

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In January 2026, Somalia will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Somalia intends to organise one signature event, an open debate titled “[Reaffirming international rule of law: pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice, and multilateralism](#)” under the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is expected to chair the meeting. Possible briefers include Secretary-General António Guterres; Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission Mahmoud Ali Youssouf; and the Founding President of the African Institute of International Law, Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf.

Somalia intends to convene the quarterly open debate on “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)” (MEPQ) at ministerial level. Somali Foreign Minister Abdusalam Abdi Ali is expected to chair the meeting.

Additional Middle Eastern issues anticipated in January are:

- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting; mandate renewal of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA); and renewal of the monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, originally mandated by Security Council resolution 2722 in January 2024.
- [Syria](#), meetings on political and humanitarian issues, and on the chemical weapons track.

Issues in the Americas that will be featured in January’s programme of work are:

- [Colombia](#), the quarterly briefing on the work of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia; and
- [Haiti](#), the quarterly briefing on the work of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and renewal of BINUH’s mandate.

The only meeting on an African issue scheduled for the month is the semi-annual briefing from the [International Criminal Court \(ICC\) on the Court’s Darfur-related activities](#).

The Council also expects to renew the mandate of the [UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel \(UNOWAS\)](#), which expires on 31 January, through an exchange of letters with the Secretary-General.

Regarding European issues, Council members are scheduled to hold their semi-annual consultations on the [UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus \(UNFICYP\)](#) and to vote on a resolution renewing the mission’s mandate, which expires on 31 January. A private meeting with UNFICYP troop-contributing countries is also expected ahead of the vote on the renewal resolution.

Council members will also receive a briefing in consultations on the work of the [UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia \(UNRCCA\)](#).

Additional meetings on these and other issues—including [Ukraine](#), [Sudan](#), and [Venezuela](#)—may be scheduled during the month depending on developments.

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In Hindsight: The Security Council in 2025 and the Year Ahead

In 2025, divisions in the Security Council continued to constrain the body's ability to address some of the more dire security crises confronting the world. Dynamics in the Council shifted over the year as the new US administration's policy positions became clearer. Key resolutions were adopted on Gaza and Haiti, although their implementation poses significant challenges. The Council adopted a resolution on Ukraine that had little impact on the worsening situation in the country, and it likewise struggled to gain traction on other entrenched crises in Sudan and Myanmar. An unusually high number of unexpected crisis situations—ranging from conflicts between Cambodia and Thailand and between India and Pakistan to a coup in Guinea-Bissau and tensions between the US and Venezuela—were the focus of some attention. Syria is one issue where the Council demonstrated considerable unity in 2025, and the country now has an opportunity to build a brighter future after years of civil war.

In 2026, the Council will have to address several critical issues. Among these are the future of peace operations, the implementation of resolutions on Gaza and Haiti, and the impact of the UN's liquidity crisis on its work. It will also need to make a crucial recommendation to the General Assembly on who should lead the UN as its next Secretary-General. These and other issues with important bearing on international peace and security point to a year ahead with both challenges and opportunities.

Declining Outcomes and Voting Patterns Demonstrate Deep Divisions

The 44 resolutions adopted in 2025 continue a downward trend in output for the fifth straight year—compared to 46 in 2024, 50 in 2023, 54 in 2022, and 57 in 2021. It also marks the lowest number of resolutions since 1991 (42). In addition, only 61.4 percent of the resolutions adopted in 2025 had the support of all 15 Council members. This is less than the 65.2 percent adopted unanimously in 2024, and it represents a low level of unanimity for the post-Cold War period, including in the prior decade. For example, between 2014 and 2023, the Council adopted 83.9 percent of its resolutions (494 of 589) unanimously.¹

In 2025, the Council adopted eight presidential statements, one more than 2024 (seven) and two more than 2023 (six). Presidential statements, which require the support of all 15 Council members to be adopted, focused on the following issues in 2025: political developments in Lebanon, as well as the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon; counter-terrorism, especially in Africa; the 2025 review of the UN's peacebuilding architecture; violence against civilians in Latakia and Tartus, Syria; conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of disputes; violence against civilians in Suweida, Syria; the importance of the purposes and principles of the UN Charter; and the 30th anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

Notwithstanding the slight uptick in the number of presidential statements over the past two years, the eight adopted in 2025 are still very low in comparison with the average annual output of presidential statements in recent decades. For example, in the decade from 2011-2020, the Council adopted a total of 220 presidential

statements (an average of 22 per year), and the six adopted in 2023 were the lowest number since the Council began using its current documentation for presidential statements in 1994.

Council members issued 34 press statements in 2025. Unlike resolutions and presidential statements, press statements are not formal documents of the Security Council. Nonetheless, they reflect the collective will of Council members, and like presidential statements, require unanimity to be adopted. The number of press statements has declined considerably in recent years. Last year there were 43, and in 2023 there were 34, the same as in 2025. However, in the decade from 2013-2022, the Council issued a total of 879 press statements, or an average of 87.9 per year.

The low number of outcomes (resolutions, presidential statements, and press statements) reflects the difficulty that the Council has had in reaching agreement. On some of the most violent conflicts, for example, the Council's output has been limited, its voice largely muted by difficult dynamics. There was only one product on the war in Ukraine in 2025: resolution 2774 of 24 February, a short text imploring a swift end to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. Similarly, only one formal outcome was adopted on the war in Gaza, resolution 2803 of 17 November, which endorsed the "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict", welcomed the establishment of a Board of Peace (BoP) as a "transitional administration with international legal personality", and authorised the BoP to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza. Both these resolutions were adopted non-unanimously: all five of the Council's European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK) abstained on resolution 2774, while China and Russia abstained on resolution 2803. While it is notable that Council members agreed to six press statements on Sudan in 2025, the Council has not been able to adopt a formal outcome in response to the dire security and humanitarian situation in Darfur and other parts of the country in 2025. The only formal outcome on Sudan in 2025 was the renewal of the Panel of Experts of the 1591 Sanctions Committee. Similarly, efforts to pursue a resolution or presidential statement for several months in 2025 on the civil war in Myanmar were stymied, largely due to resistance from China and Russia; Council members were only able to muster one press statement in response to this conflict during the year.

Besides the two vetoes on the war in Gaza, two other vetoes were cast in 2025: both on amendments on draft resolutions on the war in Ukraine. This is a decrease from the eight vetoes on seven draft resolutions in 2024, which were the highest number of vetoes and vetoed draft resolutions in any year since 1986.

The 2025 vetoes reveal interesting trends in Council dynamics. The US vetoed the two draft resolutions on Gaza, which is not surprising, but both were penned by all ten elected members (E10) of the Security Council. This reflects the growing sense of identity among the E10 members, who, in recent years, have demonstrated the ability to collaborate to try to break impasses on difficult issues. In this regard, their collective effort to pen draft resolutions on Gaza in June and September, while unsuccessful, was the continuation of a working method developed in 2024, when the E10 collectively

¹ United Nations, "Highlights of Security Council Practice in 2023 - Voting," (<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/highlights-2023-D10>)

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drafted resolution 2728, which demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Notwithstanding the US vetoes, both draft resolutions had the support of the other 14 members of the Council.

In February, Russia vetoed two amendments on US-authored resolution 2774, which implored a swift end to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the UK), collectively known as the E5, were disappointed that the text omitted any reference to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. One of the vetoed amendments, which was proposed by the E5, reaffirmed the Council's commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The second, also proposed by the E5, urged a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Ukraine in line with the UN Charter and the principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity of states. The US also introduced its draft resolution in the General Assembly, where it was adopted earlier that day with amendments that were not in the Council's resolution, including a reference to Russia's "full-scale invasion" of Ukraine and "the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders, extending to its territorial waters".

The Role of the US

A new US administration brought significant changes in US policy to the Security Council. On some thematic files, the US now shares positions closer to China and Russia than its traditional P5 allies, France and the UK. The US has opposed the Council's work on climate change, peace and security and certain aspects of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda—seeking (often successfully) to remove references to "climate change" and "gender" in negotiations on Council outcomes. In many cases, it has also successfully advocated for caveating references to international humanitarian law with the qualifier "as applicable" in outcomes.

The US played a decisive role in some of the key decisions the Council made in 2025. It co-penned resolution 2793 on Haiti with Panama. Adopted on 30 September, this resolution authorised UN member states to transition the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti into a "Gang Suppression Force" (GSF) for an initial period of 12 months and requested that the Secretary-General establish a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH). In addition, on 17 November, the Council adopted the US-authored resolution 2803, which endorsed the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, welcomed the establishment of a Board of Peace (BoP), and authorised the BoP to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza.

These resolutions were not without controversy, however. Resolution 2793 was adopted with three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia), while there were two abstentions (China and Russia) on resolution 2803. These members expressed significant misgivings about both resolutions; some other members who supported them nonetheless had concerns, including about how they would be implemented. With regard to Haiti, Council members noted

the support of countries in the region for resolution 2793. However, some raised questions about the composition of the Gang Suppression Force (GSF), its financing, its rules of engagement, and its concept of operations—while emphasising the importance of its strict adherence to international law. With regard to Gaza, some Council members welcomed the US's "20-point plan" and noted the support of the Palestinian Authority and Arab countries for resolution 2803 in their explanations of vote on this resolution. However, concerns were expressed by a number of members about issues such as the composition of the ISF in Gaza, its terms of reference, and what they perceived as insufficient attention accorded to the Palestinian role in the future of Gaza.

Whither Peace Operations?

The UN's liquidity crisis has resulted in significant austerity measures that have affected much of the UN's work in 2025, including the peacekeeping operations that the Council mandates and oversees. A major factor contributing to the resource-constrained environment for peacekeeping is the significant arrears in assessed contributions. Notable in this regard are the significant arrears of three permanent members: the US, China, and Russia, who are assessed to contribute 26.1584 percent, 23.7851 percent, and 2.4898 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget, respectively. As at 15 November, the US owed \$2.370 billion, China \$697 million, and Russia \$193 million. Contingency measures are starting to be carried out, including a 15 percent cut in expenditures for peacekeeping operations and the repatriation of 25 percent of uniformed personnel that Secretary-General António Guterres announced in a 10 October letter to UN staff.

The US, in particular, exercised significant influence on the mandates of UN peace operations in 2025. It often pushed for shorter-term extensions of missions than had previously been the norm, as with the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) and the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UMMHA) in July. At times, it requested reporting on the potential transition of peace operations. This was the case, for example, in the negotiations on the mandate renewals of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in November. In one instance, the US advocated for the outright closure of a mission, the UN Interim Force for Lebanon (UNIFIL), whose mandate was extended for a final time until 31 December 2026 through the adoption of resolution 2790 on 28 August 2025. In the case of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the US position led to a considerable reduction of the mission's tasks. When the Council renewed the verification mission through resolution 2798 of 31 October 2025, it removed two of the mission's tasks—verifying compliance with the restorative sentences handed by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP) and monitoring implementation of the 2016 peace agreement's ethnic chapter—at the request of the US.

In 2025, in contrast to most Council members, the US was unwilling to co-finance the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) through UN-assessed contributions as outlined in resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, a position also held

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by the previous US administration.² This has generated concerns about the future financial viability of the mission, as reflected in the 15 December 2025 communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC).

A positive development in 2025 was the “Peacekeeping Trio Initiative” spearheaded by three elected members—Denmark, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—who sought to highlight this issue as a key priority of their Security Council terms. The three countries organised a series of informal roundtables to facilitate discussions on various aspects of peacekeeping, most importantly the ongoing review of peace operations, which is being conducted by the UN Secretariat and is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2026. Denmark, Pakistan, and the ROK also coordinated among themselves in organising formal meetings in the Council during their monthly presidencies in March, July, and September, respectively, to discuss issues around the future of peacekeeping at a time when peacekeeping is facing significant challenges.

