentiating between permanent members and elected members were first used in 1991 and have since been used in every selection process. Until 2006, the straw polls had two options, i.e. either "encourage" or "discourage". In 2006, the option of "no opinion" was added. The 2016 straw polls retained all three options with members either "encouraging", "discouraging" or expressing "no opinion". Between 21 July and 5 October 2016, six straw polls were held. The first five were undifferentiated with permanent and elected members using identical ballot papers, while the final one was colour-coded, where permanent members were given red ballot papers and elected members white ones.

There appears to be general acceptance of the straw polls among

Council members. Council members will need to decide, however, on the appropriate start date and when to move to colour-coded ballots. Both issues are likely to be key points of contention, as they were in the 2016 process. If there is a particularly high number of candidates, shortlisting through eliminating those that are underperforming in the polls may come up for discussion. In 2016, only four of the 13 candidates dropped out of the selection process following low scores in the polls.

An issue that has arisen in the past, and is likely to come up again, is the balance between increasing the transparency of the straw poll system and maintaining the confidentiality of the results. In order to maintain confidentiality, in 2016, members agreed ahead of the straw polls not to announce the results. Following each vote, the Council president simply informed the President of the General Assembly and the press that the polls had been conducted without revealing the results. The Council president then informed each of the permanent representatives of nominating member states of the votes received by their candidate, as well as the highest and lowest numbers of encouraged and discouraged among candidates, without revealing which candidates received these numbers. In 2016, the Council faced criticism from civil society and the wider UN membership for this lack of transparency in its communication of the results of the straw polls. Given that due to leaks after each straw poll, the full results were promptly published in the media, some members argued that it would be better for the Council to be the one to provide the results.

Since then, there has been an ongoing debate among the wider membership about the need for greater openness in the selection and appointment process, particularly with regard to the results of the straw polls. This sort of transparency would ensure that accurate numbers are used in analysis of the results and retained as an official record for future reference. This has, however, been a divisive issue both in the negotiations on resolution 79/327 and the joint letter. Members will need to decide if the results should be made public, and if so, how this can be done in a way that is respectful to the candidates.

Over the years, there have been attempts to provide written guidelines on the selection process through non-papers. Ambassador Nugroho Wisnumurti (Indonesia), during the process that led to the appointment of Kofi Annan, submitted a set of guidelines on the straw polls during his term as President of the Council in November 1996. These informal guidelines, which came to be known as the Wisnumurti Guidelines, were again used in 2006, together with a fact sheet produced by France in the process that led to the appointment of Ban Ki-moon. In the process leading to Secretary General António Guterres' appointment, a series of non-papers were produced including one on informal guidelines for the process by Egypt, Council president in May 2016, and Spain; a paper on the selection process for straw polls circulated by Russia in May 2016; and a paper on the procedure, which included an annex on the practice related to straw polls authored by France in June 2016. Ambassador Koro Bessho (Japan), who was the Council president at the start of the straw polls in July 2016, transmitted on 1 February 2017 a note written in his personal capacity on the selection process to the presidents of the General Assembly and Security Council.

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The Recommendation

Since 1991, the use of colour-coded ballots has given Council members a clear indication of whether there was a candidate who would receive nine affirmative votes, with no negative vote from a permanent member. In 2016, this point was reached after the first and only colour-coded straw poll held on 6 October. Of the remaining nine candidates, only one candidate, António Guterres, emerged as the candidate with more than nine “encourage” and no “discourage” votes. At this point, the Council convened a private meeting to adopt a resolution recommending Guterres by acclamation. This was the same process used for Kofi Annan (1996) and Ban Ki-moon (2006).

Some of the wider membership have suggested that the Council should recommend more than one candidate to the General Assembly. Article 97 of the UN Charter states that: “The Secretary-General shall be appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.” Some argue that it would be contrary to Article 97 for the Council to do this, while others suggest that, given that Article 97 does not make clear what is meant by “recommendation”, the Charter is open to the Council proffering either one or multiple candidates. While this is unlikely to be acceptable to the permanent members of the Council, it may be raised if there are a number of suitable candidates.

The Appointment

Following a recommendation from the Security Council, the process moves to the General Assembly. Rule 141 of the General Assembly’s Rules of Procedure stipulates that when the Council has submitted its recommendation on the appointment of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly shall consider the recommendation and vote upon it in a private meeting. In practice, the General Assembly has never held the vote in a private meeting, and almost all appointment resolutions have been adopted by acclamation.

In 2016, there was an attempt to appoint facilitators to consult with states on the substance of the appointment resolution, but some states raised concerns that this could be a divisive process. Some members are keen for the General Assembly to play a more active role, including through the possibility of its own straw polls, an idea that was included in the initial draft of resolution 79/327 but faced opposition from some members.

Conclusion

The Security Council and General Assembly are about to embark on a journey that will culminate in a decision that will shape the future of the UN at a time of major change to the organisation and the global order. Slovenia, as Council president in December, has chosen to organise an open debate on “Leadership for Peace” which will provide members with an opportunity to focus on the qualities needed for the next Secretary-General to navigate today’s global challenges and lead the UN into the future. The selection of the Secretary-General will most likely be one of the most consequential decisions the world body makes in the upcoming year.

Overview of the Secretary-General selection and appointment process: 2015/2016 and 2025-2026

2015/2016

2025/2026



This chart provides a comparative look at the timelines for the 2015–2016 and the 2025-2026 UN Secretary-General selection and appointment processes, highlighting key milestones in each cycle.

Key
 PGA = President of the General Assembly
 PSC = President of the Security Council
 AOB = meeting under “any other business”, a standing agenda item in closed consultations
 NOP = no-objection procedure

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Sudan/South Sudan

On 14 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2802, renewing the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 November 2026 (S/PV.10042 and Resumption I). The text received 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia). In extending UNISFA's mandate for an additional year, the resolution expresses the Council's intention to "consider further renewal of the mission based on demonstrable progress by Sudan and South Sudan" against a set of benchmarks. It also reaffirms that any decision regarding the mission's future will remain subject to the Council's determination.

In their explanations of vote, China, Pakistan, and Russia emphasised UNISFA's positive contribution to promoting stability in Abyei and reiterated their concern over the linking of the mission's renewal to the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in the resolution. Guyana, on behalf of the A3 Plus grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, and Somalia), voiced similar concerns, referencing "unrealistic benchmarks" and deploring "the persistent erosion of previously agreed language throughout the text".

Climate, Peace and Security

On 6 November, the Security Council held a briefing on "Climate and security—environmental impact of armed conflict and climate driven security risks" under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.10035). The briefers were Inger Andersen, the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Charles C. Jalloh, Professor of Law at the University of Miami and member of the International Law Commission; and Maranatha Dinat of World Relief Haiti, a humanitarian organisation that partners with local churches to strengthen communities.

Hitting the Ground Running: Annual Finnish Workshop for Incoming Members

On 6 and 7 November, the Council's current and incoming members—Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Latvia, and Liberia—participated in the 23rd annual "Hitting the Ground Running" workshop, which is organised by Finland. Historian and former UN official Thant Myint-U provided the keynote address on the workshop's first night.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

On 10 November, Sierra Leone convened an open debate on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) as one of the signature events of its November Security Council presidency (S/PV.10037). Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister, Alhaji Musa Timothy Kabba, chaired the meeting. The briefers were Adedeji Ebo, Officer-in-Charge of the Office for Disarmament Affairs and Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs; Mohamed ibn Chambas, High Representative for the African Union's "Silencing the Guns" initiative; and Roraima Ana Andriani, Special Representative of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to the European Union.

South Sudan

On 11 November, the Security Council convened an open briefing and closed consultations on the situation in South Sudan and the

work of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (S/PV.10038). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed on recent developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report (S/2025/706) on the mission. UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous and Solomon Ayele Dersso, Executive Director of Amani Africa Media and Research Services, also briefed.

International Court of Justice Elections

On 12 November, the General Assembly and the Security Council elected Phoebe Okowa (Kenya) as a Member of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), succeeding Judge Abdulqawi A. Yusuf (Somalia), who resigned as a member of the Court, effective 30 September. Okowa will hold office for the remainder of her predecessor's term, which was due to expire on 5 February 2027.

Central African Republic

On 13 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2800, extending the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for one year, until 15 November 2026, with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (the US) (S/PV.10041). In its explanation of vote, the US expressed reservations about the one-year extension, noting its preference for a six-month renewal that would use the national elections as a key milestone for adjusting the mission's mandate. It also expressed a preference for a larger reduction in troop levels in light of progress made in the Central African Republic (CAR) and emphasised the need to establish a more realistic budget for the mission in the context of ongoing reform efforts and the UN liquidity crisis.

Working Methods

On 14 November, the Security Council convened for its annual open debate on working methods (S/PV.10043). The meeting was held under the agenda item "Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2024/507)", referring to the most recent version of the comprehensive compendium of Council working methods adopted in December 2024, which is also known as Note 507. The briefers were Co-Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG) Ambassador Christina Markus Lassen (Denmark), Executive Director of Security Council Report Shamala Kandiah Thompson, and Co-Author of "The Procedure of the UN Security Council" (4th Edition) Loraine Sievers. Pakistan delivered a joint statement on behalf of the elected members (E10). The Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT) and the Nordic group also delivered joint statements. 41 member states participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Conflict and Food Insecurity

On 17 November, the Security Council held a high-level open debate titled "Framing the Global Dialogue: Addressing Food Insecurity as a Driver of Conflict and Ensuring Food Security for Sustainable Peace" under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.10045 and Resumption I). Sierra Leonean President Julius Maada Bio chaired the open debate, which was a signature event of

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the Sierra Leonean presidency. Deputy Secretary-General and Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group Amina J. Mohammed; Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Musya; Special Envoy for Food Systems of the African Union (AU) Ibrahim Assane Mayaki; and Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Maximo Torero Cullen briefed at the open debate. Around 70 member states participated in the open debate.

Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 17 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2803, welcoming the establishment of a Board of Peace (BoP) and authorising the BoP to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza. The resolution received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia) (S/PV.10046).

On 24 November, the Security Council held its regular monthly briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ) (S/PV.10051). The briefer was Ramiz Alakbarov, the Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO). Israel and the Observer State of Palestine at the UN participated in the meeting.

UN Peacekeeping

On 18 November, Security Council members held closed consultations on UN Peacekeeping Operations. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members on the contingency measures being implemented by UN peacekeeping missions funded by the peacekeeping budget to address the UN’s liquidity crisis, resulting from member states’ failure to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

Lebanon

On 20 November, Security Council members received a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (S/2025/738). Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert briefed.

“Maritime Safety and Security: Protection of Seafarers” Arria-formula Meeting

On 21 November, an Arria-formula meeting on “Maritime Safety and Security: Protection of Seafarers” was held in Conference Room 4 at UN headquarters. Greece and non-Council members India and the Philippines organised the meeting. Denmark and Panama co-sponsored the meeting with non-Council members Japan and Romania. Ambassador Aglaia Balta (Greece) provided opening remarks, and Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Arsenio Dominguez made welcoming remarks. The briefers included: Captain Antonios Doumanis, Seafarers’ Labour Director at the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy of Greece; Emmanuel Donato Guzman, Office of

Maritime and Ocean Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines; Dr. Bimal N. Patel, member of the International Law Commission and Professor of International Law at Rashtriya University in India; and Captain Eleni Papadopoulou, General Secretary-Masters and Mates Union of the Greek Merchant Marine.

Ukraine

On 20 November, the Security Council held an open briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10050). Council members Denmark, France, Greece, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, and the UK requested the meeting, citing rising numbers of civilian casualties in Ukraine, ongoing attacks on energy infrastructure in the country, and the need for a ceasefire. The briefers were Kayoko Gotoh, the Officer-in-Charge of the Europe, Central Asia and Americas Division at the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and Edem Wosornu, the Director of the Operations and Advocacy Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Peacebuilding

On 26 November, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2805 (S/PV.10054) and the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution A/80/L.15 on the 2025 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture. Although the practice in the Security Council for previous such resolutions was for delegations not to speak after the adoption, the US asked to take the floor to deliver an explanation of vote. In its statement, the US called for a “back to basics” approach that keeps peacebuilding disciplined, strategic, and firmly anchored in advancing peace, without creating new mechanisms that could undermine or circumvent the Security Council’s authority. In the General Assembly, the adoption was followed by explanations by member states. Egypt took the floor first to describe the consultative and participatory process that it co-facilitated with Slovenia. Ten interventions followed—from Argentina, Australia, Denmark, Iran, Japan, Morocco, Norway, Switzerland, Russia, and the UK—with all expressing support for effective implementation of the twin resolutions that maximises efficiency and impact.

Some member states, particularly Australia, Denmark, and Norway, regretted the absence of references to climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals. These members also noted that they would have wished to see stronger language on the role of civil society and the need for human rights-based peacebuilding approaches, as well as clearer commitments to adequate, predictable, and sustained peacebuilding financing. Russia emphasised that preventing conflict is primarily the responsibility of member states, grounded in the principles of national leadership and ownership.

Visiting Mission to Lebanon and Syria

In November, Council members agreed to the terms of reference (TORs) for a visiting mission to Lebanon and Syria. The visit is expected to take place in early December.

Leadership for Peace

Expected Council Action

In December, Slovenia plans to convene an open debate on “Leadership for Peace” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Former UN Secretary-General and member of The Elders, Ban Ki-moon, is expected to brief. A woman civil society representative may also brief. The open debate will be the signature event of Slovenia’s December presidency.

Rising geopolitical instability, proliferating armed conflicts, disregard for international law, and acute financial shortfalls continue to place significant strain on the multilateral system, and the UN in particular. Against this backdrop, and with the formal phase of the selection and appointment process for the next UN Secretary-General just starting, the open debate plans to focus on the qualities needed for the next Secretary-General to navigate the current fraught international environment.

Among other issues, the open debate is likely to invite reflections on how the UN and the next Secretary-General can adjust to the rapidly evolving global order while preserving the organisation’s unique role and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter. Slovenia may encourage members to focus on issues such as conflict prevention and the use of Article 99 of the UN Charter, which empowers the Secretary-General with the capacity to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. The meeting may also prompt discussion on how member states and the Security Council can better support the next Secretary-General in addressing these challenges. It appears that this will be the Council’s first formal open meeting dedicated specifically to these issues.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The current UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, will complete his second term on 31 December 2026. In line with General Assembly resolution 79/327 of 5 September on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, the process of selection and appointment of the next Secretary-General is to start with a joint letter from the presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

The joint letter issued on 25 November begins soliciting candidates for the position while also setting out the modalities for submitting and considering nominations. Among other things, it says that the position of Secretary-General “requires the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and a firm commitment to the purposes and principles” of the UN Charter. The letter invites candidates with “proven leadership and managerial abilities, extensive experience in international relations and strong diplomatic, communication and multilingual skills”. The letter notes “with regret” that no woman has ever held the position of Secretary-General and encourages UN member states to “strongly consider nominating women as candidates”. It also notes the “importance of regional diversity in the selection of Secretaries-General”.

While these elements align with language used in General Assembly resolution 79/327, proposals from the ten elected Council members (E10) to add additional references to, for instance, independence, political leadership, and commitment to multilateralism and

international law, were opposed by the permanent members (P5) and were not included in the joint letter. (For more information, see our 25 November *What’s in Blue* story.)

