

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In April, Bahrain will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Bahrain plans to hold four signature events. One is a high-level open debate on [maritime security](#) under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item.

Bahrain also plans to convene the quarterly open debate on “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)” (MEPQ) as a high-level signature event.

Two signature events will be briefings under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations”: one on cooperation with the [Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#) and another on cooperation with the [League of Arab States \(LAS\)](#). Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani is expected to chair both briefings. Bahrain has proposed two separate draft presidential statements in connection with the meetings. The anticipated briefers at the first meeting are Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari and GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi. Khiari and LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit are expected to brief at the second meeting.

In April, the Council will hold a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the [European Union \(EU\)](#), also under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations”.

The Council will receive a briefing this month on the implementation of resolution 2730 of 24 May 2024 on the [protection of humanitarian and UN personnel](#).

The Council will also hold its annual briefing with the heads of military components of [UN peacekeeping operations](#).

In addition to the open debate on the MEPQ, other Middle Eastern issues on the programme in April are:

- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments; and
- [Syria](#), monthly meeting on political and humanitarian issues.

The Council plans to address several African issues this month, including:

- [Libya](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the work of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, as well as renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the Committee and reauthorisation of measures contained in resolution 2146 of 19 March 2014 related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya;
- [Great Lakes region](#), briefing and consultations on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region;
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), mandate renewal of the mission, and a meeting with UNMISS troop- and police-contributing countries; and
- [Western Sahara](#), consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Two issues in the Americas are on the programme in April:

- [Colombia](#), briefing and consultations on developments in the country and the work of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia; and
- [Haiti](#), briefing and consultations on developments in the country, including the work of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH).

Regarding European issues, a briefing is planned on the work of the [UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo \(UNMIK\)](#). There may also be one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#).

Council members are also likely to closely follow closely developments related to the Middle East crisis, including [Iran](#) and [Lebanon](#), and [Sudan](#). Other issues could be raised during the month, depending on developments.

1 April 2026

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In Hindsight: Living with the Veto

Introduction

Since the founding of the United Nations over 80 years ago, few issues have generated as much controversy among the world body's membership, or so affected the Security Council's work, as the veto accorded to the Council's five permanent members (P5). In recent years, P5 divisions have hindered meaningful engagement on situations such as Myanmar, Sudan, "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", and Ukraine.

The exercise of the veto has continued to increase. The seven vetoed draft resolutions in 2024 were the most since 1986. A total of eight vetoes were cast on these failed drafts: four by Russia, three by the US, and one by China. They were on a range of issues, evidence of the divisiveness that currently pervades much of the Council's work in an era of elevated tension among the major powers. In 2025, there were four vetoes: two by the US on a draft resolution on the war in Gaza, and two by Russia on amendments to a draft resolution on Ukraine. Significant attention continues to be focused on the adverse effects of the veto, which has been the subject of considerable academic research and a recent documentary film.¹

Given the rise in the use of the veto—and the unlikelihood of a Charter amendment to reform the veto in the near future—our 23 March research report, *Living with the Veto*, explores options for action, without amending the Charter, to promote accountability for the use of the veto, to limit its exercise, and to help promote international peace and security when the Council is hamstrung by the veto or the threat of veto.

The report analyses the Liechtenstein-led "veto initiative", which was launched on 26 April 2022 with the adoption by the UN General Assembly of resolution A/RES/76/262, and represents the first time that a UN body has taken action to modify the use of the veto. This resolution decides that the President of the General Assembly "shall convene a formal meeting of the General Assembly within 10 working days of the casting of a veto by one or more permanent members of the Security Council ... on the situation as to which the veto was cast, provided that the Assembly does not meet in an emergency special session on the same situation".

While the veto initiative is a positive development that promotes accountability and transparency, the use of the veto has risen in recent years. Additional avenues need to be pursued to curtail the exercise of the veto in ways that violate the UN Charter and, as much as possible, fill the void left by the Council in the face of irresponsible veto use. In this regard, a variety of proposals have been advanced, and in some cases pursued. The report explores options for action in this regard.

General Assembly Action in the Context of Security Council Divisions

In cases where the Security Council is gridlocked on an issue, the General Assembly can and has, in many cases, provided a forum for constructive engagement and action. While the UN Charter entrusts the Security Council with the "primary" responsibility for international peace and security under Article 24(1), it provides broad

discretion to the General Assembly to discuss and make recommendations on matters related to international peace and security in Articles 10, 11, 12 and 14. Although it cannot exact binding legal obligations on UN member states like the Security Council, the General Assembly has a rich history of discussing and acting on issues related to international peace and security.²

During the past decade, notable actions taken by the General Assembly on issues that have faced vetoes in the Security Council have included, among others:

- the establishment of the "International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria to Assist in the Investigation of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes Under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011" (IIIM) in December 2016;
- the creation of the "Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic" to determine the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in Syria in June 2023;
- the recommendation for the creation of an international register of damage in Ukraine, which led to the establishment of such a body by the Council of Europe in May 2023; and
- the endorsement of the New York Declaration on 12 September 2025, calling for the end of the war in Gaza and mapping out conditions leading to Palestinian statehood and improved relations between Israel and Arab states.

Resuscitating the Obligatory Abstention under Article 27(3)

One concern that has been gaining traction among the wider UN membership in recent years is the decades-long dormancy of the obligatory abstention clause in Article 27(3) in Chapter V of the UN Charter. Article 27(3) stipulates that any Council member that is a party to a dispute shall not vote in Council decisions of a substantive nature under Chapter VI (that is, those related to the peaceful settlement of disputes) or under Article 52(3), which focuses on the pacific settlement of disputes through regional arrangements. This provision of the Charter has been dormant for several decades, although many member states have begun to call for its resuscitation, especially since Russia's vetoes of draft resolutions pertaining to the war in Ukraine, following its full-scale invasion of the country in February 2022. In this regard, the September 2024 *Pact for the Future*—the roadmap agreed by member states for the future of multilateralism—calls for full implementation and adherence to the provisions of the UN Charter, including Article 27(3).

Living with the Veto presents several options to help revive the obligatory abstention provision in Article 27(3); among these is the possibility of a General Assembly resolution calling for adherence to the obligatory abstention and clarifying who would be required to abstain by defining "party to a dispute". It appears that discussion of such a proposal has been underway for several months, and a draft resolution addressing these issues was circulated by Liechtenstein and 13 other states to the wider membership on 27 March. The draft further calls on Council members to apply the term "party to a dispute" to promote implementation of the obligatory abstention

¹ Director/Producer Tim Slade, "The Veto", 2025.

² See Erica Gaston and Adam Day, *Assembly for Peace: A Digital Handbook on the UN General Assembly's Past Practice on Peace and Security*. The handbook provides a comprehensive overview of the work of the General Assembly (GA) on matters relevant to international peace and security. The authors write: "...the GA has engaged in a wide range of activities under Chapter IV of the Charter that might be considered part of its peace and security practice, including the deployment of mediators, the establishment of peace operations, the mandating of special envoys, recommendations for the use of force or sanctions and the creation of accountability mechanisms such as fact-finding missions (FFMs) and commissions of inquiry (COIs)", 1.

In Hindsight: Living with the Veto

under Article 27(3) and invites the Council to submit a special report on the implementation of the term “party to a dispute” when the Council invokes it, including in regard to relevant decisions.

Veto Restraint in the Case of Atrocity Crimes

A legal argument that has been gaining attention posits that use of the veto to block action in the context of atrocity crimes violates international law, including *jus cogens* norms, the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and international treaties such as the Geneva Conventions.³ A major proponent of this argument has suggested that the General Assembly could pursue an ICJ advisory opinion or a resolution on this issue.⁴ Legal obligations related to the use of the veto in the context of atrocity crimes are likely to engender further important consideration.⁵

In the meantime, member states that have yet to sign on to the French/Mexico initiative and the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group Code of Conduct—which call for veto restraint in the face of atrocity crimes—could continue to be encouraged to do so. To date, 107 member states have pledged their support to the French/Mexico initiative, while 130 member states and two observer states (the Holy See and the State of Palestine) have supported the ACT Code of Conduct. Despite this significant level of support, it is revealing that France’s joint initiative with Mexico has not been supported by any other permanent member, while France and the UK are the only P5 members to back the ACT Code of Conduct.

Recommendations from the President of the General Assembly

The 5 September 2025 General Assembly resolution on revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly requests the President of the General Assembly (PGA) to continue preparing “detailed summaries following relevant discussions related to the annual report of the Security Council, on the use of the veto or General Assembly resolution 377 A (V) or 76/262, including *recommendations for action based on such discussions*” [emphasis ours]. This last clause—apparently incorporated in the negotiations on the resolution at the initiative of Mexico and ACT, among others—provides an opportunity for the PGA to highlight concrete recommendations regarding pathways for action for the General Assembly after the use of the veto.

Documenting the Pocket Veto

One factor that is not reflected by statistics on the veto is the “hidden” or “pocket” veto. This refers to cases in which draft resolutions are not formally presented for a vote—or if they are, their content is significantly altered—because of the threat of the veto by one or more permanent members. It is very difficult to document the use of the pocket veto because written records only exist if a draft resolution is circulated as a Council document, and in most cases, this only happens if there is a reasonable expectation of adoption. There is often anecdotal evidence of explicit veto threats, but implicit ones are harder to ascertain.

Nonetheless, documenting veto threats in as systematic a way as possible, while arduous, would be a fruitful task. It would create a more refined understanding of the positions of the permanent members and their impact on the work of the Council, including how they shape the operating environment and constrain potential action on certain files. An impartial think tank or academic institution could undertake such a project. Conducting this initiative would require consistent and extensive engagement with Council members to determine when such threats are made.