Other Thematic Initiatives

Several other important thematic initiatives affected the Council’s work in 2025. On 22 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2788 on strengthening mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The resolution reaffirms the Council’s commitment to making frequent use of the UN Charter’s pacific settlement tools and requests the Secretary-General to report on its implementation by July 2026.

On 26 November, the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted substantively identical resolutions on the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR). The twin draft resolutions, unanimously adopted in the Security Council as resolution 2805, affirm that the latest PBAR aims to enhance the implementation and impact of UN peacebuilding activities at the field level. They also restate the UN’s long-standing commitment to conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and sustaining peace, emphasising that these efforts rely on the mutually reinforcing contributions of development, human rights, and peace and security initiatives.

Another notable thematic development in 2025 was the Security Council’s unanimous adoption of resolution 2807 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) on 12 December. The resolution, which was co-authored by Guyana and Sierra Leone, aims to promote engagement by member states, the Security Council, and other UN entities on the YPS agenda. Among other things, it decides to continue the consideration of the YPS agenda in the Council’s work, including through open debates to discuss the Secretary-General’s biennial reports on YPS submitted pursuant to resolution 2535 of 14 July 2020.

Council members supportive of the body’s work on women, peace and security and climate, peace and security continued to promote these issues, notwithstanding difficult political headwinds. In 2025, nine Council members—Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, Panama, the ROK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and the UK—sought

to give continuity to some aspect of the Shared Commitments on the WPS initiative, which was started in 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico. In 2025, participants in this initiative held regular WPS-focused press stakeouts, which are designed to enhance the visibility of the Council’s discussions on WPS.³

In 2025, nine Council members (Denmark, France, Greece, Guyana, Panama, the ROK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and the UK) were climate, peace and security “pledgers”, striving to address the effects of climate change on international peace and security in the Council. The pledgers held seven stakeouts prior to formal Council meetings in 2025, delivering joint statements highlighting the relevance of climate change to the topic of the meeting.⁴

The Informal Expert Group of members of the Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security conducted a visiting mission to the Chadian part of the Lake Chad Basin from 7-12 December. During the visit, the delegation—consisting of Slovenia, Guyana, the ROK, Denmark, France, Greece, Sierra Leone, and the UK—met with relevant stakeholders to discuss localised impacts of climate change on peace and security across Chad and the broader region.

The Impact of the Delay in the Appointment of Subsidiary Body Chairs

In 2025, agreement on the appointment of the chairs of subsidiary bodies was not reached until 29 May—the longest period with no subsidiary body chairs and vice-chairs since this decision was first recorded in a presidential note in 1979. As a result of the delay, contingency measures had to be developed whereby Council presidents handled urgent responsibilities of subsidiary body chairs during their presidencies until chair appointments were finalised, unless another member objected. In rare instances, Council presidents were able to process requests for exemptions to measures imposed by sanctions regimes, brief the Council on the work of subsidiary bodies, and facilitate the publication of reports of experts assisting sanctions committees. (For more on the impact of the delay in appointing subsidiary body chairs, please see our May 2025 *In Hindsight*.)

Following the appointment of the chairs, the Council had to play catch-up at the subsidiary body level for the remainder of the year. This challenge was highlighted during the briefings of the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies on 17 December 2025. In this regard, Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria), who chaired the 2745 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee and the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee, observed that operating in a condensed timeframe created significant “operational consequences”, hindering strategic planning and engagement with member states and creating scheduling conflicts between subsidiary body meetings and Security Council activities. At the time of writing, agreement on the subsidiary body chairs for 2026 had yet to be finalised.

The Year Ahead

Several major crises will continue to confront the Council in 2026.

² Resolution 2719 determines that AU-led peace support operations authorised by the Council (such as AUSSOM) should have access to UN-assessed contributions up to 75 percent of their annual budgets.

³ These were held in relation to formal Council meetings on Afghanistan (10 March), Haiti (21 April), South Sudan (16 April), Yemen (14 May), the DRC (27 June), West Africa (7 August), conflict-related sexual violence (19 August), Afghanistan (17 September), WPS (6 October) and South Sudan (11 November).

⁴ Stake outs were held prior to meetings on Yemen (6 March), the Great Lakes region (16 April), the protection of civilians (22 May), Libya (24 June), South Sudan (18 August), UN peace operations (9 September) and West Africa and the Sahel (18 December).

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There are more conflicts confronting the world now than at any point since the end of World War II. This raises significant questions regarding how a divided Council will be able to muster the political will needed to mitigate violence and support political solutions in Myanmar, South Sudan, Sudan, Yemen, and West Africa, among other items on its agenda. Unanticipated crises will surely arise as well, as they did, for example, with respect to India and Pakistan and Thailand and Cambodia in 2025.

In 2026, a host of complex challenges are likely to be linked to the implementation of resolutions 2793 and 2803 on Haiti and Gaza, respectively. An important issue to consider in the coming year is how robustly the Council will be able to exercise its oversight role with respect to the implementation of these resolutions. Reporting requirements to the Council are outlined in both texts, which could provide the Council with useful information to facilitate this oversight role.⁵

In 2026, the Security Council's role on Ukraine will depend on whether a peace agreement is reached. If that happens, it is possible that the Council could have a role in monitoring its implementation. If there is no agreement, the Council is likely to continue to be hamstrung on this issue by the involvement of one of its permanent members (that is, Russia).

Council members are likely to maintain their unity in 2026 around the need to support the political transition in Syria, the site of a Council visiting mission in December. One issue that they will continue to watch closely is the threat of intercommunal violence in the country, which was a source of considerable concern to the Council in 2025.

Another pressing issue for the Council in 2026 will be its engagement with peace operations, considering the austerity crisis facing the UN and the US administration's highly critical view of UN peace operations. The recommendations from the Secretariat's review of UN peace operations, expected to be finalised early this year, may

inform Council members' deliberations on the future of peace operations.

One open question in 2026 is how the Council will engage on the "Non-Proliferation" file with respect to the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. In September 2025, the "E3" parties to the JCPOA—France, Germany, and the UK—triggered the "snapback" mechanism to reimpose UN sanctions on Iran that the JCPOA and resolution 2231 had suspended. China and Russia have contested the E3's legal and procedural standing to activate the mechanism and argued that all sanctions were permanently lifted on 18 October 2025, when the JCPOA and resolution 2231 were originally set to expire. Several Council members maintain that UN sanctions measures on Iran have been reactivated and that the Security Council's 1737 Sanctions Committee and its supporting Panel of Experts (PoE) have been restored.

Council members are also expected to devote considerable time and effort in 2026 to engaging with candidates and conducting straw polls for a new Secretary-General, especially in the second half of the year. The Council's recommendation to the General Assembly for the appointment of the next Secretary-General will be one of the most important decisions it makes in 2026.

As international peace and security difficulties mount, criticisms of the UN system, including the Security Council, abound, some justified, others less so. In this context, multilateral institutions need to work with member states to solve political, security, and economic crises that transcend borders and strike at the most vulnerable. It is precisely at these moments that the world needs a more effective Security Council. Security Council Report looks forward to continuing to report on the efforts of Council members striving to rise to the challenge of maintaining international peace and security in an increasingly troubled world.

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Iraq

On 2 December, the Security Council held an open briefing on the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (S/PV.10055). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, Mohamed Al Hassan, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's final reports on UNAMI (S/2025/757) and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property (S/2025/756). Iraq and Kuwait participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Visiting Mission to Lebanon and Syria

From 2 to 7 December 2025, the Security Council travelled to Syria and Lebanon on an official visiting mission.

The Council spent one day (4 December) in Damascus, Syria, marking the first time the Council visited the country. Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN, Samuel Žbogar, said that the Council's objective during the visit to Damascus was to build trust. Council members met with multiple relevant interlocutors and stakeholders, including high-level government officials, UN country team officials, representatives from civil society and transitional justice and accountability mechanisms, and local and religious leaders.

In Beirut, the Council delegation held meetings with Lebanese

⁵ Resolution 2793 requests the UN Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on the implementation of the resolution as part of his regular reports on Haiti. It also requests the GSF Special Representative, in coordination with the Haitian government and the UN, to develop a "strategy and metrics for measuring success of the mission and concrete timebound objectives, with benchmarks towards an end-state", to be presented to the Council within nine months of the resolution's adoption. Resolution 2803 specified that the BoP would operate in a manner consistent with relevant international legal principles and requested it to submit a written report to the Security Council every six months.

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authorities, including President Joseph Aoun, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri, and Prime Minister Nawaf Salam. The Council also met with the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), General Rodolphe Haykal, and the Chair of the Cessation of Hostilities Mechanism, US Lieutenant General Joseph Clearfield. In addition, the Council travelled to Naqoura, where it received a briefing by Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Major General Diodato Abagnara and visited a nearby UNIFIL position. It seems that during their various engagements, Council members expressed support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon, and for the full implementation of resolution 1701. Members also apparently expressed support for the November 2024 cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon and discussed the Lebanese government's commitment to ensuring a state monopoly over arms throughout the territory of Lebanon. It seems that Council members further emphasised the importance of respecting the safety and security of peacekeepers and discussed issues such as strengthening of the LAF, economic and institutional reforms, and the reconstruction of southern Lebanon.

On 18 December, the Council held a briefing on the visit, in which Žbogar delivered a statement on behalf of the co-leads of the mission, Algeria, Denmark and Slovenia (S/PV.10071).

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

On 8 December, Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs Elina Valtonen, in her capacity as the current Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), briefed the Security Council on the organisation's activities (S/PV.10056). Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon chaired the meeting.

Guinea-Bissau

On 8 December, Council members held closed consultations on Guinea-Bissau. Council member Sierra Leone requested the meeting, citing the recent unconstitutional change of government in the country and the suspension of the electoral process. The Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, briefed at the meeting. It seems that Denmark and Sierra Leone, the co-penholders on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), proposed a draft press statement on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. Although several Council members supported the initiative, Russia apparently expressed reservations, arguing that at the time there was no reliable information about the situation and that the Council should not rush to judgment. Denmark and Sierra Leone then circulated press elements during the consultations, but agreement was not possible due to Russia's position.

Ukraine

On 9 December, the Security Council held an open briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10057). Council members Denmark, France, Greece, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, and the UK requested the meeting, citing the rising numbers of civilian casualties in Ukraine,

ongoing attacks on energy infrastructure in the country as winter is setting in, and the urgent need for a ceasefire. Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon chaired the meeting. The briefers at the meeting were Kayoko Gotoh, the Officer-in-Charge for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas at the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO); Joyce Msuya, the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs; and Tomaž Lovrenčić, the Director of the non-profit organisation ITF Enhancing Human Security.

Youth, Peace and Security

On 9 December, Security Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on youth, peace and security (YPS) with members of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Council member Slovenia organised the meeting, which featured a briefing by Awa Dabo, Director and Deputy Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). The PBC's Chair, Ambassador Ricklef Beutin (Germany), and its vice chairs (Brazil, Japan, Morocco, and Poland) also participated in the meeting.

On 12 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2807 on YPS. The resolution, which was authored by Guyana and Sierra Leone, aims to promote engagement by member states, the Security Council, and other UN entities on the YPS agenda. Among other things, it decides to continue the consideration of the YPS agenda in the Council's work, including through open debates to discuss the Secretary-General's biennial reports on YPS submitted pursuant to resolution 2535 of 14 July 2020.

Afghanistan

On 10 December 2025, the Security Council held an open briefing on Afghanistan (S/PV.10058). The briefers were: Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) and Officer-in-Charge of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Georgette Gagnon; Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher; and Founder and Executive Director of the Window for Hope Network Negina Yari. Slovenian Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Tanja Fajon chaired the meeting. Afghanistan, India, Iran, and Kazakhstan participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Closed consultations were held following the open briefing.