This marks the third time that a joint letter is being used to start the process. The first time was during the process that led to Guterres’ appointment. The second occasion was prior to his reappointment.

The December open debate is in continuity with the open debate on “Leadership for Peace” which Slovenia organised during its previous Council presidency, in September 2024. The event focused on leadership in strengthening multilateralism in light of eroding respect for the UN Charter, deep divisions at the Security Council, and its loss of credibility in connection to its lack of action, including regarding the wars in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine. The briefers were UN Secretary-General António Guterres; President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mirjana Spoljaric Egger; and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia and a member of The Elders. At the open debate, speakers expressed concern over growing geopolitical divisions and the Council’s lack of effectiveness, urging consistent adherence to international humanitarian law and renewed commitment to multilateralism and conflict prevention.

At the start of the open debate, the Council adopted a presidential statement authored by Slovenia. The presidential statement reaffirmed the principles set forth in the UN Charter and underscored the need to strengthen resolve to maintain international peace and security. It stressed the need for universal adherence to international law, while emphasising the importance that the Council attaches to promoting justice and the rule of law. The presidential statement also reiterated the Council’s strong support for the protection of civilians in armed conflict and the need to promote women’s full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making. The statement also stressed the importance of upholding multilateralism with the UN at the centre of the multilateral system. It further expressed the Council’s commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities “in the most effective manner”.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is how best to identify a candidate for the post of Secretary-General who is able to effectively navigate the current difficult international environment, mounting political pressures, declining credibility of the Security Council, persisting financial constraints affecting the continuity of UN operations, and the implications of the UN80 process for the organisation and its personnel.

An option could be for Slovenia to produce a chair’s summary capturing the major themes of the open debate. This could be a useful document to map Council members’ understanding of the issues discussed without requiring negotiated outcomes. It would also help to highlight areas of convergence while documenting the range of views expressed, which could support the Council’s deliberations on this matter going forward.

In addition, such a document could assist Council members in determining the areas they may want to focus on when they meet candidates who have chosen to run for the position of UN Secretary-General.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2024/5 (25 September 2024) reaffirmed the Security Council’s commitment to international law, including the UN Charter, and expressed the Council’s commitment to fulfilling its responsibilities “in the most effective manner”. General Assembly Document A/RES/79/327 (5 September 2025) was a resolution on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly.

Leadership for Peace

Council Dynamics

Negotiations around the content and modalities of the joint letter formally starting the selection and appointment process of the next Secretary-General have been shaped by P5–E10 faultlines. The E10 initially proposed more ambitious language, including around steps of the process and a clearer description of the qualities and expertise that the new Secretary-General should possess. Even though there were differences among some of the E10 on the relative importance of specific aspects of the selection process and regarding how much pressure the E10 should apply to ensure their positions were reflected in the letter, E10 unity was maintained during the letter’s negotiation. The P5, for their part, opposed provisions they felt would constrain flexibility, such as clear deadlines or formulations perceived as encouraging a deliberative role for the General Assembly. Overall, these dynamics reflect longstanding tensions over the respective roles of the Council and the General Assembly, and the challenge of balancing the P5’s Charter-conferred privileges with demands for greater transparency.

The September 2024 open debate on “Leadership for Peace” highlighted deep divisions over the drivers of the crises affecting

international peace and security as well as over the Council’s role in addressing them. This was particularly evident in Council members’ contrasting views on the way forward and responsibility for the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. Sierra Leone said that the Council’s deliberations are increasingly “clouded by geopolitical rivalry, turning the Council from a forum for diplomacy into a battleground for national interests” with damaging consequences not only for the Council’s credibility but also for “the lives of millions of innocent women, men and children”. Citing the wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, Slovenia emphasised the harmful impact of the “impression of double standards” and the Council’s increasing reluctance to use its toolbox to deal with “crises and conflicts”, warning that the warring parties’ perceptions of impunity for violations contributed to soaring civilian casualties. Similarly, Guyana raised concern over the erosion of respect for the Charter, calling for the consistent application of international law.

Although the Council has turned its attention to newer developments and some crises have entered different phases, the positions evident during the 2024 open debate have not fundamentally shifted.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNAMI was established in 2003. December will mark the conclusion of UNAMI’s mandate in Iraq, following more than two decades of support to the country through transition and shifting regional dynamics. Throughout its years of operating in Iraq, UNAMI contributed to the country’s stability by supporting elections, facilitating political dialogue, advancing reconciliation, strengthening national institutions, promoting human rights, coordinating humanitarian efforts, and advancing sustainable development.

Resolution 2732 revised UNAMI’s mandate to focus on four priority areas during the drawdown period: electoral assistance to Iraqi authorities; facilitation of progress on Iraq-Kuwait issues; support for development and humanitarian tasks; and promotion of accountability and human rights protections. Pursuant to the resolution, the Secretary-General drew up a Transition and Liquidation Plan for UNAMI, which was sent to the Council on 23 December and outlined three core transition priorities: the implementation of the mission’s remaining mandated tasks; the phased transfer of responsibilities to the UN country team and Iraqi authorities; and the gradual

drawdown of UNAMI’s personnel and physical footprint.

On 25 November, the final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 2732 was issued, covering developments in Iraq and UNAMI’s activities since the previous report of 30 May and Hassan’s briefing to the Council on 10 June. The report states that the mission continues its drawdown and that on 27 May and 31 July, it ceased operations in its Mosul and Kirkuk compounds, respectively. Its remaining offices in Baghdad, Erbil, Basrah, and Tehran, Iran, are set to close by 31 December. The mission is also on track with its phased withdrawal of personnel and the transfer of mandated activities to the UN Country Team and relevant agencies, funds and programmes.

On 11 November, Iraq held its Council of Representatives elections. A coalition led by the incumbent Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani emerged as the frontrunner, but no party secured a majority. The process to form a new government is expected to be protracted—in previous elections, it has sometimes taken almost a year—due to extensive negotiations among the political factions which constitute the 329-member Iraqi legislature. The Secretary-General’s report says that according to Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), voter turnout reached 56.11 percent and that 25 percent of seats were reserved for women and nine seats for minorities.

On 12 November, a statement issued by the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General welcomed the “generally calm” conditions in which the elections were held and called for a “timely and peaceful government formation process that reflects the will of the Iraqi people”, while reaffirming the UN’s commitment to support Iraq. In accordance with one of its mandated drawdown priorities, UNAMI

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAQ Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2792](#) (17 September 2025) authorised 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. [S/RES/2732](#) (31 May 2024) renewed UNAMI’s mandate for a final 19-month period until 31 December 2025. Secretary-General’s Reports [S/2025/756](#) (19 November 2025) was the Secretary-General’s biannual report covering developments pertaining to missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives. [S/2025/323](#) (30 May 2025) was the Secretary-General’s biannual report on UNAMI. [Security Council Letter S/2024/966](#) (24 December 2024) transmitted the Secretary-General’s transition and liquidation plan for UNAMI, requested by resolution 2732.

Iraq

provided assistance and advice throughout the electoral process. In a statement made on the day of elections, Special Representative Hassan said that UNAMI officials were deployed in all Iraqi governorates to view and support the electoral process, and were satisfied with what they observed.

Amid UNAMI's drawdown, various regional developments continue to have an impact on Iraq's political and security landscape. The Secretary-General's report notes that the escalation of hostilities in June between Israel and Iran "raised serious concern in Iraq regarding possible ramifications for the country's stability, economy and security", and included several violations of Iraqi airspace by both parties. According to the report, drone and missile attacks targeted Iraqi air defences, Kirkuk International Airport, oil fields and energy infrastructure through late June and July. It also adds that Iraqi investigations determined that attacks on Iraqi air defences on 24 June were "executed by a single party, which was not named, and launched from inside Iraqi territory".

The threat from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) also continues to impact Iraq. According to the 25 November report, ISIL continued "asymmetric attacks", while Iraqi authorities continued to conduct counter-terrorism operations. The report says that from 1 April to 20 October, 21 attacks were attributed to ISIL, many of which targeted Iraqi security officials. Furthermore, the Secretary-General's 1 August biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh says that, in Iraq, the group has focused on rebuilding networks along the Syrian border and restoring capacity in the Badia region, as it seeks to exploit the situation following the ouster of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad's regime.

On 26 September, during the UN General Assembly High-Level Week in New York, the High-Level International Conference on the Repatriation of Persons from Al-Hol, Surrounding Camps and Places of Detention was convened by Iraq with the technical support of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT). The conference offered an opportunity for member states to mobilise efforts towards facilitating the urgent, safe, voluntary, and dignified repatriation of detainees from camps in northeast Syria, which host approximately 30,000 individuals—many of whom are women and children—in dire conditions that have been further exacerbated due to funding cuts. During the conference, Iraq was recognised for its efforts to repatriate its citizens from these camps.

The 17 June annual report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict said that, given the reduction of grave violations against children in Iraq and the measures adopted by the government to protect children, the situation of Iraq would be removed from the children and armed conflict agenda. On 30 June, the Iraq country task force on children and armed conflict was disbanded.

Another priority which UNAMI has focused on—since it was included in the mission's mandate through resolution 2107 of 27 June 2013—is facilitating the repatriation and return of Kuwaiti and third-country missing persons and Kuwaiti property, which remain missing following the 1990-1991 Gulf War. In view of UNAMI's drawdown, resolution 2732 requested the Secretary-General to recommend to the Council options for a follow-on mechanism to ensure continued progress on the file.

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 towards this end. The adoption marked a transition of responsibilities pertaining to the Iraq-Kuwait file from UNAMI to a follow-on mechanism. On 19 November, the Secretary-General issued the final report on UNAMI's responsibilities on the Iraq-Kuwait file, which emphasised that the Senior Representative role will be essential to "ensure continuity and sustained engagement" by the UN on the humanitarian file. The report also commends UNAMI's contribution to facilitating dialogue and confidence-building between Iraq and Kuwait over the years.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Security Council ahead of UNAMI's termination is ensuring that the mission concludes its drawdown in a safe and orderly manner. The December briefing provides an opportunity to assess how the drawdown has progressed and whether UNAMI's priority areas are being appropriately transitioned into various other UN mechanisms and Iraqi government structures.

One issue the Council will remain officially engaged on is the outstanding Iraq-Kuwait humanitarian file. Resolution 2792 requests the Secretary-General to inform the Council of progress on the file by 31 March 2026, and every six months thereafter. Council members are likely to hold meetings to discuss the issue following the submission of such reports. They will also be anticipating the appointment of the Senior Representative, which remains pending.

Another issue is how the Council should respond to regional spillover risks and Iraq's ongoing security sector challenges. Council members could consider adopting a presidential statement which commends UNAMI's achievements throughout its years of operations and encourages Iraq to continue efforts to assert state authority over armed actors, combat terrorism, and support disarmament and reintegration processes, including through bilateral assistance or capacity-building by other UN entities.

While December's meeting will be the Council's last mandated briefing on UNAMI, members are likely to remain engaged on Iraq beyond the mission's closure, particularly in relation to the Iraq-Kuwait file, counter-terrorism, and regional security. Following the usual practice, the issue will remain on the Council's seizure list under the agenda item "the situation concerning Iraq" for three years, after which it will be removed unless a member state asks for it to be retained.

Council Dynamics

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

Negotiations on resolution 2792 were apparently also not contentious, as Council members seemed to broadly share the Secretary-General's position that a follow-on UN mechanism for the repatriation or return of Kuwaiti and third-country missing persons and Kuwaiti property should be established following UNAMI's withdrawal. (For more information, see our 16 September *What's*

Iraq

In Blue story.) The UK—the penholder on the Iraq-Kuwait file—has emphasised the importance of progress on the missing persons and property file.

Regional developments and the risk of spillover from neighbouring conflicts continue to inform Council discussions. The US—the

Council’s penholder on Iraq—has pressed the government to disarm Iran-aligned militias in the country. By contrast, members such as China and Russia have voiced concern about the foreign military presence in Iraq and urged respect for Iraq’s sovereignty.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Expected Council Action

In December, Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen, in her capacity as the current Chairperson-in-Office (CiO) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), is expected to brief the Security Council on the organisation’s activities. Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon is expected to chair the meeting.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The Council has received annual briefings from the OSCE CiO since 2004. The chairmanship of the OSCE rotates yearly, and on 1 January, Finland succeeded Malta in this position. Past briefings on the work of the organisation have taken place early in the year, allowing former CiOs to inform the Council about their priorities for their upcoming presidencies. As this year’s briefing will be held towards the year’s end, it can serve as an opportunity for Valtonen to reflect on the OSCE’s work in the past year and the initiatives that Finland promoted during its chairmanship.

December’s Council meeting comes shortly after the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which laid the foundation for the OSCE. The Helsinki Final Act, signed on 1 August 1975, sought to improve the relationship between East and West, covering ten principles divided into three areas (also known as “baskets”): political and military security, including commitments to refraining from the threat or use of force, the territorial integrity of states, and the peaceful settlement of disputes; economic cooperation and environmental protection; and human rights, including respect for fundamental freedoms such as thought or speech, as well as equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

The occasion of the anniversary has led to reflection about the continued relevance of the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE’s ability to promote its principles. It also comes at a time when the organisation is facing significant strain following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The requirement for consensus in OSCE decisions, save for a few exceptions, has allowed Russia and other member states like Azerbaijan to block agreement on issues that are crucial to the organisation’s ability to function. The OSCE has been unable to agree on its annual budget since 2021; as a result, it has had to rely on monthly allotments based on the 2021 budget and voluntary contributions. Discussions on the appointment of senior officials have also been difficult. For instance, in 2024, the role of OSCE Secretary-General remained vacant for three months before member states were able to reach consensus on a candidate, appointing Feridun H. Sinirlioglu to the position in December 2024.

The OSCE has also had to alter its Ukraine-related work since Russia’s invasion. In 2022, the organisation closed its two field operations in the country, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM), which monitored implementation of the 2015 Minsk II agreement by gathering daily information related to ceasefire violations and the withdrawal of heavy weapons in eastern Ukraine, and the Project Co-ordinator, which supported Ukraine in developing its legislation, institutions, and practices on such issues as combatting human trafficking and humanitarian de-mining. The closures resulted from Russia’s opposition to the extension of the two field operations’ mandates. Since April 2022, three Ukrainian OSCE personnel have also been detained by pro-Russian forces in Luhansk.

The OSCE has been able to continue some work related to Ukraine through the use of tools that do not require consensus. These include the OSCE Secretariat Extra-budgetary Support Programme for Ukraine (SPU), which was launched in November 2022 and carries out projects similar to those of the Project Co-ordinator. The SPU’s work is supported by contributions from OSCE participating states and partners. Additionally, the OSCE Moscow Mechanism has been invoked five times since the outbreak of the war to establish independent fact-finding missions to investigate allegations of abuses of international human rights law (IHRL) and international humanitarian law (IHL) in Ukraine. (The mechanism, which was created in 1991, allows participating states to initiate an investigation into human rights violations over the opposition of the state under scrutiny.)