Careful documentation would consider several questions: Was a draft resolution produced? If so, what was the content? If not, is there an indication of the substance envisioned? Which permanent member(s) threatened the veto? If the threat was communicated explicitly, how was it conveyed—in a closed Council meeting, in a bilateral discussion, or in another format? If it is implicit, what is the precise substance of the messaging? In some cases, ascertaining the credibility of the information could be a challenge; for example, there may be contrasting interpretations of an exchange, with one or more sources maintaining that the use of the veto had been implied, while others, including the relevant permanent member(s), deny that the threat of the veto had been made. Such discrepancies can be explained on a case-by-case basis as part of the project to provide as complete and transparent a historical record as possible.

Conclusion

Political courage to challenge the status quo on the veto is sorely needed to address a deteriorating international security environment beset by multiple crises and enormous human suffering. Continued efforts need to be pursued by Council members, the wider membership and civil society to enhance accountability for the irresponsible exercise of the veto (and threat of veto) and to promote international peace and security when the Council fails to fulfil its responsibilities under the UN Charter.

3 Jennifer Trahan, *Existing Legal Limits to Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes* (Cambridge University Press, 2022); see also, Juan Manuel Gómez-Robledo and Pablo Arrocha Olabuenaga, “Restraining the Use of the Veto” in *Empowering the Security Council: Reforms to Address Modern Threats*, eds. Mona Ali Khalil and Floriane Lavaud (Oxford University Press, 2024), 93-96.

4 Trahan, *Existing Legal Limits to Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes*, 256-257.

5 Trahan, *Existing Legal Limits to Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes*, 256-257.

Status Update since our March Forecast

Children, Technology, and Education in Conflict

On 2 March, the Security Council held an open briefing titled “Children, technology, and education in conflict” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.10113). US First Lady Melania Trump chaired the meeting, a signature event of the US’ March Council presidency. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

Energy, Critical Minerals, and Security

On 5 March, the Security Council held a briefing on “Energy, critical minerals, and security” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV. 10114). US Secretary of Energy Chris Wright chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of the US presidency. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

Myanmar

On 6 March, the Security Council held a private meeting on Myanmar. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar Julie Bishop briefed via videoconference (VTC) (S/PV/10115). Philippine Foreign Secretary Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro briefed in person in her capacity as the Special Envoy of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Chair on Myanmar. The UK, the penholder on the file, requested the meeting to hear an update on the situation in Myanmar.

1540 (Non-proliferation) Committee

On 16 March, the Security Council received the annual update on the work of the 1540 Committee (S/PV.10120). The usual practice is for the Chair of the 1540 Committee to brief Council members on the Committee’s activities. Pending the appointment of the chair, as Council members continue to negotiate this year’s allocation of subsidiary body chairs, the US briefed on the report in its capacity as Council President in March.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 17 March, the Security Council held closed consultations on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). France, the penholder on the file, requested the meeting to discuss the escalation of fighting in the eastern DRC, particularly the 11 March drone attack in Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, which killed one UNICEF staff member and two other civilians.

On 26 March, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in the DRC, including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/PV.10126). Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Protection and Operations in MONUSCO Vivian van de Perre briefed. Rwanda participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

Iran

On 11 March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2817, submitted by Bahrain on behalf of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—as well as Jordan (S/PV.10119). The resolution condemned Iran’s strikes against these countries and determined that they constitute a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security. The text was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). It was co-sponsored by 136 UN member states.

The Council subsequently voted on an alternative draft resolution submitted by Russia. In contrast to resolution 2817, it did not name individual countries but more generally “mourn[ed] the tragic loss of life throughout the ongoing hostilities” in the Middle East and urged all parties to immediately stop their military activities and refrain from further escalation (S/2026/159). The draft text failed to be adopted because it did not garner the nine favourable votes required for adoption. It received four votes in favour (China, Russia, Pakistan, and Somalia), two votes against (Latvia and the US), and nine abstentions.

On 12 March, the Security Council held an open briefing on the work of the 1737 Sanctions Committee concerning Iran under the “Non-proliferation” agenda item (S/PV.10120). Prior to the meeting, Russia raised a point of order reiterating its position that “Non-proliferation” had been removed from the Council’s agenda. The Russian representative stated, “We cannot agree to the agenda for today’s meeting proposed by the United States presidency” and “request that the question of holding this meeting be put to a procedural vote”. The US subsequently put the provisional agenda to a vote. The agenda was adopted with 11 votes in favour, two against (China and Russia), and two abstentions (Pakistan and Somalia).

Afghanistan

On 16 March, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2818, extending the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for three months, until 17 June 2026.

Ukraine

On 23 March, the Security Council held an open briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10124). The Council’s European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK) requested the meeting following Ukraine’s 18 March letter, citing recent Russian strikes against the country. US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau chaired the meeting, at which Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher briefed.

UNDOF (Golan)

Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan on 26 March. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed.

UN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold a high-level briefing on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations”. The briefing will be one of the signature events of Bahrain’s April Security Council presidency and marks the first Council meeting focused on cooperation between the UN and the GCC. Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are the GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi and Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Established in 1981 following a meeting in the Emirati capital, Abu Dhabi, the GCC is a regional, intergovernmental organisation that serves as a platform for cooperation on political, economic, and sociocultural issues affecting the Arab states of the Persian Gulf. The GCC comprises six member states—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the organisation is structured around three key decision-making organs: the Supreme Council, Ministerial Council, and Secretariat General. Its mandate focuses on achieving coordination, integration, and interconnection among member states; formulating similar regulations in various sectors; and strengthening cooperation across different fields, such as economic and financial affairs, trade, and scientific and technological progress in industry, mining, and agriculture, among other areas. The GCC has held permanent observer status at the UN General Assembly since 2007 and engages with various international and regional organisations, including the African Union (AU), the European Union, the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

Enhancing cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations, as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, remains a prominent theme for the Security Council, especially in addressing issues of peace and security. On multiple occasions, the Council has convened briefings to discuss strengthening cooperation between the UN and regional organisations. For instance, the Council has held annual consultative meetings with the members of the AU Peace and Security Council since 2007 to bolster cooperation and dialogue between the two bodies to confer and address peace and security challenges affecting the African continent. In addition, the Council has convened debates and briefings on cooperation with several other organisations, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the LAS, the OIC, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Over the past several years, the GCC has expressed positions on country situations on the Council’s agenda, particularly those relating to the Middle East. Individual GCC member states have also played an instrumental role in mediation efforts across regional

and international disputes. For instance, Qatar played a key role in brokering the 2020 Doha Peace Agreement between the US and the Taliban and the 2011 Darfur Peace Agreement, while in more recent years, it has engaged in ongoing mediation efforts between Israel and Hamas. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also positioned themselves as important diplomatic players in global mediation efforts, particularly in facilitating prisoner exchanges between Ukraine and Russia in 2022 and 2025, respectively. Both countries were also involved in helping forge a peace agreement between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 2018.

Since the onset of the regional conflict in the Middle East on 28 February with US and Israeli airstrikes on Iran, the security situation of the GCC countries and Jordan has become increasingly precarious. Tehran has continued to target these countries’ civilian and energy infrastructure, intensifying its attacks on oil and natural gas facilities around the Gulf. According to media reports, it has reportedly launched thousands of drones and missiles against GCC countries, with the largest number striking the UAE.

Following the attacks, Bahrain, as well as France, with Colombia’s support, requested an emergency briefing under the agenda item “The situation in the Middle East”, citing Tehran’s strikes on several countries in the Gulf region. China and Russia also asked for a meeting but under the agenda item “Threats to international peace and security”. The meeting was eventually held under the Middle East agenda item. Speaking on behalf of the GCC, Bahrain characterised the attacks as “flagrant violation[s] of the GCC countries’ sovereignty and territorial integrity”, calling on the Security Council to assume all its responsibilities in confronting these violations and preventing their recurrence. (For more information on the meeting, see our 28 February *What’s in Blue* story.)

The Ministerial Council of the GCC similarly convened an extraordinary meeting via videoconference on 1 March to discuss the regional effects of Iran’s aggression. During the meeting, the Council strongly condemned Tehran’s aggression towards the GCC countries and Jordan, affirming that “they will take all necessary measures to defend their security and stability and to protect their territories, citizens, and residents, including the option of responding to the aggression”. Bahrain, in its capacity as the current president of the Ministerial Council, chaired the meeting.

On 11 March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2817, presented by Bahrain on behalf of the GCC member states and Jordan. Co-sponsored by 136 UN member states and adopted with 13 affirmative votes and 2 abstentions (China and Russia), the resolution condemns Tehran’s strikes in the strongest terms and determines that such acts constitute a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security. It further demands Tehran’s immediate cessation of all attacks against these countries. (For more information on the resolution, see our 11 March *What’s in Blue* story.)

In addition to the region’s precarious security landscape, the GCC countries’ economic situation has also been affected as a result of the war. As part of its retaliation campaign against Washington

UN DOCUMENTS ON UN-GCC COOPERATION [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2817](#) (11 March 2026) condemns Iran’s attacks on Gulf countries, demands an immediate halt to hostilities, and deplores Tehran’s targeting of infrastructure such as ports and energy facilities in the Gulf region. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10112](#) (28 February 2026) was an emergency briefing on the US-Israeli military operation against Iran and Iran’s subsequent retaliatory strikes on Gulf countries. [General Assembly Documents A/RES/79/295](#) (16 June 2025) on cooperation between the UN and GCC. [A/RES/62/78](#) (6 December 2007) decides to invite the GCC to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly as an observer.

UN-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Cooperation

and Tel Aviv, Tehran has effectively closed off the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint that underpins the economies of the GCC countries and through which about a fifth of global oil supplies pass. Iran's interference with the waterway has reportedly upended energy production and inflicted major disruptions to broader supply chains, including aviation, tourism, and agriculture. So far, the crisis has reportedly removed about 400 million barrels, approximately four days of the global oil supply, from the market, triggering price increases of around 50 percent. Some analysts argue that Tehran's disruptions place the region at risk of some of the most severe economic harm since the 1990-1991 Gulf War, warning that "outputs are expected to drop substantially further if commercial shipping continues to avoid the strait due to Tehran's threats".