International Criminal Tribunals

On 10 December 2025, the Council held its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The IRMCT's president, Judge Graciela Gatti Santana, and its chief prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, briefed (S/PV.10059). They also met with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to the debate. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Rwanda, and Serbia participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 11 December, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the

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implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (S/PV.10060). Special Representative and Head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry and Regional Head of Advocacy for the Norwegian Refugee Council Christelle Huré briefed.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 12 December, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/PV.10063). Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and International President of Médecins Sans Frontières Javid Abdelmoneim briefed. Additionally, the Chair of the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone), briefed on the Committee's work. Burundi, the DRC, and Rwanda participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

On 19 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2808 renewing MONUSCO's mandate until 20 December 2026 (S/PV.10075).

Somalia

On 12 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2806, renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee until 31 December 2026 and expressing its intention to review its mandate by 30 November 2026 (S/PV.10064). The resolution also renews until 30 November 2026 the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports, the charcoal exports ban, and the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) components ban.

On 23 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2809, extending the authorisation of the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUS SOM) for another year, until 31 December 2026 (S/PV.10078).

UNDOF (Golan)

Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on 12 December. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed. On 29 December, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2811 renewing the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for six months, until 30 June 2026.

Leadership for Peace

On 15 December 2025, the Security Council convened for an open debate on "Leadership for Peace" under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item (S/PV.10067). The briefers were former UN Secretary-General and member of The Elders, Ban Ki-moon, and Anjali K. Dayal, Associate Professor in International Politics at Fordham University. Ban underscored that UN leadership "must more confidently reassert its active political role in diplomacy for peace, including mediating and settling crises", adding that member states need to support this role and avoid situations in which political settlements are dictated solely by powerful countries. He also argued that the next Secretary-General "should

be empowered by a single seven-year term", noting that two five-year terms risk making the office overly dependent on the Council's permanent members for renewal. In her briefing, Dayal emphasised that the most important characteristic of a Secretary-General is the ability, by both "position and disposition", to place greater value on "tomorrow" than on immediate advantages, in order to make the conference room more attractive than the battlefield.

Sudan

On 16 December, Security Council members held an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the situation in Sudan. The UK, as pen-holder, and Denmark convened the meeting against the backdrop of the ongoing crisis in the country. Council members received briefings from several key regional and international actors during the IID. The briefers were the UN Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Sudan, Ramtane Lamamra; the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) High-Level Panel on Sudan Mohamed Ibn Chambas; the European Union (EU) Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Annette Weber; and the Head of Sudan and Horn of Africa Affairs at the League of Arab States (LAS), Zeid Al Sabban. Cherinet Hariffo, the Permanent Observer of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to the UN, also briefed, alongside a representative of the US, who spoke on behalf of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—collectively referred to as the "Quad" countries.

On 22 December, the Council held an open briefing to discuss the situation in Sudan (S/PV.10077). The briefers were Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari, Director of the Crisis Response Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu, and Cameron Hudson, a political risk consultant. Sudan's Transitional Prime Minister, Kamil Eltayeb Idris, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Central African Republic

On 17 December, Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria), the Chair of the 2745 Sanctions Committee concerning the Central African Republic (CAR), briefed the Security Council on the Committee's work (S/PV.10069).

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

On 17 December 2025, the outgoing chairs of the Council's subsidiary bodies held their customary briefing on their experiences (S/PV.10070). The Council was briefed by the following representatives of the five members who completed their two-year terms on the Council at the end of 2025:

- Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria) on the 2745 Central African Republic (CAR) Sanctions Committee and the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee.
- Ambassador Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana) on the 2653 Haiti Sanctions Committee and the 2048 Guinea-Bissau Sanctions Committee.

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- Ambassador Sangjin Kim (Republic of Korea [ROK]) on the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee; the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations.
- Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) on 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) on the 1518 Iraq Sanctions Committee.

West Africa and the Sahel

On 18 December, the Security Council held an open briefing on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PV.10073). Deputy Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, Barrie Freeman, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's latest report on the activities of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), which was published on 28 November and covers developments from 1 August (S/2025/771). Closed consultations followed the open briefing.

Libya

On 19 December, the Council held its regular bi-monthly briefing on Libya (S/PV.10074). Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Serwaa Tetteh briefed on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and on the latest Secretary-General's report (S/2025/792). Ambassador Mohamed Rabi Yusuf (Somalia), Chair of the Libya Sanctions Committee, briefed on the Committee's activities.

Myanmar

On 22 December, the Council convened for a private meeting on Myanmar. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar Julie Bishop and Special Envoy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Chair on Myanmar Tan Sri Othman Hashim briefed. The Republic of Korea (ROK) and the UK, the penholder on the file, requested the meeting. Ahead of the meeting, Council members were negotiating a draft press statement regarding the 10 December airstrike that struck a hospital in Rakhine state, killing at least 34 people and injuring dozens more. It appears that the press statement was blocked by China and Russia.

Non-Proliferation

On 23 December 2025, the Security Council held a briefing under the "Non-Proliferation" agenda item to discuss the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme (S/PV.10079). The meeting was requested by Denmark, France, Greece, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Slovenia, the UK, and the US, with support from Panama. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of resolution 2231, which is dated 15 December 2025 and covers developments since the previous report of 19 June 2025.

Following the adoption of the agenda, China and Russia raised a point of order objecting to the agenda item under which the meeting was held, reiterating their argument that resolution 2231 has expired and that the Council has therefore concluded its consideration of the Iranian nuclear file. France and the UK took the floor to counter those claims, maintaining their position that most provisions of resolution 2231 remain in effect due to the invocation of its snapback mechanism.

Venezuela

On 23 December, the Security Council held an open briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item to discuss recent developments relating to Venezuela (S/PV.10080). The meeting was requested by Venezuela in a 17 December letter, citing the escalating situation around the country. China and Russia supported the meeting request. The Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), Mohamed Khaled Khiari, briefed at the meeting.

Counter-Terrorism

On 29 December, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2810, which extended the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) until 5 January 2029.

Emerging Threats

On 29 December, Council members participated in an Arria-formula meeting convened by Russia on "Risks and challenges emanating from uncontrolled use of low earth orbit satellites". The briefers included Alexey Borodin, the Director-General of the Regional Commonwealth in the Field of Communications, and Victor Strelets, Expert of the National Research Centre for Telecommunication in Moscow.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 29 December, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2025/8) marking the 30th anniversary of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), also known as the Dayton Peace Agreement. Slovenia authored the presidential statement, which acknowledges this milestone and the progress that BiH has achieved since the signing of the Agreement and its Annexes in 1995.

Israel's Recognition of Somaliland

On 29 December, the Security Council held an open briefing under the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item to discuss Israel's 27 December 2025 decision to recognise Somaliland, a breakaway region in northern Somalia (S/PV.10084). The "A3 Plus" grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) requested the meeting. China, Pakistan, and Russia supported the meeting request. The Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO), Mohamed Khaled Khiari, briefed at the meeting.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

8 December marked Syria's one-year anniversary since rebel forces—led by now interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa—ousted the Bashar al-Assad government. Mass celebrations occurred in some of Syria's most populous cities, including Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. In a speech to the nation, Sharaa vowed to build a better future for Syria, highlighting progress made on regional and international reintegration, economic recovery, and security sector reform (SSR), while reaffirming the interim government's commitment to transitional justice, accountability, and the search for missing persons.

Celebrations for the 8 December anniversary were reportedly banned by the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) in areas under their control in northeast Syria due to security concerns. On 7 December, Mazloum Abdi—the General Commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the armed wing of the DAANES—reaffirmed his commitment to the 10 March Agreement between the interim government and the SDF, which aims to see the SDF integrate into the new government's state institutions by the end of the year. Implementation of the agreement has been difficult, however, as the SDF has called for a secular, decentralised state—sticking points for Damascus. In a 7 December statement, the DAANES criticised the interim government's actions in the past year for lacking inclusivity and undermining national unity, and called for a comprehensive national dialogue.

From 2 to 7 December, the Council held a visiting mission to Lebanon and Syria. The Council spent one day (4 December) in Damascus, Syria (the first time the Council had visited the country) and then travelled to Lebanon, where members spent two days (5 and 6 December).

On 18 December, the Council held a briefing on the visit, in which Permanent Representative of Slovenia to the UN Samuel Žbogar, president of the Council in December, delivered a statement on behalf of the co-leads of the mission, Algeria, Denmark, and Slovenia. Žbogar said that the mission had a “clear objective” of building trust among the international community, the Council and the Syrian interim government. Despite being in Damascus for only a day, Council members had a busy agenda, meeting multiple relevant interlocutors and stakeholders, including high-level government officials, UN country team officials, and representatives from civil society, transitional justice and accountability mechanisms, and local and religious leaders. (For more information, see our 17 December *What's in Blue* story.)

On 1 December, US President Donald Trump expressed the US' satisfaction with, and support for, steps being taken by the Syrian interim government and Sharaa. He stressed the importance of Israel engaging in dialogue with Syria and that there are no actions that

“interfere” with Syria's transition. The following day (2 December), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that a deal with Syria was possible but reiterated Israel's demand that Syria establish a demilitarised area from Damascus to the current buffer zone, which was established by the Israeli-Syrian 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Following Assad's ouster, Israeli forces took control of the buffer zone and expanded into territory in Golan, southern Syria, in violation of the 1974 agreement. Sharaa has sharply criticised Israeli actions, warning that such demands could lead to “a dangerous place”, and has called for Israel to withdraw its forces and respect the 1974 agreement. US-brokered discussions for a security pact between the two countries have reportedly faced challenges due to these conflicting positions.

On 28 November, an Israeli incursion into the town of Beit Jinn in southern Syria reportedly killed at least 13 people, including women and children, and wounded 25. That same day, the Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi sent identical letters to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, condemning the attack as a “fully-fledged war crime”. In the Council's 18 December briefing on Syria, the Permanent Representative of Israel Danny Danon said that the operation targeted terrorists from the Al-Jama'a al-Islamiyya group—the Lebanese branch of the Muslim Brotherhood—which were planning attacks against Israeli civilians. He also claimed that there is growing proof that Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) are trying to “build up” in Syria. Danon underlined that Israel will not allow Syria to become a haven for terrorists and that it is Syria's responsibility to prevent these activities. Speaking in the same meeting, Olabi called into question the facts presented by Danon, and argued that it is Israel which is preventing Syrian authorities from exerting full control and responsibility over Syrian territory through their demands.

US and Syrian authorities have continued their nascent cooperation on counterterrorism operations. On 5 December, US Central Command Commander (CENTCOM) Admiral Brad Cooper issued a statement praising Syrian forces for interdicting “multiple weapons shipments” intended for Lebanese Hezbollah, affirming “a shared interest” in ensuring its disarmament and the Middle East's peace and stability. Additionally, according to a 30 November CENTCOM statement, between 24 and 27 November, forces from CENTCOM and the Syrian Ministry of Interior “located and destroyed more than 15 sites containing [Islamic State in Syria and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh)] weapons caches in southern Syria”.

On 13 December, CENTCOM said that an ambush by an ISIL gunman killed two US military personnel and one US civilian interpreter, and injured three other US military personnel and two Syrian security personnel. The attack took place in Palmyra in central Syria, and the next day the Syrian Interior Ministry and a US official reportedly said that the gunman—who was killed during the attack—was a member of the government's security forces, who was slated for dismissal for his extremist views. Trump vowed “serious retaliation” against the group, and on 19 December, US forces carried out

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strikes on more than 70 ISIL targets across central Syria.