Most recently, 41 OSCE states invoked the Moscow Mechanism in July to examine Russia’s treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs). The report, presented on 25 September, documented numerous IHL and IHRL violations attributable to Russia, including a high number of arbitrary killings and executions of Ukrainian POWs and their systematic torture and ill-treatment. Among other things, the report encouraged the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to “pursue investigations into these violations, with the aim of securing arrest warrants, prosecutions and convictions, if the evidence is sufficient”.

Reflections on the OSCE’s work—including its achievements, the challenges it is currently facing, and its future path—featured prominently during a 31 July event hosted by Finland to mark the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, under the theme “Respect, Respond, Prepare”. In her statement at the event, Valtonen recounted the organisation’s significant contributions over the years, including through the work of its field operations, in the areas of conflict prevention, democratic development, human rights, and post-conflict reconciliation. She emphasised that although Russia’s invasion of

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE OSCE Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9610 (19 April 2024) was a briefing on UN-OSCE cooperation.

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Ukraine “violates every principle” that the organisation is committed to—including respect for borders, sovereignty, and the renunciation of violence—the “Helsinki principles themselves remain unbroken”.

Valtonen outlined in her statement three immediate priorities. The first is support for Ukraine and promotion of accountability for Russia’s actions in the country. The second is reforms within the OSCE to “enable effective and timely decision-making”, including to resolve the deadlock around the approval of the organisation’s budget. In this regard, Finland has initiated the Helsinki+50 Discussions on the Future of the OSCE, a discussion held in August with representatives of participating states, partner countries, and civil society, with the aim of building a vision for the future of the OSCE. The results of this discussion will be reported at the next meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, which will be held on 4 and 5 December. Finland has also launched the Helsinki+50 Fund, an initiative that aims to improve the use of voluntary funding for OSCE activities. The third priority outlined by Valtonen is upholding the core principles of the organisation, namely shared commitments, open dialogue, and the voice of civil society.

December’s briefing will allow Valtonen to provide an update on how Finland promoted these priorities throughout the year. She may also discuss additional thematic issues advanced during the chairmanship, including through the publication on 6 May of an OSCE-wide roadmap for the implementation of commitments on women, peace and security (WPS) and the organisation of an 11-12 September forum focused on strengthening OSCE member states’ resilience to security challenges stemming from climate change. A roadmap initiated by Finland on youth, peace and security (YPS) is expected to be presented at the December OSCE Ministerial Council.

There is also likely to be discussion about country-specific work conducted by the OSCE as well as ways to enhance its partnership with the UN. The Geneva International Discussions (GID)—which are co-chaired by the OSCE, the European Union (EU), and the UN and serve as the only platform for addressing the security and humanitarian consequences of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war—may be cited as a positive example of cooperation between the OSCE and the UN. The latest GID meeting took place on 11-12 November, during which participants emphasised the need for the GID to make tangible progress and deliver on its core agenda.

On 1 September, the OSCE adopted a unanimous decision to close the OSCE Minsk Group, which was formed in 1992 to find a peaceful resolution between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. This decision was made after the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan submitted a joint appeal to the OSCE on 11 August requesting the group’s closure. The issuance of the joint appeal was reportedly a condition set by Azerbaijan before it agreed to the US-mediated “Agreement on Establishment of Peace

and Inter-State Relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of Azerbaijan”. Although the sides initialled the text of the agreement on 8 August, it remains unsigned. Azerbaijan has previously voiced opposition to the OSCE Minsk Group and had reportedly blocked approval on the OSCE’s budget until all Minsk Group-related institutions are removed.

Issues and Options

There have been concerns that if the difficult dynamics within the OSCE continue, the organisation may decline in relevance and capacity. Some have emphasised the importance of the OSCE as the only multilateral forum outside the UN where Russia and Western countries can hold dialogue on security issues. In light of the markedly altered context in which the organisation operates, Council members could also discuss new avenues for cooperation between the organisation and the UN that utilise the OSCE’s expertise. In the context of the war in Ukraine, members might discuss a possible role for the OSCE in monitoring any potential future interim agreements.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Over the years, Council members have expressed sharply diverging positions on issues within the OSCE’s purview, most notably Ukraine, and on the broader European security architecture. These divisions have become more pronounced following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and have coloured Council discussions during the annual OSCE briefings.

Russia has often accused the OSCE of bias, blaming former CiOs of promoting anti-Russian views instead of operating on behalf of all 57 members of the organisation. During the latest Council meeting on cooperation with the OSCE, held on 19 April 2024, Russia argued that all the OSCE’s tools and resources have been redirected to the “Ukrainization” of the organisation’s agenda, to the detriment of its engagement on other crises in its area of operations. It further maintained that this has undermined the OSCE’s role as “a unique all-weather platform” for cooperation among states on the continent. Nonetheless, Russia argued that, if the OSCE resumes working in an impartial manner, the organisation has potential as a mediator and can play a role after the end of the war in Ukraine.

On the other hand, several Council members, including the European members, highlighted at the 19 April 2024 meeting the OSCE’s role as a pillar of the European security architecture and a platform for dialogue on security matters on the continent. These members also welcomed its continued work on Ukraine, including through the SPU and the Moscow Mechanism. Some also expressed concern about Russia’s decision, for the first time, not to invite OSCE observers to its presidential elections in 2024.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will convene for its quarterly open briefing on Afghanistan. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) and Officer-in-Charge of UNAMA, a senior official from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a representative of civil society are expected to brief. Closed consultations are scheduled to follow the open briefing.

UNAMA's mandate expires on 17 March 2026.

Key Recent Developments

Tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban, which have been simmering since Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) announced the end of a ceasefire with Pakistan in November 2022, have led to clashes over the last month, a serious escalation that has the potential to destabilise the region. The crisis began in earnest on 10 October, when Taliban officials accused Pakistan of carrying out attacks in Kabul and Paktika province in eastern Afghanistan the day prior. Although Pakistan has accused the Taliban of harbouring the TTP and failing to curb its activities on Afghan soil, it did not claim responsibility for the attacks, which followed a series of increasingly frequent clashes between the Pakistani military and militant groups near the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. When asked about the attacks during a 10 October press conference, Pakistani Army spokesperson Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry told reporters that "Afghanistan is being used as a base of operations against Pakistan, and there is proof and evidence of that". The latest report of the Monitoring Team Assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, which was issued on 21 July, says that the TTP has "continued to receive substantial logistical and operational support" from the Taliban.

Several days after the strikes inside Afghanistan, fighting between Taliban security forces and the Pakistani military erupted in various locations along the border between the two countries and, on 15 October, Pakistan reportedly conducted airstrikes in Kabul and Kandahar province. While each side provided differing casualty estimates, it appears that many combatants and civilians were killed or injured during the airstrikes and the skirmishes. In a 16 October statement, UNAMA announced that at least 17 civilians were killed and 346 were injured in Spin Boldak in Kandahar province and said that it had documented at least 16 civilian casualties resulting from other clashes in Paktika, Patkya, Kunar, and Helmand provinces.

On 15 October, Pakistan and the Taliban announced that the two sides had agreed to a 48-hour ceasefire, which was later extended before being formalised on 19 October during negotiations in Doha mediated by Qatar and Türkiye. While the ceasefire has largely held, there have been sporadic violent incidents since it was first agreed, including a 17 October Pakistani airstrike in Paktika province and an exchange of fire between the two sides near Spin Boldak on 6 November. There have also been several reports of clashes between the Pakistani military and militants in northwestern Pakistan, near the border with Afghanistan. On 25 November, the Taliban accused Pakistan of carrying out strikes in Khost, Kunar, and Paktika provinces, and claimed that the attack in Khost province killed nine children and one woman. A spokesperson for Pakistan's military subsequently denied the allegations. The alleged attacks came two

days after suicide bombers struck the headquarters of Pakistani security forces in Peshawar, killing three people and wounding 11 others.

The negotiations mediated by Qatar and Türkiye seem to have ended without an agreement after several rounds of talks, although the ceasefire appears to remain in place. The main sticking point in the negotiations was Pakistan's demand that the Taliban take decisive action to curb the activities of militant groups on Afghan territory, including the TTP. In remarks reported on 25 October, Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif raised the possibility of "open war" between the two sides if an agreement is not reached.

On 11 and 12 November, suicide bombers killed 15 people in two separate attacks in Pakistan, including an attack near a courthouse in Islamabad. On 13 November, Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi told Pakistan's parliament that the bombings were carried out by Afghan nationals and reiterated allegations that the Taliban is supporting militants who carry out attacks on Pakistani territory. On 12 November, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offered to resume talks with the Taliban. In recent weeks, Iran has also offered to play a role in mediating the dispute between the two sides.

Against this backdrop, the Taliban has pursued closer ties with India. On 10 October, the same day that the Taliban accused Pakistan of carrying out attacks in Kabul and Paktika province, India announced the reopening of its embassy in Kabul. The announcement came during Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's six-day visit to India, the first such trip since the Taliban seized power in August 2021. On 19 November, Taliban Minister of Commerce and Industry Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi arrived in New Delhi, where he met with Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Union Minister of State Jitin Prasada, and Indian trade officials.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan continues to grapple with one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. According to figures published by OCHA, 22.9 million Afghans, more than half of the country's population, were expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2025. Efforts to provide humanitarian assistance have been complicated by the forced return of approximately 2 million Afghan nationals from Iran and Pakistan this year. In a recent update, OCHA noted that the flow of returnees has "placed immense pressure on humanitarian response systems" at both border crossing points and in areas of return. The 6.3 magnitude earthquake that struck northern Afghanistan on 3 November, which followed a series of devastating earthquakes that hit eastern Afghanistan in late August and early September, has placed additional strain on the humanitarian response.

It appears that Council members were negotiating a draft press statement authored by China, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the US on the earthquakes in eastern Afghanistan in late August and early September. During the negotiations, Russia apparently raised concerns regarding the penholdership dispute on the Afghanistan file and ultimately blocked the draft press statement. (For more information on this dispute, see our 15 March *What's in Blue* story.)

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has also continued to deteriorate, particularly for women and girls. The Taliban has reportedly introduced several new restrictions on women and girls in recent months, including a prohibition on women entering hospitals in Herat if they are not wearing a burqa and a ban on books written by women in Afghan universities.

Afghanistan

The two-day shutdown of internet and mobile phone service in Afghanistan that ended on 1 October and the subsequent restrictions on social media access have also had a significant impact on the human rights of Afghans. In a 10 October statement, a group of independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council noted that internet and telecommunications shutdowns “seriously impede” the rights to work, health and education and would “very likely” increase poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. The statement also noted that women and girls are disproportionately affected by such shutdowns, particularly given that many are “dependent on online platforms for learning, online work and business opportunities, and virtual social spaces”.

On 7 October, the seventh meeting of the Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan, which was attended by officials from Belarus, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and representatives of the Taliban, was held in Moscow. During the talks, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reportedly said that Russia was looking forward to expanding business ties with Afghanistan and boosting anti-terrorism and anti-narcotics cooperation. On 23 September, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Ministerial Contact Group on Afghanistan held its first meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly’s high-level week.

UNAMA, the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), and the participants in the Doha process are currently working on the roadmap for political engagement referred to in the report of the Afghanistan independent assessment requested by resolution 2679. Among other matters, the independent assessment outlined an “architecture for engagement” to guide political, humanitarian, and development activities in Afghanistan. (For background on the independent assessment and the Doha process, see our 27 November 2023, 8 December 2023, 28 December 2023, 25 February 2024, and 7 March 2025 *What’s in Blue* stories and our June 2024 and September 2024 *Monthly Forecasts*.) At the time of writing, UNAMA had apparently indicated that it would circulate a document concerning next steps shortly. Another meeting of the Doha process participants may be held after this document has been circulated.

The previous Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Roza Otunbayeva, finished her term in September. At the time of writing, discussions regarding her successor were still ongoing.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 6 October, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan. Among other matters, the resolution decided to establish an independent investigative mechanism to collect and analyse evidence of international crimes and serious violations of international law in Afghanistan and prepare files for criminal proceedings.

In a 30 October press release, Richard Bennett, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, warned against normalising the Taliban. He stressed that the severity of the country’s human rights situation cannot be overstated, underscoring that Afghanistan is suffering the most extreme and systematic assault on gender equality of our time. He also highlighted the need for urgent, principled and sustained international attention and action aimed at dismantling the Taliban’s institutionalised system of gender persecution and addressing the country’s myriad human rights crises.

Following recent reports of public executions and other cruel punishments in the country, Bennett also called on the Taliban to immediately halt all executions and establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty. At least 11 people have been

publicly executed since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in August 2021.

Sanctions-Related Developments

It appears that the US has continued to block the majority of requests submitted to the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee for exemptions to the travel ban imposed by the 1988 Afghanistan sanctions regime. In correspondence sent to Committee members in August, the US indicated that it would scrutinise travel ban exemption requests more closely, on a case-by-case basis. The letter apparently also noted that the Taliban continues to use hostage diplomacy and accused the Taliban of failing to deliver on its counter-terrorism commitments. In response, it seems that some member states have resorted to notifying the Committee of travel by designated individuals rather than submitting exemption requests.

Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

In an August update, UN Women described the women’s rights crisis in Afghanistan as “among the most extreme globally”. The update warned that four years of Taliban rule have seen restrictions on women and girls being tightened and codified. UN Women stressed that none of the restrictive edicts issued in the initial phase of the Taliban takeover has been repealed and that, while enforcement was inconsistent at first, four years on a more “systematic enforcement model has taken hold”. This is compounded by a pattern of anticipatory compliance which has led families, NGOs and businesses to “pre-emptively restrict women’s freedoms” out of fear of punishment. The update reported that, in response to their exclusion from formal governance structures, some women have been able to informally engage with local and national representatives of the de facto authorities. It stressed, however, that these interactions “are not indicative of institutional acceptance of women’s participation in public life” and remain circumscribed to a limited set of issues. The update also described how global reductions in foreign aid put the fragile entry points Afghan women have negotiated at risk, with many women-led organisations forced to close. Among other recommendations, UN Women called for women’s rights to remain central to the international community’s response. It also urged long-term flexible funding for Afghan women’s civil society organisations and thoughtful funding decisions to ensure that no action or funding inadvertently strengthens or normalises the discriminatory policies of the de facto authorities.

On 31 October, Denmark and Sierra Leone, the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on WPS, together with the UK, the penholder on WPS, sent a letter to Guterres regarding the independent assessment and the related Doha process. Among other matters, the letter urged that the rights of Afghan women and their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation be placed at the centre of the Doha process.

In a 25 November statement marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, UNAMA and UN Women urged the Taliban to end restrictions on women and girls and called on the international community to maintain all avenues for providing critical support. The statement also highlighted the impact of severe aid cuts, noting that they have forced the UN and its partners to close or reduce life-saving services.

Key Issues and Options

The clashes between Pakistan and the Taliban are an issue for the Council. Council members may wish to consider adopting a resolution that expresses concern regarding the recent escalation, urges both sides to refrain from further military action, and encourages them to return to dialogue with a view to resolving their dispute peacefully. Such a product could also demand that the Taliban adhere to its counter-terrorism commitments and call for the cessation of any support that is being provided to the TTP. Members could also choose to hold informal consultations to discuss the possibility of issuing such a product and to receive a briefing from UN officials regarding the dispute and its implications for the region.

The Taliban’s ongoing refusal to adhere to Afghanistan’s international obligations, especially those relating to women and girls, is a major issue for the Council, particularly because it directly contradicts the recommendations outlined in the independent assessment.