At the time of writing, fighting in the region continues. Despite unverified reports of contacts between the US and Iran—which Tehran has publicly denied—there appears to be no immediate prospect for a diplomatic off-ramp at this stage.

Key Issues and Options

Strengthening cooperation with the UN and the GCC is a key issue for the Council, against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict in the Persian Gulf. Amid escalating tensions between the US and Israel, on the one hand, and Iran, on the other, the precarity of the region's security situation and its potential spillover effects across the broader Middle East continues to be a source of mounting concern for Council members. The economic implications of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz for the GCC countries and the global market further compound the region's instability, highlighting the need to preserve regional and international peace and security.

Another issue is how both organisations can enhance cooperation on thematic priorities, including the women, peace and security (WPS) and youth, peace and security (YPS) agendas, while addressing emerging threats and challenges, such as maritime security, counterterrorism, and food-and-water insecurity.

At the time of writing, it appears that Bahrain, on behalf of the GCC countries, has proposed another resolution that addresses the threats to the freedom of navigation in and near the Strait of Hormuz. In addition to the draft resolution, Bahrain has circulated a draft presidential statement, which apparently focuses on the importance of strengthening cooperation between the UN and the GCC in promoting regional stability and maintaining international peace and security. At the time of writing, negotiations on both texts were at an early stage.

During the briefing in April, Council members could propose concrete ideas for strengthening the partnership between the UN and the GCC particularly in the areas of mediation, preventive diplomacy, post conflict stabilisation, and humanitarian response.

The briefing could also provide a platform for both organisations to reaffirm their commitment to addressing emerging threats and challenges, countering terrorism, and sustaining peace and security and identify practical avenues for strengthening their joint efforts in this regard.

Members could also choose to establish a regular cycle of meetings between the Council and the GCC through the presidential statement, which would allow for greater cooperation particularly in addressing threats to international peace and security in the region. Such an annual meeting could follow the practice of the LAS meetings and be held annually in New York during the presidency of the Arab member in the Council. Alternatively, the meetings could alternate between New York and the GCC headquarters in Riyadh, in line with the UN-AU meetings, which rotate between New York and the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Council and Wider Dynamics

It appears that Council members are generally supportive of the initiative to hold a briefing on the UN's cooperation with the GCC. Moreover, Council members seem interested in further engaging with GCC member states, especially in light of the Gulf countries' role in mediation initiatives. Regional security developments have also generated increased interest in enhancing cooperation between the two entities. Bahrain, on behalf of the GCC countries, is expected to stress the importance of strengthening institutional cooperation and fostering partnerships between the two organisations, notably in areas related to conflict prevention and mediation.

However, differences in political alignments and priorities among Council members may colour the substance of discussions on certain conflict situations. A key area of divergence concerns the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The GCC has condemned Israel for aggression on the Gaza Strip following the 7 October 2023 attacks by Hamas and has supported the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, emphasising its importance for regional and global stability. At the same time, divergences exist among the GCC countries regarding this particular issue, as two member states—Bahrain and the UAE—signed the US-brokered Abraham Accords in September 2020, through which they normalised diplomatic relations with Israel and enhanced economic cooperation between the countries.

Since the signing of the accords, these diplomatic ties have faced periodic strain due to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as seen in September 2025, when Israel carried out a military strike in Qatar against Hamas leadership. The attack drew significant criticism from several international interlocutors, including Bahrain, the UAE, and other GCC countries. The US is a key ally of Israel on the Council and has continued to extend its substantial political and diplomatic backing.

UN-League of Arab States (LAS) Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold a high-level briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS). Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani is expected to chair the meeting. UN Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari and Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul Gheit are the anticipated briefers.

At the time of writing, Council members have been negotiating a draft presidential statement as a possible outcome of the meeting.

Background and Key Recent Developments

In recent years, Arab Council members have adopted the practice of holding meetings on UN-LAS cooperation during their Council presidencies. This has included Algeria (2024-2025), the United Arab Emirates (2022-2023), Tunisia (2020-2021), and Kuwait (2018-2019). The Council has also adopted presidential statements in connection with some of these meetings, including S/PRST/2019/5, S/PRST/2021/2, and S/PRST/2022/1, adopted in 2019, 2021, and 2022, respectively.

The presidential statements, which were adopted after the meetings in 2021 and 2022, encouraged Council members to hold an informal meeting with the LAS Secretary-General and Arab Summit Troika representatives on the margins of the General Assembly's high-level segment. Since then, each year the meeting has taken place in the format of a high-level informal interactive dialogue.

On 23 January 2025, the Council held its most recent briefing on UN-LAS cooperation under then-Council member Algeria's presidency. In his briefing to the Council, Khiari framed the meeting against the backdrop of an acute regional crisis, noting that the extreme challenges facing the Middle East were coinciding with wider strains on the international system and the rules-based order. His briefing focused on three main areas: the short-lived Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal brokered days earlier; the importance of UN-LAS cooperation on the transitions underway in Syria and Lebanon; and the deteriorating situation in Sudan, where he called for intensified diplomatic efforts. He also highlighted youth engagement as a shared priority, referencing the Arab Regional Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Strategy. Gheit also briefed the Council and similarly focused on Gaza, stressing that only the realisation of Palestinian statehood could guarantee lasting peace, while also flagging the League's hope for a successful and inclusive Syrian transition free of foreign interference.

On 17 May 2025, the LAS held its 34th summit in Baghdad—the first in Iraq since 2012. UN Secretary-General António Guterres attended the summit. The summit was dominated by the war in Gaza, with the resulting Baghdad Declaration calling for an immediate ceasefire and rejecting the forced displacement of Palestinians. Arab leaders called on countries and international financial institutions to provide financial support for an Arab-led Gaza reconstruction plan to counter the proposal being made by the US, at the time, to take control of the enclave. The declaration also condemned

Israeli strikes on Syrian territory and called for continued engagement on Sudan and Libya.

Subsequently, on 17 November 2025—following months of US-led diplomatic activity—the Council adopted resolution 2803, which endorsed the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict and authorised the establishment of the Board of Peace (BoP) and a temporary International Stabilization Force (ISF). Thirteen members voted in favour, including then-Council member Algeria, who also represented the Arab voice on the Council, while China and Russia abstained. Several LAS states—including Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—publicly backed the US initiative.

Following the outbreak of conflict triggered by the Israeli-US strikes on Iran on 28 February, the LAS Secretary-General strongly condemned the Iranian retaliatory missile and drone attacks against Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, characterising them as a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of states that had neither sought nor participated in the war. On 8 March, the LAS Council convened an extraordinary ministerial session and adopted a resolution condemning the strikes as a serious violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the affected states and endorsing the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. The resolution also condemned Iran's targeting of civilian infrastructure and called on the Security Council to adopt a binding resolution demanding an immediate halt to the attacks.

The subsequent adoption of Council resolution 2817 on 11 March, which condemned Iran's strikes on Arab states, was welcomed by Gheit, who also congratulated Bahrain—the author of the resolution—for mobilising support for the text. He described the “majority” of 13 votes in favour as a “broad international rejection” of the Iranian attacks and as underscoring the solidarity with the Arab position. All LAS member states except for Iraq (and a total of 136 member states) co-sponsored the resolution. China and Russia abstained from voting on the resolution.

The LAS has also been active in supporting Lebanon in the face of continued Israeli military operations targeting Hezbollah on Lebanese territory. On 14 March, Gheit condemned Israeli strikes on civilian objects and assets belonging to the Lebanese state, while supporting the Lebanese government's decision to ban Hezbollah's military and security activities. On 18 March, the LAS' Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Health Ministers held an emergency meeting to discuss providing support to the health sector in Lebanon, as it struggles to meet the needs of persons displaced by the renewed Israeli attacks.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue is how the UN and the LAS can work together more effectively to promote peace and security across the Arab world at a moment of acute and interconnected regional crises.

Council members could discuss ways of doing this during the meeting. According to the concept note circulated by Bahrain to Council members to help guide the discussion, the aim of the meeting is to, among other things:

UN DOCUMENTS ON UN-LAS COOPERATION Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2022/1 (23 March 2022) welcomed the cooperation between the UN and the LAS and reiterated the Council's intention to consider further steps to promote closer cooperation and strategic coordination between the two organisations. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9845 (23 January 2025) was a Security Council meeting on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States.

UN-League of Arab States (LAS) Cooperation

- evaluate cooperation and enhance coordination between the UN and the LAS in addressing emerging regional threats;
- develop joint strategies following disruptions to maritime security and global supply chains;
- explore collaboration to counter disinformation and hate speech; and
- identify opportunities for streamlining capacity-building efforts on counterterrorism, crisis preparedness and resilience building.

Another key issue is how the UN and the LAS can enhance cooperation on thematic priorities—including the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda, the Arab Regional YPS Strategy, and counterterrorism.

A possible option for strengthening the UN's institutional relationship with the LAS includes conducting periodic Security Council visits to LAS headquarters in Cairo—the only such visit took place in 2016—by alternating meetings between New York and Cairo, in line with the annual meeting between the UN Security Council and the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council.

Another option is for Council members to consider adopting a presidential statement in connection with the meeting, which would be the first statement on UN-LAS cooperation since 2022. The statement could reiterate the Council's commitment to closer UN-LAS coordination on conflict prevention, early warning, peacebuilding, and addressing transnational threats such as terrorism, among other issues. It could also emphasise the role of the UN Liaison Office to the LAS in Cairo as a facilitator of strengthened institutional cooperation on these issues.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members broadly recognise the importance of strengthening relations between the UN and the LAS, particularly given the deteriorating security environment across the Arab world. This consensus has, in the past, enabled the adoption of presidential statements in connection with the annual briefings and the holding of high-level informal dialogues between the Council and the Arab Summit Troika.

At the same time, in the Council's most recent UN-LAS cooperation meeting on 23 January 2025, Gheit directly pointed to a structural obstacle to more effective cooperation: the strategic rivalry between major powers has driven up tensions within the Council and “adversely affected the handling of Arab issues, especially the question of Palestine”. The meeting also produced no presidential statement, despite ongoing negotiations on a draft submitted by then-Council member Algeria.