Terrorism is also fuelling intercommunal tensions in Syria. On 26 December an explosion in an Alawite mosque in the city of Homs reportedly killed at least eight people and injured 20 more. Ansar al-Sunna—an apparent splinter group of ISIL—claimed responsibility for the attack. On 28 December, protests took place in coastal areas, including in Latakia and Tartous, in which Alawite demonstrators demanded security and political guarantees for their minority. Clashes then reportedly broke out between the protestors and interim-government supporters and security forces, in which at least four people were killed and more than 100 injured.

On 17 December, the US Congress repealed the 2019 Caesar Civilian Protection Act, legislation which had imposed heavy sanctions on Syria to penalise the Assad government and has continued to undermine the country's economic recovery following his ouster. Trump is expected to sign it into law soon.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)'s 24 November 2024 report on the implementation of resolution 2118 of 27 September 2013 (which required the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles) says that on 23 October, the OPCW Secretariat "re-established a continuous presence of the OPCW Mission in [Syria]". The Secretariat also deployed an Office of Special Missions (OSM) team. Established on 1 June, the OSM was set up to coordinate all the Secretariat's activities and implement the OPCW's mandate in Syria—with the aim of establishing a "long-term presence of the OPCW" in Syria. The report also details an increase in visits to chemical weapons-related locations by the Secretariat since March 2025, facilitated and supported by the Syrian authorities.

In her briefing at the 18 December meeting on Syria, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Joyce Msuya, had three requests for the Council and the international community: diplomacy to de-escalate and resolve ongoing flashpoints and prevent fighting; mobilising investment into development, so that Syria can transition from relying on humanitarian aid to recovery and reconstruction efforts; and support for humanitarian assistance in the near term. Msuya pointed out that the Syria humanitarian appeal for 2025 remained only 30 percent funded, a shortfall which, unless reversed, will cause reduction or disruptions to aid and hinder future recovery efforts.

Briefing at the same meeting, Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo said that the UN seeks to establish the Special Envoy's office in Syria to support Syria's transition "with greater impact".

On 29 December, the Council adopted resolution 2811, extending for six months the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) until 30 June 2026. (For more information, see the brief on UNDOF [Golan] in our December 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 7 December, the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) delivered a press statement on the first anniversary of the fall of the Assad regime. In the press statement, the COI commended the interim authorities for their efforts to address the crimes, violations, and abuses inflicted during previous decades. At the same time, it highlighted that many challenges lie ahead in Syria's transition, amid the continuing insecurity and violence still afflicting many communities, alongside unresolved conflicts, including repeated Israeli military operations.

In a 5 December press briefing note, Thameen Al-Kheetan, the Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stressed the need for more concrete steps to stop human rights violations and abuses in the country.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is to ensure that Syria's interim government pursues a credible, transparent, and inclusive political process, while navigating a fraught security context compounded by intercommunal tensions, terrorism, and external interference. Central to this issue are Damascus' efforts in 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. Based on an integrated strategic assessment internal report prepared by the UN Secretariat, the Secretary-General has considered what types of UN presence in Syria would be most suitable to meet the country's current needs.

Following up on their recent mission to Damascus, Council members could convene an Informal Interactive Dialogue (IID) with the participation of Syria and relevant UN entities to discuss the most viable options for future UN and Council engagement in Syria and appropriate support for Syria's transition.

Another issue is the need to start minimising the country's reliance on humanitarian aid through support and investment in recovery and development. Council members could consider holding a public briefing focused on the country's need for support on reconstruction and economic rehabilitation, featuring briefings from representatives of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank.

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 SSR efforts, together with a credible political process in the country.

The Council's December visit to Damascus represented an important signal of unified support to Syria's transition, following years of division on the Syria file. Earlier in 2025, 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 crippled economy, including through the easing of unilateral sanctions, with several Council members already having taken steps to ease unilateral sanctions on Syria. The Council lifted some of its sanctions impacting the Syrian interim government, through the adoption of resolution 2799 of 6 November, which removed Sharaa and Syrian Interior Minister Anas Hassan Khattab from the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list.

Israel's presence and military activities in Syria remain a contentious issue for Council members. Most members believe Israel's actions are fostering instability in Syria and that it must comply with

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the 1974 Agreement. In contrast, the US has predominantly characterised Israel's actions as defensive in nature or tied to ensuring its national security and has pushed back against attempts by other members to introduce language criticising Israeli actions in Syria in recent Council products.

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.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which expires on 28 January, and the monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, originally mandated by Security Council resolution 2722, which expires on 15 January.

Background and Key Recent Developments

In December, intra-Yemeni tensions escalated, creating greater uncertainty in an already fragile country. On 2 December, the Southern Transitional Council (STC)—a separatist group from south Yemen, reportedly backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—launched an offensive which expanded its control over the eastern oil-rich governorate of Hadramout following brief clashes with forces aligned with the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). By 8 December, the STC had also advanced into the eastern governorate of Al-Mahra and claimed to have control over all of Yemen's southern governorates.

The executive body of Yemen's internationally recognised government, the PLC, was established in 2022, with the support of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to unify Yemen's diverse political groups and steer the country's transition out of civil war. Progress towards this aim has stalled, however, as the Houthis—an Iran-backed rebel group which opposes the Yemeni government—have entrenched its control over northern Yemen, while concurrently the various factions that constitute the PLC are mired by internal division. The STC also forms part of the PLC, and its leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi, is one of the government body's vice presidents. However, since the STC's creation in 2017, its goal has been to establish an independent state in south Yemen, in contrast with some other members of the PLC, who favour a unified Yemen. South Yemen was an independent state prior to unification with the north in 1990.

In a 3 December statement, the STC said that its operation in

Hadramout aimed to prevent the governorate's exploitation by the Houthis for smuggling purposes and the activities of terrorist groups, such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida. According to the STC's website, during a 10 December meeting, Zubaidi said that the group's expansion of control over the south-eastern governorates is the "starting point" and that the "next objective must be [the Houthi-controlled capital] Sana'a—whether through peace or war". The group has also reportedly told Western diplomats that Yemen's "1990 unity was over".

During an 8 December meeting with ambassadors of the states sponsoring the political process, PLC Chairman Rashad al-Alimi said that the STC's unilateral actions violate the agreed terms of the transitional phase, undermine the PLC's authority and threaten the political process. He called on the international community to reject such challenges to the government's authority and to exert pressure on the STC to withdraw its forces from Hadramout and Al-Mahra.

On 9 December, a Saudi delegation reportedly called for the withdrawal of STC forces during a visit to Hadramout. According to media reports, the STC has been warned of the possibility of direct airstrikes by Saudi forces, as Saudi troops have gathered on the Yemeni border.

The developments in Hadramout and Al-Mahra were discussed at a 9 December meeting in Riyadh between UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg, Yemeni Foreign Minister Shaya Zindani, Saudi Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed al-Jaber, UAE Ambassador to Yemen Mohammed al-Zaabi, representatives of the permanent five members of the Security Council (P5) and other diplomats. Grundberg called on all actors to exercise restraint and de-escalate through dialogue, emphasising the need to allow space for discussions that support the stability of Yemen.

On 17 December, the Council held its monthly meeting on Yemen. The meeting was only held in closed consultations, apparently to avoid discussing the politically sensitive recent developments in an open setting. Secretary-General António Guterres briefed Council members, following his visit to the region, including Saudi Arabia and Oman. Grundberg and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya also briefed in the closed session. Following his briefing, the Secretary-General held a press encounter

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. 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.

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in which he expressed concern at “dramatic new developments” in eastern Yemen, emphasising that “unilateral actions will not clear a path to peace” and that “a full resumption of hostilities could have serious ramifications on regional peace and security”. He urged all parties to exercise restraint and de-escalate tensions through dialogue, while calling for the preservation of Yemen’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Council members issued a press statement on 23 December that referred to ongoing escalations and recent developments in Yemen as not conducive to progress, called for de-escalation, and encouraged “enhanced diplomatic efforts”, while underlining Council members’ support for efforts toward a political settlement. The statement also reaffirmed Council members’ “strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Yemen, and to the [PLC] and the Government of Yemen”.

The Houthis continue to arbitrarily detain personnel from the UN, non-governmental (NGO) and civil society organisations, and diplomatic missions. A 19 December statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General strongly condemned “the arbitrary detention on 18 December of a further [ten UN] personnel by the [Houthis], bringing the total number of UN detained personnel to 69.” Furthermore, a 9 December statement by the Spokesperson condemned the referral of UN personnel to the Houthi special criminal court and called on the Houthis to rescind the decision and work towards the immediate release of all those detained. In his 17 December press encounter, the Secretary-General said that three UN personnel had been referred to the court on charges related to their performance of UN official duties. The Council members’ 23 December press statement also reaffirmed the members’ condemnation of the detentions and reiterated their demand for the release of all those detained by the Houthis.

On 3 December, the Houthis reportedly released nine crew members whom they had detained following the attack and sinking of the Liberian-flagged, Greek-operated MV Eternity C on 7 July. 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.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to help mitigate the risk of an escalation of hostilities in Yemen, which could see a resumption of full-scale conflict. Volatile dynamics within the PLC, the potential resurgence of conflict between the Houthis and political factions in south Yemen, and the Houthis’ involvement in regional dynamics all pose a risk to the security and stability of the country.

Amid shifting domestic and regional dynamics, Council members could consider convening an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with regional stakeholders, countries supporting the Yemen political process, and the Special Envoy, to discuss the implications of the latest developments on the UN’s efforts to facilitate an inclusive negotiated political settlement to end the Yemeni conflict. Commitments to a set of confidence-building measures were made by the parties in December 2023; however, discussions aimed at establishing a roadmap to peace, which would have seen the implementation of these

commitments, stalled following the Houthis’ escalatory reaction to the Gaza war in October 2023.

As the Houthis continue to arbitrarily detain UN personnel and are referring them to their special criminal court, Council members could consider adopting a humanitarian resolution that demands that the Houthis rescind the referrals to the court, immediately and unconditionally release all personnel detained, and cease further obstruction to the delivery of UN humanitarian assistance in Yemen.

The need to ensure the protection and safety of navigation and shipping in the Red Sea is another important issue that requires maintaining pressure on the Houthis to avoid resuming attacks on merchant ships and global supply chains. One option for the Council is to extend for a further six months the monthly reporting requirement for the Secretary-General on attacks by the Houthis on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea prior to its expiration on 15 January.

Another key issue for the Council is the future viability of UNMHA, in view of its mandate expiration on 28 January 2026. Pursuant to resolution 2786 (adopted on 14 July), on 25 November, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council a review of the mission, including potential adjustments which could improve “efficiencies and structural coherence across [UN] missions in Yemen”. The review presents three options for the Council to consider. One option is to streamline the mission by removing its physical patrolling capacity. The two other options would involve shutting down the mission and augmenting the Office of the Special Envoy to take on relevant core tasks previously covered by the mission in support of the Hodeidah Agreement, either by maintaining a small presence in Hodeidah focused on these tasks, or by closing any full-time UN political presence in Hodeidah and making use of the existing locations of the Office of the Special Envoy. The review also notes that the Houthis have indicated that a withdrawal of the UN political presence from Hodeidah would be considered a formal declaration of the cancellation of the Hodeidah Agreement. Council members are likely to carefully consider the implications of the respective options and decide on UNMHA’s future during the negotiations on its renewal in January.

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. Recent developments in southeast Yemen, however, undermine the PLC’s legitimacy and further complicate efforts to attain a political settlement. There is also general agreement on the need to restore freedom of navigation and security in the Red Sea.

Negotiations on the sanctions regime renewal in November also highlighted long-standing differences among the five permanent Council members regarding the Houthis. (For more information, see our 13 November *What’s in Blue* story).

France, the UK, and the US have 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—including through the strengthening of the

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Yemen sanctions regime. The US has adopted a particularly hawkish position on the Houthis, unilaterally sanctioning the group and accusing Iran of supporting it.

