

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 In Hindsight: UN Peace Operations at a Crossroads
- 5 Status Update since our February Forecast
- 6 Afghanistan
- 9 Syria
- 11 Lebanon
- 13 UNDOF (Golan)
- 15 Democratic Republic of the Congo

Overview

In March, the US will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

The US is expected to organise two signature events: one on “[Children, technology and education in conflict](#)” and the other on “[Energy, critical minerals and security](#)”. Both will be held under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. The first meeting, which will be held this afternoon (2 March), will be chaired by First Lady Melania Trump. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo is the anticipated briefer.

The US also plans to convene briefings on the work of the [1737 Sanctions Committee](#) concerning [Iran](#) and the [1540 Committee](#), which assists member states in preventing non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction. (At the time of writing, committee chairs had not been appointed as Council members continue to negotiate this year’s allocation of subsidiary bodies chairs. If the chairs are not appointed by the time the meetings are scheduled to take place, the US may brief in its capacity as Council president.)

Other Middle Eastern issues scheduled for March include:

- [Syria](#), meetings on the political and humanitarian situations and on the chemical weapons track;

- [Golan](#), consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF);
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the monthly meeting; and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701, which was adopted in 2006 and called for a cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel.

The only African issue planned for March is a briefing and consultations on the [UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo \(MONUSCO\)](#). Council members are also expected to consider a draft resolution adjusting MONUSCO’s mandate based on the Secretary-General’s report and recommendations due to be submitted by 1 March pursuant to resolution 2808 of 19 December 2025.

Regarding Asian issues, the Council will hold its quarterly meeting on the situation in [Afghanistan](#). Members also expect to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Additional meetings on other issues—such as [Myanmar](#), [Sudan](#), [Ukraine](#), and the military escalation in the Middle East—could be raised in March, depending on developments.

2 March 2026

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In Hindsight: UN Peace Operations at a Crossroads

Introduction

UN peace operations have traditionally been among the most important tools available to the Security Council for the promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. They are perhaps the most visible aspect of the UN's work. Most importantly, as the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations demonstrated, UN peace operations have played an important role in saving lives and resolving conflicts.¹

Today, however, they face mounting challenges in an increasingly fractured multilateral environment. Geopolitical tensions among Council members, coupled with severe budgetary constraints, have weakened political consensus and eroded financial and operational support for these missions. Additionally, host governments are questioning the continued presence of UN peace operations, with several of them calling for the draw down and exit of these missions from their countries. This has resulted in the departure of three UN peace operations from Mali, Sudan, and Iraq, respectively, over the past three years, while one Special Political Mission (SPM), the UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), is going through a transition process as it winds down its operation and handover responsibilities to the Somali authorities and the UN Country Team (UNCT).

Against this backdrop, this month's *In Hindsight* examines Security Council deliberations on UN peace operations in 2025 and highlights emerging trends. It also considers what lies ahead for UN peace operations this year at a time of great uncertainty.

2025: A Challenging Year

As the UN marked its 80th anniversary, UN peace operations experienced a particularly difficult year. While the Council renewed the mandate of eight peacekeeping missions and five SPMs last year, the mandates of four peacekeeping missions and one SPM were adopted non-unanimously. This reflects a broader trend of lack of consensus within the Council and the flagging political support for UN peace operations.

Last year, the UN's liquidity crisis hindered the operational capacity and effectiveness of peace operations. The crisis is the result of member states being unwilling or unable to pay their annual contributions to the UN's regular and peacekeeping budgets in full and on time. At the end of the year, the UN was facing significant arrears for its peacekeeping and regular budgets, largely due to the US, which contributes roughly 22 percent of the regular budget and 27 percent of the peacekeeping budget. To mitigate the impact of the liquidity crisis, UN peace operations were forced to implement contingency measures, including a 15 percent cut in expenditures and the repatriation of 25 percent of uniformed personnel.

Since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025, the US has sought to overhaul UN peace operations as part of a "go back to basics" strategy designed to cut costs and to focus the UN on what it believes is its core peace and security mandate. It has pushed for some missions that it believes are ineffective to wind down their operations and withdraw. During several mandate renewal negotiations of missions as discussed below, the US has also called

for strategic reviews and benchmarks to assess mission progress and performance, as well as for the Secretary-General to present options for determining the future of specific missions. The US position influenced the decisions adopted by the Council last year regarding several missions, despite concerns expressed by some members about a hasty drawdown and the implementation of benchmarks that may not be in sync with realities on the ground, among others.

These positions have had a significant impact on peace operations in Lebanon, Yemen, and Western Sahara. In August 2025, the Council renewed the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) for a final time until 31 December, requesting the mission to begin an orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal. During the negotiations, the US signalled its readiness to veto the mandate renewal if it did not contain a clear date for the end of the mission, while the other members did not apparently seek the termination of UNIFIL and seemed to favour prioritising conditions on the ground rather than a specific end date for the mission. The result was a compromise that tempered US insistence on a set date for the mission's exit, with a final, longer-than-usual mandate renewal of 16 months. During negotiations in July 2025 on the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), the US expressed the view that it should be shuttered, and as noted below, the Council renewed the mandate at the start of the year for one last time until 31 March. In resolution 2797, which was drafted by the US and adopted on 27 January, the Council requested a strategic review to determine the future of MINURSO. The US also asked the Secretary-General to provide a report by 15 September on the feasibility of an eventual handover of tasks from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to the host country authorities or the UNCT.

In terms of partnerships for peacekeeping, the adoption of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of African Union (AU)-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs) had rekindled a sense of hope and optimism for enhanced cooperation between the UN and the AU. Through this resolution, the Security Council determined that AUPSOs authorised by the Security Council should receive up to 75 percent of their annual budgets through UN-assessed contributions. However, efforts to trigger the implementation of this landmark resolution in the case of Somalia, which hosts the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM), failed last year due to strong opposition from the US. (For more, see our 10 May 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

On the other hand, the Council authorised support for the deployment of a Gang Suppression Force in Haiti in September 2025 through the establishment of a support office—a model also envisaged under resolution 2719 to assist AUPSOs. In November 2025, the Council also authorised the establishment of a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF) in Gaza. These developments appear to have prompted discussion about the future direction of UN peace operations, particularly in the context of a perceived shift towards non-UN-authorized missions.

¹ United Nations, *Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People*, A/70/95-S/2015/446 (17 June 2015).

In Hindsight: UN Peace Operations at a Crossroads

Comprehensive Review of UN Peace Operations

Last year, the Secretary-General launched a comprehensive review of UN peace operations as requested by UN member states in the *2024 Pact for the Future* amid enormous difficulties facing UN peace operations. This review is being conducted internally by the UN Secretariat, with the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) leading the process.

The two departments have conducted a series of consultations with the various intergovernmental bodies and received written input from member states, regional organisations, civil society, and academia. The review is expected to be submitted to the General Assembly and the Security Council later this year in the form of a Secretary-General's report. In 2025, the Security Council held three open debates organised by the “peacekeeping trio”—Denmark, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea (RoK)—which allowed Council members and the wider UN membership to share their views and perspectives on the future of UN peace operations. With RoK having completed its Council term at the end of 2025, Denmark and Pakistan are expected to continue to work together on peacekeeping issues, particularly with respect to the review.

While the aim of this review was to help shape the future of UN peace operations, expectations among member states regarding its outcome appear to be quite modest. Based on the informal consultations held so far and the key pillars of the review shared with member states last December, there is a sense that the review may not produce any groundbreaking recommendations. A theme that has emerged in discussions about the future of peace operations—and one that may also feature prominently in the outcome of the review—is how to implement a networked approach that continues to capitalise on the UN's comparative advantages while also leveraging partnerships with regional organisations, host countries, and the broader UN system.

Additionally, given that member states will need to review the recommendations, and that Secretary-General António Guterres' term will end on 31 December, the responsibility of implementing the review's recommendations will most likely fall on the next Secretary-General. The future of peace operations is likely to be one of the key questions asked of candidates during the informal interactive dialogue sessions in the General Assembly, which will begin on 20 April. At this stage, it is unclear how the next Secretary-General will approach this issue and whether or not it will be a priority.