In the year since, two significant developments have coloured the context for UN-LAS cooperation and heightened both the urgency

and the difficulty of effective coordination between the two bodies.

The first is the adoption of US-authored resolution 2803, which endorsed the US plan to end the Gaza conflict and set up the BoP and ISF. China and Russia abstained, with the latter noting the text's absence of a meaningful path to Palestinian statehood. The backing of the plan by several LAS states reflects a strategic investment in pursuing the ceasefire and the reconstruction process. Bahrain, the current Arab member on the Council, has since become a member of the BoP, and in its inaugural meeting on 19 February, it pledged funding for Gaza relief and reconstruction efforts. At the same time, Gheit was clear following the resolution's adoption that it must ultimately lead to the realisation of a Palestinian state, noting that Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory remains the “core of the problem”.

The second, more recent development is the outbreak of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran. In a 28 February Council meeting on the issue, Maged Abdelfattah Abdelaziz, the Permanent Observer for the LAS to the UN, described the moment as one in which “the Arab-Israeli conflict has expanded into full-scale regional war”. The LAS position on the issue is notably bifurcated between longstanding rejection of unilateral military action in the region—including against Iran—and a strong condemnation of Iran's retaliatory attacks on Arab states, which is seen by the LAS as a “strategic miscalculation” that is creating a rift between the neighbouring sides. Several LAS members are either benefactors of or broadly align with the US-led security architecture in the Gulf region. However, many are also apprehensive of Israel's increased regional influence, which was highlighted following Israel's strikes in Qatar on 9 September 2025.

The Council's response to the conflict has been fractured. Following their abstentions during the adoption of resolution 2817, which condemned Iran's strikes on neighbouring states, Russia argued that the resolution failed to reflect the full context of the conflict, while China cautioned that the text did not address the root causes. In the same meeting, the council voted on a competing draft resolution on the crises, presented by Russia, which failed to be adopted due to insufficient support: It received four votes in favour (China, Russia, Pakistan, and Somalia), two votes against (Latvia and the US), and nine abstentions.

Sudan is another fault line with internal divisions among LAS member states—which back different parties to the conflict—that mirrors and compounds the Council's paralysis on the file. Despite the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Sudan, the Council has been unable to adopt any formal outcome, beyond renewing the Panel of Experts of the 1591 Sanctions Committee, since 2024. Divisions on Sudan in both bodies have made meaningful UN-LAS cooperation on the file difficult.

Protection of Humanitarian and UN Personnel

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold its second annual briefing on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel, in accordance with resolution 2730 of 24 May 2024. Representatives of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) are expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

In recent years, the eruption and intensification of several conflicts around the world have exacerbated challenges to humanitarian action and threats faced by humanitarian personnel in conflict. According to the Aid Worker Security Database (AWSDB), 383 aid workers were killed in 2024—the most recent year for which verified figures are available—making it the deadliest year on record for humanitarian personnel. This continued a trend from 2023, during which 293 aid workers were killed, representing a nearly 150 percent increase from the year before. The war in Gaza has contributed to a large share of this increase: between October 2023 and December 2024, 344 aid workers were killed there, the majority of whom worked for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Other country situations with a high number of fatalities in 2024 included the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Lebanon, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine, with aerial bombardment and small arms fire the most prevalent means of attack. Across conflicts, national and locally recruited personnel accounted for more than 90 percent of victims.

At the time of writing, AWSDB's provisional data for 2025 indicated that 350 aid workers were killed last year—including 226 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)—representing a slight decrease from 2024. This is most likely due to the current ceasefire in Gaza that went into effect in October 2025. Fatalities remain at historically elevated levels, however, while injuries and kidnappings also persist.

In addition to direct threats of physical violence, humanitarian personnel face a range of other obstacles to their work. According to the Secretary-General's most recent annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC)—which was issued on 15 May 2025 and describes the state of PoC in 2024—these challenges include bureaucratic and administrative impediments imposed by host states; shortages of essential supplies; the politicisation of humanitarian operations; unintended effects of sanctions and counterterrorism measures; and targeted misinformation and disinformation campaigns.

Resolution 2730—penned by then-Council member Switzerland—sought to address these issues. Among other provisions, the resolution recalls the primary responsibility of host states for the security and protection of UN and humanitarian personnel; expresses grave concern about the growing number of attacks, acts of violence, and threats against such personnel; recalls the obligation of all

parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law (IHL); and underlines the obligations of all parties to armed conflict under IHL related to protecting civilians and civilian objects, including allowing and facilitating the rapid, safe, and unhindered passage of humanitarian assistance.

The scope of the resolution encompasses humanitarian and UN and associated personnel—including national and locally recruited staff—as well as their premises and assets. It addresses direct threats such as the indiscriminate use of explosive devices, alongside indirect risks, including misinformation and the misuse of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to target humanitarian operations. It also condemns the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and the deprivation of civilians of essential objects, which hinder relief efforts and worsen conflict-induced food insecurity.

A central focus of the resolution is accountability and reporting. It urges states to conduct “full, prompt, impartial and effective” investigations into violations of IHL and international human rights law against humanitarian and UN personnel; prosecute those responsible; and cooperate with relevant domestic, regional, and international courts and tribunals. It further requests the Secretary-General to provide recommendations within six months on preventing and responding to such attacks, to brief the Council on this matter within 12 months and annually thereafter, and to report “swiftly” when “widespread issues” regarding the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel occur, signalling the Council's intention to give such situations its “full attention”.

The Security Council received the Secretary-General's recommendations in a letter dated 22 November 2024 and discussed them in a 26 November 2024 briefing. Among other measures, the Secretary-General urged member states to reaffirm their obligations under international law, uphold humanitarian principles, and facilitate safe and unhindered access through streamlined procedures and humanitarian exemptions in counterterrorism frameworks. He also called for consistent condemnation of all attacks, strengthened oversight and accountability mechanisms, and responsible arms export practices. Additionally, he stressed the importance of survivor-centred approaches, including psychosocial support and access to justice—particularly for national and locally recruited staff—and recommended integrating safety and security mechanisms into UN mandates and peace operations, including during mission transitions.

On 2 April 2025, the Council held the first annual briefing required by resolution 2730. Members were briefed by Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya, Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security Gilles Michaud, and International NGO Safety Organisation Executive Director Nic Lee.

Key Issues and Options

A central issue for the Council is how to reverse the sharp deterioration in the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel amid intensifying armed conflict, politicised humanitarian access,

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF HUMANITARIAN AND UN PERSONNEL [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2730](#) (24 May 2024) was a resolution on the protection of humanitarian personnel and UN and associated personnel and their premises and assets. [Secretary-General's Report S/2025/271](#) (15 May 2025) was the Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. [Security Council Letter S/2024/852](#) (22 November 2024) was a letter from the Secretary-General transmitting recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks, violence, and threats targeting humanitarian and UN personnel, as requested by resolution 2730. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9889](#) (2 April 2025) was the first annual briefing on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel held in accordance with resolution 2730. [S/PV.9795](#) (26 November 2024) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks, violence, and threats targeting humanitarian and UN personnel, as requested by resolution 2730.

Protection of Humanitarian and UN Personnel

and a global erosion of respect for IHL. Despite the adoption of resolution 2730, the persistent high death toll among aid workers—particularly national and locally recruited staff—continues to raise questions about accountability, protection, and support systems, including mental health and survivor assistance.

Another key concern is the growing use of misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech to delegitimise humanitarian work, compounding access restrictions, and heightening the risk to personnel.

A further issue is budgetary pressure on humanitarian operations, which face “funding cuts without historic precedent”, forcing some organisations to choose between staff safety and the delivery of life-saving assistance.

To address these challenges, Council members may wish to express support for the full and prompt implementation of resolution 2730 and the Secretary-General’s recommendations at this month’s meeting. Additionally, Council members could adopt or issue a presidential statement or press statement reaffirming core principles—such as the obligation of all parties to comply with IHL and to protect humanitarian and UN personnel—and urging universal accession to international instruments such as the 1994 Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel and its 2005 Optional Protocol.

As requested by resolution 2730, members may also urge the Secretary-General to report to the Council on situations in which there are “widespread issues” regarding the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel, which he apparently has not yet done. Additionally, they could invite survivors of attacks to participate in the Council’s annual briefings on the resolution, as the Secretary-General encouraged in his recommendations.

Other options include encouraging humanitarian exemptions in counterterrorism frameworks—building on the cross-cutting humanitarian carve-out in UN sanctions regimes established by resolution 2664 of 9 December 2022—as well as strengthening risk management and duty-of-care provisions in UN mandates.

Council Dynamics

Most Council members agree on the need to enhance the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel. Resolution 2730 garnered

wide support, receiving 14 votes in favour and 97 co-sponsorships from the wider UN membership, demonstrating broad international concern about this issue. Russia abstained on the resolution, however, objecting to its reference to international courts, its proposed parameters for ensuring humanitarian access, and its gender-related language.

At the Council’s November 2024 and April 2025 briefings, members expressed general agreement on the need to ensure compliance with IHL and to ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access, notwithstanding accusations against some members for violating these obligations themselves. Many emphasised that attacks on humanitarian personnel constitute serious violations of IHL and may amount to war crimes, and called for stronger preventive measures, including effective deconfliction mechanisms and enhanced risk management. Several called for a recommitment to humanitarian principles and reinforced legal protections, emphasising that rhetoric must be matched by meaningful action. In this regard, most expressed support for the Secretary-General’s recommendations, particularly those related to survivor-centred approaches, countering misinformation, and strengthening duty-of-care frameworks.

At the same time, significant divergences persist on accountability and the attribution of responsibility in specific conflict situations. Several members—particularly elected members and some European countries—have stressed the need for independent investigations and, where appropriate, the use of international accountability mechanisms. By contrast, members such as China, Russia, and—especially under the current administration of US President Donald Trump—the US have been sceptical about the role of international courts, emphasising instead the primacy of national jurisdictions and warning against what they view as the politicisation of accountability mechanisms.