Conversely, China and Russia have expressed concerns that resolution 2801, which renewed the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime until 14 November 2026, facilitates the potential for expanding the Yemen sanctions regime and establishing maritime interdictions in the future. The two members, who abstained on this resolution, argued that this would escalate tensions and push the parties further away from a political settlement.

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.

Diverging positions also exist on the question of UNMHA's future. The US has stressed that it is time to "sunset" the mission, whereas other Council members, including Russia and China, have expressed support for the mission's value, highlighting its stabilising role in the Hodeidah region.

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

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

In January, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) ahead of its 31 January 2026 expiry. Earlier in the month, Security Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the situation in Cyprus by Special Representative and Head of UNFICYP Khassim Diagne.

Key Recent Developments

Over the past six months, UN efforts to sustain momentum on the Cyprus issue have continued through a series of high-level engagements aimed at advancing the implementation of confidence-building measures (CBMs), despite the persistence of longstanding disagreements regarding the parameters of a settlement. Although political divisions remain, both sides have participated in a number of high-level, UN-facilitated informal meetings, marking the most sustained period of dialogue since the breakdown of talks in 2017.

Following the informal meeting on Cyprus in a broader format—bringing together the two Cypriot leaders and the three guarantor Powers (Greece, Türkiye, and the UK)—held in Geneva on 17–18 March of this year, Secretary-General António Guterres convened another informal meeting in the same format on 16–17 July in New York with Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Christodoulides and then Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar.

During the meeting, the parties reviewed progress on the CBMs agreed earlier in the year, but did not reach agreement on several key outstanding issues, including the opening of new crossing points. According to the Secretary-General, four of the six agreed initiatives have been achieved. These include the establishment of a technical committee on youth; initiatives related to the environment and climate change, including impacts on mining areas; the restoration of cemeteries; and an agreement on demining, which is to be finalised once remaining technical details are resolved. Discussions were expected to continue on the remaining two initiatives, namely the opening of four crossing points and the development of solar energy in the buffer zone. In addition, the leaders reached a common understanding on the establishment of a consultative body for civil society engagement, the exchange of cultural artefacts, an initiative on air quality monitoring,

and measures to address microplastic pollution.

In early September, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Cyprus, María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, travelled to the island for consultations in advance of anticipated leader-level engagement during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly. On 27 September, Guterres held a trilateral meeting in New York with Christodoulides and Tatar, after which he indicated that his Personal Envoy would conduct further consultations to support preparations for a future informal meeting in a broader format.

On 3 September, Guterres appointed Khassim Diagne as his Special Representative and Head of UNFICYP, succeeding Colin Stewart, who left the post in August.

On 19 October, Tufan Erhürman won the Turkish Cypriot leadership election, replacing Ersin Tatar. Erhürman, who campaigned on a platform advocating a return to negotiations based on a federal solution, secured a decisive victory, receiving 62.8 percent of the vote. Following the election, however, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan reiterated his support for a two-state approach. In a speech delivered on 3 November to the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Erdoğan called on participants to "further support the Turkish Cypriots' fight for rights, freedom and justice, which is based on a two-state solution".

On 20 November, Christodoulides and Erhürman met under UN auspices at the UN residence in the buffer zone, with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Holguín, participating virtually. During the meeting, Erhürman presented a 10-point proposal aimed at fostering conditions conducive to the launch of a new negotiating process. The proposals included measures to enhance youth interaction between the two communities; a joint visit by the two leaders to the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in the buffer zone; addressing property-related arrests; and establishing direct communication channels between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot security forces.

In addition, Erhürman presented a separate four-point proposal for relaunching formal negotiations towards a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus issue. This approach reportedly envisaged, *inter alia*, acceptance of political equality by the Greek Cypriot side, the conduct of negotiations within a defined timeframe, the preservation

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2771 (31 January 2025) extended the mandate of UNFICYP until 31 January 2026. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2025/447 (3 July 2025) This was the Secretary-General's report on the UN operation in Cyprus. S/2025/448 (3 July 2025) This was the Secretary-General's report on his mission of good offices in Cyprus.

Cyprus

of all past agreements, and a UN guarantee that embargoes imposed on the Turkish Cypriots would be lifted should the Greek Cypriot side withdraw from negotiations. According to the UN press briefing by Spokesman for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujaric on 20 November, the leaders expressed readiness to work towards another informal meeting in a broader format to be convened by the Secretary-General.

On 11 December, the Personal Envoy returned to the island and convened a joint meeting with Christodoulides and Erhürman. According to a press statement by the UN Spokesperson in Cyprus, the leaders agreed to accelerate work on practical CBMs, including the opening of new crossing points, the granting of access to EU markets of halloumi/hellim by producers from both communities, and the completion of the long-delayed pipeline associated with the Mia Milia/Haspolat water treatment plant, as well as measures to improve the functionality of existing crossing points.

A report in line with the Secretary-General's UN80 initiative, which was issued on 18 September 2025, proposed structural and programme realignments for the Office of the Special Adviser on Cyprus, including functional streamlining through greater use of support services shared with UNFICYP. In this context, the proposed 2026 programme budget reflects a reduction of \$1.2 million (37.7 percent) for the Office, including the proposed abolishment of eight posts, among them the Special Adviser at the Under-Secretary-General level. The elimination of the Special Adviser post is attributed to the absence of formal negotiations since 2017 and the appointment of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on Cyprus to follow up on initiatives agreed in Geneva in March 2025. Notwithstanding these adjustments, the Office is expected to continue supporting political engagement, CBMs, and the work of bicomunal technical committees. These changes are taking place against the backdrop of the broader UN liquidity crisis, which may affect funding for UNFICYP and the Good Offices in Cyprus.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 9 September press release, UN experts expressed grave concern over reports of exploitative recruitment and employment practices against migrant workers at a citrus farm in the northern part of Cyprus. The UN experts received information that such "workers were subjected to threats, coercion, and violence by company-controlled intermediaries who engaged in direct acts of violence as well as by company officials who used their influence to make public threats". Despite complaints raised by these workers, Turkish Cypriot authorities had not carried out thorough investigations or implemented effective accountability measures against the alleged perpetrators. The UN experts urged the authorities to conduct effective investigations into allegations of trafficking in persons and access to remedies, as well as to ensure compensation for the victims affected.

At the 60th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Working Group on the use of mercenaries presented a full report of its 16-24 January 2025 visit to Cyprus. While acknowledging the positive strides the country has made in regulating private security companies in the maritime context, the Working Group stressed the importance of applying the same high standards and scrutiny to those operating on land. Among other recommendations, it called on Cyprus to consider establishing an independent, proper oversight body or mechanism to oversee these private security actors and ensure that they are not engaged in human rights violations and abuses.

Key Issues and Options

Since the collapse of the 2017 talks in Crans-Montana, the key issue for the Security Council has been the absence of sustained progress towards resuming a formal political process. While the leader-level meeting on 11 December under the facilitation of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy suggests a renewed willingness to pursue practical cooperation, Holguín has acknowledged that further work is needed before an informal meeting in a broader format can be convened.

Against this backdrop, an option for the Council, in the context of the upcoming renewal of UNFICYP's mandate (which expires on 31 January 2026), would be to use the resolution to encourage the parties to build on recent engagements and to avoid steps that could undermine the political climate, including actions that heighten tensions in the buffer zone.

The Council could also consider inviting Holguín to brief members during the consultations on Cyprus on her assessment of whether conditions are emerging for a broader-format meeting. Another option would be to hold such a discussion in an informal interactive dialogue (IID) format, a closed, informal meeting that could allow for a frank exchange of views with Holguín and both Cypriot leaders.

In addition, Council members may wish to consider the potential implications of the proposed UN80-related budgetary and staffing adjustments affecting the Office of the Special Adviser on Cyprus, as well as the possible impact of the broader UN liquidity situation on UNFICYP and the Secretary-General's Good Offices in Cyprus. While the Secretariat has indicated that the Office will continue to deliver on its core political mandate through a streamlined structure, some members may seek greater clarity on how these financial and structural constraints could affect political engagement, support for CBMs and the implementation of UNFICYP's mandate ahead of the mission's renewal. In this context, the Council could request a briefing from the Secretariat to assess any potential operational or mandate-related implications.

Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda. Permanent members with a vested interest in Cyprus include France, Russia, and the UK, which also serves as the penholder on the issue. Greece, which was elected on 6 June 2024 to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council from 2025 to 2026, is a key stakeholder in relation to UNFICYP and one of the three guarantor powers.

While the Council is united in its support for UNFICYP and a political process based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation (BBF) with political equality, members diverge on the conditions and time-frame for the unification talks. Some members have previously supported a comprehensive strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. Russia has been adamant that there should be no external interference or attempts to impose solutions or timelines that might influence the peace talks.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In January, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) prior to its expiration on 31 January. The Council is also expected to hold its 90-day briefing on the situation in Haiti. Special Representative and Head of BINUH Carlos Ruiz Massieu is expected to brief the Council on recent developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH. Closed consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

Background and Key Recent Developments

After the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in July 2021, Haiti descended into a multidimensional crisis characterised by political deadlock, extreme violence, and dire humanitarian conditions. Armed gangs have overrun an estimated 90 percent of Port-au-Prince, the capital, employing tactics including murder, kidnapping, and sexual violence amid widespread impunity.

In recent months, the gangs have expanded their reach beyond the capital, including to parts of the Artibonite and Centre departments. Armed attacks in late November and early December 2025 resulted in several casualties and triggered large-scale displacement in the Lower Artibonite. The Secretary-General's latest BINUH report, issued in October 2025, indicates that intentional homicides in the Artibonite and Centre departments increased by 210 percent, totalling 1,303 victims between January and August 2025, compared to 419 during the same period in 2024.

In December 2025, a significant rift emerged within the Viv Ansanm gang coalition over a dispute about the continued use of kidnappings. According to media reports, clashes among gang members broke out in Port-au-Prince on 9 December 2025 following accusations from the leader of Viv Ansanm that one of the members of the coalition had ignored his order to halt kidnappings. The clashes reportedly resulted in multiple fatalities, including children, and raised concerns about further violence.

According to BINUH, between 1 July and 30 September 2025, at least 1,247 people were killed, and 710 were injured in Haiti. Security force operations were responsible for 61 percent of those killed or injured. Gang attacks accounted for approximately 30 percent of casualties, while nine percent resulted from actions by self-defence groups targeting alleged gang affiliates. Kidnapping and sexual violence figures remained high during the same period.

The high rate of casualties among people not involved in gang activities during anti-gang operations remains a source of concern. The most recent BINUH report notes that 22 percent of casualties during such operations "were residents struck by stray bullets at home or during daily activities". It adds that some security officers have "continued to summarily execute individuals suspected of gang links".

Since March 2025, a Haitian National Police (HNP) task force has been operating drones targeted at gang members with the support of US private military contractors. The BINUH report provides casualty figures related to drone operations in the country. Between 1 March and 20 September 2025, drone operations resulted in the deaths of at least 547 people, of whom 527 were suspected gang members and 20 members of the population, including 11 children.

According to a recent update by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, "most of these drone strikes are likely unlawful under international human rights law".

On 30 September 2025, the Security Council adopted resolution 2793, authorising UN member states to transition the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti into a "Gang Suppression Force" (GSF) for an initial period of 12 months. Like the MSS, the GSF is not a UN mission. At the same time, the resolution requests that the Secretary-General establish a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) to provide support to the GSF, among other entities. While the transition to the GSF is authorised "on the understanding that the cost of personnel will be borne by voluntary contributions", UNSOH will be funded through peacekeeping assessed contributions.