Most importantly, it seems that the discussions about reforming UN peace operations have been overshadowed by the urgent need to mitigate the impact of the ongoing liquidity crisis, which is forcing drastic cuts to field operations. At the same time, there are ongoing discussions on the UN80 Initiative, launched by the Secretary-General last year and aimed at overhauling the UN system to make it more effective, cost-efficient, and responsive.

In his 24 March 2025 briefing to the Security Council on peace operations, Guterres expressed the hope that the comprehensive review of UN peace operations would help inform efforts under the UN80 Initiative by finding efficiencies and improvements. Member

states also appear curious to know how the two processes could mutually reinforce each other. Apparently, this is quite a delicate issue at a time when the organisation is being forced to scale back its operations and cut costs. It seems that the issue was raised but not fully explored during informal consultations on the review.

What Lies Ahead?

The year started with the Council requesting the Secretary-General to prepare a transition and liquidation plan for another SPM, UNMHA, which is expected to transfer its tasks and responsibilities to the Special Envoy for Yemen. The US' explanation of vote could be an indication of its approach in upcoming negotiations on peace operations mandates. Its Deputy Permanent Representative Tammy Bruce stated: “The Security Council has a responsibility to look at all special political missions with the same critical eye with which it has examined UNMHA. The Council must adapt or end missions if conditions on the ground are not tolerable”.²

Looking ahead, Council members will negotiate the mandate renewal of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) this month. The US has already argued that the mission needs to adapt to changing conditions on the ground, underscoring the importance of realigning its mandate through clear and achievable benchmarks. In March, the Council is also expected to consider further adjustments to the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), based on the Secretary-General's report and recommendations to be submitted by 1 March.

In April, the mandate renewal of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is anticipated. The mission has had to implement austerity measures at a time when South Sudan is relapsing into yet another cycle of conflict and violence. Last year, the mission had apparently faced difficulties with the host country in implementing these measures. Recently, the South Sudanese government reportedly ordered the mission to evacuate its personnel from three counties in Jonglei State ahead of its planned military operations against opposition forces in the region. In a 10 February Security Council meeting on South Sudan, the US, the penholder on South Sudan, warned that “any further non-cooperation by South Sudan will constitute a threat to the mission's viability”, adding that this will inform future decisions regarding the mission's future.³ However, other Council members appeared cautious, mindful of the potential ramifications of such signals at a time when the country is sliding back into violence.

In November, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), although both the renewal and the mission's future will depend on progress by both Sudan and South Sudan in implementing the benchmarks set out in resolution 2802 of 14 November 2025. Against this backdrop, South Sudan requested the AU to place the issue of Abyei on the agenda of its Summit on 14–15 February. However, with the war in Sudan showing no sign of abating and South Sudan itself on the brink of another cycle of conflict and violence, prospects for meaningful progress on the benchmarks appear bleak.

² U.S. Mission to the United Nations, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on the UN Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement,” January 27, 2026, <https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-un-mission-to-support-the-hudaydah-agreement/>.

³ U.S. Mission to the United Nations, “Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on UNMISS,” U.S. Mission to the United Nations, 10 February 2026, <https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-unmiss/>.

In Hindsight: UN Peace Operations at a Crossroads

In October 2024, the Council approved a two-phase transition for the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), subsequently renamed UNTMIS, expressing its intention to complete the transition by 31 October. This decision aligned with the host government's request for the mission to hand over responsibilities to the Somali authorities and the UNCT. The UK, the penholder on Somalia, apparently explored the possibility of a Council outcome to address the second phase of UNTMIS' transition. It was also keen to test options for a successor UN presence in recognition of Somalia's continuing needs. However, in the absence of host-country support, it did not appear that a product would be possible. As a result, it appears that it will be very difficult for the UK and other like-minded members to try to revive the discussion of a possible successor mission to UNTMIS in October.

Furthermore, the Council is expected to consider proposals for a possible drawdown of MINUSCA, informed by the Secretary-General's report due in September. Any drawdown is likely to begin with the closure of the mission's electoral division following the conclusion of national electoral processes.

Lastly, the Council is scheduled to review the implementation of resolution 2719 three years after its adoption, in December of this year. Over the past three years, the UN and the AU have undertaken joint efforts to lay the groundwork for the resolution's implementation. These efforts were outlined in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report submitted pursuant to the resolution. Although there is currently a sense that the review may be largely procedural—and resolution 2719 has yet to be applied in practice—it is too early to predict how Council dynamics could shape the process.

Observations

UN peace operations expanded significantly after the end of the Cold War. Today, however, as the world enters another turbulent period, the utility of UN peace operations is increasingly being called into question, especially by the US, a permanent member of the Security Council and the world's most powerful country, and by host countries themselves. While last year was challenging for UN peace operations, this year could be even more difficult. Several UN peace operations are slated to wind down their operations and leave. Others could be forced to initiate drawdown processes.

In light of these developments, transitions have become central to Council discussions on UN peace operations. The implementation of resolution 2594—a landmark text spearheaded by Ireland in September 2021 on peace operations—is therefore all the more critical to ensuring the gradual, orderly, and responsible withdrawal of UN peace operations. However, its application has been uneven, particularly in the face of a strong push over the past five years for accelerated drawdown and exit of UN peace operations.

There is no doubt that this issue warrants particular attention in the ongoing review of peace operations. While all missions are expected to engage in early and integrated transition planning, some may be reluctant to do so in the absence of a clear mandate from the Security Council or a formal request from the host government. The Secretariat may be similarly hesitant, aware that initiating discussions on transitions could send the wrong signal regarding the drawdown and exit of UN peace operations.

A related issue concerns the utility of strategic reviews, assessments, benchmarks, and options in informing Council decisions on the drawdown, reconfiguration, or exit of UN peace operations. It is important to look at how these tools are effectively utilised to facilitate smooth and successful transitions. In some cases, these tools have informed the Council's decisions. In others, however, they have fallen short of expectations, or Council members proceeded to make decisions based on political considerations.

The more pressing issue remains the liquidity crisis, which does not show any sign of a sustainable solution. What this means is that UN peace operations will continue facing significant operational limitations in effectively carrying out their mandated tasks. The UN is expected to run out of cash in July if member states do not pay their dues. The Secretary-General has said that the organisation faces a major risk of “imminent financial collapse”.

In this context, the US' 2006 contribution is a critical factor. There was a bipartisan effort in the US Congress to approve a budget that would cover US contributions to both the regular and peace-keeping budgets. The key question is whether the US administration will be willing to disburse the funds approved by Congress. Last year, the administration rescinded some of the approved budget, citing ongoing “mission failures”. In a 6 February interview with *Reuters*, the US Permanent Representative to the UN, Mike Waltz, was quoted as saying that the UN would receive “an initial tranche of money very shortly,” while noting that the specific figures had not yet been decided.

In an increasingly resource-constrained environment, there are growing calls within the Council—particularly from permanent members, including but not limited to the US—for UN peace operations to focus on core tasks. In practice, this would entail scaling back the multidimensional nature of some peace operations by narrowing mandates that encompass a broad range of peacebuilding activities and refocusing them on key security and political objectives.

Taken together, all these developments underscore the daunting challenge facing UN peace operations as they seek to preserve their role and relevance in a time of geopolitical uncertainty and financial austerity.

Status Update since our February Forecast

Counter-Terrorism

On 3 February, Security Council members issued a press statement condemning terrorist attacks in Balochistan Province on 31 January that resulted in the deaths of 48 Pakistani nationals, including 31 civilians (SC/16287). The Balochistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attacks.

On 4 February, the Security Council held a meeting (S/PV.10101) on the Secretary-General's 22nd biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to international peace and security (S/2026/57). The briefers were Acting Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism and Head of the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Alexandre Zouev and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) Natalia Gherman. Chris Elmore, the UK's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, chaired the meeting.

On 13 February, Council members issued a press statement condemning a suicide terrorist attack on a mosque in Islamabad on 6 February that resulted in the deaths of 32 Pakistani nationals and injured 92 (SC/16296).

On 17 February, Council members agreed on a press statement condemning in the strongest terms the 3 February terrorist attack in Kwara State in Nigeria, which resulted in the loss of the lives of at least 100 people and the destruction of properties (SC/16297). The members reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. They underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers, and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism accountable and to bring them to justice.