These divisions are particularly pronounced in discussions related to Gaza, which dominated the April 2025 meeting and where positions differed sharply on the attribution of responsibility and the appropriate response. The US emphasised violations by non-state actors such as Hamas, whereas most other members directly criticised Israeli military operations and called for stronger accountability measures.

Kosovo

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold its first briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo. Special Representative and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Peter Due will brief on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest report.

Key Recent Developments

There has been no meaningful progress in the EU-facilitated dialogue on normalisation between Belgrade and Pristina. In an effort to revive the process, EU Special Representative for the

Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue Peter Sørensen met separately with senior officials in Pristina and Belgrade in mid-January, and again with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and Prime Minister Albin Kurti of Kosovo on separate occasions in late February. On 22 January, Sørensen also convened the chief negotiators of Kosovo and Serbia in Brussels for the first meeting of the Joint Commission on Missing Persons, a trilateral body bringing together Kosovo and Serbia under EU chairmanship and with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as observer, to oversee implementation of the 2023 Declaration on Missing Persons.

UN DOCUMENTS ON KOSOVO Secretary-General’s Reports S/2025/634 (10 October 2025) was the latest report of the Secretary-General on UNMIK. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10019 (21 October 2025) was the second regular briefing of the year on the situation in Kosovo.

Kosovo

On 16 January, Kurti announced plans to gradually integrate Serbia-supported health and education institutions in Serb-majority areas into Kosovo's system. Following engagement within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue, Sørensen stressed in press remarks on 14 March that any such integration should be inclusive, consistent with prior dialogue commitments, and designed to avoid disrupting essential services. He also underscored the need for structured consultations with representatives of the Kosovo Serb community throughout the process in order to secure their buy-in.

Regional security rhetoric also intensified in recent months. On 11 February, Albania, Croatia, and Kosovo agreed to hold their first joint training of 2026 following a meeting of their defence officials. The move drew a sharp response from Belgrade, with the Serbian Ministry of Defense condemning the trilateral meeting and related security plans as a violation of Security Council resolution 1244 and arguing that the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) remains the only legitimate armed formation in Kosovo with a clearly defined mandate.

On 20 November 2025, President Vjosa Osmani of Kosovo called snap parliamentary elections for 28 December 2025 after the ruling Vetëvendosje party failed to secure enough votes in parliament to form a government. Ahead of the vote, the EU announced that it was moving forward with lifting measures imposed on Kosovo in 2023 in response to tensions in the north and would programme 216 million euros in financial assistance following gradual improvements in local governance in northern municipalities after the 2023 local elections. Vetëvendosje won roughly half of the vote in the 28 December 2025 election and later secured 57 seats in the 120-member assembly.

The post-election process was then prolonged by a nationwide recount and a vote tampering investigation in which authorities detained more than 100 people, although the outcome of the election did not change. On 11 February, parliament approved a new Kurti-led government, ending more than a year of political deadlock.

Expectations that the new government would restore political stability, however, proved short-lived. On 5 March, Kosovo's parliament failed to elect a president by the constitutional deadline after the ruling party was unable to secure the support and participation needed to proceed with a vote on its nominee. Osmani dissolved parliament on 6 March and called snap elections, but the Constitutional Court subsequently intervened. After first temporarily barring Osmani from setting an election date before 31 March, the court ruled on 25 March that the decree dissolving parliament had no legal effect and gave the assembly 34 days to elect a president.

Key Issues and Options

Maintaining stability in Kosovo and promoting the de-escalation of tensions in the north remains a key priority for the Council.

A second key issue is whether the Council can help sustain momentum behind the EU-facilitated dialogue and the implementation of existing commitments.

Another issue facing the Council is how to foster constructive discussion on this politically charged file. During the Council's open briefings on Kosovo, Belgrade and Pristina typically present sharply contrasting accounts of the sources of regional instability.

These meetings often become an arena for public posturing rather than substantive engagement. This dynamic can eclipse any positive momentum and shift attention back to mutual recrimination. Instead of open briefings, Council members may therefore wish to consider holding closed consultations—or private meetings, which would be closed as well but would allow Kosovar and Serbian officials to participate, unlike closed consultations. This could allow for a more candid exchange on the obstacles to implementing commitments under the EU-facilitated dialogue and to advancing the normalisation process.

In response to the many challenges facing Kosovo, the Council could also consider adopting a presidential statement that:

- expresses support for Sørensen;
- urges Belgrade and Pristina to engage in good faith and implement pending commitments without preconditions; and
- stresses that any measures affecting the Kosovo Serb community should avoid disruption of essential services and encourage inclusive implementation in line with prior dialogue commitments.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Most Council members support the EU-facilitated dialogue to establish conditions for the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Pristina. Deep divisions among permanent members, however, continue to characterise the Council's approach to the issue.

Among the five permanent Council members, France, the UK, and the US recognise Kosovo's independence and tend to be supportive of its government; China and Russia do not recognise its independence and strongly support Serbia's position and its claim to territorial integrity. Elected members Bahrain, Colombia, Denmark, Latvia, Liberia, Pakistan, and Panama recognise Kosovo's independence, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Greece do not. Somalia reportedly recognised Kosovo's independence in May 2010, although its recognition has been disputed by Serbian officials in recent years and subsequently reaffirmed by Kosovar authorities.

The modification of UNMIK's mandate, with a view to its possible drawdown, is another matter of contention among Council members. The US has been the most vocal proponent of reviewing UNMIK's operations and ultimately phasing it out, a position it has maintained well before the current financial constraints of UN peace operations and the introduction of the UN80 Initiative. At the Council's 21 October 2025 briefing on Kosovo, the US described UNMIK as a "bloated peacekeeping mission without peacekeepers" and called for its functions to be transferred to agencies better suited to carry them out. Denmark and the UK similarly argued that a strategic review was overdue, framing the issue within the broader UN80 reform agenda. France adopted a more cautious position, expressing support both for "common-sense efforts to improve and streamline peacekeeping missions through efficiency measures" and for extending UNMIK's mandate for as long as necessary, while noting that the mission's mandate is intrinsically linked to the normalisation process. Russia, by contrast, has opposed changes to UNMIK's mandate or budget, maintaining that the mission continues to play a crucial role.

UN-European Union (EU) Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold its annual meeting on strengthening European Union (EU)-UN cooperation under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”. Kaja Kallas, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Strengthening cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations—as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter—has become an increasingly prominent theme for the Security Council. The Council has maintained the practice of holding annual briefings on cooperation between the EU and the UN since 2010, although these briefings were not held in 2012 and 2018. Since 2013, Council members have also held annual informal meetings with members of the EU Political and Security Committee. In 2014, the Council adopted a presidential statement welcoming the EU’s cooperation with the UN and its contributions towards the maintenance of international peace and security and its involvement in international negotiations and mediation processes.

The EU and its member states are among the largest contributors to UN financing, providing, as at September 2025, approximately 22 percent of the regular budget, 21 percent of peacekeeping funding, and more than one third of all voluntary contributions. In addition to troop and police contributions by EU member states to UN peace operations, the EU also deploys its own civilian and military missions under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), in some cases alongside UN missions. Around 4,000 military and civilian personnel are currently deployed across 21 ongoing CSDP missions and operations.

Council briefings on UN-EU cooperation have generally addressed areas of common concern between the two organisations, focusing on the EU’s main foreign policy priorities and objectives and addressing current crises on the Security Council’s agenda. This year, the war in Ukraine, now in its fifth year, and the rapidly escalating crisis in the Middle East are expected to be the central focus of Kallas’ briefing.

Four years into Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Council has reaffirmed its continued unwavering support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, and the EU is continuing to provide comprehensive political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military, and diplomatic support to Ukraine. In December 2025, the European Council agreed to provide a loan to Ukraine of 90 billion euros for the years 2026–2027, a loan to be repaid by Ukraine only once reparations from Russia are received. Since the start of the war in February 2022, the EU has adopted 19 packages of sanctions against Russia. The European Council has urged Russia to agree to a full, unconditional, and immediate ceasefire and engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace, underscoring that borders must not be changed by force and that Ukraine’s long-term security and ability to defend itself must be guaranteed.

The outbreak of armed conflict in the Middle East has significantly altered the geopolitical context in which this year’s briefing will take place. The escalating crisis started on 28 February when the US and Israel launched airstrikes on multiple sites and cities across Iran, killing Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and several other Iranian officials. Iran responded with missile and drone strikes against Israel and several other countries in the region that host US bases. On 1 March, the EU called for maximum restraint, protection of civilians, and full respect of international law, including the principles of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law. The EU also stated that Iran’s attacks and violations of sovereignty were inexcusable and that Iran must refrain from indiscriminate military strikes.

On 11 March, the Security Council adopted resolution 2817, submitted by Bahrain on behalf of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as well as Jordan. The resolution, which was co-sponsored by 136 UN member states, including all 27 EU member states, condemned Iran’s “egregious attacks” against its regional neighbours and determined that such acts constituted a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security. Since its adoption, the EU has called on Iran and its proxies to immediately cease attacks in line with resolution 2817, adding that it stands ready to contribute to all diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and bring about a lasting solution to end the hostilities and prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon.

The Strait of Hormuz crisis has added a further dimension to the EU’s maritime security profile. Since Iran’s effective closure of the strait following the outbreak of hostilities, the European Council has condemned any acts that threaten navigation or prevent vessels from transiting the strait, and has called for the EU’s Naval Force Operations ASPIDES and ATALANTA to be reinforced with additional assets. Kallas has indicated that the EU is exploring the possibility of expanding the scope of those missions or establishing a new framework analogous to the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The crisis has materially affected European energy markets, with European gas prices surging following strikes on Qatari liquefied natural gas infrastructure.