Afghanistan

Council members could ask for an informal meeting with representatives of DPPA and UNAMA to discuss options for responding to the Taliban's actions and their implications for the independent assessment and the Doha process. Members could use this meeting to ask for an informal update on the roadmap for political engagement, next steps in the Doha process, and the activities of the working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector that were established in mid-2024. They could also discuss possible options for revitalising the implementation of the independent assessment's recommendations, which appears to have largely stalled in 2025.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is another significant issue. Following the briefing from OCHA during the open meeting in December, which is likely to highlight some of the issues faced by humanitarian actors in the country, members could hold an informal meeting to discuss possible steps the Council could take to help the UN manage these issues.

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

The threat of terrorism emanating from Afghanistan remains an issue. The latest report of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, notes that ISIL-Khorasan, ISIL's Afghan affiliate, represents the most serious threat regionally and internationally. Members could hold an informal meeting that specifically focuses on the terrorist threat, which would give them an opportunity to discuss possible Council action in this area.

Council Dynamics

Council members have generally been united in their desire to see a prosperous, peaceful Afghanistan ruled by an inclusive government, complying with its international obligations, and free from terrorism, but they are divided over how to achieve this goal. Some members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded

states, have previously argued that the Taliban must adhere to international norms in order to obtain international recognition and receive economic and development aid from the international community. Several of these members prefer maintaining pressure on the Taliban, particularly regarding its policies and practices that violate the rights of women and girls.

The US position appears to be changing, however. During the June open briefing, the US indicated that its Afghanistan policy is currently under review and said that its focus has narrowed, noting that protecting US citizens, mitigating the terrorist threat, and securing the release of US hostages are its top priorities. In the September open briefing, the US also appeared to signal a possible shift in its position on UNAMA, saying that the mission should refocus on its core tasks and be guided by clear performance benchmarks.

China and Russia, for their part, have contended that the international community should provide economic and development assistance to Afghanistan without linking it to other issues, such as the rights of women and girls, and favour engagement and dialogue without increased pressure. Both members have repeatedly called for the release of frozen assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank, the bulk of which were seized by the US after the Taliban seized power in August 2021 and have also pushed for the reinstatement of the standing exemption to the travel ban that expired in August 2022.

Pakistan has linked its dispute with the Taliban to its relationship with India by accusing India of supporting the Taliban and the TTP, a claim that India strenuously denies.

Earlier in 2025, a dispute regarding penholdership on the Afghanistan file emerged among members following the departure of Japan from the Council, which held the pen with the United Arab Emirates in 2023 and on its own in 2024. At the outset of this dispute, two pairs of Council members indicated that they were willing to work together as co-penholders: China and Pakistan on the one hand, and the ROK and the US on the other. (For more information, see our 15 March *What's in Blue* story.) In late September, the US apparently indicated that it would withdraw its pursuit of the penholdership.

Pakistan is the chair of the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee.

International Criminal Tribunals

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

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

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

Gatti Santana and Brammertz briefed at the Council’s most recent semi-annual debate on the IRMCT, which was held on 11 June. In her briefing, Gatti Santana updated Council members on

the IRMCT’s remaining work, noting that IRMCT judges issued nearly 100 decisions and orders during the previous six months, thirty of which related to access to confidential information and requests for the variation of protective measures for witnesses. She also underscored the importance of state cooperation for the IRMCT’s work and highlighted the situation of six acquitted persons currently in Niger and awaiting relocation to other states. Regarding the transfer of some of the IRMCT’s remaining functions, she argued that although certain administrative functions could be transferred to states, some of the IRMCT’s judicial tasks should remain at the international level.

During his briefing, Brammertz provided an update on the cases against Félicien Kabuga and Fulgence Kayishema. Kabuga has been declared unfit to stand trial and remains in the custody of the IRMCT, while Kayishema is still in South Africa more than two years after his arrest, despite an IRMCT order directing him to be transferred to its custody. Brammertz urged South Africa to immediately execute the arrest warrant for Kayishema, who has been accused of orchestrating the killings of more than 2,000 Tutsis during the Rwandan genocide. Brammertz also highlighted his office’s work assisting national authorities with pursuing accountability for crimes committed in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

On 29 July, the IRMCT denied Ratko Mladić’s latest application for release on humanitarian grounds.

Key Issues and Options

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

Council Dynamics

Council members generally have positive reviews regarding the IRMCT and the progress it has made, with the exception of Russia. During the 11 June open briefing, Russia strongly criticised the IRMCT and called for its closure to free up resources, citing the UN’s liquidity crisis. Other Council members expressed support for the IRMCT and its work and urged member states to cooperate with the mechanism as it carries out its remaining functions.

The negotiations concerning resolution 2740, which most recently extended Brammertz’s term, were lengthy, difficult, and contentious. Russia apparently objected to many aspects of the draft text, provided comments on almost every paragraph, reiterated long-held criticisms of the IRMCT, and pushed strongly for a concrete time-frame and deadline for the transfer of the mechanism’s remaining

International Criminal Tribunals

functions. While some of Russia's suggestions were supported by China, they were largely opposed by other Council members. (For

more information on the negotiations, see our 27 June 2024 *What's in Blue* story.)

UNOCA (Central Africa)

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 7 June, an ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, with the theme of "consolidating the achievements of the ECCAS reform to accelerate regional integration and the construction of a community of destiny in Central Africa". The summit also addressed the worsening security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and expressed support for ongoing mediation efforts to address that situation.

During the summit, the presidency of Equatorial Guinea was extended for another year instead of having Rwanda take over the rotating ECCAS presidency, reportedly due to objections from Burundi and the DRC. This prompted Rwanda to announce its withdrawal from ECCAS, arguing that its rights as guaranteed by the organisation's constitutive act were violated. On 7 September, ECCAS held an extraordinary summit in Malabo and appointed Ezéchiel Nibigira of Burundi as the new President of the ECCAS Commission.

On 12 October, Cameroon held its presidential election and President Paul Biya, who at 92 is Africa's oldest leader, was declared the winner for an eighth term. In power since 1982, Biya is set to extend his rule until 2032. There were protests in Douala, the economic capital, against the results, which the opposition claimed were rigged. Several people were reportedly killed in post-election violence. In a 28 October statement, the African Union (AU) Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf noted the final results of the presidential elections and congratulated Biya on his re-election, while expressing grave concerns about the reported violence, repression, and arrests of protesters and political actors in connection with the election results.

On 10 June, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) received an update on the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and reviewed the implementation of the Regional Strategy for Stabilisation, Recovery, and Resilience (RS-SRR) of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin. MNJTF is a regional security coalition comprising forces from Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria, mandated to combat Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin. The RS-SRR was developed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) in

2018 to address the threat of terrorism, displacement, and underdevelopment in the region. The AUPSC endorsed the regional strategy and requested the AU Commission to continue to support the activities of MNJTF and LCBC.

The AUPSC reiterated their deep concern about the impact of Niger's decision to withdraw from MNJTF. The country announced its decision in March. Its withdrawal has raised concerns about the weakening of the region's counter-terrorism framework and the potential creation of a security vacuum that could be exploited by terrorist groups. The AUPSC encouraged the remaining members of the MNJTF to maintain their unity in the fight against Boko Haram and sustain the gains achieved thus far.

Despite recent operational successes by the MNJTF, Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to pose serious threats to peace and security in the Lake Chad Basin. Reports indicate that Boko Haram has intensified its attacks in Nigeria and Cameroon. In August, Nigeria announced that it had killed at least 35 armed fighters in airstrikes near the country's border with Cameroon. Following an October 2024 attack that claimed the lives of 40 Chadian soldiers, President Mahamat Idriss Déby had reportedly threatened to withdraw from MNJTF, accusing the force of failing to eliminate the security threats posed by terrorist groups. Analysts attribute the resurgence of Boko Haram to Niger's withdrawal from MNJTF and Chad's declining support for the task force.

In early November, US President Donald Trump sparked controversy after he said he could deploy the US military in the country to combat Islamist militant groups, accusing the Nigerian government of failing to "protect Christians". While Nigeria reportedly welcomed US assistance, it emphasised that any support must respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. The AU Commission also issued a statement urging the US "to engage Nigeria through diplomatic dialogue, intelligence-sharing, and capacity-building partnerships, while respecting Nigerian sovereignty rather than resorting to unilateral threats of military intervention, which could undermine continental peace, regional stability, and AU norms for peaceful conflict management".

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situations in several parts of Central Africa continue to be key concerns for the Council. In December, Council members are likely to be interested in hearing Abarry's assessment of country-specific situations in the region. The recent election in Cameroon and the upcoming election in the Central African Republic (CAR) in December may be of particular interest to Council members. A possible option is for the new President of the ECCAS Commission to brief the Council in December.

The continued threat of terrorism in the Lake Chad Basin remains

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNOCA [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2024/7](#) (1 November 2024) expressed the Council's full support for UNOCA. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/342](#) (30 May 2025) was the semi-annual report on UNOCA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9931](#) (09 June 2025) was a meeting on the situation in Central Africa.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

a matter of serious concern. This concern has been heightened by the fact that Boko Haram and ISWAP have begun employing drones and have become increasingly adept at using social media to spread extremist ideology and recruit youth. In this context, Council members may be keen to hear more about the impact of Niger's decision to withdraw from the joint force.

A related issue is how to address the root causes of the conflicts in the region. Council members continue to support the RS-SRR of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin developed by the Lake Chad Basin Commission and welcome its endorsement by the AUPSC. Members of the The Council's informal expert group (IEG) of members of the Security Council on climate, peace and security will be visiting the Lake Chad Basin in early December. Although this is an informal group, the co-chairs of the IEG could choose to brief interested Council members in an informal format following their visit.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement raising alarm at terrorist activity in the region and expressing support for the MNJTF in combating this challenge. The statement could also call for expedited implementation of the RS-SRR and appeal for international support in this regard.

Resource constraints remain a major concern for all UN peace operations, including Special Political Missions such as UNOCA. On 9 June, Abarry informed Council members that the mission is considering setting up a trust fund to complement its regular budget to be able to respond effectively to the need for UN good offices in the Central Africa region.

Council Dynamics

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

In the Council's 9 June meeting, the spillover effect of the conflict in Sudan on neighbouring countries in the Central African region was a major concern for several members. The escalating situation in eastern DRC was also another preoccupation, which prompted Council members to reiterate the need for the full implementation of resolution 2773 of 21 February to address the situation. That resolution, among other things, demanded the cessation of further military advances by the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) rebel group in eastern DRC and called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

Council members recognise the important role played by the MNJTF in fighting Boko Haram and ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin. In this month's meeting, many of them will likely condemn the recent attack in the region and underscore the need to continue supporting the MNJTF in neutralising these groups.

Some Council members tend to focus on the situation in north-west and southwest regions of Cameroon. These members may continue to draw particular attention to the country's political and security challenges in light of the post-electoral violence.

The UK is the penholder on UNOCA.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Key Recent Developments

On 27 June, the DRC and Rwanda—who 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. On 21-22 October, the third meeting of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism was held in Washington. The Mechanism set up under the agreement is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the Concept of Operations (CONOPS) 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 the disengagement of forces and lifting of defensive measures by Rwanda, in line with the 27 June Peace

Agreement. Representatives from the US, Qatar, and the African Union (AU) Commission attended the meeting. According to a joint statement issued after the meeting, the DRC and Rwanda reaffirmed their commitment to what was referred to as the Operations Order (OPORD), which was developed to serve as the implementation plan for advancing the CONOPS.

On 7 November, the Joint Oversight Committee, established based on the peace agreement to resolve any disputes arising between the parties during implementation, held its meeting in Washington. Representatives from the US, the DRC, and Rwanda, Qatar, Togo (as the AU mediator), and the AU Commission participated. According to a joint statement released after the meeting, the parties committed themselves to refraining from hostile actions or rhetoric that would undermine the full implementation of the 27 June peace agreement. They also initialled the text of a Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF), which outlines key areas for fostering economic cooperation and development between them. During the meeting, Qatar, which has been facilitating talks between the Congolese government and the

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2773 (21 February 2025) was on the situation in the eastern DRC. S/RES/2765 (20 December 2024) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 20 December 2025. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10008 (30 September 2025) was on the situation in the DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) rebel group, provided an update on the ongoing negotiations in Doha.

Following an initial direct meeting 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. On 19 July, they concluded a Declaration of Principles in Doha that included a commitment to a ceasefire.

Since then, negotiations have been ongoing to reach a comprehensive peace agreement, paving the way for the two sides to sign the Doha framework for peace on 15 November. In doing so, they affirmed their commitment to addressing the root causes of the conflict through structured dialogue, confidence-building measures, and a phased approach to de-escalation and stabilisation. Qatar indicated that the Doha framework agreement will serve as a foundation for a comprehensive peace process, with a series of protocols, annexes and technical arrangements to be discussed and agreed between the parties in due course to address specific issues, including the consolidation and verification of a ceasefire, modalities for troop disengagement, humanitarian access, reintegration and support for national dialogue.

On 26 November, Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during which they were briefed on the current state of the various mediation processes in Washington and Doha. The facilitators outlined the present dynamics, anticipated outcomes, and ways in which the Council can support the peace efforts, including a possible role for MONUSCO in ceasefire monitoring. (For more, see our 25 November *What's in Blue* story.)

On 30 October, France, together with Togo, hosted a Great Lakes Conference on the margins of the Paris Peace Forum. The purpose of the meeting was to mobilise the international community to respond to the humanitarian emergency in the eastern DRC and in the region and support the ongoing negotiation and mediation processes.

The 9th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) took place on 15 November in Kinshasa, DRC, during which DRC President Félix Tshisekedi assumed the rotating ICGLR chairmanship. The last ICGLR summit was held virtually in November 2020, and Angola's President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço had been serving as the rotating chair since then. He was also actively involved in efforts to ease the tensions between the DRC and Rwanda through what was known as the Luanda process.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 October, the President of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland) announced the appointment of Arnauld Akodjenou (Benin), Maxine Marcus (Germany/US) and Clément Nyaletsossi Voule (Togo) to serve as the three independent members of the recently established Independent Commission of Inquiry on the human rights situation in the South and North Kivu provinces of the DRC.

On 7 and 8 October, the HRC adopted resolutions 60/22 and 60/35, respectively. Resolution 60/22 requests the members of the commission to present an oral update and to submit a comprehensive report on South and North Kivu's human rights situations, within the framework of an enhanced interactive dialogue. Resolution 60/35 concerns technical assistance and capacity building in the field of human rights in

the DRC. Among other recommendations, the resolution calls on international actors and partners, under the auspices of the UN Human Rights Office, to provide the additional financial resources and technical and logistical support necessary for the DRC government to consolidate its efforts in the field of transitional justice at national and regional levels.