UN Peacekeeping

On 5 February, the Security Council received its annual briefing from the heads of police components of UN peace operations (S/PV.10102). The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix; UN Police Adviser Faisal Shahkar; Police Commissioner of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Mamouna Ouédraogo; and Police Commissioner of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Meinolf Schlotmann.

Sudan

On 9 February, Security Council members held closed consultations on Sudan. The meeting was requested by the UK (the penholder on Sudan), together with Bahrain and Denmark (the Council's co-focal points on conflict and hunger), following the issuance of the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) alert on Sudan on 5 February. Director of the Crisis Response Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu and Assistant Executive Director for Programme Operations at the World Food Programme (WFP) Matthew Holingworth briefed.

On 19 February, the Security Council held an open briefing on Sudan (S/PV.10109). UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Yvette Cooper, chaired the session. The briefers were Wosornu, Under-Secretary-General for Political

and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo, and Regional Director of the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa Hala Al-Karib.

On 24 February, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Pekka Haavisto as his new Personal Envoy for Sudan, succeeding Ramtane Lamamra in this role.

On 24 February, Council members agreed to a press statement expressing deep concern over the continued violence across Sudan, including in the Kordofan and Darfur regions (SC/16304). They called on the parties to the conflict to immediately halt the fighting and strongly condemned reports of repeated drone attacks targeting civilians, civilian infrastructure, and humanitarian personnel, as well as related premises and assets. They condemned the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) for its continued assaults and destabilising activities in the Kordofans region, and all forms of violations and abuses committed against the civilian population. They also expressed grave concern over conflict-induced famine and extreme food insecurity in parts of the country.

On 24 February, the 1591 Sudan Sanction Committee approved the listing of four RSF-affiliated individuals, subjecting them to the measures imposed by the Security Council (SC/16303).

South Sudan

On 10 February, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.10103), followed by closed consultations, on the situation in South Sudan and the work of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Lacroix briefed on the Secretary-General's 90-day report (S/2026/58), which covered developments from 16 October 2025 to 15 January. The Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Major General (retired) George Aggrey Owinow, and Executive Director of the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization Edmund Yakani also briefed.

On 13 February, Council members agreed on a press statement expressing grave concern at the escalating violence in Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria, and across South Sudan (SC/16295). They recalled that, under international law, individuals who order the commission of war crimes may be held accountable. Council members called on all parties to de-escalate, immediately cease renewed hostilities, and resolve their differences through peaceful dialogue.

Yemen

On 12 February, the Security Council held a briefing on Yemen (S/PV.10105). UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Director of the Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Lisa Doughten briefed the Council.

Libya

On 18 February, Hanna Tetteh, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), briefed the Council on Libya's political, security, and humanitarian situation (S/PV.10107). She expressed concern over the lack of progress toward the political roadmap's key milestones, including national elections and unified institutions.

Status Update since our February Forecast

Tetteh also warned that unaddressed economic instability could jeopardise national security. Council members echoed these concerns and reaffirmed their support for UNSMIL's efforts to advance the political process.

Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 18 February, the Security Council held its regular monthly open briefing on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.10108). The UK—the Council's president in February—invited Council members to participate at the ministerial level, and Cooper chaired the meeting. Council members were briefed by DiCarlo and two civil society representatives: Hiba Qasas, Founding Executive Director of the Principles for Peace Foundation, and Nadav Tamir, Executive Director of J Street Israel. Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, and the Observer State of Palestine also participated in the meeting.

West Africa and the Sahel

On 19 February, the Council agreed to the contents of a letter (S/2026/83) responding to the Secretary-General's 20 January letter (S/2026/53) recommending the extension of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) mandate. In its letter, the Council decided to extend the UNOWAS mandate from 20 February to 31 January 2029. The Council expressed its intention to convene two regular UNOWAS briefings annually, while noting that additional briefings could be requested as needed. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit two annual reports on UNOWAS' activities. The Council further welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to conduct an independent strategic review of the UNOWAS mandate and activities and requested that the review be finalised and submitted by 30 September.

Ukraine

On 20 February, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “The Information Dimension of the Ukrainian Crisis: How Media Narratives Shape Conflict”. The briefers were Glenn Diesen, a Norwegian political scientist, and Andrea Lucidi, an Italian independent journalist.

On 24 February, the Security Council held a high-level briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10110). The meeting was requested by Ukraine, with support from the Council's European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK), to mark the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of the country on 24 February 2022. The UK's Minister of State for Europe, North America and Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, chaired the meeting, at which DiCarlo

briefed. Ukraine and several regional countries participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Children and Armed Conflict

On 24 February, Panama convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “Red Hand Day 2026: Safe Education to Prevent the Recruitment and Use of Children in Armed Conflict”. The meeting was co-organised by Greece and Liberia, together with non-Council members Austria, Japan, and Uruguay. The briefers were Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier; UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell; the Director of the Liaison Office in New York of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Eliot Minchenberg; and the Haiti Operations Director at Save the Children, Johnny César Etienne.

Central African Republic

On 25 February, the Security Council held an open briefing on the situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) (S/PV.10111). The briefers were Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the CAR and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) Valentine Rugwabiza and the Chair of the CAR configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Omar Hilale (Morocco).

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)

On 25 February, Council members met in consultations to discuss the work of the 1718 DPRK sanctions committee.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 25 February, Security Council members discussed recent developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) under “any other business” (AOB) following the consultations on the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. Members convened at the UK's request against the backdrop of recent secessionist rhetoric by the former president of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik. There were no briefers.

Situation in the Middle East

On 28 February, the Security Council convened for an emergency briefing under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East” to discuss the US-Israeli attacks on Iran that began earlier that day and the retaliatory strikes by Iran on Israel and several other countries in the region hosting US military facilities (S/PV.10112). UN Secretary-General António Guterres provided the briefing.

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) ahead of its expiry on 17 March.

The Council is also scheduled to convene for its quarterly open briefing on Afghanistan. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Political) and Officer-in-Charge of UNAMA Georgette Gagnon is expected to brief. Closed consultations are scheduled to follow the open briefing.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 February, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members on her visit to Kabul from 24 to 25 January during an informal meeting organised by China at its mission to the UN in New York. While in Kabul, DiCarlo met with the Taliban, members of the diplomatic community, Afghan women (including national UN staff), and civil society representatives. According to a press release, DiCarlo raised concerns in her meetings with the de facto authorities regarding restrictions on UN Afghan female staff and broader limitations on women's access to education, employment, and public life, calling for their immediate reversal. She also encouraged the de facto authorities' full engagement in the Doha Process and stressed the need to address international obligations necessary for Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community. DiCarlo further underscored the importance of ensuring unimpeded cross-border humanitarian assistance and sought the de facto authorities' support in facilitating aid delivery.

The working groups on counter-narcotics and the private sector, established as part of the Doha Process, held meetings on 3 and 9 February, respectively, bringing together member states and international organisations, Taliban representatives, and subject matter experts.

On 16 February, an extraordinary meeting of the Regional Contact Group of Special Representatives of Central Asian countries on Afghanistan was held in Astana, Kazakhstan. Special representatives of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the meeting, which focused on coordinating a regional approach to Afghanistan, including issues related to regional security, trade, and economic cooperation.

Tensions between Pakistan and the Taliban authorities in Afghanistan have continued to increase, with clashes in late 2025 marking a significant escalation in cross-border frictions. Pakistan has repeatedly accused the Taliban of allowing militant groups to target Pakistan from Afghanistan, allegations the Taliban deny. On 6 February, a suicide bombing at a Shiite Mosque in Islamabad killed 31 people. The attack was reportedly claimed by the regional affiliate of the Islamic State, known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-K). On 16 February, a militant attack in Bajaur District, in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, resulted in the deaths of 11 security personnel. The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) subsequently claimed responsibility.

On the night of 21 February, Pakistan launched airstrikes along the Afghan border, targeting what it described as "terrorist camps

and hideouts" in Nangarhar and Paktika provinces in Afghanistan. Pakistan's military said the strikes killed at least 70 militants. Taliban authorities, however, stated that the strikes hit civilian areas and resulted in dozens of casualties, including women and children. The Taliban's defence ministry condemned the attack as a violation of the country's sovereignty and said that an "appropriate and measured response" would be taken.