Kallas is also likely to express concern about continuing insecurity in several African contexts, including Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and may also underscore the importance of the EU’s partnership with the AU on peace and security issues. In this regard, she could highlight regular EU-AU consultations, the EU’s continued support for African peace and security initiatives, including through the European Peace Facility, and cooperation on issues such as maritime security and support for Somalia’s security transition. Kallas may also reiterate support for efforts to secure more predictable and sustainable financing for AU-led peace support operations, including through the implementation of resolution 2719 on access to UN-assessed contributions.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Under Article 34 of the Treaty on European Union, EU member states serving on the UN Security Council are to “defend the positions and interests of the EU”. There are currently four EU member states serving on the Council: Denmark, France, Greece,

UN DOCUMENTS ON UN-EU COOPERATION Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2014/4 (14 February 2014) was a presidential statement on cooperation between the UN and the EU, highlighting the EU’s comprehensive approach to the maintenance of international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9876 (11 March 2025) was the annual meeting on strengthening UN-EU cooperation.

UN-European Union (EU) Cooperation

and Latvia. The UK, which ceased to be a member of the EU on 31 January 2020, has on occasion joined EU members in making joint statements.

Another factor that may shape UN-EU dynamics is the evolution of Europe's fiscal and security priorities. While the EU and its member states remain among the largest financial contributors to the UN system and continue to underline their support for multilateralism and the work of the UN, they have taken steps in recent years to increase defence spending and mobilise additional resources for European defence readiness. Over time, this trend may influence how the EU approaches discussions on burden-sharing, mandate efficiency, and resource allocation across the multilateral system, including in relation to UN financing and operations.

Russia's intervention at this year's briefing is likely to reflect the broader deterioration in EU-Russia relations since 2022. Following

Kallas' briefing at the March 2025 briefing on UN-EU cooperation, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) delivered a critique of the EU's position on Ukraine that also included personal remarks about Kallas, whom he described as "an outspoken Russophobe", while invoking statements she had made before assuming her current office. After Council members had spoken, the Danish presidency returned the floor to Kallas to respond to the comments and questions raised during the meeting, at which point Kallas framed Nebenzia's remarks as an illustration of the broader challenge of misinformation, saying they amounted to "rewriting history". Russia then objected on procedural grounds, arguing that open Security Council briefings are not intended to become an interactive dialogue with briefers, before France condemned the "ad hominem attacks" as contrary to the Council's working methods.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to renew the authorisation of measures contained in resolution 2146 of 19 March 2014 related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. It is also expected to extend the mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee. Through resolution 2769 of 16 January 2025, the Council renewed the authorisation of petroleum-related measures until 1 May 2026 and extended the PoE's mandate until 15 May, to be reviewed by 15 April.

The Security Council is also scheduled to hold its 60-day briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Serwaa Tetteh will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Libya remains mired in a political impasse between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah, with advisory support from the High State Council (HSC), and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and backed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The parties remain deadlocked over draft legislation to hold national elections that would reconcile the country's divided government. A key point of contention is over the proposal to form a unified interim government to organise the elections—a proposal favoured by the GNS and HoR but opposed by the GNU and some segments of the HSC. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections.

In August 2025, Tetteh presented the Council with a roadmap to

lead Libya to national elections and unified institutions. The roadmap is built on three pillars: adopting an electoral framework for presidential and legislative elections; unifying institutions under a new government; and launching a structured dialogue on governance, economic, security, and reconciliation issues to support the elections and address key conflict drivers.

During the Security Council's most recent briefing on Libya, held on 18 February, Tetteh reiterated that despite UNSMIL's efforts, no meaningful progress was made on completing the first two pillars of the roadmap. A crucial step in this process is the reconstitution of the Board of the High National Elections Commission (HNEC). While the HoR and the HCS previously reached an agreement on a mechanism for selecting the HNEC Board, Tetteh noted that both institutions had taken unilateral steps that could undermine their unity.

During the February briefing, she elaborated on a two-step approach involving the formation of a small group of Libyan representatives to address the two roadmap milestones related to elections. The first step appears designed to bring together key institutional and political actors from the eastern- and western-based authorities in a compact format focused on the blocked milestones. Tetteh stated that, should this group fail to agree, "a broader convening will be necessary to take forward the implementation of the roadmap". This step seems to imply the use of existing Libyan agreements, such as the Libyan Political Agreement of 2015, to overcome the current impasse.

In her February briefing, Tetteh warned the Council that Libya's political situation is deteriorating amid further fragmentation of state institutions. She highlighted competing mandates and conflicting rulings issued by courts in Benghazi and Tripoli, which risk undermining the integrity of the judicial system. She also stressed that the economic situation remains dire, citing currency devaluation, high inflation, and persistent fuel shortages.

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2796](#) (31 October 2025) renewed UNSMIL's mandate for twelve months and encouraged the mission to implement the recommendations from the strategic review. [Security Council Press Statements SC/16309](#) (3 March 2026) urged Libyan stakeholders to fully engage with UNSMIL's political roadmap and demonstrate political will to advance a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned process. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10107](#) (18 February 2026) was a briefing on Libya.

Libya

In a 3 March press statement, Council members reiterated their support for Tetteh's mediation efforts and urged all Libyan stakeholders to engage fully and without delay with Tetteh on the political roadmap. In this regard, the statement called on them to demonstrate the political will and compromise needed to advance a Libyan-led process, and refrain from unilateral actions that could deepen divisions, undermine reconciliation, or worsen Libya's economic situation.

On 3 February, Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, the son of Muammar Gaddafi, was killed in Zintan by unknown assailants. The authorities in Libya have issued warrants for the arrest of three suspects whose identities have not been revealed. To date, no arrests have been made.

A November 2025 investigative report by The Sentry—an international investigative and policy organisation that seeks to disable multinational predatory networks that benefit from violent conflict, repression, and kleptocracy—highlighted the escalating scale of fuel smuggling in Libya, estimating the government losses at \$20 billion over the 2022–2024 period. The report attributes the crisis to systemic exploitation of fuel subsidies and crude-for-fuel swaps by political elites across the country. It concludes that more than 50% of imported fuel is currently diverted to illicit networks, severely undermining domestic supply.

Sanctions-Related Developments

Pursuant to resolution 2769, which last renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and extended the petroleum-related sanctions measures, the Panel submitted its final report by 15 March. On 24 March, the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee met to discuss the PoE's final report. At the time of writing, the report had not yet been published.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 February, UNSMIL and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a joint report on human rights abuses and violations against migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Libya. Based on interviews with almost 100 migrants from 16 countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, the report exposes an exploitative business model in which grave violations and abuses against migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees have evolved into deliberate, profit-driven practices. It also uncovers that trafficking networks, often with ties to state or non-state actors, prey on the extreme situations of vulnerability faced by migrants for profit through violent practices, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, ransom, and extortion.

Libya's approach to migration governance, compounded by restrictive migration policies across Europe's Mediterranean borders and the absence of sufficient protective measures and rights-based migration laws, has also provided a conducive environment for actors in the illicit economy to perpetrate human rights violations and abuses with impunity, further perpetuating the cycle of exploitation that has become "business as usual", according to the report. UNSMIL and OHCHR underscored the need to dismantle such an exploitative model and bring an end to systematic violations, calling on Libyan authorities to, among other things, immediately release all arbitrarily detained migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in both unofficial and official detention centres and to decriminalise irregular entry, stay, and exit from the country.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue facing the Council in April is the renewal of the PoE's mandate and extension of the authorisation of measures contained in resolution 2146, which allow member states to inspect designated vessels on the high seas suspected of facilitating the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. The main findings and recommendations from the final PoE report are likely to inform negotiations on the PoE's mandate renewal.

Past PoE reports have drawn attention to unprecedented levels of oil smuggling operations that also serve as a major source of revenue for armed groups in Libya. Given the significance of this issue, the Council could consider further strengthening the sanctions regime by targeting illicit payments taking place outside legitimate Libyan institutions or consider new listing criteria in this regard. Another option would be to explore the possibility of expanding the maritime interdiction regime on illicit oil smuggling.

On the political front, a key issue for the Council is how to best support the roadmap for a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned political process that Tetteh presented in August 2025. One of the main objectives for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country's rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement on electoral laws, including the possible establishment of a unified interim government to organise the elections. Council members have issued two press statements in support of the ongoing process. In the absence of progress, the Council could consider adopting a resolution that supports Tetteh's efforts to advance the political process.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process leading to elections as the only way to restore political, security, and economic stability in the country. They are also broadly supportive of the UN's mediation role in pursuing this objective, and they share concerns about the volatile security situation.

Positions diverge more sharply on sanctions. The US, UK, and European members generally view the Libya sanctions regime as an important tool to support stability, constrain spoilers, and safeguard Libya's oil wealth. Russia, China, and some other members, such as Somalia and Pakistan, have criticised the long-standing restrictions on frozen Libyan assets and have argued in favour of giving Libyan authorities greater ability to reinvest and manage these funds, while repeatedly warning against attempts by external actors to control or reshape Libya's financial architecture for their own interests.

Both China and Russia have also expressed concern over what they see as intrusive maritime authorisations, in particular, the EU Naval Force Mediterranean Operation IRINI, which is currently the only regional arrangement conducting inspections of vessels on the high seas off Libya when there are reasonable grounds to believe they are violating the UN arms embargo.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

The situation in Yemen remains tense following clashes between factions of the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) of Yemen's internationally recognised government over control of the country's southeastern governorates of Hadramut and Al-Mahra, which took place between December 2025 and early January. The Southern Transitional Council (STC)—a faction within the PLC with secessionist aspirations that is reportedly backed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—attempted to expand its control over southern Yemen in December 2025, but its efforts were thwarted by forces aligned with the rest of the PLC and Saudi Arabia by 10 January.

On 6 February, the recently appointed Yemeni Prime Minister Shaya Mohsen al-Zindani formed a new government, comprising a 34-member cabinet which includes ten ministers from the previous government and three women. In a 9 February statement, Grundberg welcomed the formation of the cabinet, including the return of women ministers, and underlined the importance of the new government being allowed to function “in a constructive environment” to promote stability, alleviate suffering, and create the conditions for lasting peace in Yemen.