On 1 September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report to the HRC that provides an overview of the country's human rights situation and the activities of the UN Joint Human Rights Office between 1 June 2024 and 31 May. Among other matters, the report emphasises the importance of the Joint Office continuing its support to the Congolese government in implementing its human rights obligations and calling on the DRC to strengthen its collaboration with UN human rights mechanisms, including treaty bodies and special procedures.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 30 September statement, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, expressed grave concern about the abduction and alleged sexual violence perpetrated against four women human rights defenders in the South Kivu province of the DRC, as well as at the killing of the mother of one of the activists. Lawlor warned that these incidents form part of a pattern of systematic violence against civilians in eastern DRC, "where human rights defenders, and women human rights defenders in particular, are consistently targeted". The statement called on the DRC authorities to promptly investigate the attacks, bring those responsible to justice, and guarantee a safe environment for human rights defenders.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in December is the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate. At the 30 September meeting, Council members requested the Secretary-General to make appropriate recommendations considering developments on the ground, as well as any adjustments necessary to ensure the mission's performance. The Secretary-General's quarterly report, due by 30 November, is expected to contain these recommendations.

Council members are likely to consider MONUSCO's three key priority tasks—namely, the protection of civilians, security sector reform, and the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants—as remaining relevant. In response to developments, Council members could choose to assign the mission additional responsibilities, such as monitoring or supervising the implementation of a ceasefire and supporting ongoing peace processes.

The challenges facing MONUSCO, particularly the restrictions on its freedom of movement in areas controlled by the M23, have been of continued concern for Council members. In the upcoming mandate renewal, they are likely to call for the lifting of all such restrictions to enable the mission to effectively fulfil its mandated tasks.

Another major issue is the impact of the UN's liquidity crisis and the resulting budget cuts being implemented across peacekeeping missions. Consequently, MONUSCO has been compelled to repatriate some of its contingents. On 18 November, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed Council members, in closed consultations, on the contingency plan being implemented across all peacekeeping missions to mitigate this challenge. (For more, see our 17 November *What's in Blue* story.)

Council Dynamics

Council members have welcomed recent breakthroughs in ongoing mediation efforts to resolve the situation in eastern DRC. At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a draft press statement to welcome the signing of the Doha Framework Agreement. However, they acknowledge that meaningful progress

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of the security situation on the ground will depend on the parties' implementation of their commitments.

At the same time, Council members remain deeply concerned about the security situation in eastern DRC. They are likely to continue reiterating their call for the cessation of hostilities and for the implementation of commitments undertaken by the parties within the framework of ongoing mediation efforts in Washington and Doha. In particular, Council members emphasise the importance of implementing the CONOPS to neutralise the FDLR and of lifting the defensive measures imposed by Rwanda.

Some Council members are worried about the impact of the funding cuts, which they think will undermine MONUSCO's capacity to fulfil its mandated tasks, particularly the protection of civilians.

At the 30 September meeting, Pakistan, a major MONUSCO troop-contributing country, argued that the mission must be strengthened and not weakened. Russia maintained that the mission's ability to protect civilians must be restored or adapted to the new realities. The "A3 Plus" grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) particularly stressed that "any drawdown or reconfiguration must be conditions-based, responsible and aligned with progress on the ground to avoid creating a security vacuum".

However, the US wants the mission to become more effective by eliminating unnecessary expenses and redundancies. Despite this, recent media reports indicate that the Trump administration has notified Congress of its intentions to provide funding for the US share of costs for MONUSCO.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is expected to reauthorise the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), whose mandate expires by the end of the month.

The Security Council is also expected to renew the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime, including the provision for maritime interdiction, which expires on 13 December. In addition, the Council will decide on the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, which expires on 13 January 2026.

Key Recent Developments

Somalia's domestic political landscape continues to be dominated by debates over the electoral model for the 2026 national elections, a persistent source of tension between the federal government and the federal member states. The federal government has been advocating for a "one person, one vote" system, while the member states hold divergent positions—some supporting the proposal and others opposing it. The Chairperson of the National Electoral and Boundaries Commission had recently announced that voting in the Banadir region—which includes Mogadishu and its surrounding districts—will proceed on 30 November under the "one person, one vote" model, with over one million people registered to participate. However, media reports indicate that these elections are now rescheduled for 25 December.

Opponents of the model have raised concerns about the country's preparedness to conduct these elections and questioned the federal government's capacity to implement them effectively. Puntland and Jubaland, both of which have suspended relations with Mogadishu, openly oppose the initiative and accuse President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of attempting to centralise power. Other federal member states and opposition leaders favour retaining the traditional clan-based formula, which they argue ensures equitable power-sharing among major clans. Mahmoud visited Kismayo in October to ease tensions with Jubaland, but it seems that the visit did not yield anything concrete in thawing the tense relations.

A new political alliance known as the Somali Future Council—which

includes the leaders of Puntland and Jubaland, as well as other opposition figures from the Somalia Salvation Forum, a coalition established in May that includes former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and former prime ministers Hassan Ali Khaire, Mohamed Hussein Roble, and Abdi Farah Shirdon—met in Nairobi in November and rejected the federal government's plan for a one person, one vote elections in 2026 without first achieving the necessary national consensus. The Somali Future Council expressed its intention to convene a national conference in Somalia. Meanwhile, on 10 November, a new political party known as the Union of National Pride has named Shirdon as their candidate for the 2026 presidential elections. Fahad Yasin, an influential former national intelligence and security chief, was allegedly behind the formation of this party.

The political tensions in the country have also contributed to deterioration in security, with Al-Shabaab significantly expanding its control of territory in Central Somalia. However, the government appears to have succeeded in targeting senior leaders of the group in a series of recent operations. In a 9 November press release, the Somali National Armed Forces (SNAF) said they had killed senior Al-Shabaab leaders, including Mohamed Abdi Mohamed Nur (Gofoowo), in military operations conducted in the Bay and Bakool region. Additionally, the US Africa Command stated that it had conducted an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab on 26 October, in coordination with the Somali federal government. SNAF confirmed the information in a 27 October press release, indicating that the strike killed senior Al-Shabaab leader Mahmoud Abdi Hamud, known as Jaafar Gurey, in Bu'aale, Middle Juba region.

Puntland Security Forces, with support from the US, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and regional countries, have been conducting operations against an Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) offshoot that has established a foothold in the Bari region of Puntland. The forces have reported recent successes, including the capture and killing of ISIL members (including foreign terrorist fighters among them) during operations targeting the group's hideouts. On 19 November, the US Africa Command announced that it had conducted a series of air strikes against ISIL-Somalia in coordination with

Somalia

the Somali federal government.

In a 3 July meeting, the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) underscored the need to intensify efforts to secure funding for the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) and instructed the AU Commission to engage the UN, as well as bilateral and multilateral partners, to convene a resource mobilisation conference. In line with this directive, a high-level meeting on AUSSOM financing was held in New York on 25 September on the sidelines of the General Debate of the 80th session of the UN General Assembly. However, the total amount pledged remains significantly below the \$196 million required to cover troop allowances.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 3 March, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2776, extending the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime until 13 December and renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee until 13 January 2026. The resolution, among other things, requested the Secretary-General to submit a technical assessment regarding the arms embargo targeting Al-Shabaab by 1 November. It also expresses the Security Council's intention to make any necessary adjustments following receipt of the technical assessment. It seems that the report has already been circulated to Council members.

Pursuant to resolution 2776, the Panel of Experts was expected to submit its final report on 13 November. The report, which has already been circulated to members, apparently describes the significant threats posed by Al-Shabaab to the peace and security of Somalia and the region. It seems that the report expresses concerns about the group's expanding influence in central and southern Somalia; its continued attacks against the government, including the assassination attempt against the president; its sophisticated extortion efforts to generate revenue to fund its operations; and its smuggling of weapons and military equipment. Additionally, it seems that the report provides details of the panel's investigative work on ISIL-Somalia and the foreign terrorist fighters being recruited by the group.

Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for Council members in December is reauthorising the AUSSOM mandate. Pursuant to resolution 2767, the UN, jointly with the AU and the FGS, was tasked to undertake regular joint technical assessments of progress made, including against the benchmarks outlined in the AU-UN joint report of 26 November 2024, to inform the Council's decision on the authorisation of AUSSOM's subsequent phases. This report was expected to be submitted by 30 September, but, in a 2 October letter, the Secretary-General noted that additional time would be required to finalise the report and requested an extension until 30 October, which was subsequently granted by the Council. The upcoming negotiations are expected to be informed by this report, which, at the time of writing, had not been published. A possible option is for Council members to meet informally for a briefing from the Secretariat on the key findings of the report. This would allow members to decide whether to reauthorise the mission for another year with no change or to make adjustments to the mandate based on the joint technical assessment and its recommendations.

A related issue is the lack of sustainable funding for AUSSOM financing, which could affect its ability to carry out its mandate. The mission's personnel have been operating without allowances for more than a year. Ultimately, this could lead to personnel having to leave the mission. Early this year, an attempt to trigger resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations through UN-assessed contributions failed owing

to strong opposition by the US. (For more, see our 10 May *What's in Blue* story.) Following the 7th African Union-European Union Summit held in Luanda on 24-25 November, Council members could hold an Informal Interactive Dialogue with representatives from the AU and the EU to discuss the financial situation ahead of the reauthorisation of AUSSOM's mandate.

The financial situation of the UN Support Office for Somalia (UNSSO) is another issue for Council members in December. UNSSO is mandated to provide logistical and other support to AUSSOM, but it is being forced to reduce its expenditures by 25 percent as part of the contingency measures being implemented by UN peacekeeping missions funded by the peacekeeping budget to address the UN's liquidity crisis, resulting from member states' failure to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time.

The extension of the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime and the mandate renewal of the Panel of Experts supporting the committee are other key issues in December. Members may draw on the findings of the report and recommendations contained in the panel's final report, as well as the Secretary-General's technical assessment. The most likely option for Council members is to renew the measures outlined in resolution 2713 with no change and extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts for another year.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The majority of Council members support addressing AUSSOM's funding challenges. However, the US remains strongly opposed to considering the issue within the framework of resolution 2719. While some members may try to raise the financing issue during the negotiations in December, it may not get any traction, given the strong opposition by the US. The European Union is expected to announce funding for AUSSOM in early 2026.

The financing issue was a topic of discussion during the annual consultations between Council members and the AUPSC on 18 October, in which the latter strongly pushed for the need to find a solution to the funding challenges. The meeting concluded without adopting a joint communiqué because Council members and the AUPSC could not reach the necessary consensus, including on language related to financing.

In October, the UK—the penholder on Somalia—had apparently sought to develop a Council product or letter, given that the mandate of the UN Transition Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTAMS) is set to expire at the end of October 2026. The mission is currently implementing a two-year phased transition of its functions to the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Somalia. However, it seems that Somalia was not supportive of the penholder's proposal, which now appears to have been abandoned.

Council members support the Somali government's priorities and recognise the many challenges the country faces, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. They also support ongoing efforts to fight the group, including the implementation of sanctions to degrade Al-Shabaab. During the negotiations on resolution 2776, however, Somalia expressed its desire for the Security Council to seriously consider the utility and effectiveness of the sanctions regime. Its position was supported by the "A3 Plus" Grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and

Guyana) as well as China, Pakistan, and Russia. This issue is likely to be raised again in the upcoming negotiations on the extension of

the sanctions regime.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

In December, 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.

Council members are expected to renew UNDOF's mandate, which is set to expire on 31 December.

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, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2782 renewing UNDOF's mandate for six months.

Since 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, the IDF 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. Since July, Israel has said that some of its operations have been 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 repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the 1974 agreement, and despite strongly condemning Israeli attacks, it has not retaliated militarily. In an 11 November interview with *The Washington Post*—held while he was in Washington, DC for a historic meeting with US President Donald Trump—Sharaa said that Israel has “expansionist ambitions” for Syria and pushed back against Israeli demands for the demilitarisation of southern Syria.

Under Trump, the US seems to have adopted a policy committed to supporting Syria's progress towards stability and peace with its neighbours, and is mediating discussions between Syria and Israel towards establishing a security agreement. In *The Washington Post* interview, Sharaa confirmed that his government is in “direct negotiations with Israel”, facilitated by the US, and is demanding that Israel withdraw to the positions it held before 8 December 2024, adding that Trump supports his country's position. According to Israeli media, negotiations are facing an impasse, as this condition seems to be a non-starter for the Israelis unless it is accompanied by a comprehensive peace deal. (For more information, see the brief on

Syria in our December 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 19 November, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited an outpost in Israeli-held territory in southern Syria. Netanyahu told troops that Israel's presence there is of “immense importance” both for safeguarding the country's security and the Druze population. That same day, at a Security Council meeting on Syria, Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi said that his government “strongly condemns this provocative tour” and called on the UN and the Council to take action to halt such violations by Israel.

Recent Israeli operations into Syria have reportedly included the setting up of a military checkpoint in the southern governorate of Quneitra on 5 November. On 14 November, Israeli forces reportedly raided the village of Jamlah in Deraa governorate. This follows an earlier raid on Jamlah on 4 October, during which the IDF detained three men. According to Syrian media, the families of the detainees have appealed to UNDOF for assistance. Similarly, on 15 November, three men were reportedly detained by the IDF in Quneitra. On 24 November, Syrian state news agency SANA reported that Israel conducted “multiple incursions” into Quneitra and set up a checkpoint close to an UNDOF post in the region. On 28 November, Israeli forces conducted a raid and airstrikes on the town of Beit Jinn in southern Syria, which reportedly killed at least 13 people, including two children, and wounded 25.

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 at 4 August, the IDF “maintained and reinforced” ten positions it had established in both the area of separation and limitation on the Syrian 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.

The next UNDOF report by the Secretary-General is due on 3 December.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 5 September, the UN Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories submitted a report to the General Assembly on Israel's policies and practices to consolidate and expand its occupation of the Syrian Golan and other regions of the broader Middle East. Covering developments from August 2024 to July 2025, the report observed that “Israel has continued to transfer its civilian population to the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection

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/2025/599 (26 September 2025) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNDOF, covering the period 20 May to 17 August. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9840 (17 January 2025) was a meeting on UNIFIL and UNDOF.

UNDOF (Golan)

of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and established a military presence further into Syrian territory, negatively affecting the human rights of the local Arab populations". In light of these findings, the Special Committee underscored that any peace agreement between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic must respect the rights of the population living in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967 and in the recently occupied area.

The Special Committee, in a subsequent press release, warned that Israel is working to double the settler population in the occupied Golan and claims it will stay indefinitely in newly occupied areas further inside Syria. In this regard, the Special Committee emphasised the importance and need for the international community to act, underscoring that there must be accountability for these and other egregious violations of international law.

Jayantha Jayasuriya, Chair of the Special Committee, presented the report's findings to the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly at its 80th session, held on 17 November.

Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in December is the renewal of UNDOF's mandate. Members could choose to have a straightforward renewal of the mandate to avoid complicated negotiations during a period in which discussions are ongoing between the parties over establishing a security agreement. Members could also consider updating the renewal resolution in light of the significant shift in security dynamics in the Golan, increased challenges for UNDOF in addressing ongoing violations of the 1974 agreement, and obstructions preventing the mission from carrying out its mandate, while ensuring the safety and security of the peacekeepers.

Another issue for the Council is that the significant Israeli presence in the buffer zone 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 ongoing 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. In the 10 August presidential statement, authored by Denmark—the humanitarian penholder for Syria—and focused on violence in Suweida in July, the Council called “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 stress[e] the obligation on all parties to fully abide by its terms and to maintain calm and reduce tensions”.

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 can agree, serving as co-penholders on the issue. In addition, 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.