In a 23 February statement, UNAMA reported that preliminary casualty figures from 21 February airstrikes in Nangarhar province indicate that at least 13 civilians were killed and seven others injured, including women and children. In Paktika province, one airstrike reportedly struck a madrassa and partially damaged a nearby mosque, while another hit and partially destroyed a vacant private residence.

In response to Pakistani airstrikes, on 26 February the Taliban reportedly launched attacks across multiple locations in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Media reports citing Taliban sources indicated that the attacks resulted in multiple casualties among Pakistani security forces and the capture of several military outposts. Pakistani authorities, however, rejected claims regarding the seizure of outposts and disputed the extent of casualties alleged by the Taliban. Subsequently, Pakistani forces reportedly carried out retaliatory airstrikes targeting locations in Kabul, Kandahar, and four provinces along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Pakistan's Defence Minister described the situation as an "open war" with Afghanistan. Satellite imagery reviewed by *The New York Times* confirmed that at least one ammunition depot in Kabul was struck. At the time of writing, the full extent of casualties and material damage reportedly remains unclear, with both sides claiming to have inflicted significant losses.

The human rights situation in Afghanistan has continued to deteriorate, particularly for women and girls. In early January, the Taliban introduced a new criminal procedural code containing stringent and discriminatory provisions that, among other things, further curtail women's rights, normalise violence against women, and raise concerns about the legitimisation of practices amounting to slavery. The code reportedly defines certain offences in vague terms and grants sweeping discretionary powers to judges and authorities, creating broad scope for interpretation and enforcement.

Afghanistan continues to face one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises, with nearly half of the country's population, 21.9 million people, projected to require humanitarian assistance this year. Food insecurity levels are especially high, with an estimated 17.4 million Afghans experiencing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity between November 2025 and March. The large-scale returns to Afghanistan from Iran and Pakistan have also compounded the situation. In a 13 February press release, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) reported that nearly 150,000 Afghans have returned so far this year, bringing the total number of returnees to approximately 5.4 million since October 2023.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The latest report of the Monitoring Team assisting the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Daesh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, dated 3 February, highlighted persistent terrorist threats linked to Afghanistan. The report notes that the

Afghanistan

de facto authorities continued to provide a permissive environment for several terrorist groups, notably TTP, and raised concerns about the growing exploitation of commercial satellite communications and their increasing proficiency in using artificial intelligence.

It further assessed that Al-Qaida continued to benefit from the patronage of the de facto authorities and acted as a facilitator for other groups, particularly the TTP, including through training and advisory support. The report describes the TTP as one of the largest terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, noting that its increasingly complex attacks against Pakistani security forces have contributed to cross-border military confrontations. At the same time, ISIL-K was assessed to be under sustained pressure, primarily as a result of regional counterterrorism operations and Taliban military actions.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 19 January press release, UN experts stressed the importance of codifying gender apartheid as a crime against humanity and upholding gender-responsive provisions in the proposed Treaty on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Humanity. The UN General Assembly formally launched the intergovernmental process on the draft treaty in January, with the Preparatory Committee meeting from 19 to 30 January. The experts urged member states to ensure the meaningful participation of Afghan women in civil society, as well as gender justice activists in the treaty's negotiations, underscoring that the treaty's legitimacy hinges on whether it enables the inclusion of those who are living under the atrocities it seeks to address and prevent. Among other matters, the UN experts called on member states to strengthen other modes of support for Afghan women, girls, and gender-diverse persons, including through actively preventing normalisation of the de facto authorities and providing sustained funding for women-led civil society organisations.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of UNAMA's mandate is a key priority for the Security Council in March. One option would be for the Council to extend the mission's mandate for another year without making any changes to its priorities and tasks. Another option is for Council members to reflect the evolving human rights and humanitarian situation in the country and to express concern about the Taliban's restrictions on the mission's operations. The current policy approach of the US administration towards UN special political missions may influence the tenor of the negotiations. In its remarks at the Council's last open briefing on Afghanistan, the US suggested that if Taliban-imposed restrictions prevent UNAMA from effectively implementing its mandate, the Council may need to consider realigning the mission's tasks to reflect prevailing realities, with a sharper focus on core peace and security priorities guided by clear and achievable benchmarks.

The Taliban's continuing refusal to adhere to many of Afghanistan's international obligations, especially those relating to women and girls, is a major issue for several Council members. Following the Taliban's decision to prohibit Afghan women from working for the UN in early April 2023, the Council adopted resolution 2681 of 27 April 2023, which was co-drafted by then-Council members and co-pens on Afghanistan, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The resolution called for the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan and called on the Taliban to swiftly reverse the policies and practices that restrict women and girls' enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. In light of the continued and expanding restrictions, Council members could consider a follow-up product reaffirming these commitments and urging the Taliban to ensure that women

and girls are allowed to participate fully in public life, including education, employment, and engagement with the UN. Council members could also consider reflecting these concerns in the context of negotiations on UNAMA's mandate.

The threat of terrorism coming from Afghanistan remains an issue. Members could consider convening informal meetings with regional counterterrorism experts to assess emerging terrorism risks and discuss possible responses. Expert-level discussions could help monitor trends, including the activities of terrorist groups operating from or within Afghanistan, and enhance situational awareness. Such engagement could also advance deliberations on harmonising approaches and strategies to address the evolving threat.

The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, coupled with severe funding shortfalls, remains another significant issue for the Council. During the Council's most recent open briefing on Afghanistan in December 2025, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher underscored that women humanitarian staff must be able to carry out their work without restrictions, stressing that there can be no effective humanitarian response without their full participation. In this context, members could consider convening an informal meeting with humanitarian actors to explore options for mobilising additional funding and identifying steps the Council might take to facilitate sustained and principled humanitarian access.

Council Dynamics

Council members have generally been united in their desire to see Afghanistan ruled by an inclusive government, complying with its international obligations, and free from terrorism, but they are divided over how to achieve this goal.

The US position on Afghanistan appears to be evolving. During an 11 February hearing before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on South and Central Asia, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S. Paul Kapur indicated that various US agencies are in the process of formulating the Trump administration's policy toward Afghanistan, although no timeline was provided.

The US has stated that its top priorities in Afghanistan remain protecting US citizens, mitigating terrorist threats, and securing the release of US detainees. It has accused the Taliban of engaging in "hostage diplomacy" by using detainees as leverage in negotiations and has criticised what it views as insufficient progress on counterterrorism commitments. The US has also signalled a more sceptical approach toward international assistance and engagement in Afghanistan, stressing the limited results of past assistance efforts.

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

Afghanistan

Pakistan has linked its dispute with the Taliban to the alleged harbouring of terrorist groups, particularly the TTP, which Islamabad claims plans and conducts attacks against Pakistani security forces from across the border.

Pakistan has accused India of supporting armed groups targeting its territory, allegations that India has strenuously rejected. Meanwhile, India has taken steps to re-engage with Taliban authorities, meeting with senior Taliban representatives and re-opening its embassy in Kabul in October 2025.

This month's quarterly meeting will mark the first time that new Council members Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Latvia, and Liberia deliver statements on Afghanistan since joining the Council in January.

It will also mark the first time that China, as a sole penholder, takes the lead in negotiations on the mandate. (For background, see our 15 March 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Syria

Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council is expected to hold two meetings on Syria: the monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria, and another on the chemical weapons track. Deputy Special Envoy for Syria Claudio Cordone, and a representative from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are expected to brief at the political and humanitarian meeting. The Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo is expected to brief at the chemical weapons meeting.

Key Recent Developments

In February, the Syrian interim government and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) advanced steps to implement the 30 January US-brokered ceasefire and comprehensive agreement between the two parties. The agreement includes the phased integration of the SDF into government institutions and the Kurds relinquishing their control over vast swathes of resource-rich territory in northeast Syria.

In line with the framework of the agreement, on 3 February, Syrian government forces deployed into SDF-stronghold cities of al-Hasakah and Qamishli in al-Hasakah governorate, where Interior Ministry security units will reportedly take over control of state institutions, while Kurdish police will maintain security operations until they are fully merged with the Interior Ministry. Reportedly, some Arab Sunnis and Kurds living in these territories are welcoming the integration process; however, other Kurds are more apprehensive, fearing potential violence.