On 20 February, security forces reportedly opened fire on a group of people linked to the STC that attempted to storm the al-Maashiq Presidential Palace in Aden following the new government's first cabinet session at the palace, killing at least one person and wounding at least 11. The STC condemned the security forces' actions and refused to recognise the legitimacy of the newly formed government. Earlier, on 11 February, STC-affiliated demonstrators in the city of Ataq in Shabwah governorate reportedly attempted to storm a local government building and remove the national flag, with security forces intervening and killing five people and wounding 39. Both incidents reflect the unresolved tensions stemming from the STC's forced retreat from southern Yemen in January and point to challenges the new government faces in consolidating its authority.

The escalation in the Gulf region, which started on 28 February following the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, further complicates the situation in Yemen. The Houthis—a Yemeni rebel group that has de facto control of the northwest of the country, including the capital Sana'a—are considered to be part of a coalition of regional armed groups dubbed the “axis of resistance”, which are supported by Iran, and have launched hundreds of attacks against Israel and on shipping in the Red Sea since the onset of the war in Gaza in October 2023.

On 28 March, the Houthis claimed responsibility for firing several missiles at southern Israel, in what was their first attack on the country since the start of the Israeli-US war with Iran. The Israeli military

said it had intercepted one missile shot from Yemen. In a statement the following day, Grundberg warned that the escalation “risks drawing Yemen into the regional war”, making it harder to resolve the conflict in Yemen. Furthermore, he stressed that “no single actor has the right to unilaterally drag the country into a wider conflict.” The attack also raised renewed concerns regarding the possibility of the Houthis restarting their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea, which could create another commercial shipping chokehold and would be akin to Iran's strategy in the Strait of Hormuz.

On 15 March, a missile strike also reportedly attributed to the Houthis hit a gathering of civilians in the Hairan district of Hajjah governorate, killing at least 15 people, including children. In a 16 March statement on social media, Grundberg expressed alarm at the attack and underscored the need to protect civilians and hold those responsible accountable.

The Houthis also continue to arbitrarily detain personnel from the UN, non-governmental and civil society organisations, and diplomatic missions. According to the UN, 73 of its personnel are detained, three of whom were referred to a special criminal court on charges related to their duties.

In his most recent briefing to the Council on 12 February—delivered from Riyadh, where he met al-Zindani and members of the PLC—Grundberg outlined his efforts to explore pathways to restart an inclusive political process, setting out three guiding reflections:

- First, that any political process must be designed for Yemen's current reality, acknowledging the increased complexity of the conflict rather than relying on “outdated assumptions”;
- Second, that Yemen's political, economic, and security files are interlocking and must be engaged simultaneously, rather than sequentially; and
- Third, that a credible process must deliver results on two time horizons—near-term agreements that reduce suffering and demonstrate progress, alongside space for longer-term negotiations on the future shape of the state, security arrangements, and governance.

In pursuit of broader diplomatic support for restarting the process, Grundberg also visited Moscow on 17 February, where he met with senior officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry to discuss the path to a political settlement in Yemen. On 26 March, he also visited Washington, where he met senior US government officials and emphasised the need to avoid Yemen from being drawn into the current regional escalation.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen continues to deteriorate. The 2026 Yemen Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), published on 18 March, projects that over 22 million people—approximately half the population—will require humanitarian assistance in 2026, an increase of 2.8 million from the previous year. Food insecurity remains the most acute dimension of the crisis: 18.3 million people are acutely food insecure, with the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis indicating further deterioration, including districts shifting from crisis to emergency levels and pockets of catastrophic conditions. More than

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2813](#) (27 January 2026) renewed the mandate of UNMHA for a final two-month period, until 31 March. [S/RES/2812](#) (14 January 2026) extended the Secretary-General's monthly reporting requirement on Houthi attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea until 15 July. [Security Council Press Statement SC/16265](#) (23 December 2025) called for de-escalation and underlined strong support towards a political settlement in Yemen and for the Presidential Leadership Council, while also reiterating condemnation of detentions by the Houthis and the demand for the immediate and unconditional release of all those detained. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10105 (12 February 2026) was a meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Yemen.

Yemen

2.2 million children under five are acutely malnourished, including over half a million suffering from severe acute malnutrition.

To address these needs, the Yemen HNRP calls for \$2.16 billion in 2026, though Yemen's 2025 appeal was just 29 percent funded, forcing agencies to scale back life-saving services across all sectors. Compounding the crisis, on 29 January, the World Food Programme (WFP) announced it was terminating the contracts of all 365 of its staff in Houthi-controlled northern Yemen—where 70 percent of the country's humanitarian needs are situated—citing the insecure operating environment and mounting restrictions imposed by the Houthis, including the arbitrary detention of UN personnel, as the primary drivers of the decision.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to help mitigate the risk of renewed escalation in Yemen, including the possibility that the country could be drawn into the broader regional confrontation with Iran. While frontlines remain relatively static, rising regional tensions and the Houthis' willingness to militarily support Iran increase the risk of spillover, while instability in southern Yemen adds further volatility.

In this context, Council members could consider convening an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with regional stakeholders, countries supporting the Yemen political process, and the Special Envoy to assess the implications of regional developments and identify ways to insulate Yemen from escalation. The meeting could also be used for members to discuss ways to support the Special Envoy's efforts to resume a credible and inclusive political process and how regional actors can better align towards supporting a renewed political framework that reflects current realities.

A further key issue is the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation, compounded by severe access constraints. The detention of UN and other personnel by the Houthis, as well as increasing restrictions on humanitarian operations—including the suspension of the WFP activities in Houthi-controlled areas—have significantly curtailed the delivery of assistance.

In this regard, the Council could consider adopting a resolution or presidential statement demanding the immediate and unconditional release of detained personnel and calling for the cessation of interference in humanitarian operations. Members could also consider holding a dedicated meeting focused on the protection of humanitarian personnel in Yemen or inviting a senior OCHA official to brief specifically on access constraints and operational impacts.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Despite being critical of the Houthis, most Council members

continue to support an inclusive intra-Yemeni political process under UN auspices and emphasise the need to advance mediation efforts. Several Council members have expressed support for the newly formed government, which has faced challenges in legitimising its control over the southern part of the country.

Regional dynamics remain complex. Tensions between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which escalated during the recent fighting in southern Yemen, highlight underlying differences in their approaches. At the same time, the escalation involving Iran, Israel, and the US has added a new layer of complexity, particularly in light of heightened tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. While Saudi Arabia has been a principal backer of the newly formed government, Iran continues to support the Houthis, underscoring the risk that Yemen could again become a more active arena for regional competition. These dynamics raise concerns in light of Yemen potentially being drawn further into the broader regional conflict, undermining recent de-escalation efforts.

The Council's five permanent members remain divided on how to approach the Houthis. France, the UK, and the US have argued that the Council needs to increase pressure on the group—whom they believe are obstructing a political process and fostering instability in Yemen—including by strengthening the Yemen sanctions regime. The US has adopted a particularly hawkish position on the Houthis, unilaterally sanctioning the group and accusing Iran of supporting it. Conversely, China and Russia have argued that expanding the Yemen sanctions regime would escalate tensions and undermine prospects for a negotiated settlement.

Differences also persist regarding the Council's engagement on maritime security in the Red Sea. China and Russia have expressed reservations about maintaining the issue prominently on the Council's agenda, particularly where it intersects with military action undertaken by some member states, which they argue risks exacerbating tensions and undermining the political track. Other members, including the UK and the US, continue to emphasise the importance of addressing threats to freedom of navigation.

Council members have also diverged over the future of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA). Resolution 2813 (2026), adopted on 27 January, provided for a final extension of the mission's mandate until 31 March, after which it shut down and entered a liquidation phase. China and Russia have maintained that the mission played a stabilising role, while the US argued that persistent obstruction by the Houthis had limited its effectiveness and pushed for it to be drawn down.

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

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

Since the Council's last meeting on the Great Lakes region on 13 October 2025, there have been significant developments in the DRC and the Great Lakes. On 15 November 2025, the Congolese government and the *Alliance Fleuve Congo* (AFC), a politico-military coalition operating in eastern DRC which includes the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) as a major component, signed the Doha Framework for Peace, affirming their commitment to addressing the root causes of the conflict through structured dialogue, confidence-building measures, and a phased approach to de-escalation and stabilisation.

On 22 November 2025, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the signing of the Doha Framework for Peace as an important step towards addressing the conflict in eastern DRC. They urged the signatories to translate their commitments into a permanent, effective, and verifiable ceasefire and to remain engaged in the negotiation process to finalise the additional protocols, annexes, and technical arrangements. Only two of the eight protocols outlined in the Doha Framework—the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism (COVM) and the prisoner exchange—have been signed by the parties. It appears that discussions on the remaining six have not yet begun.

On 2 February, the Congolese government and M23 signed a terms of reference for implementing the COVM in Doha. In this connection, the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) deployed an exploratory and preliminary assessment mission to the city of Uvira in South Kivu from 23-27 February, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The aim of the mission was to assess the political, security, logistical, and socio-environmental conditions in and around the city. The M23 captured the city, which is located on the northern shore of Lake Tanganyika, in December 2025 but has since withdrawn.

On 4 December 2025, DRC President Félix Tshisekedi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame signed the Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity under the auspices of US President Donald Trump and in the presence of several regional leaders, committing to implement the 27 June 2025 Peace Agreement and the 25 April 2025 Declaration of Principles signed between the two countries as part of the Washington Process—a mediation effort led by the US aimed at easing regional tensions.

On 2 March, the US imposed sanctions on four Rwandan senior military officials and on the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF) as an entity, citing the violation of the Washington Accords by the “Rwanda-backed M23” when it captured the city of Uvira just days after the signing of the agreement. The DRC welcomed the US decision, while Rwanda criticised the move, describing it as one-sided.