The GSF's mandate represents a clear shift from the MSS mission's model. While the MSS mission focused on supporting and training the HNP, the GSF has been mandated to conduct "counter-gang operations to neutralize, isolate, and deter gangs" independently or in cooperation with the HNP and Haitian armed forces. It also authorised a personnel ceiling of 5,550, compared to the 2,500 envisaged (but never achieved) under the MSS mission's concept of operations.

In August 2025, the formation of a Standing Group of Partners for the GSF—comprising the Bahamas, Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kenya, and the US—was announced. On 2 December 2025, the group appointed Jack Christofides, who has held several leadership roles in the UN, as GSF Special Representative.

At a 9 December 2025 force generation conference for the GSF held at the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in New York on behalf of the Standing Group of Partners, several countries announced personnel and funding commitments, including Chad and Bangladesh, which committed 1,500 personnel each. According to reporting by the Miami Herald, prior to the meeting, several countries expressed concern about "making commitments without a clear agreement on how the mission would operate, and on a US directive that focused mainly on 'killing' gang members, many of whom are youth". Similar concerns arose among Council members during the negotiations on resolution 2793 regarding the forceful posture of the GSF and the fact that, according to UN estimates, 30 to 50 percent of gang members are children.

On the political front, the future of the transition remains uncertain, with a potential political vacuum following the expiration of the mandate of the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) on 7 February. On 1 December 2025, the TPC approved an electoral decree establishing the rules for the general elections, with the first round of legislative and presidential polling expected in August according to a draft calendar submitted by the Provisional Electoral Council to the TPC in November 2025. Under a May 2024 Decree, the TPC's mandate cannot be extended. In October 2025, the Haitian transitional authorities scrapped plans for a previously announced constitutional referendum.

The humanitarian situation remains dire, with children being particularly affected. According to a 10 December 2025 UNICEF update, approximately 1.4 million people are internally displaced in Haiti, including over 741,000 children. Some 5.7 million people face

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2793 (30 September 2025) authorised UN member states to transition the MSS mission in Haiti into the GSF for an initial period of 12 months. The text also requested that the Secretary-General establish the UNSOH. S/RES/2476 (25 June 2019) established BINUH. **Secretary-General's report** S/2025/641 (14 October 2025) was the latest Secretary-General's 90-day report on Haiti.

Haiti

high levels of acute food insecurity, including 1.2 million children under 5 years of age. Among other concerns—such as the disruption of the health and education systems, and the resurgence of cholera—UNICEF notes that “[h]undreds of thousands of Haitians, including unaccompanied and separated children, are being returned from the Dominican Republic, often without documentation or support, and face risks of homelessness, hunger, violence, exploitation and de facto statelessness”.

On 26 November 2025, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the end of Temporary Protected Status for Haitians, effective on 3 February. The decision, which is estimated to affect around 340,000 people, was taken following the DHS determination that there are “no extraordinary and temporary conditions in Haiti that prevent Haitian nationals” from safely returning to the country.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 2 October 2025, Türk updated the UN Human Rights Council on the situation in Haiti. He emphasised that the rising violence and violations of human rights in Haiti have pushed the country to the breaking point. More than 16,000 people have been killed in armed violence since 1 January 2022, when the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights began monitoring incidents of gang-related violence in the country. Türk urged accountability for human rights violations and abuses and stressed the need to address impunity and corruption as well as poverty and inequality. He also called for supporting programmes to protect survivors of sexual violence and support the reintegration of children formerly associated with gangs.

Türk noted the importance of ensuring that efforts to restore security are rooted in human rights. He urged the Haitian authorities to “investigate all allegations of unnecessary and disproportionate use of force, and ensure perpetrators, regardless of affiliation, are brought to justice”. Türk underscored the importance of “robust human rights safeguards” underpinning the activities of the GSF and called on all member states to implement the Security Council’s arms embargo on Haiti.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 3 November 2025 statement, the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls warned that the systematic exclusion of women from leadership and decision-making in Haiti and the high incidence of sexual violence are deepening insecurity and obstructing pathways to peace. They stressed that, despite commitments to gender equality, women remain sidelined from key political bodies and processes that determine their “safety, rights, and future”. Regarding resolution 2793, the statement said that, while the resolution acknowledges the impact of violence on women and girls, it “does not include concrete measures to ensure their leadership or to integrate gender perspectives across the security and governance agenda”. The Working Group called on the Haitian authorities and international partners to take immediate steps to uphold the rights of Haitian women and girls, including ensuring women’s participation across political, security, transitional justice and recovery efforts.

Key Issues and Options

The central task for the Security Council in January is to renew BINUH’s mandate. Protecting the mandate’s integrity in the current climate of violence and uncertainty and ensuring that the mission has the resources to carry out its mandated tasks is an important issue for the Council.

One option is to extend BINUH’s mandate for one year retaining its functions as established in resolution 2476, which in 2019 established the mission, and in successive mandate renewals, including

supporting a Haitian-led and Haitian-owned political process, good governance, human rights, child protection, community violence reduction, gender equality, protection from sexual and gender-based violence, and HNP capacity and institutional development.

As new leadership and personnel for the GSF are expected in the coming months, an additional issue for the Security Council will be how to ensure it receives comprehensive and timely information on the GSF’s deployment, oversight arrangements, and operational conduct. Resolution 2793 requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of the resolution as part of his regular reporting on Haiti. The resolution also requested the GSF Special Representative, “in coordination with the government of Haiti and the UN, to keep the Security Council abreast of relevant developments and inform on the concept of operations, indicative financial needs to be funded by voluntary contributions, and a force generation plan”. Should Council members wish to complement this information, one option would be to invite Christofides at an appropriate time to brief the Council on such issues as mission composition, funding arrangements, and measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and the excessive use of force.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about Haiti’s multidimensional crisis and generally agree on the need to tackle escalating gang violence and its impact on the Haitian population. Views also converge on the continuing need for a sanctions regime and the importance of a Haitian-led political solution that addresses both security and socioeconomic challenges. At the same time, positions have differed among Council members on how to appropriately respond to the security situation in Haiti.

The US was the main architect of the transition from the MSS mission to the GSF. China and Russia broke silence during the negotiation of resolution 2793 and, together with Pakistan, abstained in the vote, citing concerns about issues such as rules of engagement, sources of funding, troop composition, oversight and accountability. While these concerns were shared by many other members, the “A3 Plus” grouping (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) and European members of the Council opted for negotiating the inclusion of language on human rights, child protection, and Haitian sovereignty into the text in an attempt to mitigate these concerns.

Differences among Council members also emerged during the negotiations on the renewal of the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime in October 2025. While the co-penholders (US and Panama) initially proposed to add four names to the sanctions list, Russia opposed the listing of political figures, leading to the final version of the resolution only adding two names to the sanctions list. China and the A3 Plus sought to strengthen language on the arms embargo. While the co-penholders accommodated several of these requests, proposed references to record “the type, quantity, and serial number of weapons and ammunition seized” and “photographing all items and relevant markings and headstamps” were not included. (The majority of weapons trafficked into Haiti come from the US.)

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In January 2026, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Miroslav Jenča will brief on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2025/849), which was circulated to Council members on 26 December 2025 and covers the period from 27 September 2025.

The verification mission's mandate expires on 31 October 2026.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 November 2025, Colombia marked the ninth anniversary of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace concluded in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). This milestone comes amid a complex environment for the implementation of the peace agreement and the UN's support for the process, against the backdrop of the electoral period in Colombia and a recent modification of the verification mission's mandate.

On 31 October 2025, the Security Council renewed the verification mission's mandate for another year through resolution 2798, which received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Russia and the US). The resolution removed two tasks that had been previously assigned to the mission: verification of compliance with the restorative sentences handed down by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP)—the judicial component of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition established by the 2016 agreement—as well as monitoring implementation of the agreement's ethnic chapter. The negotiations on the mandate renewal were the most difficult since the verification mission was established in 2017. The US demanded the removal of these tasks, apparently conveying its readiness to veto the verification mission's mandate if they were maintained, while most other Council members strongly advocated for their retention. (For more information, see our 30 October 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Jenča emphasised in a 4 November 2025 interview the importance of the renewal of the verification mission's mandate to carry out the tasks on monitoring implementation of the rural reform chapter, the reincorporation of former FARC-EP combatants, and personal and collective security guarantees. He added that ethnic communities are relevant to all these provisions and therefore the mission will “continue working with ethnic groups...now without some of the spaces that Security Council resolution 2798 took away from us”.

The removal of the mission's task relating to the SJP came shortly after the Court announced in mid-September 2025 its first restorative sentences. (In accordance with the peace agreement, those who acknowledge responsibility for crimes committed during the conflict will receive restorative sentences aimed at providing redress to victims, while those who refuse are subject to the Colombian penal code and may face imprisonment of up to 20 years.) International interlocutors had anticipated the handing down of sentences to begin as far back as 2021; in that year, the Council expanded the verification mission's mandate through resolution 2574 of 11 May to verify compliance with the restorative sentences.

In a 31 October 2025 statement, the SJP said that although the Council's decision presents certain challenges, it will not jeopardise the Court's ability to verify compliance with the sentences it hands down. In this regard, the statement noted that the SJP, in cooperation with the verification mission, has developed over the past few years “a rigorous mechanism that combines fieldwork with advanced technology” to record information that can confirm the carrying out of activities decreed by the restorative sentences, including the search for missing persons and humanitarian demining.

As reflected in Council members' statements after the adoption of resolution 2798, the majority of the Council continues to support the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. Resolution 2798 requests the Secretary-General to ensure coordination and efficiencies, including by ensuring that other activities in the country are carried out by the most appropriate UN system entity. This provision alludes to other UN entities potentially having a role in efforts relating to the tasks removed from the verification mission's mandate. Some early discussions have begun in this regard, including in a 6 November 2025 meeting between the SJP's President, Judge Alejandro Ramelli, and representatives of the UN system in Colombia.

The SJP continued advancing its work in the last quarter of 2025. On 19 December 2025, the Court concluded its first transitional adversarial trial, imposing a sentence of 20 years in prison on a retired colonel, after he denied his responsibility and was found guilty of killings and forced disappearances presented as combat casualties during the conflict.

With eight months remaining in the term of Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego, which ends in August 2026, his administration continues to take actions and decisions relevant to the implementation of the peace agreement. In November 2025, the government announced that it will elevate the Peace Implementation Unit to the category of a Presidential Advisory Office. This decision came after Colombia's Constitutional Court issued a ruling in September 2025 determining that the entity currently overseeing implementation of the 2016 peace agreement “lacks the independence, resources, and political clout necessary to fulfill its mission”, which has prevented it from guaranteeing the security of signatories to the agreement, among other things. Signatories to the peace agreement have been advocating for at least two years for the establishment of such an office and for the appointment of a high-level official to oversee implementation.

Also in November 2025, the government secured Senate approval of a bill that extended the timeframe for implementation of the development programmes with a territorial focus (PDET in their Spanish acronym) until 2037. (PDETs are a tool created by the peace agreement aimed at facilitating investments and enhancing state presence in regions most affected by armed conflict, poverty, and illicit economies.)

Violence remains a persistent challenge across various regions in the country. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that, between January and November 2025, 1.6 million people were affected by violence and armed conflict, triple the number from 2024. At least 148,000 people were confined and 93,438 were displaced in 2025, exceeding historical figures monitored by OCHA since 2008. The severe escalation in the north-eastern region of Catatumbo in January 2025 was a significant

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2798 (31 October 2025) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia for another year. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10010 (3 October 2025) was the latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

Colombia

factor in the increased numbers, with the region accounting for one third of all people displaced nationwide. OCHA has also noted an increase in grave violations against children for the fifth consecutive year, with forced recruitment and use of children by armed groups in combat and support roles, particularly from indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities, eroding community resilience. It has further warned of an escalation of attacks by non-state armed groups using drones and explosive devices.