The agreement also includes provisions focusing on the return of displaced persons and on Kurdish civic and educational rights. Although these provisions and the 16 January Presidential Decree No. 13 recognising Syrian Kurdish identity are the first official steps recognising Kurdish rights and identity made by the Syrian government, neither the comprehensive agreement nor the decree mentions

the constitutional enshrinement of Kurdish rights, which has been a strong demand from Kurdish political leaders.

On 12 February, the members of the Council issued a press statement on northeast Syria and counterterrorism, which was authored by the US. The statement welcomed the agreement between Damascus and the SDF and its ongoing implementation; stressed the need for the parties to protect civilians, ensure humanitarian access, and continue Syria's recovery; encouraged progress on the integration of Kurdish representatives into the Syrian government; and reaffirmed the government's duty to protect all citizens.

The statement further stressed intensified counterterrorism cooperation against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and al-Qaida. It called on parties to avoid any security vacuum surrounding the detention facilities housing thousands of ISIL fighters in northeast Syria, which the Syrian government took control of from the SDF in January. The statement also welcomed Iraq's role in temporarily detaining ISIL detainees who were moved from Syrian to Iraqi facilities in a US-led operation undertaken by the Global Coalition Against Da'esh (the Coalition).

According to a 13 February statement by US Central Command (CENTCOM), the 23-day operation saw the transfer of 5,700 adult male ISIL fighters. Furthermore, al-Hol—one of Syria's largest camps housing around 24,000 ISIL affiliates, most of whom are women and children—has reportedly experienced an exodus of thousands of its residents, raising security and human rights concerns. On 22 February, Syrian authorities reportedly said that the camp was fully evacuated and shut down.

The Secretary-General's 2 February report on the threat posed by ISIL to international peace and security said that ISIL continues to maintain thousands of fighters in Syria and seeks to destabilise the country by carrying out attacks and inciting sectarian tensions. This included five foiled assassination attempts in 2025 on Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and on Syria's interior and foreign ministers.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA

Security Council Resolution S/RES/2799 (6 November 2025) removed interim Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa and interim Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida sanctions list. **Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2025/6** (10 August 2025) condemned violence against civilians in Suwayda in July 2025, called for unhindered humanitarian access to the region, and called on the Syrian interim authorities to ensure accountability. **S/PRST/2025/4** (14 March 2025) condemned sectarian violence perpetrated in Latakia and Tartous and called for accountability and the protection of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religion. **Security Council Press Statement SC/16293** (12 February 2026) welcomed the comprehensive agreement between Syria and the Syrian Democratic Forces regarding the integration of northeast Syria, and Syria's commitment and actions to counter ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaeda. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10106** (13 February 2026) was a Security Council meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria.

Syria

According to media reports, the US plans to fully withdraw from Syria in the next few weeks. In February, US forces reportedly pulled out of al-Tanf—a key military base in southern Syria used for Coalition operations—and al-Shaddadi and Qasrak bases in northeast Syria, handing over control to the Syrian authorities. On 14 February, CENTCOM issued a statement saying that US forces had killed or captured over 50 ISIL fighters and struck over 100 ISIL infrastructure targets in Syria over the course of two months.

Despite advancing steps to consolidate its control over the northeast, the Syrian government continues to face challenges to Syrian unity and territorial integrity, particularly in southern Syria. On 31 January, a large group of protestors in the southern Druze-majority governorate of Suwayda reportedly called for self-determination and accountability for crimes committed against Druze during clashes in the governorate in July 2025. The Israeli military also continues to maintain a presence in southern Syria and to conduct incursions into Syrian territory. (For more information, see the brief on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan in our March 2026 Monthly Forecast.)

Damascus' newly established control over the northeastern governorates of Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, and al-Hasakah has renewed efforts to hold elections in these governorates, which had been postponed during the October 2025 indirect People's Assembly elections due to security concerns. In the Council's monthly meeting on Syria on 13 February, Syrian Permanent Representative to the UN Ibrahim Olabi said that parliamentary elections will soon be held in these governorates. In the same meeting, Cordone briefed the Council for the first time since he was appointed Deputy Special Envoy for Syria and stressed the importance of the People's Assembly being fully inclusive of Syrian society.

On 19 February, Cordone commenced a multi-day visit to Syria in which he met with Syrian high-level officials, UN entities, and civil society to discuss how his office can further support the Syrian political transition.

Syrian authorities also continue to take steps aimed at rebuilding the country and its economy. On 7 February, Syria and Saudi Arabia reportedly signed a multi-billion-dollar investment package involving Saudi investors funding aviation, infrastructure, and telecommunications projects in the country. Additionally, on 11 February, Syrian senior officials held meetings with a World Bank delegation to look at potential financing for development projects geared towards Syria's recovery.

The country continues to rely heavily on aid as it grapples with insecurity and chronic humanitarian needs. In her briefing to the Council on 13 February, OCHA Director of the Financing and Partnership Division Lisa Doughten said that in the aftermath of the clashes in the northeast, an estimated 130,000 people remain displaced and are particularly vulnerable, especially to inclement weather events. (There are some 5.5 million internally displaced people in Syria.) Doughten stressed that for Syria to decrease its reliance on aid, it will need support in preventing further violence, increased investment in recovery and development, and funding for humanitarian aid in the near term.

Between 17 and 19 February, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict, Vanessa Frazier, visited Syria to discuss new ways to collaborate with

and support the Syrian government on strengthening the protection of children. Frazier said that she witnessed a commitment to build a Syria where children are “central” to the government's vision. The SRSG expressed concerns that challenges to the protection of children remain, including deprivation of liberty, unexploded ordnance, and mines.

Regarding the chemical weapons file, on 21 January, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) released its fifth report of its Investigation and Identification Team (IIT), which identified the Syrian Arab Air Forces as the perpetrators of a 2016 chemical weapons attack in Kafr Zeita. It also welcomed that—for the first time since the IIT's creation—the Syrian authorities facilitated and cooperated with the team during its investigations. In his 8 January briefing to the Council, Ebo spoke of good coordination between the OPCW and Damascus, including on continued deployments by the OPCW's Technical Secretariat to visit Syria and identify potential chemical weapons-related sites.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 29 January press release, UN experts called for the restoration of peace, human rights, and the security of detainees and prisoners in northeast Syria following military operations in the region. The experts noted that, since going into effect, there have been reports of breaches to the ceasefire agreement, and “condemned shocking alleged violations of international law, including summary executions, attacks on civilians, torture and the desecration of bodies and graves.” They urged all parties to peacefully resolve the conflict with full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including humanitarian assistance for the many displaced persons. Among other matters, the experts also called on the authorities to investigate allegations of violations by any actors and to ensure accountability. They further expressed concern at the US transferring “7,000 alleged ISIL prisoners to Iraq without any publicly known screening or legal process, oversight or protection for human rights”.

Women, Peace and Security

On 13 February, prior to the Council's monthly briefing on Syria, the Council members which have signed on to the Shared Commitments on WPS—Colombia, Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Panama, and the UK—delivered a WPS-focused statement to the press. The statement called for the “full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women in all political and decision-making processes in Syria”. The statement recognised recent steps taken by the Syrian government while also calling for further efforts towards an inclusive transition and to protect women's rights. It expressed concern at reports indicating that women and girls have faced sexual and gender-based violence and called for expanding efforts to strengthen prevention and protection measures.

The Co-Founder of the Syrian Women's Political Movement, Muzna Dureid, briefed the Council during the 13 February meeting. Noting that Syrian authorities had not granted permission to her organisation to convene in Damascus and highlighting the near absence of women in cabinet and diplomatic posts, she questioned the Syrian government's commitment to women's participation. Dureid noted that Syrian women “continue to face security threats, including sectarian abduction, killing, and patriarchal mindsets in the system and society”. She underscored the importance of accountability, transitional justice, and investment in education. Dureid also linked national security to human security, stressing that “[n]o amount of military strength can stabilize a country if its people live in fear, poverty, and injustice”.

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

Syria

transition, while navigating a fraught security context compounded by intercommunal tensions, terrorism, and external interference. By sustaining a united position anchored in the principles of resolution 2254, Council members can condition increased support for the Syrian government on its progress on key issues, such as pursuing disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) and fostering social cohesion and transitional justice, including through accountability and reconciliation processes.