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.)

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations on Yemen. UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and an official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief on political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Yemen continues to suffer from pervasive insecurity, a deepening humanitarian crisis, and a stalled political settlement to the decade-long civil war. Intra-Yemeni tensions remain high between the Houthis—a Yemeni rebel group that has de facto control of the northwest of the country, including the capital Sana'a, which they seized in 2014—and the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC)—the internationally recognised government of Yemen.

Since the 8 October announcement of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, the Houthis have not conducted any further attacks against Israel or vessels in the Red Sea, after almost two years of tit-for-tat attacks between the Houthis and Israel following the start of the Gaza war. The parties, however, have continued to use inflammatory rhetoric—in November, the Houthis reportedly published an undated letter to Hamas in which they threatened to continue further attacks should the ceasefire collapse. In a 2 November speech, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the group is a “very great threat” that his administration will do “everything necessary to eliminate”.

Grundberg has continued his extensive diplomatic efforts to bring about the immediate release of UN personnel arbitrarily detained by the Houthis. As at 19 November, the UN has said that about 59 UN personnel remain detained by the Houthis. During meetings with regional stakeholders on 10 November in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on 12 November in Saudi Arabia, and on 19 November in Oman, the Special Envoy raised the arbitrary detentions, emphasising that they undermine UN efforts to deliver aid to Houthi-controlled territory and to carry out mediation.

Discussions in the meetings with regional stakeholders also focused on UN efforts to advance dialogue for an inclusive political solution that can address regional concerns and secure lasting peace and stability in Yemen, including through “strengthen[ing] regional consensus” and “ensuring a unified international approach in support of the UN’s mediation efforts.” In Oman, Grundberg also met with the Houthis’ Chief Negotiator, Abdel Salam, and held discussions which focused on the “need for a conducive environment” to advance the political process.

On 5 November, the Chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea), provided a briefing to the Council on the Committee’s work since 5 November 2024.

The latest report of the Panel of Experts (PoE) supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, dated 15 October and covering the period from 1 August 2024 to 31 July, said that the sanctions

regime has been largely ineffective. The report noted that the Houthis use smuggling to generate finances and circumvent the arms embargo, which the PoE determined had been “totally ineffective” and had failed to impact the Houthis’ ability to procure weapons, military materiel, and dual-use items. The report further noted that cooperation between the Houthis and Al-Shabaab (the Somali militant group aligned with Al-Qaida) “has intensified”, including through smuggling, training, and exchange of support. The PoE recommended that the Council “expand the scope of the provisions of resolution 2216 to include inspections of cargo conducted in Government of Yemen-controlled areas and on the high seas”.

On 13 November, Council members held the monthly meeting on Yemen only in closed consultations, forgoing the customary open briefing. This was apparently so that they could receive updates on the ongoing detentions of UN personnel in a confidential setting. The briefers were Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya. (For more information, see our 12 November *What’s in Blue* story.)

On 14 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2801, renewing the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime—comprising targeted financial and travel ban measures—for another year, until 14 November 2026, and the mandate of the PoE until 15 December 2026. The resolution also requests the PoE to present two reports and advice to the Council by 15 April 2026: one on the flow of dual-use components and precursor chemicals to Yemen and another on improving information sharing and flag State capacity to prevent vessels suspected of violating the sanctions regime from entering Yemen. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). (For more information, see our 13 November *What’s in Blue* story.)

According to the 12 November Hunger Hotspots joint report—a periodical early warnings report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP)—Yemen is one of six countries classified as of “highest concern” where populations are facing imminent risk of catastrophic hunger conditions over the period of November 2025 and May 2026. It says that acute food insecurity in Yemen is driven primarily by conflict induced food insecurity, economic deterioration and climate shocks, and that 18 million people (52 percent of the population) are in crisis levels (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] Phase three) or above, with more than 41,000 people projected to face catastrophic levels (IPC Phase five) in Houthi-controlled territory.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 October, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted resolution 60/31 on technical assistance and capacity-building for Yemen in the field of human rights. Among other recommendations, the resolution expresses deep concern over the commission of serious international human rights law abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict and calls on them to renew the truce and immediately implement all of its provisions.

On 10 September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights presented his annual report to the HRC on the technical and capacity-building assistance that the UN Human Rights Office has provided to the National Commission of Inquiry to

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2801 (14 November 2025) renewed the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime until 14 November 2026 and extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee until 15 December 2026. The resolution also requests the PoE to present two reports and advice to the Council by 15 April 2026: one on the flow of dual-use components and precursor chemicals to Yemen and another on improving information sharing and flag State capacity to prevent vessels suspected of violating the sanctions regime from entering Yemen. 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. S/RES/2140 (26 February 2014) expressed the Council’s strong support for the next steps of Yemen’s political transition and established sanctions against those threatening the peace, security or stability of Yemen. 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 detentions of UN and NGO personnel by the Houthis.

Yemen

investigate allegations of violations and abuses committed by all parties to the conflict in the country. Covering the period from September 2024 to August 2025, the High Commissioner's report noted that the human rights landscape in Yemen had deteriorated amid escalating military confrontations in the region, which risked derailing the progress made on peace talks since the 2022 ceasefire. Among other matters, the report concludes with the High Commissioner urging all parties to the conflict to cooperate fully with the National Commission of Inquiry and calling on the Yemeni government to consider strengthening the entity's mandate to ensure that it can effectively fulfil its role as an independent, transparent mechanism.

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, are drawing attention away from finding a peaceful resolution to the Yemeni civil war. Given that, following efforts to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza, the Houthis seem to have ceased their strikes on Israel and in the Red Sea, Council members may take the opportunity provided by the de-escalation to concentrate on mobilising pressure for a resumption of Yemeni peace talks and advancing an inclusive political process.

One option for the Council would be to request a briefing specifically on the regional spillover of the Yemen conflict, to better evaluate how the apparent reduction in regional escalations has impacted the situation in Yemen and what can be done to mitigate a resumption of hostilities, while also discussing ways to accelerate diplomatic efforts aimed at renewing the political process in the country. Grundberg or Mohamed Khaled Khiari, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, could brief. The briefing could be held in an informal closed setting, to allow space for more sensitive discussions.

A related option for the Council would be to adopt a presidential statement encouraging the Yemeni parties to revive concrete discussions towards establishing a political roadmap under UN auspices; commitments to this end were made by the parties in December 2023, but discussions fell through following the Houthis' escalatory reaction to the Gaza war. Council members could stress the need for the UN roadmap to include regional security guarantees—including regarding the Red Sea—to reflect the changed reality since 2023. Given the degradation of socioeconomic conditions in Yemen, members could also call for enhanced economic and humanitarian support for the country. Members could also include a strong condemnation of the Houthis' arbitrary detention of UN and aid personnel, and demand their immediate, unconditional release.

The conflict's harmful effects on children in Yemen are another matter of concern. The PoE's most recent report describes the Houthis' "systematic" child recruitment practices as part of a "long-term plan" aimed at producing "a generation of loyal fighters who are uneducated and indoctrinated and with no viable alternatives". It adds that independent official sources documented 214 cases of recruitment during the reporting period, of whom 140 were killed and 74 remain deployed.

An option for the Council would be to invite to its next Yemen meeting a briefer who can discuss ways to address violations committed against children, such as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier or UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell. This session could be held in closed consultations to allow for a frank exchange. The 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee could also invite Frazier to brief the Committee. The last briefing of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee by a Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict took place in June 2022.

Council Dynamics

Despite being critical of the Houthis, most Council members have maintained their support for an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process and continue to call for advancing mediation efforts between the conflict parties, including a resumption of dialogue and a peace process under UN auspices. There is also general agreement on 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.

Recent negotiations on the sanctions regime renewal, however, have highlighted long-standing differences among the five permanent Council members regarding the Houthis.

France, the UK, and the US have all argued that the Council needs to respond to the worsening situation in Yemen through increased pressure on the Houthis, whom they believe are obstructing a political process in Yemen. All three preferred a more ambitious renewal of the sanctions regime, which would have prohibited the flow of dual-use items to the Houthis, authorised member states to carry out maritime interdictions on vessels suspected of carrying sanctioned items to the group, and asked the panel to investigate increased coordination between the Houthis and Al-Shabaab and other regional terrorist groups.

The US has adopted a particularly hawkish position on the Houthis, unilaterally sanctioning the group and accusing Iran of supporting it. In its explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 2801, the US lamented that the sanctions renewal did not include provisions to mandate an asset freeze on the Houthis—a request it had apparently made during the negotiations.

Conversely, in their explanation of vote following their abstentions, China and Russia expressed concerns that the resolution facilitates the potential for expanding the Yemen sanctions regime and establishing maritime interdictions in the future, arguing that this would escalate tensions and push the parties further away from a political settlement. During the negotiations, China and Russia had apparently requested a straightforward renewal of the sanctions regime.

China and Russia have also criticised foreign military action in Yemen, claiming that such actions further degrade the situation. In this regard, Israel, the UK, and the US have all conducted strikes targeting Houthi infrastructure since the beginning of the Red Sea crisis.

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

Briefing by the Outgoing Chairs of the Security Council's Subsidiary Bodies

Expected Council Action

As is customary in December, the outgoing chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies are expected to provide a briefing on their experiences. The representatives of the five members completing their two-year terms on the Council at the end of 2025 and the subsidiary bodies they each chaired are:

- **Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria)**: the 2745 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee; the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee; and the 1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism.
- **Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana)**: the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee and the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee.
- **Ambassador Jihoon Cha (Republic of Korea [ROK])**: the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee; the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.
- **Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone)**: The 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) Sanctions Committee; the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee; and the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals.
- **Ambassador Samuel Žbogar (Slovenia)**: the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee and the 1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee.

Background

The practice of briefings by the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies was established during the Colombian presidency of the Council in December 2002. It is considered an important aspect of promoting transparency in the work of the sanctions committees and working groups. Since not all subsidiary bodies produce an annual report, this December briefing has also served over the years as a means of creating a publicly accessible institutional memory of these bodies' activities.

Key Recent Developments

At this briefing, the chairs will review developments within their committee or working group during their two-year term, assess their experience, suggest recommendations for improvements, and provide advice to their respective successors.

Briefing on the activities of the [2745 Sanctions Committee on armed groups operating in the Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), Ambassador Bendjama is likely to highlight the lifting of the arms embargo on the CAR government following the unanimous adoption of resolution 2745 on 30 July 2024, which extended and strengthened targeted sanctions measures against armed groups and associated individuals. He may also note that the Security Council adopted resolution 2789 on 29 July 2025, renewing those sanctions measures for another year.

As the outgoing chair of the [1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee \(CTC\)](#), Bendjama is expected to mention the CTC's adoption on 6 January of the "Nonbinding guiding principles on preventing, detecting and disrupting the use of new and emerging financial technologies for terrorist purposes", also known as the "Algeria Guiding Principles". This document was adopted in accordance with the "Delhi Declaration on countering the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes", which was issued during a special session

of the CTC held in India in October 2022. (Among other matters, the Delhi Declaration expressed an intention to develop, with support from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate [CTED], a set of non-binding guiding principles to assist member states to counter the threat posed by the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes.) Additionally, Bendjama is likely to refer to meetings held by the CTC during his term, such as the 27 October briefing marking CTED's 20th anniversary.

Bendjama was also the chair of the [1566 Working Group on Counter-Terrorism](#), which remained dormant in 2024 and 2025.

Ambassador Rodrigues-Birkett is expected to cover the activities of the [2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee](#) during the past two years. Her briefing may include an overview of the Committee's meetings, including briefings by the coordinator of the Panel of Experts (PoE), and by representatives of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). She could also highlight recent designations. In 2024, the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee added two individuals to its sanctions list. In 2025, the Committee designated two additional individuals through the unanimous adoption of resolution 2794, which renewed the sanctions regime. The Council also designated two entities this year: the *Gran Grif* and *Viv Ansanm* gangs.

Rodrigues-Birkett was also the chair of the [2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee](#), which has been dormant in recent years.

As chair of the [2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee](#), Ambassador Cha may mention the adoption of resolution 2801 of 14 November, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime and requested the PoE supporting the Committee to present two reports to the Council by 15 April 2026: one on the flow of dual-use components and precursor chemicals to Yemen, and one on improving information sharing and flag state capacity to prevent vessels suspected of violating the sanctions regime from entering Yemen. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). Cha may also detail presentations provided by the PoE supporting the Committee and note that the Committee additionally received two briefings by OCHA on 17 October 2024 and 31 October 2025, respectively. He may add that the Committee delisted two individuals on 30 July 2024, upon request from a member state.

Regarding the [1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee](#), Cha may note the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2791 of 12 September, which extended and aligned the timeframes of the mandates of the sanctions regime and of the PoE assisting the Committee.

Speaking on the [Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations](#), Cha may elaborate on the efforts made last year to reactivate the Working Group by convening thematic discussions, including on transitions. He may also discuss the challenges that these efforts encountered this year, including difficulties in scheduling meetings due to the limited availability of timeslots resulting from the Council's overloaded programme of work. He may express hope that the Working Group will, in the future, assume a more proactive role in regularly reviewing peacekeeping mandates and following up on the outcomes of the ongoing peace operations review, which the Secretary-General is expected to submit next year.

As chair of the [1533 DRC Sanctions Committee](#), Ambassador

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUBSIDIARY BODIES [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9814](#) (13 December 2024) was a briefing of the outgoing chairs of the subsidiary bodies.

Briefing by the Outgoing Chairs of the Security Council's Subsidiary Bodies

Kanu may refer to his visit to Angola, the DRC, Rwanda, and Uganda in December 2024, which he undertook as part of the Committee's regular engagement with regional states to exchange views on the security situation in eastern DRC and to discuss implementation of the sanctions regime. He may also recall the adoption of resolution 2773 on 21 February, which expressed the Council's readiness to consider additional measures against those contributing to the continuation of the conflict in eastern DRC.

In his capacity as chair of the [2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee](#), Kanu may note the Council's persistent divisions over this regime. Members' diverging views were evident during the adoption of resolution 2781 of 30 May, which most recently renewed the sanctions measures. At that vote, six Council members—Algeria, China, Pakistan, Russia, Sierra Leone, and Somalia—abstained.

Regarding the [Informal Working Group on International Tribunals](#), Kanu is likely to refer to the Working Group's meetings with the president and prosecutor of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), which were held before their semi-annual briefings to the Council in June and December. Kanu is also expected to mention the adoption of resolution 2740 on 27 June 2024, which was drafted by Sierra Leone and extended Serge Brammertz's term as IRMCT prosecutor until 30 June 2026.

Briefing on the activities of the [1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee](#), Ambassador Žbogar may refer to the Committee's 18 August meeting with Dr. Ammar Ibrahim, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq and Chairman of the Iraqi National Committee for Freezing Terrorist Assets. At that meeting, Ibrahim briefed on the work of the Iraqi National Committee and the challenges related to recovery of financial assets and delisting of individuals and entities from the 1518 Sanctions List. Žbogar may also note that the Committee amended one entry on its list on 5 August.

Žbogar is also chair of the [1636 Lebanon Sanctions Committee](#), which has remained dormant in recent years.