Human Rights-Related Developments

At the 60th session of the UN Human Rights Council, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent presented a full report of its 15-24 May 2024 visit to Colombia. In the report, the Working Group provides an overview of the current legal, institutional, and policy framework and measures taken to prevent racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance faced by people of African descent in Colombia. Its findings highlighted that, despite the positive measures and noticeable efforts undertaken by Colombia, the prevalence of racial discrimination in the country persists and hampers the full recognition of people of African descent and their integration into society. At multiple levels, Afro-descendant communities, as the Working Group indicated, experience a lack of recognition, as they are often subjected to statistical invisibility by state institutions, met with structural barriers, including institutional racism, as well as denied full enjoyment of certain economic, social, and cultural rights.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how tasks no longer in the Council's remit—verification of compliance with the SJP's restorative sentences and monitoring of implementation of the ethnic chapter of the peace agreement—will be addressed. Member states that wish to support such processes need to take into account some considerations. For instance, the 2016 agreement envisioned a role for the verification mission in monitoring compliance with the sentences handed down by the SJP, but not for other UN entities. Therefore, approval from both signatory parties (the government and the former FARC) will be required in order to give other entities that role. Furthermore, many UN bodies in Colombia have experienced budget cuts in light of the UN's liquidity crisis and will require additional funding to be able to undertake new tasks. Member states can seek to engage with relevant actors to address such issues bilaterally. These issues could also be discussed by Council members and other stakeholders in an informal interactive dialogue (IID), a closed informal meeting format that could allow for a frank exchange.

In a similar vein, OCHA highlighted in its 2026 Global Humanitarian Overview that humanitarian needs continue growing in the country while capacities and resources are diminishing. The potential spillover effects of the heightened tensions between the US and Venezuela may further compound the situation. (For background, see our 23 December 2025 *What's in Blue* story.) Colombia already hosts nearly three million Venezuelan refugees and migrants,

numbers that can grow if the situation in Venezuela escalates. At the meeting on Colombia in January 2026, some Council members can choose to call on donors to enhance their support for humanitarian efforts in the country.

As January's meeting will be the last before the March 2026 congressional elections, Council members could emphasise in their statements the urgent need to use mechanisms outlined in the peace agreement, such as the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics (SISEP), to facilitate the secure conduct of elections. They can also encourage the government to continue prioritising implementation of the peace agreement in the remainder of its term, including by putting in place structures that can help facilitate continuity in the next administration, such as elevating the entity in charge of implementation to a presidential office.

Council Dynamics

Colombia had previously been considered a file that enjoyed Council consensus in support for the peace process and for the verification mission's work. However, the strains in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the US since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025 have created significant challenges in the Council's engagement on the file. (For background on the deteriorating bilateral relationship, see the brief on Colombia in our October 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.) These difficult dynamics were evident in the contentious negotiations on resolution 2798, and in the fact that Council members have not adopted any press statements on Colombia in 2025, although it had previously been the practice to do so after every quarterly meeting.

The recent developments could also signal future difficult dynamics as Colombia joins the Council as a non-permanent member for 2026-2027. In early December 2025, the US indicated its intention to convene meetings in Washington with the four other new members—Bahrain, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Latvia, and Liberia—to discuss future cooperation at the Security Council, while excluding Colombia.

The advent of the four other incoming members may also affect Council dynamics on the Colombia file. Among the Council members that finished their term in 2025, Guyana played a strong role as part of the "A3 Plus" grouping (together with then-members Algeria and Sierra Leone and current member Somalia) in highlighting issues affecting indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities and stressing the need to implement the 2016 agreement's ethnic chapter. It remains to be seen if the new "A3" grouping (the DRC, Liberia, and Somalia) will take a similar approach.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Rule of Law

Expected Council Action

In January, Somalia is organising an open debate on “Reaffirming international rule of law: pathways to reinvigorating peace, justice, and multilateralism” under the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Secretary-General António Guterres, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and former judge of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Abdulqawi Yusuf are possible briefers. The meeting will be the signature event of Somalia’s presidency.

Background

The Council held its first thematic debate on the rule of law in 2003. It has since held debates focusing on the rule of law on several occasions. During an open debate held on 19 January 2012, the Council received a briefing from then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his report on the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies. In a presidential statement adopted during that debate, the Council recognised that sustainable peace requires an integrated approach that strengthens the coherence among political, security, development, human rights, and rule of law activities.

On 19 February 2014, the Council convened for an open debate on the rule of law in peacekeeping operations. Two days later, the Council adopted a presidential statement underlining the importance of peacekeeping operations and special political missions supporting efforts to strengthen rule of law institutions in host countries within the scope of their mandates.

On 18 December 2020, the Council held an open debate on the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law: Strengthening the cooperation between the Security Council and the International Court of Justice”. A presidential statement adopted on 21 December 2020 recognised the positive contribution of the ICJ to the rule of law at the international level, as well as its key role in adjudicating disputes, defusing tensions, and restoring peaceful relations among states.

On 12 January 2023, the Council held an open debate on the “Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security: the rule of law among nations”. According to a concept note for the meeting, it was intended to provide “an opportunity to have a deeper discussion on how to take action, under the UN framework, to ensure international peace and security through the promotion of the rule of law” and to “reaffirm the meaning and role of the rule of law among nations and the common understanding that the rules to which all member states have

agreed must be observed by all”.

Open debates on issues related to the rule of law have also been convened in recent years under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. On 17 May 2018, the Council convened for an open debate on the “Maintenance of international peace and security: Upholding international law within the context of the maintenance of international peace and security”.

On 9 January 2020, the Council held an open debate on the topic “Maintenance of international peace and security: Upholding the UN Charter”. A presidential statement was adopted at the meeting, which, among other matters, called on member states to fully comply with the Charter and to raise public awareness of its importance in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues that might be raised during the open debate include:

- the role played by the rule of law in efforts to maintain international peace and security, including the work undertaken by peace operations related to the rule of law;
- the importance of compliance with international law and the need for accountability when violations occur;
- the relationship between the ICJ and the Council and the possibility of Council enforcement of ICJ judgments pursuant to Article 94 of the UN Charter; and
- the right of self-defence recognised in Article 51 of the UN Charter, the scope of that right, and reports to the Council regarding action taken in self-defence.

Somalia could choose to produce a chair’s summary capturing the main themes of the open debate and circulate it as an official UN document. Members could also consider whether there is a need to hold a follow-up meeting that specifically focuses on a particular issue raised during the open debate.

Council Dynamics

Council members regularly emphasise the importance of the rule of law and highlight the role that it can play in maintaining international peace and security. Several Council members support references to the need to uphold “international humanitarian law” in Council outcomes, although the US has sought to qualify this language with the term “as applicable” in negotiations. The prevailing difficult dynamics among Council members may mean that some members choose in the open debate to focus on specific issues that have proven particularly divisive, such as the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

In January 2026, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ). Somalia—the Council president for January—intends to convene the meeting at ministerial level.

Key Recent Developments

The war in Gaza entered a pivotal new phase on 8 October, when Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire as the first stage of the US-proposed peace framework known as the “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”. The ceasefire agreement called for Hamas to release the remaining hostages that it was holding in exchange for the release of Palestinian detainees, a partial withdrawal of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) from Gaza, and an increase in humanitarian aid into the territory. At the time of writing, Hamas had released all living hostages and the remains of all but one of the deceased hostages, while Israel had released Palestinian detainees at the agreed ratio and redeployed to an initial withdrawal line. According to the Secretary-General’s latest quarterly report on the implementation of resolution 2334 of 23 December 2016 (S/2025/807), which covers the period from 20 September to 2 December, the partial withdrawal leaves the IDF in control of an estimated 53 to 58 percent of Gaza’s territory.

The ceasefire remains fragile and has been interrupted by intermittent violence, with each side accusing the other of violating the agreement. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), citing local health authorities as at 18 December, 394 Palestinians have been killed by the IDF since the ceasefire came into effect, as the total Palestinian death toll since 7 October 2023 passed 70,000. On 13 December, Israel assassinated a high-level Hamas commander in a missile strike, reportedly prompting a rebuke from the US, which deemed the strike a ceasefire violation. On its part, Israel has accused Hamas of deliberately delaying the return of hostages.

According to the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2334, humanitarian conditions in Gaza have improved during the ceasefire but remain “catastrophic”, marked by widespread destruction, forced displacement, and collapsed essential services and critical infrastructure. In a situation update dated 11 December, OCHA reported that the volume of aid collected at border crossings by the UN and its partners in the two months since the ceasefire went into effect had increased by 67 percent compared with the preceding two months. OCHA stressed, however, that humanitarian access in Gaza—which has faced frigid winter conditions and life-threatening rainstorms in recent weeks—remains constrained by insecurity, customs clearance challenges, the limited number of partners authorised by Israeli authorities to deliver cargo, delays and denials of cargo at operational crossings, and limited routes available for transporting humanitarian supplies. In its latest assessment published on 19 December, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) found that improved humanitarian access had offset the famine conditions previously declared in parts of Gaza but that the food security situation remains severe, with over 500,000 people facing “emergency” conditions (IPC Phase 4) and more than

100,000 still experiencing “catastrophe/famine” (IPC Phase 5).

On 8 December, the UN launched a \$4.06 billion flash appeal for the OPT, allocating 92 percent of the required funds for the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip. On 17 December, the OPT Humanitarian Country Team issued a statement expressing serious concern about the new registration process for international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) that Israel introduced in March. According to the statement, the process “fundamentally jeopardizes the continuation of humanitarian operations throughout the OPT”, relying on “vague, arbitrary, and highly politicized criteria” that impose requirements that humanitarian organisations cannot meet without violating international legal obligations or compromising core humanitarian principles. The statement said that “dozens” of INGOs face deregistration under the framework by 31 December 2025, followed by the forced closure of operations within 60 days, which would have a “catastrophic impact” on access to essential and basic services in Gaza.

The second stage of the Comprehensive Plan calls for the decommissioning of Hamas’ weapons; the further withdrawal of the IDF, which will progressively hand over security responsibility for Gaza to an International Stabilization Force (ISF); and the establishment of an interim technocratic government in Gaza comprising Palestinian and international experts under the oversight of a Board of Peace (BoP), which will be chaired by US President Donald Trump. This body is to eventually cede control of Gaza to a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA), at which point “the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood”. On 17 November, the Security Council adopted resolution 2803, welcoming the establishment of the BoP for a two-year period, authorising the body to establish the ISF, and requesting it to submit a written biannual report to the Council on its progress. The resolution, which was penned by the US, received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia).

On 10 December, Trump said that the BoP will consist of heads of state who will be named “early next year”. Media reports have indicated that the US aims to deploy the ISF after the establishment of the BoP and will appoint a two-star general to lead the force, although it will not participate with its own troops. Countries such as Azerbaijan, Indonesia, and Türkiye have previously signalled an interest in contributing to the force, but these talks have reportedly been complicated by uncertainty surrounding its mandate and whether it will be expected to militarily engage Hamas, which has continued to express opposition to “total disarmament”. Meanwhile, Hamas and the PA have reportedly agreed on a shortlist of candidates to serve on the technocratic governance committee envisioned by the Comprehensive Plan.

In the occupied West Bank, settlement expansion, settler violence, and Israeli military operations have continued to accelerate. According to the Secretary-General’s quarterly report on resolution 2334, Israeli authorities advanced or approved over 6,310 housing units during the reporting period, while settlement activity in 2025 reached its highest levels since the UN began systematically tracking it in 2017. Notably, on 21 December, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced the approval of 19 new settlements—a

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2803 (17 November 2025) endorsed the “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”, 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/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including acts of terror. It was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention.