Members are also likely to continue closely monitoring the government's counterterrorism efforts, particularly given recent ISIL attacks, the security shifts in northeast Syria, and the evacuation of ISIL-linked affiliates from the al-Hol camp.

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 in mid-2025, the Secretary-General has considered what types of UN presence in Syria would be most suitable to meet the country's current needs. Efforts are also underway to move the Special Envoy's office to Damascus and for a new representative to be appointed following the resignation of the former Special Envoy Geir O. Pedersen in October 2025. Council members could convene an Informal Interactive Dialogue with the participation of Syria and relevant UN entities to discuss the most viable options for future UN engagement in Syria (including by the Council) and how the UN can effectively support Syria's transition.

Another issue is the need to raise funding for humanitarian aid in the near term and to support Syria's transition into long-term recovery and development. Council members could consider holding a public briefing focused on the humanitarian situation and the country's need for support in reconstruction and economic rehabilitation. Such a meeting could include briefings from OCHA and representatives of the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank and provide an opportunity to amplify calls for an international pledging conference to support Syria's reconstruction.

Council members could also choose to request a closed briefing

from SRSF Frazier following her recent visit to Syria to hear more on the humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges facing Syrian children.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are aligned on the need for the Syrian authorities to advance an inclusive, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led political process based on the key principles of resolution 2254. They broadly agree that the threat of intercommunal violence cannot be addressed without advancing inclusive accountability measures, DDR, and security sector reform (SSR) efforts, together with a credible political process in the country.

The Council's December 2025 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 Suwayda. Furthermore, the Council's decision to delist Sharaa and his interior minister from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and al-Qaida sanctions list through the US-authored resolution 2799 of 6 November 2025 was a significant step towards legitimising the interim government.

The integration agreement on northeast Syria has been welcomed by Council members, with many viewing Damascus' increased consolidation of control over Syrian territory as an integral step towards restoring Syrian unity and territorial integrity. 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 ISIL/Da'esh and al-Qaida sanctions regime.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In March, Security Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. The Secretary-General's report, which is due on 10 March, will cover the period from 21 October 2025 to 20 February. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert are the anticipated briefers.

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON

Security Council Resolution S/RES/2790 (28 August 2025) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for a final time until 31 December 2026 and established several functions that UNIFIL is authorised to fulfil during the drawdown and withdrawal period. It also requested the UN Secretary-General to explore, by 1 June 2026, "options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701" following the withdrawal of UNIFIL. **S/RES/1701** (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. It also expanded UNIFIL's mandate. **S/RES/1559** (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory.

Key Recent Developments

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

Lebanon

the Blue Line in practice acts as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between the two states.)

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

Since the arrangement, Israel has carried out near-daily airstrikes and shelling in Lebanese territory—particularly in southern Lebanon—saying that it is targeting members of Hezbollah and its facilities to prevent the group from rebuilding its capabilities. These include the 20 February airstrikes in the Bekaa valley that reportedly killed at least 10 people and wounded 24, including three children. The most recent report of rocket launches from Lebanon towards Israel occurred in March 2025.

In mid-February 2025, Israel withdrew from most of southern Lebanon, but has since occupied five positions and two "buffer zones" in Lebanese territory near the Blue Line, with the IDF reportedly saying that it will remain there "until Israel is certain that Hezbollah will not return to the area south of the Litani River".

The UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has continued to observe IDF military activities in the mission's area of operation and reported several incidents in which the IDF opened fire or dropped grenades in proximity to peacekeepers during the months of January and February. On 2 February, the IDF dropped glyphosate, a herbicide, over areas near the Blue Line. UNIFIL has also continued to detect unexploded ordnance and unauthorised weapons in its area of operations in southern Lebanon, a region where Hezbollah has historically maintained significant influence.

Recent meetings of the mechanism established by the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement to monitor and support enforcement of the cessation of hostilities were held on 3 and 19 December 2025, and on 7 January. (The mechanism is a reformulated version of the tripartite mechanism, which consisted of representatives of UNIFIL, the IDF, and the LAF, and was chaired by UNIFIL. Under the terms of the cessation of hostilities, the revised mechanism also includes France and the US—which now chairs the mechanism.) In a new development, civilian representatives of Lebanon and Israel attended the meetings of the mechanism in December. At the time of writing, the next meeting of the mechanism was expected to take place on 25 February.

On 8 January, the LAF announced that it had achieved the objectives of the first phase of the plan to extend state authority over the entirety of Lebanese territory, an indirect reference to the disarmament of non-state groups in Lebanon, including Hezbollah. The announcement said that the first phase "focused on expanding the Army's operational presence, securing vital areas, and extending operational control over the territories that have come under its authority

in the South Litani Sector [the area south of the Litani River], with the exception of lands and sites that remain under Israeli occupation". It added that continued Israeli attacks and the occupation of several sites in Lebanese territory "negatively affect the completion of the required tasks" and hinder the extension of state authority.

On 16 February, the LAF presented its plan to move to the second phase of its disarmament plan to the Lebanese government. The second phase focuses on the region between the Litani and the Awali River, and it will take between four and eight months to complete, LAF Commander Rodolphe Haykal said. According to media reports issued shortly after the plan was first announced in August 2025, following the conclusion of the second phase the LAF will focus on Beirut and its surrounding areas; it will then concentrate on the Bekaa region, and then on the entirety of the Lebanese territory.

Hezbollah officials have stated several times that the group does not intend to disarm in areas north of the Litani River, arguing that Israeli strikes and occupied positions must be addressed first.

UNIFIL has entered the final year of its mandate. On 28 August 2025, the Security Council adopted resolution 2790 extending UNIFIL's mandate for a final time until 31 December and directing the mission to begin an orderly drawdown and full withdrawal from that date, "and within one year". (For more information, see our 28 August 2025 *What's in Blue* story on UNIFIL.)

A UNIFIL spokesperson has recently announced that the mission is planning to withdraw most of its uniformed personnel by mid-2027. Separately from the planned drawdown, the mission has had to reduce the number of peacekeepers in its area of operations by approximately 2,000 in recent months as a result of the UN liquidity crisis and measures implemented across UN missions to cut costs.

Resolution 2790 requested the UN Secretary-General to explore, by 1 June, "options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701" following the withdrawal of UNIFIL, including regarding "assistance in respect of security and monitoring of the Blue Line and the ways to enhance the support" to the redeployment of the LAF south of the Litani River through the UN's "tools". Lebanese officials have called for a continued international presence in southern Lebanon.

Resolution 2790 also urged the international community to intensify its support, "including equipment, material and finance" to the LAF in order to ensure their effective and sustainable deployment and enhance their capacities to implement resolution 1701. An international conference in support of the LAF in the implementation of its plan to establish the monopoly of arms across the country is expected to take place in Paris on 5 March. A preparatory meeting was held in Cairo on 24 February. At that meeting, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam reportedly said that the decision on Hezbollah's disarmament is "an irreversible sovereign choice" but that the implementation of the second phase of the LAF's plan depends on several factors, including the results of the conference in support of the Lebanese Army.

From 2 to 7 December 2025, the Security Council travelled to Syria and Lebanon on an official visiting mission. In Beirut, the Council delegation held meetings with Lebanese authorities, including President Joseph Aoun, Speaker of the Parliament Nabih Berri, and Salam. The Council also met with the Commander of

Lebanon

the 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 UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander Major General Diodato Abagnara and visited a nearby UNIFIL position.

Parliamentary elections are currently expected in May. Disputes over the electoral law, particularly regarding diaspora representation, as well as broader speculations about a possible postponement of the elections, have raised concerns about possible delays. Previous elections in Lebanon have been subject to delays due to political deadlock and other challenges.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 19 January, the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group examined Lebanon's human rights record, marking its fourth review under the UPR mechanism. At the outset, Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Haneen Sayed highlighted recent human rights developments in the country on issues such as the death penalty, violence against women, and the rights of people with disabilities. Recommendations received by Lebanon during the review focused on freedom of expression, safety of journalists, gender equality and women's rights, human trafficking, independence of the judiciary, migrant workers' rights, and LGBTQ rights, among other issues.

Key Issues and Options

Supporting the full implementation of resolution 1701 and the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon remains a key priority for the Security Council.