As a cross-cutting issue, the briefers are likely to note challenges arising from this year's delay in the appointment of subsidiary body chairs. This impasse, which was the longest delay in appointing chairs in the Council's history, was formally resolved on 29 May when Council members adopted a presidential note setting out the appointments for 2025.

Council Dynamics

The division among Council members over sanctions is particularly stark between the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and others, on the one hand, and China, Russia, and African countries, on the other. The P3 often maintain that measures like arms embargoes and targeted sanctions, such as asset freezes and travel bans, are

essential for mitigating violence and supporting the implementation of peace agreements. By contrast, China, Russia, and African members of the Council acknowledge sanctions as a useful tool but criticise cases where sanctions remain in place for years without adjustments to account for progress or allegedly serve to exacerbate tensions in volatile political contexts. Russia and others have also accused Western countries of downplaying the humanitarian and economic impacts of both Security Council sanctions and those imposed outside the UN context. This year's non-unanimous votes extending the South Sudan and Yemen sanctions regimes illustrate these contrasting positions.

The Council's discussions on sanctions have been particularly challenging when major powers have strategic interests at stake. This year, Council members have been sharply divided over the "snapback" of UN sanctions on Iran. China and Russia opposed the decision taken by the E3 (France, Germany, and the UK) and supported by the US to reactivate those sanctions prior to the October expiration of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme, which had suspended them. China and Russia contested the E3's legal standing to invoke the snapback and portrayed the move as illegitimate, creating "two parallel realities" that have left the applicability of the Iran sanctions regime—including its compliance and reporting obligations—in dispute.

In recent years, the allocation of subsidiary bodies has also been contentious. In July 2016, Council members agreed on a presidential note concerning the preparation of newly elected members during the transitional period between the election and the beginning of their term, including the selection and preparation of chairs of subsidiary bodies. The note established a more consultative process for the chairs' appointment, co-led by a permanent member and the chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG), and stipulated that the appointments should be completed by 1 October.

This deadline has never been met, however. In some instances, the chairs were agreed to in early or mid-October, as happened following the elections in 2019 and 2022. Other times, such as in 2021 and 2023, prolonged negotiations over the allocation of chairs led to final decisions in January of the following years. For this year's chairs, agreement was not reached until May—the longest period with no subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs since this decision was first recorded in a presidential note in 1979. At the time of writing, consultations were ongoing on the allocation of chairs for the five incoming members in 2026: Bahrain, the DRC, Colombia, Latvia, and Liberia. (For more information on the dynamics surrounding the appointment of subsidiary body chairs, see the *In Hindsight* in our May 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Syria

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is expected to hold its monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Najat Rochdi, a representative from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and a civil society representative, are expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 8 December, it will be one year since rebel groups—led by Syria’s now interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa—overthrew the government of then-president Bashar al-Assad. Since then, Sharaa and his interim government have focused efforts on: restructuring governance frameworks; consolidating the armed forces; advancing transitional justice and reconciliation efforts; rehabilitating Syria’s devastated economy; and reintegrating the country into the international community. Despite these efforts, the interim government is still facing many challenges in rebuilding a stable Syria, following over 13 years of civil war.

On 10 November, Sharaa—a former Al-Qaida-affiliated militant, whom the US government had once imprisoned and, until recently, listed as a terrorist—held a historic meeting with US President Donald Trump in Washington DC, marking the first visit of a Syrian head of state to the White House since the country gained independence from France in 1946.

The meeting reportedly included discussions on several topics. These included economic cooperation with Syria and the further easing of sanctions on the country; the fight against terrorist threats in the country; and efforts to ensure Syria’s security, unity, and territorial integrity. Following the meeting, Trump praised Sharaa and said that the US wants to “see Syria become a country that’s very successful”.

On the same day, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced the suspension, for another 180 days, of sanctions under the “Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act” of 2019, replacing an identical waiver which had been in place since 23 May. The US House of Representatives is currently deliberating on fully repealing the act, after the Senate voted in favour of this on 10 October.

Furthermore, the US has succeeded in convincing the Council to lift UN sanctions on Sharaa and Syrian Interior Minister Anas Hattab. On 6 November, the Council adopted resolution 2799, which removed both individuals from the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list. The resolution was authored by the US and was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (China). (For more information, see our 5 November *What’s in Blue* story.) The next day, Sharaa and Hattab were also removed from the US Specially Designated Global Terrorist List and the UK Sanctions List.

The US and Syria also appear to be increasing cooperation on security issues in Syria, including on counter-terrorism. Following the meeting between Sharaa and Trump, Syrian Information Minister Hamza al-Mustafa announced that the country had signed up to join the US-led Global Coalition against ISIL/Da’esh. He added that “[t]he agreement is political and until now contains no military

components”. A 12 November US Central Command (CENTCOM) press release said that CENTCOM forces, in coordination with “partners in Syria”, conducted more than 22 operations against ISIL from 1 October to 6 November, resulting in five ISIL members killed and 19 captured, and said that it will continue to “aggressively pursue” the terrorist group’s “remnants in Syria”.

Syria’s accession to the Global Coalition also seems to have given impetus to discussions between the interim government and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)—a Kurdish-led group which controls most of Syria’s de facto autonomous northeast territory and has been a key US partner in the fight against ISIL. In an 11 November post on X, the SDF Commander Mazloum Abdi praised the move and said that he held a phone call with US Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack, in which he conveyed a commitment to “accelerate the integration of the SDF into the Syrian state”. This was a key element of the 10 March agreement between the two parties, which aimed to have the SDF integrated by the end of the year. Despite such rhetoric, clashes between the two sides have continued to take place, including reported deadly fighting in Raqqa and Deir Ezzor governorates, between 19 and 22 November.

Following 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—tensions between Syrian interim forces and Druze militias have continued to simmer. On 13 November, violent clashes reportedly broke out between the two, leading to several injuries on both sides, illustrating the fragility of the US-brokered ceasefire. At a 16 July press conference, Syria’s National Committee investigating July’s violence in Suweida provided an update on its inquiry, and said that it has “requested the arrest of several army, security, and civilian personnel suspected of involvement in abuses”.

On 19 November, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited an outpost in Israeli-held territory in southern Syria. Netanyahu told troops that Israel’s presence there is of “immense importance” both for safeguarding the country’s security and the Druze population. That same day, at a Security Council meeting on Syria, Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi said that his government “strongly condemns this provocative tour” and called on the UN and the Council to take action to halt such violations by Israel. The UN Deputy Special Envoy for Syria, Najat Rochdi, condemned the visit and called for an end to Israeli violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. On 28 November, Israeli forces conducted a raid and airstrikes on the town of Beit Jinn in southern Syria, which reportedly killed at least 13 people, including two children, and wounded 25. (For more information, see the brief on UNDOF [Golan] in our December 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 14 November, the UN said that, despite major funding cuts, it continued to provide humanitarian aid in southern Syria, including Suweida. OCHA warned, however, that humanitarian assistance is reaching nearly 70 percent fewer people in southern governorates, due to “limited funding and access challenges”. The \$3.2 billion Syria Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for 2025 is only a quarter funded.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2799 (6 November 2025) removed interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and interim Syrian Interior Minister Anas Hattab from the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) focused on a political solution to the Syria 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

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 7 November press briefing note, the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Thameen Al-Keetan, expressed concern over ongoing reports of dozens of abductions and enforced disappearances, in addition to the more than 100,000 people who went missing under the former government. Al-Keetan stressed that the fate and whereabouts of those who have gone missing, both before and after the fall of the former government, must be urgently clarified.

In a 30 October press release, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) warned that repeated massacres and human rights violations, including those allegedly committed by members of the interim government's security forces, risk plunging the country back into conflict. The COI continued to receive reports of extra-judicial killings, torture, forced displacement, and other human rights abuses against Alawite civilians in Damascus and western governorates. It also cited multiple reports of women and girls being abducted by unknown armed actors, with some reportedly subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage. Underscoring the need for swift, concrete action in the country, the Commission called on the interim authorities and member states to urgently address the underlying causes of the recent violence and prevent the recurrence of violations. It likewise urged them to work to build trust between the state and impacted communities, including by holding those responsible accountable.

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's efforts in pursuing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) efforts, and in fostering social cohesion and transitional justice, including accountability and reconciliation.

The UN's future 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 has considered 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.

The Council is expected to undertake a visiting mission to Syria in December. Council members could use the mission to gain a better picture of the security and humanitarian situation in the country. They could hold discussions with Syrian officials on steps being taken by the interim government in the political transition, including in pursuing justice, reconciliation, and national unity efforts. It could also serve as an opportunity for members to engage with Syrian civil society and with UN representatives on the ground to gain insights on present challenges for Syrians and how the Security Council can assist them. Members could issue a presidential statement following their visit, conveying key messages to the interim government based on their findings from the visiting mission.

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 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.

There is broad agreement among Council members that the new Syrian government requires international support to rebuild the country and its devastated economy, including through the easing of unilateral sanctions. Some Council members are taking steps to build relations with the authorities in Damascus and to facilitate a smooth transitional period. In addition to the 10 November meeting with Trump, Sharaa has been hosted by the presidents of France and Russia. On 13 November, during a visit to the UK, Syrian Foreign Minister Assad al-Shibani presided over a ceremony reopening the Syrian Embassy in London, more than a decade following its closure.

Under the Trump administration, the US has been engaged in efforts to stabilise the situation in the country. US mediation has played a key role in brokering the ceasefires with the Kurdish SDF in the northeast and the Druze in the south. It is also mediating discussions to establish a security pact between the Syrian interim government and Israel. In an 11 November interview with *The Washington Post*, Sharaa criticised Israel's "expansionist ambitions" and reiterated Damascus' position that it must withdraw to positions it held before 8 December, in line with the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, underlining that Trump supports this position.

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 Agreement. In contrast, the US has predominantly seen Israel's actions as defensive in nature or tied to ensuring its national security.

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. China has been particularly vocal in calling on Damascus to take a stronger stance on FTFs in the country, some of whom have reportedly been integrated into the Syrian armed forces. Several FTFs constitute part of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, which China considers a terrorist organisation and is also listed under the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida sanctions regime. During negotiations on resolution 2799, China apparently pushed to include language calling on Syria to address the threat posed by FTFs, some of which was included by the US (the penholder). On 6 November, China ultimately abstained from voting on the resolution, and in its explanation of vote said that the draft had failed to "take into full account the counter-terrorism and security situation in Syria" and how the adjustments made would impact the situation.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council will hold an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on West Africa and the Sahel. The Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Leonardo Santos Simão, is expected to brief. A civil society representative may also brief.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation of several countries in West Africa and the Sahel region continues to deteriorate significantly as terrorist groups continue to expand their influence and secure a greater stronghold across the region. In recent months, there has been a marked increase in attacks by armed groups and terrorists in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, which formed the collective defence arrangement, Alliance of Sahel States (AES) in 2023. UN reports from the region observe that entire communities have been emptied in Burkina Faso, northern Mali, and western Niger as violence between armed groups, intercommunal clashes and military activity spreads.

In Mali, Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), an Al-Qaida affiliate, has attacked more than 100 fuel tankers and abducted fuel truck drivers near the capital, Bamako, and other parts of the country. The group's months-long siege has disrupted access to essential supplies and exacerbated the country's acute humanitarian conditions. Some analysts have warned that the blockade is an indication of JNIM's growing hold over Mali and a step towards the group's efforts to force the government into a defensive position. However, Malian officials, such as Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop, insist that the situation is under control and have dismissed the notion that jihadists could soon take over the capital.

Such developments have sparked alarm from several international interlocutors—including the AU, as well as France, the UK, and the US, who have urged their citizens to leave the country immediately. Expressing deep concern over Mali's rapidly deteriorating security situation, AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf has stressed the need for a robust, coordinated international response to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel.

On 18 November, Sierra Leone, serving as Security Council president for November and current ECOWAS Chair, convened an open briefing under the agenda item "Peace Consolidation in West Africa" on enhancing regional counter-terrorism cooperation in West Africa and the Sahel. (For more information, see our 17 November *What's in Blue* story.)

Meanwhile, in early November, fighting reportedly broke out between Boko Haram and rival militants from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the village of Dogon Chiku, which lies on the shores of Lake Chad, an area located at the junction of Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The development was the latest in hostilities between the groups as more non-state armed actors stake a claim for dominance in the Lake Chad Basin. At least 200 terrorists were reportedly killed in the clashes, with most of the deceased believed to be ISWAP members. In December, members of the Informal Expert Group of members of the Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security (IEG) intend to conduct an informal

field mission to Chad to assess localised impacts of climate change on peace and security in the region.

Several countries in West Africa are undergoing political transitions and preparing for key elections in 2025. Côte d'Ivoire held presidential elections on 25 October, with President Alassane Ouattara securing a fourth term. In the lead-up to the elections, sporadic protests erupted in different parts of the country after Ouattara announced his bid for another term, and opposition candidates, former President Laurent Gbagbo and ex-CEO of Credit Suisse Tidjane Thiam, were barred from running. The country's National Security Council dispatched 44,000 personnel from its Defence and Security Forces to deter public demonstrations in the lead-up to the election. Groups of young people attempting to assemble peacefully were also reportedly dispersed with tear gas, with 255 protesters arrested.

Guinea-Bissau's presidential and legislative elections were held on 23 November, with incumbent President Umaro Sissoco Embaló running for re-election despite earlier vows to step down. Embaló has been at odds with the political opposition regarding his legitimacy as president due to disputes over the timing of the end of his current five-year term. Opposition groups assert that his electoral mandate officially expired in February, while the country's Supreme Court of Justice ruled it concluded in September. Embaló has nonetheless continued to remain in office.

At the time of writing, the official results had not been announced, but Embaló and Fernando Dias da Costa, his main contender, had both reportedly declared victory. However, on 26 November, a day before the planned announcement of the election's result, Guinea-Bissau military officers claimed that they had seized "total control" of the country. Referring to themselves as the "High Military Command for the Restoration of Order", the officers reportedly read out a statement on television, declaring that they had ordered the immediate suspension of the electoral process "until further notice", the activities of media outlets, as well as the closure of all borders. Shortly before the announcement, there were reports of heavy gunfire near the Guinea-Bissau presidential palace, the Election Commission headquarters and the Ministry of Interior, where men in military uniform were reportedly seen taking over the main road leading to the building.

Since gaining independence in 1974, Guinea-Bissau has been beset by political turmoil and has experienced several coup d'états as well as multiple coup attempts. A previous coup attempt against Embaló also took place in December 2023, in addition to an alleged coup attempt in late October ahead of the November elections.

On 3 November, Guinea's military leader General Mamadi Doumbouya submitted his candidacy for the 28 December presidential elections, breaking an earlier promise not to run for office and to hand power to a civilian government. Two of Guinea's largest opposition parties, the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG) and the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG Arc en Ciel), have reportedly been suspended from participating in political activities, raising concerns over the election's credibility.

The worsening security and political situations have exacerbated

West Africa and the Sahel

an already dire humanitarian crisis in West Africa and the Sahel region. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has stressed that humanitarian access and funding have reached a breaking point, noting that its 2025 appeal for \$409.7 million to cover needs in the Sahel has only been 32 percent funded, which has prompted significant cuts in critical services related to education and health care, among other areas.