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move that he said was intended to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and which was subsequently condemned by numerous countries. The Secretary-General's report also states that settler violence reached "its highest levels recorded in recent years", averaging five incidents per day in 2025—many in the context of the annual olive harvest, which is a key source of income and livelihood for Palestinians in the West Bank. Additionally, Israeli security forces killed 38 Palestinians during the reporting period while continuing the large-scale military operation that began in January and has involved extensive demolitions of Palestinian homes and civilian infrastructure in refugee camps, displacing tens of thousands of people. Two Israelis were killed by Palestinians during the reporting period, according to the Secretary-General's report.

Recent weeks have also seen notable developments regarding the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Israel has accused UNRWA of complicity with Hamas, a charge that the Agency strongly denies and which the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rejected in a 22 October advisory opinion that found that Israel, as an occupying power, is obligated to allow UN agencies, including UNRWA, to provide humanitarian aid in Gaza. On 5 December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution that commended UNRWA for its provision of vital assistance to the Palestinian refugees and renewed its mandate until 30 June 2029. On 8 December, Israel raided UNRWA's East Jerusalem compound, reportedly replacing its UN flag with an Israeli flag and seizing Agency property. On 12 December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution welcoming the ICJ's 22 October advisory opinion. During the Security Council's most recent meeting on MEPQ, held on 16 December, several Council members welcomed that resolution while condemning Israel's 8 December raid, which some described as a violation of the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the UN.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 November, the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), announced the appointment of Srinivasan Muralidhar (India), Florence Mumba (Zambia), and Chris Sidoti (Australia) as members of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel.

At the 80th session of the UN General Assembly Fourth Committee, Jayantha Jayasuriya, the Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, presented the Special Committee's latest report on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the OPT and the occupied Syrian Golan. Highlighting the report's findings, Jayasuriya said that Israel is pursuing a "systematic policy of territorial expansion through settlement, military occupation, and eventual annexation". Settlers, often acting alongside Israeli security forces, have attacked Palestinian civilians, leading to widespread deaths, injuries, home demolitions, and land confiscations. Underscoring the need for decisive action from the international community, Jayasuriya urged member states to consider imposing political and economic sanctions and a full arms embargo until Israel "ceases violating the Palestinian and other peoples' human rights" and withdraws fully from all occupied territories in the region.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 17 October update on the situation of women and girls in Gaza, UN Women highlighted that the "ceasefire may have paused the fighting, but it has not ended the crisis". The update noted that for two years, "women and girls in Gaza were killed at a rate of roughly two every hour", and that their needs remain at an all-time high. Among

other things, the update noted that one in seven families in Gaza is led by a woman and highlighted the need for nutrition and shelter support, including in the context of the winter season. UN Women also stressed the importance for Gaza's future of centring the needs of women and girls and including women's organisations in the humanitarian response and reconstruction efforts. UN Women urged member states to scale up funding and called on all parties to uphold the ceasefire "fully and without delay".

Key Issues and Options

After two years of devastating war in Gaza and the collapse of two previous ceasefires, the adoption of resolution 2803 represents the Security Council's most assertive engagement with the conflict so far.

An immediate issue for the Council is to ensure that both parties fully abide by their ceasefire obligations under phase one of the Comprehensive Plan that resolution 2803 endorsed. This includes sustaining the cessation of hostilities, lifting remaining restrictions on the flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and securing the return of the last remaining hostage.

In the medium term, another key issue is to support efforts to advance to the second stage of the Comprehensive Plan in a manner consistent with international law. Important questions in this regard concern the objective, timeline, and sequencing of the transitional framework established by resolution 2803, including the composition and terms of reference of the BoP and technocratic governance committee; the mandate of the ISF; and the benchmarks for PA reform, none of which have been clearly defined. To receive more information about these issues, Council members could request briefings by representatives of the BoP, ISF, or other actors involved in preparations at January's open debate. They could also consider conducting a visiting mission to Israel and the OPT, including to the Civil-Military Coordination Centre that the US has established in Israel to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.

Longer-term issues include supporting Gaza's reconstruction and development, promoting accountability for international crimes committed during the war, and reviving a credible political process toward the realisation of the two-state solution. To this end, Council members could contribute to the dedicated reconstruction trust fund that resolution 2803 requested the World Bank and other international financial institutions to establish. They could also consider measures to facilitate transitional justice processes, including by requesting the Secretary-General to provide strategic recommendations for post-conflict accountability and reconciliation mechanisms. Additionally, Council members could consult with the broader UN membership to ensure that efforts to implement the Comprehensive Plan align with other international frameworks to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict, including the New York Declaration that the General Assembly endorsed in September.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The adoption of resolution 2803 marked a rare moment of convergence in the international community's engagement on Gaza, driven by regional backing for the US-brokered Comprehensive Plan and the priority that many Council members placed on consolidating the ceasefire and easing the humanitarian catastrophe in the enclave. In their explanations of vote, several members that voted in favour emphasised that their decision had been influenced by the support

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that the PA and key Arab and Muslim states had expressed for the resolution, as well as their expectation that the transitional framework that it established would lead to unified Palestinian governance in the OPT and ultimately to a two-state outcome.

At the same time, the debate revealed significant underlying fault lines that are likely to shape Council dynamics moving forward. Explaining their abstentions, China and Russia cited concerns over insufficient clarity on the mandate, oversight, and legal basis of the BoP and the ISF, as well as the absence of an explicit reaffirmation of the two-state solution. Despite their favourable vote, several

other members—including Algeria, Denmark, Pakistan, Slovenia, and Somalia—also signalled unease over ambiguities in the resolution, particularly regarding timelines for Israeli withdrawal, the role of the UN and the PA during the transition, and safeguards against fragmentation of the OPT.

At January's open debate, many members are expected to press for closer Council oversight of implementation of the resolution, and long-standing divisions will likely persist over how assertively the Council should engage on accountability and final status issues beyond Gaza's stabilisation.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

Expected Council Action

In January, Kaha Imnadze, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), is expected to brief Security Council members on the UNRCCA's work in closed consultations.

Key Recent Developments

Imnadze last briefed Council members on 10 July 2025, in closed consultations. Among other matters, he provided an update on the UNRCCA's activities pertaining to counter-terrorism, transboundary water management, border demarcation, and the women, peace and security, and youth, peace and security agendas. Imnadze also covered the border agreements between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

On 16 November 2025, the foreign ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signed and exchanged ratification instruments for a treaty relating to the junction point of the three countries' national borders. The treaty, which took two decades to negotiate, was signed on 31 March 2025 during a trilateral summit held in Khujand, Tajikistan. The summit followed the 13 March 2025 ratification of an agreement between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which resolved the long-running border dispute between the two countries. Disputes regarding the border have sometimes erupted into violence, including in September 2022, when dozens of civilians were killed and thousands more displaced during clashes between Kyrgyz and Tajik security forces.

There has been increased interest from a number of member states in pursuing closer ties with Central Asia, sparking increased diplomatic competition in the region. On 7 November 2025, the "C5+1", a diplomatic platform comprising the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and the US, issued a joint statement marking the format's tenth anniversary and agreeing to take a series of steps intended to promote economic activities and engagement. On the same day, the US Department of State issued statements highlighting closer business relations between the US and each Central Asian state. These statements came a day after US President Donald Trump hosted leaders from all the C5 countries at the White House. Kazakhstan also announced that it would become

the first Central Asian state to join the Abraham Accords ahead of the meeting with Trump.

In early October 2025, Russian President Vladimir Putin travelled to Central Asia for a three-day visit, which included the Russia-Central Asia summit with leaders from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan and a meeting of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The participants in the Russia-Central Asia summit adopted a communiqué, in which the leaders agreed to work on matters such as transport and logistics corridors, counter-terrorism, illegal migration, and drug trafficking, as well as a joint action plan for 2025 to 2027.

From 19 to 22 November 2025, Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi travelled to Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan for meetings with his counterparts from each country. The visit followed the second China-Central Asia summit, which was attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping and took place in mid-June 2025. Among other matters, Xi reportedly pledged during the summit that China would provide 1.5 billion yuan (\$208.86 million) in grant assistance to Central Asian states to support livelihood and development projects.

On 11 July 2025, the European Union (EU) and the five Central Asian countries held the 12th EU-Central Asia High-Level Political and Security Dialogue in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. According to an EU statement, the participants discussed global and regional security challenges arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as the situations in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and also took stock of efforts to implement the joint roadmap for deepening ties between the EU and Central Asia.

The Taliban has continued to seek closer ties with Central Asian states after seizing power in Afghanistan in August 2021. On 15 November 2025, a delegation of Tajik officials arrived in Kabul for a series of meetings with representatives of the Taliban. According to media reports, the talks focused on diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, and regional security.

Snap parliamentary elections were held in Kyrgyzstan on 30 November 2025. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election observers reportedly concluded that while the elections were efficiently run, they were nonetheless stifled by a restrictive campaign environment in which fundamental freedoms

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA Security Council Letter S/2007/279 (7 May 2007) was a letter from the Secretary-General on the establishment of a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13179** (25 January 2018) was a press statement welcoming further cooperation and coordination among UNRCCA, the Central Asian States, and relevant regional organisations, including those organisations of which the Central Asian States are members.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

were increasingly limited. Candidates affiliated with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov won the majority of seats at the polls, which were originally due to take place by November 2026. Kyrgyzstan is one of two candidates for the Asia-Pacific seat on the Security Council for the 2027-2028 term.

On 1 December, Chinese and Tajik authorities announced that five Chinese nationals were killed and another five injured in Tajikistan during attacks that were launched from Afghanistan. On 3 December, Taliban officials announced that they had arrested two people in connection with the attacks.

From 18 to 24 September 2025, Imnadze visited the border regions of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to observe the dynamics of cross-border cooperation between the three countries. He held meetings with local authorities, border services, and representatives of civil society and commended the progress made since the border agreement was signed.

Between 13 and 16 October 2025, the UNRCCA and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) convened the fifth regional conference on the counter-terrorism early warning network for Central Asia. During his opening remarks, Imnadze highlighted the strong interest of member states in the initiative.

On 11 December, Imnadze met with OSCE Secretary-General Feridun Sinirlioğlu in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. They discussed cooperation between the UNRCCA and the OSCE in relation to security and stability in Central Asia, including joint efforts aimed at promoting preventive diplomacy.

On 16 November 2025, Imnadze participated in the seventh consultative meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia in Tashkent, where he conveyed a message from the Secretary-General that commended Central Asia's dedication to multilateralism, among other matters. Central Asian heads of state were joined by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, as Azerbaijan has become a fully-fledged member of the format.

Key Issues and Options

Determining how to make the best use of the UNRCCA's expertise in preventive diplomacy and deciding whether there is anything the Council can do to support its efforts are both issues for Council members. An option for the Council would be to hold an open briefing on the work of the UNRCCA, which would give members an opportunity to publicly express their support and raise awareness of its activities. Closed consultations could then be held after the open briefing to allow for a more interactive and frank exchange with Imnadze. Alternatively, the Council could hold a debate in order to give Central Asian states the chance to discuss the UNRCCA's work in public. Currently, the norm is for UNRCCA meetings to be held solely in closed consultations.

The situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia is another issue for the Council. A representative of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) could be invited to participate in the closed consultations and provide information on developments in the country that might affect Central Asia.

Members could also choose to issue a press statement highlighting the importance of the UNRCCA's work and the role it plays in the region.

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the UNRCCA and consider it to be an important tool for promoting cooperation and diplomatic engagement in Central Asia. Before the middle of 2018, Council members regularly issued press statements expressing support for the UNRCCA and its work and encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, the UNRCCA, and "relevant regional organisations". Council members have not been able to agree on a press statement for the last seven years, however, owing to disagreements among the permanent members about including references to specific regional organisations, including the CIS, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

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