Capitalising on what appears to be a narrow window for a peaceful transition in Lebanon, while avoiding destabilisation risks, is a key issue for the Council, the country, and the broader region.

At the same time, rising tensions between the US and Iran have heightened concerns that any further deterioration could risk drawing Lebanon into a broader regional confrontation, complicating efforts to sustain stability along the Blue Line. That the root causes of the hostility between Israel and Hezbollah remain unaddressed is a long-standing issue.

Although it will continue to closely monitor the situation, the Council is likely to take a low-key approach until 1 June, when it expects to receive options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701 after the withdrawal of UNIFIL, in accordance with resolution 2790.

Council Dynamics

Council members agree that the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement between Israel and Lebanon needs to hold. There is also broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security.

While Council members have regularly expressed their support for UNIFIL's work in Lebanon, during the negotiations of resolution 2790, the US demanded a clear date for the mission's termination and signalled its readiness to veto the mandate renewal if it did not contain such a date. On the other hand, none of the other 14 members had approached the negotiations seeking the termination of UNIFIL. The result was a compromise that tempered US insistence on a set date for the mission's exit, with a final, longer-than-usual mandate renewal (16 months) reflecting the other members' concern that an accelerated drawdown could have undermined the process of Lebanon achieving full control over its territory.

Differences persist in Security Council members' views of Hezbollah. Some members distinguish between Hezbollah's political and military wings and have designated only its military wing as a terrorist organisation; other members, including the UK and the US, have listed Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. On the other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon.

France is the penholder on Lebanon. At the same time, since the cessation-of-hostilities arrangement, the US has assumed a more active role in Lebanon, exerting pressure on Lebanese authorities for the timely implementation of commitments to disarm non-state actors, particularly Hezbollah.

UNDOF (Golan)

Expected Council Action

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

Background and Key Recent Developments

UNDOF was established following the conclusion of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement (the 1974 agreement) between Israel and Syria, which ended the Yom Kippur War. Its mandate is to maintain the ceasefire between the parties and supervise the

disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces, as well as the areas of separation (a demilitarised buffer zone) and limitation (where Israeli and Syrian troops and equipment are restricted) in the Golan.

On 29 December 2025, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2811 renewing UNDOF's mandate for six months, until 30 June.

Israel continues to maintain a presence in the area of separation—which it expanded into following the ouster of Bashar al-Assad's government in December 2024—and from where it also routinely conducts incursions across the ceasefire line, in violation of the 1974 agreement. In recent weeks, Israel has reportedly continued to conduct frequent operations in the Syrian southern governorates of

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNDOF Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2811 (29 December 2025) renewed the mandate of UNDOF for six months, until 30 June 2026. S/RES/350 (31 May 1974) established UNDOF. Secretary-General's Report S/2025/784 (2 December 2025) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNDOF, covering the period 18 August 2025 to 15 November 2025. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9840 (17 January 2025) was a meeting on UNIFIL and UNDOF.

UNDOF (Golan)

Daraa and Quneitra, including by setting up checkpoints, conducting raids, arbitrarily arresting Syrians, and through artillery shelling. At the beginning of February, Israel also reportedly sprayed chemicals over agricultural land in Quneitra, threatening food security and the livelihoods of the local population.

Israel has cited national security concerns as the basis for its continued violations and has said that it will occupy the buffer zone indefinitely to ensure the demilitarisation and mitigation of threats from southern Syria. Since July 2025, Israel has said that some of its operations have been aimed at protecting the Druze community in Syria's southern Suwayda governorate from intercommunal violence.

Under its new interim president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to the 1974 agreement, and despite strongly condemning Israeli attacks, it has not retaliated militarily. Sharaa has sharply criticised Israeli actions, warning that such demands could lead to “a dangerous place”, and he has called for Israel to withdraw its forces and respect the 1974 agreement.

Since Sharaa took power, the US has seemingly adopted a policy of supporting Syria's progress towards stability and peace with its neighbours, including with Israel. On 6 January, Israel, Syria, and the US held discussions in Paris, following which they issued a joint statement affirming a commitment to achieving mutual security. The statement said that Israel and Syria agreed to establish a joint communication mechanism, which would be supervised by the US, to facilitate coordination on intelligence, military de-escalation, diplomacy, and commercial opportunities between the two sides. On 14 February, Syrian interim Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani reportedly clarified that the discussions were focused on Israel's withdrawal from Syrian territory occupied since December 2024 and excluded the issue of control over the Golan, which has existed since the 1973 war.

In January, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited UN peacekeeping missions in the Middle East, including UNDOF. In a 16 January briefing to journalists, he noted that the mission's area of operations had experienced significant changes due to Israel's positions established inside the area of separation and demanded a “return to the situation where UNDOF would be the only military presence in the area of separation”. Lacroix further described the ongoing talks between the two parties as “positive”.

The Secretary-General's most recent report on UNDOF's activities, dated 2 December 2025 and covering the period from 18 August to 15 November 2025, reported continued violations of the 1974 agreement, including the continued presence of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on the Syrian side of the buffer zone. The report said that as at 3 November, the IDF “maintained and reinforced” ten positions that it had established in both the areas of separation and limitation on the Syrian side, adding that UNDOF observed continued “engineering and construction activities” by the IDF in the area of separation. It also reported that the movement of UNDOF personnel was restricted six times, including through IDF roadblocks and constructed gates, and said that on one occasion IDF soldiers aggressively confronted an UNDOF patrol, for which the IDF later made a formal apology.

The next UNDOF report by the Secretary-General is due on 11 March.

Key Issues and Options

The shift in security dynamics in the Golan and ongoing violations of the 1974 agreement are key issues for the Council. Israel's presence in the buffer zone and repeated violations of the 1974 agreement could risk further destabilising internal security dynamics in Syria or lead to a significant escalation between the parties.

A related issue is the increased challenges UNDOF faces in implementing its mandate, including through movement restrictions imposed on mission personnel due to Israeli activities in the area of operation.

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

Council and Wider Dynamics

The Council remains united in its view that UNDOF plays an important role in regional stability. Despite historical divisions about who holds sovereignty over the Golan, Russia and the US have traditionally considered UNDOF as a separate issue on which they can agree, serving as co-penholders on the file. In addition, following the ouster of Assad, the dynamic between Russia and the US on the Syrian file has shifted. The two countries, once holding strongly opposing views, have shown increased alignment, as demonstrated by their co-penholdership of a 14 March 2025 presidential statement addressing sectarian violence and key issues on Syria's political transition.

During negotiations on the latest UNDOF mandate renewal in December 2025, the penholders chose to streamline the resolution to focus on the core issues, including the obligation of both parties to respect the 1974 agreement. The resolution also called on the parties to avoid any breaches of the ceasefire and the area of separation, and to regularly liaise with and support UNDOF. The mandate was renewed for the customary period of six months.

Apparently, China wanted to include language in the text that recalled Syria's counterterrorism obligations; however, this was not included by the penholders. Since Sharaa's government established control of Syria, China has been particularly vocal in calling on Damascus to take a stronger stance on foreign terrorist fighters, some of whom have been integrated into the country's security forces and are members of the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which China considers a terrorist organisation and a threat to its security.

The IDF's recent actions and presence in the Golan have generated criticism from several Council members. Most Council members

UNDOF (Golan)

have consistently demanded Israel's full withdrawal from Syria, while calling on all parties to adhere to the 1974 agreement. One of the main contentious issues during negotiations on the Council's 10 August 2025 presidential statement on Syria—which contained a reference to the 1974 agreement and UNDOF's mandate—was over whether Israel's military actions in Syria should be explicitly

referenced and condemned in the text, with the “A3 Plus” members at the time (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana) and Pakistan arguing for such language. Conversely, the US was unwilling to include a direct reference to Israel or its actions. (For more information, see our 9 August 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In March, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). During the month, the Council is expected to consider a draft resolution adjusting the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in light of recent developments, including efforts to implement the ceasefire between the DRC government and the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) rebel group.