Key Issues and Options

The expanding threat of terrorism across West Africa and the Sahel region is a key concern among Council members, as the region remains a hotspot for extremist groups. The escalation of attacks by armed and terrorist organisations, coupled with their deployment of advanced weaponry, demonstrates the growing sophistication of these groups and the limited effectiveness of existing security arrangements in the region.

Compounding the terrorist threat is the deepening nexus between terrorism and organised crime in the Sahel. Terrorist activities are becoming increasingly intersected with transnational crimes as criminal networks are financing terrorist groups through money laundering, drug economies, arms and human trafficking, and the illicit trade of natural resources. These dynamics have exacerbated the precariousness of the environment, raising serious alarm about potential spillover into previously unaffected regions. In this respect, one option for members would be to consider inviting Ghada Fathi Waly, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, to brief the Council.

The latest political developments in Guinea-Bissau are an issue of concern for Council members to watch. The indefinite suspension of electoral processes could risk greater political turmoil in the country, exacerbating the country's instability and potentially inducing an institutional crisis. Before the December briefing and consultations, Council members may wish to closely monitor the political situation and initiate informal discussions on how to handle the changed scenario.

Supporting regional counter-terrorism efforts effectively in the context of constrained financial resources remains another key issue for Council members. Regional mechanisms—such as the Accra Initiative, ECOWAS through the ECOWAS Standby Force, and the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin—grapple with formidable challenges, including political instability, fragmented security coordination, and persistent funding challenges. Additionally, the AES countries' withdrawal from ECOWAS has strained their relations with other West African countries. Given the rising terrorist threat, the Council could encourage greater dialogue among the Sahelian countries in order to discuss possible counter-terrorism cooperation.

An option would be for Council members to hold an informal interactive dialogue with the AU, ECOWAS, and regional member states to discuss the outcome of the assessment by the Independent High-level Panel on Security, Governance and Development in the Sahel (that is, the Issoufou Panel). The Panel was jointly launched by the UN, the African Union, ECOWAS, and the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) in September 2022 under the leadership of the former president of Niger, Mahamadou Issoufou, to undertake a strategic assessment of “the underlying challenges in the Sahel, including the surge in violent extremism, growing fragility

of the economies of the region due to the impact of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as complex political transitions”. The Panel's report was discussed at the 8th UN-AU annual conference in October 2024, but Council members have yet to be briefed about the report. The IID would allow the interlocutors to discuss strategies for harmonising approaches to address the growing threat of terrorism in West Africa and the Sahel.

Regional member states and Special Representative Simão have expressed support for leveraging resolution 2719, which authorises the use of UN-assessed contributions to finance AU-led peace support operations on a case-by-case basis, to support a peace operation in West Africa and the Sahel. However, key questions remain regarding the practical implementation of the resolution, given that AES countries currently remain outside existing regional security cooperation frameworks. Moreover, attempts to operationalise the resolution in Somalia as a potential case faced considerable setbacks this year, which seems to have dampened discussions on resolution 2719's implementation.

An underlying key issue is the structural conflict drivers in the Sahel, such as poor governance, underdevelopment, severe humanitarian conditions, and climate change, which remain key challenges in promoting regional security and sustainable economic development. One option for Council members would be to strengthen collaboration with the Peacebuilding Commission to support locally-led initiatives that promote good governance and enhance regional and cross-border cooperation, including within the framework of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel.

Council and Wider Dynamics

There is broad concern in the Council about the threat of terrorism and the dire security and humanitarian crises affecting West Africa and the Sahel. Sierra Leone and several other Council members have emphasised the need for the Council to pay close attention to the region, including by exploring avenues to support regional efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism.

At the same time, differences persist among Council members regarding the broader security context, their strategies for engaging with the region, and their respective interests. The US and European members have expressed concern over Russia's growing influence and its engagement with military juntas. The withdrawal of Western military assistance has also created a security vacuum in the region, inducing several Sahelian countries to pursue alternative partnerships, most notably with Russia.

Russia, in contrast, has maintained that the current security challenges are rooted in Western interference in the region and has called for collective international support for the AES countries. Moscow has also expanded its footprint in the region through bilateral defence agreements and the deployment of personnel from the Africa Corps, which is the successor to the Wagner Group and reportedly operates under the direct oversight of the Russian Ministry of Defence. However, Russian forces deployed in the region have increasingly come under attack, demonstrating the precariousness of the operating environment.

The current US administration under President Donald Trump seems to be re-engaging with the military governments in the

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sub-region after a period of strained relations, seeking to re-establish security cooperation and maintain its strategic presence in the Sahel. Analysts have suggested that this reset in US relations with these countries is partly driven by strategic interests in accessing critical minerals and expanding economic engagement. Meanwhile, in late October, the US redesignated Nigeria as a “Country of Particular Concern”, based on claims that Christians in the country are being persecuted. Trump has reportedly threatened military action in Nigeria if the country fails to crack down on the killings and protect Christian communities.

France’s relations with Mali have deteriorated further. Both sides

have suspended counter-terrorism cooperation and declared certain embassy staff persona non grata in their respective capitals. Tensions escalated after Malian authorities arrested French national Yann Vezilier on espionage charges. France rejected the allegations, noting that Vezilier is a member of its embassy in Bamako. Additionally, Mali’s media regulator, the High Authority for Communication, had suspended French broadcasters LCI and TF1 until further notice, reportedly claiming that both television services had broadcast “unverified information and falsehoods” concerning the JNIM-imposed fuel blockade in the country.

Denmark and Sierra Leone are co-penholders on UNOWAS.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security 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.

Background and 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.

Ahead of UNSMIL’s mandate renewal in October, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a report containing a strategic review of the mission aimed at increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of UNSMIL’s overall structure. The review reiterated that UNSMIL’s core mandate is to support a political solution to the Libyan conflict and therefore recommended streamlining all the mission’s workstreams to prioritise this task. It emphasised the importance of the economic track to the country’s political transition and long-term stability and recommended strengthening this aspect of UNSMIL’s mandate. The review also highlighted the importance of UNSMIL’s engagement in human rights and the rule of law as integral components of the political process. In this regard, it advised that UNSMIL should fully leverage the convening power of the UN by leading and providing Secretariat support to the working groups

of the Berlin Process, the UN-supported negotiation track that facilitated the 2020 ceasefire agreement. Another one of the review’s recommendations was to streamline the mission’s engagement on the security track from ceasefire implementation to confidence-building and reunification of military and security institutions.

In terms of operational configuration, the review recommended that UNSMIL maintain a consistent presence in eastern and southern Libya, with targeted expansions in Benghazi and Sabha. The review argued that this is essential for the mission to be perceived as representative and inclusive. It acknowledged that expanding UNSMIL’s presence will require significant resources and recommended that the mission offset these costs through reallocation of resources, realigned staffing, and improved efficiency through cost-saving measures and external support services.

On 31 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2796, which extended the mandate of UNSMIL for another year. The resolution included the above-mentioned recommendations from the strategic review.

On 18 October, UNSMIL issued a statement welcoming the holding of elections that day in 16 municipalities in eastern, central and southern parts of the country. Initially scheduled for August, the election process in these municipalities was postponed due to a combination of deliberate disruptions, security incidents, and political interference. The statement also commended the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) and its staff for successfully organising 91 municipal council elections across Libya over the past year despite challenging circumstances.

During the Security Council’s most recent briefing on Libya, held on 14 October, Tetteh noted the lack of progress toward reaching major milestones on the political roadmap to lead Libya to national elections and unified institutions. (The roadmap consists of three core pillars: adopting a viable electoral framework for presidential and legislative polls; unifying institutions under a new government; and launching a structured dialogue on governance, economic, security, and reconciliation issues to pave the way for these elections and address long-term conflict drivers.) She called on political leaders to engage in good faith in preparing for the elections. However, she

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2796 (31 October 2025) extended UNSMIL’s mandate for twelve months and encouraged the mission to implement the recommendations from the strategic review. 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/2025/611 (30 September 2025) contained strategic review of UNSMIL.

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indicated that UNSMIL is prepared to pursue an alternative course and may seek the Council's support to advance Libya's political transition should the stalemate persist.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 11 November, Libya's human rights record was examined by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group during the UPR's 50th session in Geneva, marking its fourth review under the UPR. To facilitate the review, a national report was provided by the state under review in addition to a compilation and summary prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

At the session, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Eltaher Salem M. Elbaour, presented the steps Libya has taken to implement recommendations posed during its previous reviews, which it committed to follow up on. Elbaour also highlighted recent human rights developments in the country, reaffirming the Libyan government's condemnation of all human rights violations and its commitment to ensuring accountability and human rights for the Libyan people despite the prevailing challenges.

The Working Group subsequently adopted the report on Libya at its 15th meeting, held on 14 November.

Key Issues and Options

A key concern for the Council remains the fragile security situation in the country, which has become even more acute after the recent escalation of violence in Tripoli in May. While the violence has ceased, the UN has warned that it could have spiralled out of control and seriously undermined the permanent ceasefire reached in 2020. Citing reports of military build-up in and around Tripoli in July, UNSMIL has called on all parties to refrain from using force and to avoid actions that could lead to renewed clashes. The violence underscores the need for sustained attention to the political and security dynamics in Libya. A possible option for the Slovenian presidency is to invite a civil society representative to an informal meeting to hear perspectives on the potential undercurrents that could affect the stability of the country.

Another continuing core issue for the Council is how best to support the road map for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process that Tetteh presented in August. One of the main objectives for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country's rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement

on electoral laws, including the possible establishment of a unified interim government to organise the elections.

Given the ongoing renewed efforts by UNSMIL to facilitate dialogue between Libyan political stakeholders, Council members wish to ask Tetteh how they can support the roadmap that UNSMIL presented in August, particularly political progress towards national elections to unify Libya's divided government. One option might be a presidential statement as a follow-up to the press statement issued by the Council in September.

Resolution 2796 encouraged the mission to implement various recommendations from the most recent strategic review. Given that the UN is facing a serious financial crisis and considering the UN80 initiative, a core issue for the Council will be the ability of UNSMIL to implement these recommendations. While the resolution mandated the Secretary-General to report to the Council on this issue, Council members could seek a briefing on this issue in closed consultations.

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 October meeting on Libya, Council members were generally supportive of the political roadmap presented by Tetteh. Most members emphasised that the process must be Libyan-led and Libyan-owned and fully inclusive of all political actors to ensure success. Members such as Greece, the Republic of Korea, Russia, and the UK stressed the urgency for Libyan stakeholders, particularly the House of Representatives and the High Council of State, to complete the initial milestones—reconstituting the High National Elections Commission (HNEC) and adopting the constitutional/electoral framework—as these first steps are critical to translating the roadmap into tangible actions and preventing continued delays.

Counter-Terrorism

Expected Council Action

In December, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution extending the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED).

CTED's current mandate expires on 31 December.

Background

On 28 September 2001, the Council adopted resolution 1373 which, among other matters, decided that all states must criminalise terrorist acts, suppress terrorist financing, prevent the movement of terrorists through their borders, and prosecute those engaging in

terrorism. The resolution also established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) to monitor implementation and called on states to report to the CTC on the steps taken to implement the measures outlined in it.

On 26 March 2004, resolution 1535 established CTED as a special political mission headquartered in New York and mandated it to support the work of the CTC, including by coordinating the process of monitoring the implementation of resolution 1373. The Council has since requested CTED to support the CTC in relation to specific issues, such as foreign terrorist fighters, the linkages between terrorism and organised crime, and aviation security.

UN DOCUMENTS ON COUNTER-TERRORISM Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2617 (30 December 2021) extended CTED's mandate until 31 December 2025. S/RES/2734 (10 June 2024) extended the mandates of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee and the Office of the Ombudsperson until June 2027. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2025/482](#) (21 July 2025) is the 36th report of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

Counter-Terrorism

CTED implements its mandate in several ways. It conducts country visits on the CTC's behalf to assess member states' counter-terrorism efforts, including progress made, remaining shortfalls, and priority areas for technical assistance. These visits also serve to identify good practices employed by member states in implementing the Council's counter-terrorism resolutions as well as gaps in implementation. They are often conducted together with experts from relevant international agencies, including the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL), the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and the World Customs Organisation (WCO), as well as relevant regional and subregional organisation and other actors with expertise of counter-terrorism.

CTED also conducts research and analysis concerning thematic issues and specific aspects of counter-terrorism, such as the exploitation of children by terrorist groups, border management, and supporting victims of sexual and gender-based violence linked to terrorism, and publishes reports and analytical briefs on these topics. In addition, CTED facilitates the delivery of technical assistance by linking existing projects with the needs of member states identified by CTED during its country visits. It also works with other entities in the UN system and the international community more broadly to raise awareness of particular counter-terrorism issues. On 22 October, for example, CTED convened a meeting on "The definition of terrorist acts and international human rights law" with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights.

In recent years, CTED has assisted the CTC with the development of non-binding guiding principles intended to assist the efforts of member states to counter the threat posed by the use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes referred to in the Delhi Declaration, which was adopted during a special session of the CTC held in India in October 2022. CTC members agreed to divide the non-binding guiding principles into three products covering different topics: unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), the use of new and emerging financial technologies, and information and communication technologies (ICTs). The first product on UAS, which is referred to as the "Abu Dhabi Guiding Principles", was issued in December 2023. The second product on new financial technologies, which is known as the "Algeria Guiding Principles", was issued in January 2025. At the time of writing, work on the non-binding

guiding principles on ICTs had not yet begun.

CTED's mandate was last renewed when resolution 2617 was adopted on 30 December 2021. The negotiations focused on language relating to human rights; engagement between CTED and civil society; illicit trade in cultural property; UAS; and terrorist acts motivated by xenophobia, racism, and other forms of intolerance. Then-Council member Ireland also sought to include text calling on CTED to report to the CTC on practical steps it has taken to integrate gender and human rights into its work, however, this language was ultimately not included. (For more information, see our 30 December 2021 *What's in Blue* story.)

On 27 October, the CTC held an open briefing to commemorate CTED's twentieth anniversary titled "CTED at twenty: advancing global counter-terrorism efforts for the future". The meeting was divided into two substantive sessions; one focusing on CTED's impact during the last twenty years and a second highlighting the evolving terrorism threat and the steps CTED will take to raise awareness of emerging issues, trends, and developments.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of CTED's mandate is a key issue for the Council in December. The Council will need to review the mission's mandate and consider whether to extend it for an additional period without making substantive changes or if there is a need to make adjustments. It seems that Council members are generally very supportive of CTED and its work, and some members are likely to push for an extension of its mandate with little or no amendments. At least one permanent member, however, might propose amendments to language relating to international law, gender, human rights, youth, and women, peace, and security. Members who favour retaining this language may wish to consider proposing compromise language that might be acceptable to all members.

Council Dynamics

In general, counter-terrorism enjoys broad support among all Council members. Members do place varying degrees of emphasis, however, on the different approaches to managing the terrorist threat. Some members favour an approach that is founded on human rights, prevention, and the involvement of civil society, while other members prefer to focus more closely on security and law enforcement, including kinetic operations intended to neutralise terrorist groups.

The US is the penholder on counter-terrorism. Algeria is the chair of the CTC.

Security Council Report Staff

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Executive Director

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Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 9429

Web securitycouncilreport.org

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