Key Recent Developments

On 19 December 2025, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2808, renewing the mandate of MONUSCO for one year, until 20 December 2026. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to provide, by 1 March, an assessment of progress towards establishing the ceasefire oversight and verification mechanism agreed within the framework of the Doha process, a Qatari-led mediation effort to facilitate talks between the Congolese government and the M23 rebel group. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to provide proposals on the scope of MONUSCO's engagement to support the implementation of a permanent ceasefire, with a particular focus on hotspot areas in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces of eastern DRC. Furthermore, it expressed the Council's intention to consider further changes to MONUSCO's mandate, taking into account the Secretary-General's proposals and the evolving security situation on the ground.

In February, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited Kinshasa to engage with the Congolese authorities on the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate, including its support for a permanent ceasefire pursuant to resolution 2808. While in Kinshasa, he met with President Félix Tshisekedi, Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka, and other senior government officials and relevant stakeholders. He also travelled to Beni, in North Kivu province, to assess the situation on the ground and meet with provincial authorities and peacekeepers deployed in the area. Lacroix's discussions during this visit are expected to inform the Secretary-General's 1 March report to the Security Council.

Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Interim Head of MONUSCO, Vivian van de Perre, visited Goma, the capital of North Kivu, to lay the groundwork for the mission's role in ceasefire monitoring and verification. It marked the first time

that a MONUSCO helicopter had landed at Goma airport since it was shut down in January 2025, when the M23 captured the city. This appears to have rekindled some hope for a gradual reopening of the airport, which is considered critical by humanitarian actors for the delivery of assistance. During her stay in Goma, van de Perre met with delegations from the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM) of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) headquartered in the city as well as with the leadership of the *Alliance Fleuve Congo* (AFC), of which the M23 is a principal component.

Despite the ceasefire agreed in Doha, the Congolese government and the M23 have continued to trade accusations of violations. On 2 February, the Congolese authorities accused the M23 of launching a drone attack against Kisangani airport in northeastern DRC. The next day, the group claimed responsibility for the attack, alleging that the Congolese government had been using the airport as a staging ground for aerial operations against its positions.

On 2 February, the Congolese government and the M23 signed in Doha a terms of reference for implementing the ceasefire. MONUSCO was also requested to dispatch the first field mission to the city of Uvira, in South Kivu, to monitor the ceasefire. The M23 captured this city located on the northern shore of Lake Tanganyika in December 2025 but has since withdrawn. MONUSCO is expected, pursuant to resolution 2808, to notify the Council in writing when it is required to carry out activities in South Kivu in support of ceasefire monitoring and verification because its area of operation is limited to North Kivu and Ituri provinces. It seems that the mission has sent notifications to the Security Council accordingly, through a white note circulated to members in February.

On 17 January, the President of Togo, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, in his capacity as AU Mediator, convened a high-level meeting in Lomé attended by the five co-facilitators appointed by the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as representatives of Angola, Burundi, France, Qatar, Rwanda, Uganda, the US, the AU, EAC, SADC, and ICGLR, among others. (For more information on the co-facilitators, see our 11 April 2025 *What's in Blue* story.) In the communiqué adopted at the conclusion of the meeting, participants emphasised the need to enhance harmonisation, coherence, and coordination among all peace initiatives, with a view to leveraging existing synergies and avoiding the fragmentation of mediation efforts. Following

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2808 (19 December 2025) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 20 December 2026. S/RES/2773 (21 February 2025) was on the situation in the eastern DRC. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10063 (12 December 2025) was on the situation in the DRC.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

the meeting, Gnassingbé and the co-facilitators travelled to Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda in late January and early February to meet with regional leaders as part of their efforts to finding a lasting solution to the conflict in eastern DRC.

Meanwhile, Tshisekedi has travelled to Angola multiple times this year to meet with his Angolan counterpart, João Lourenço, in an apparent effort to revive Angola's role in the ongoing mediation efforts. Angola had previously facilitated the Luanda Process, an African-led initiative aimed at supporting talks between the Congolese government and M23, which was later overtaken by the Doha process. Amid mounting pressure internally and the M23 consolidating its position in territories it controls, Kinshasa appears to be seeking Angola's support in advancing an inclusive national dialogue, an initiative spearheaded by Congolese church leaders, which so far has struggled to gain traction.

On 11 February, Lourenço announced a ceasefire between the Congolese government and the M23, to take effect on 18 February, following its acceptance by both parties. The Congolese government accepted the call for a ceasefire and noted that it did so within the framework of the ceasefire mechanism agreed in Doha. The M23 likewise reaffirmed its commitment to implementing the Doha agreement, while condemning what it described as Kinshasa's "diplomatic fragmentation strategy".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in March will be to make the necessary adjustments to MONUSCO's mandate based on the Secretary-General's report and recommendations. In this regard, France, the penholder on DRC, is expected to circulate a draft resolution to Council members following the report's submission. The draft resolution could clearly articulate MONUSCO's role in support of ceasefire monitoring and verification based on the terms of reference agreed by the parties in Doha and encourage the mission to work closely with the EJVM.

The challenges facing MONUSCO in effectively discharging its mandated tasks will be another key issue for Council members in March. They will be receiving the Secretary-General's regular report which, among other things, is expected to provide updates on MONUSCO's activities and mandate implementation in areas occupied by the M23 in North Kivu, including its protection of civilians functions based on lessons learned since January 2025, when M23 significantly expanded its control of territory in North Kivu.

How to harmonise and consolidate the various mediation initiatives on the DRC remains an ongoing concern for Council members. This issue has become even more critical in light of the revival of the Luanda process and its implications for the ongoing Doha process. The AU mediator, together with the five EAC/SADC co-facilitators, has also become active lately in an apparent attempt to reassert the AU's lead role in mediation. While there is recognition of the complementarity among the various processes, enhancing greater harmonisation to avoid forum shopping and ensuring a focus on implementing existing commitments remains a challenge. A possible option for Council members is to hold an informal interactive dialogue to facilitate a discussion on this issue with all the actors involved in mediation efforts.

Another issue that continues to preoccupy Council members is the UN's liquidity crisis and its impact on MONUSCO. Although

the Trump administration may continue to provide funding for MONUSCO, given its strategic interest in the DRC and the US involvement in ongoing mediation efforts, it also wants the mission to become more effective by eliminating unnecessary expenses and redundancies. The US dispatched a delegation to Kinshasa recently to discuss this matter with the mission's leadership.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The unanimous adoption of resolution 2808 demonstrated Council members' support for MONUSCO and the ongoing mediation efforts to address the conflict in eastern DRC. This year, Council dynamics are likely to be influenced by the DRC's membership for the 2026–2027 term. The country is expected to advocate strongly for punitive measures against M23 and Rwanda, which it accuses of supporting the rebel group. In a 4 February letter (S/2026/62) to the President of the Security Council, the DRC called for such measures, citing remarks made by Ambassador Mathilde Mukantabana, Rwanda's ambassador to the United States, before the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee on 22 January. In her remarks, Mukantabana noted that "Rwanda does engage in security coordination with AFC/M23." Rwanda's support for M23 and DRC's support to the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR) has been corroborated by past reports of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee. It seems the DRC may face challenges in securing the necessary backing within the Council for such measures.

Outside the Council, this issue appears to be gaining traction. In particular, in the US—which has been spearheading the Washington process to facilitate talks between the DRC and Rwanda—lawmakers have threatened sanctions against Rwanda over its support for M23 and its alleged "failure" to uphold the Washington Accords signed by the DRC and Rwanda in December 2025 under US auspices. In a 16 February interview, US Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs Massad Boulos did not rule out the possibility of such measures.

The US seems particularly keen to advance its strategic interests in DRC, as demonstrated in a meeting between Tshisekedi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in early February. The DRC has included Rubaya, a mining site in North Kivu estimated to supply over 15 percent of global tantalum production and currently under M23's control, in the list of strategic assets to be offered to the US as part of a bilateral minerals cooperation framework, according to an 18 February media report.

Recently, the AU has become more active in addressing the situation in eastern DRC. AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf visited Kinshasa in December 2025 and met with Tshisekedi. On 6 February, he also issued a statement condemning the M23 drone attack that targeted Kisangani airport, endangering civilian populations. This elicited a reaction from the rebel group, which denied targeting civilians and accused the AU of bias.

In another development, South Africa notified MONUSCO in early February of its decision to withdraw its peacekeepers. The decision was reportedly prompted by the South African government's desire to consolidate and realign the resources of its national defence force. The South African contingent was a key part of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade that also includes Malawian and Tanzanian forces.

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