From 17 to 18 March, the US hosted representatives from the DRC and Rwanda to facilitate discussion on the implementation of the Washington Accords. According to an 18 March joint statement, the two sides agreed to a series of coordinated steps to de-escalate tensions and advance progress on the ground including the lifting of defensive measures by Rwanda in defined areas in DRC territory, and time-bound and intensified efforts by the DRC to neutralise the *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC and implicated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

On 17 January, the President of Togo, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, in his capacity as African Union (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 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 the meeting, Gnassingbé and the co-facilitators travelled to Angola, Burundi, DRC, 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.

Tshisekedi 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 Rwanda, which was later replaced by the Doha process. Amid mounting pressure internally and M23 consolidating its position in territories it controls, Kinshasa apparently sought 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”.

In the meantime, the security situation in eastern DRC has continued to deteriorate. On 17 March, Security Council members held closed consultations at France's request, the penholder on the file, to discuss the situation, particularly in light of an 11 March drone attack in Goma, the capital of North Kivu province, which killed one UNICEF staff member and two other civilians. (For more information, see our 16 March *What's in Blue* story.)

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE GREAT LAKES Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2773 (21 February 2025) was on the situation in eastern DRC. Secretary-General's Report S/2025/615 (1 October 2025) was on the implementation of the PSC-F. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10016 (13 October 2025) was a briefing on the situation in the Great Lakes region.

Great Lakes Region (DRC)

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 26 February press release, UN experts expressed grave concern over reports of extreme violence committed against human rights defenders by the M23. Between November 2025 and February 2026, several human rights defenders in North and South Kivu provinces of eastern DRC were reportedly targeted by members of the M23 and their collaborators, in direct connection with their human rights work. The experts cited allegations of attempted killings, torture, sexual violence, and death threats as among some of the abuses the human rights defenders had endured or continue to experience at the hands of the armed group and its associates for documenting and speaking out against the group's violations. Condemning the gravity and brutality of the abuse, the experts stressed that the M23 must immediately stop targeting human rights defenders and civilians. They also underscored the importance of fully respecting the ceasefire and called on the state authorities to undertake meaningful steps to guarantee that human rights defenders in eastern DRC can carry out their work safely without fear.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in April is the security situation in eastern DRC, which continues to be a source of tension among countries of the Great Lakes region. Another major issue for Council members is the disconnect between the commitments made by the parties in ongoing peace processes and the escalation of fighting on the ground.

The need to ensure greater coordination among the various mediation initiatives in the Great Lakes region has been an ongoing issue for Council members. Since the start of the new year, the African-led mediation effort has once again become more active. During the meeting in April, Xia may brief Council members about his series of engagements with regional leaders, mediators, and facilitators as part of his good offices mandate to support ongoing mediation processes. A possible option for the Bahraini Security Council presidency in April is to invite Gnassingbé to brief the Council.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC and the Great Lakes region remains a major issue, drawing renewed attention amid growing interest in the region's vast reserves of critical minerals. Xia may speak about the issue in the context of his office's ongoing efforts in promoting sustainable and transparent natural

resource management. Council members could continue to stress the need for responsible mineral sourcing in their statements.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members have welcomed the progress in the ongoing mediation efforts to address the situation in eastern DRC. However, they remain concerned that the various agreements signed last year have not translated into reduced hostilities on the ground and eased tensions in the region.

At the 17 March meeting, some Council members apparently expressed concerns about the involvement of mercenary groups and the intensified use of drones. Media reports indicate that Blackwater, a US private security company, has been active in DRC since 2025 and is supporting the Congolese government's recent military operations in eastern DRC.

At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a draft presidential statement which, among other things, urges the parties to de-escalate, cease hostilities, and adhere to an effective and verifiable ceasefire.

The DRC, currently serving as a non-permanent member of the Council, is advocating for punitive measures against the AFC/M23 and Rwanda. The DRC was apparently supportive of adopting a resolution in response to the Secretary-General's 27 February letter, submitted pursuant to resolution 2808 of 19 December 2025, which proposed recommendations on how to support the ceasefire. However, some Council members were less inclined to proceed, given that the ceasefire agreed upon by the parties has not been implemented.

In December 2025, the DRC signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the US, which could help the latter to secure access to the DRC's critical mineral resources. The US appears to have prioritised this issue as part of a broader strategy to diversify its critical minerals supply chains and counter China's dominance in the sector. As part of its March Security Council presidency, the US convened a briefing on "Energy, critical minerals, and security" under "the Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item. (For more, see our 4 March *What's in Blue* story.)

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will receive its annual briefing from the heads of military components of UN peacekeeping operations. The anticipated briefers are Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the heads of military components of two UN peacekeeping operations: Force Commander of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) Lieutenant General Humphrey Nyone and Major General Ganesh Kumar Shrestha, Acting Head of Mission and Force Commander for the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

Key Recent Developments

These force commander briefings, held annually since 2010, focus on the operational challenges of implementing mission mandates. In April 2025, France convened the most recent briefing during its Security Council presidency. The meeting focused on how UN peacekeeping operations can support ceasefires or cessations of hostilities. It featured briefings by Lacroix and the heads of military components of two UN peacekeeping operations: Force Commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Major General Aroldo Lázaro Sáenz and the Force Commander of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic

UN DOCUMENTS ON UN PEACEKEEPING Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2802 (14 November 2025) renewed the UNISFA mandate until 15 November. S/RES/2790 (28 August 2025) renewed the mandate of UNIFIL until 31 December. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9892 (7 April 2025) was a briefing by heads of military components of UN peacekeeping operations.

UN Peacekeeping

Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) Lieutenant General Ulisses de Mesquita Gomes.

The annual briefing typically takes place during the Heads of Military Components Conference at UN Headquarters. This year, the conference is scheduled for 13–17 April under the theme “Future-Ready Peacekeeping: Reshaping to Achieve Mission Impact”. According to the concept note, the conference aims to facilitate collective reflection among heads of military components on the evolving operating environment and to identify ways to adapt UN peacekeeping to emerging challenges. This focus aligns with the *Pact for the Future*, the outcome document of the 2024 Summit of the Future, which underscored the need for UN peacekeeping operations to respond to evolving needs and deliver more agile, tailored approaches to existing, emerging, and future challenges.

The *Pact for the Future* requested the Secretary-General to undertake a comprehensive review of all forms of UN peace operations. The review is being conducted internally by the UN Secretariat, led by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). The two departments have held a series of consultations with intergovernmental bodies and solicited 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 in the form of a report by the Secretary-General.

Last year was a challenging one for UN peacekeeping. The UN faced a serious liquidity crisis that affected the operational capacity and effectiveness of field missions. 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. Since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025, the US has also sought to overhaul UN peacekeeping operations as part of a going “back to basics” strategy designed to reduce costs and focus the UN on what it believes is its core peace and security mandate.

The US position appears to have influenced decisions regarding the future of specific peacekeeping operations. In August 2025, the Council renewed the mandate of UNIFIL for a final time until 31 December, requesting the mission to begin an orderly and safe drawdown and withdrawal. In October 2025, the Council also requested a strategic review to determine the future of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). In April, Council members are expected to receive an oral briefing on the outcome of the strategic review. (For more, see the Western Sahara brief in this Forecast.)

Additionally, in November 2025, the Council tied the future of UNISFA to progress by Sudan and South Sudan against a specific set of benchmarks. The same month, the Council requested proposals for a possible drawdown of MINUSCA. The Secretary-General is expected to submit his proposals in September.

In a 10 February Security Council meeting on South Sudan, the US, the penholder on South Sudan, warned that the host country’s non-cooperation with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) will constitute a threat to the mission’s viability, adding that this will inform future decisions regarding the mission’s future. This was prompted by South Sudan’s directive for the mission to evacuate certain areas. In April, the Council is expected to renew the UNMISS

mandate which is set to expire by the end of the month. (For more, see the South Sudan brief in this Forecast.)

Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue for Council members is the future of peacekeeping and how it can adapt to emerging challenges in line with the theme of the annual Heads of Military Components Conference. In April, the outcome of the comprehensive review of UN peace operations is expected to be circulated to both Council members and the wider UN membership during the month. Council members could consider working on a formal product in response to the review and its recommendations.

Another key issue is how field missions adapt to evolving conditions while implementing their mandates. Members might be interested in hearing from Nyone in particular about the ongoing efforts to support the Central African Republic in extending state authority and implement its other mandated tasks despite resource constraints. They might also expect Shrestha to provide an update on the progress in implementing the UNISFA benchmarks set out by the Council in November 2025.

The impact of the UN’s liquidity crisis on UN peacekeeping operations remains an ongoing concern. The UN is expected to run out of cash in July if member states do not pay their dues. The Secretary-General has warned that the organisation faces a major risk of “imminent financial collapse”, a situation that would have significant implications for its peacekeeping missions.

Council Dynamics

Last year, three elected members—Denmark, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—worked together as part of a “Peacekeeping Trio Initiative”. This year, Denmark and Pakistan have continued to coordinate their efforts in support of peacekeeping.

Additionally, it seems that three other elected members—Colombia, Latvia, and Liberia—consider peace operations as a priority. Colombia hosts a UN Verification Mission, a special political mission assisting the implementation of the country’s 2016 peace agreement. Liberia, a country which once hosted a UN peacekeeping operation, is keen to highlight its successful post-conflict experience. Latvia is interested in chairing the Security Council Informal Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. However, 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.

Last year, the Council renewed the mandates of four UN peacekeeping operations non-unanimously. This trend may continue this year, with contentious negotiations anticipated. The US Permanent Representative Mike Waltz, who testified before the US House Appropriations Committee on 20 March, emphasised the US’ focus on ensuring that peacekeeping operations remain centred on their core mandate of maintaining international peace and security. He stressed that the US would continue to link mandate renewals to political progress and greater efficiency. In this regard, Waltz indicated that the US intends to continue utilising available tools such as strategic reviews and benchmarks to advance these objectives.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the situation in South Sudan. Council members are expected to receive the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan by 13 April.

The Council is also expected to vote on a resolution renewing the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) prior to its expiration on 30 April.

Key Recent Developments

The security environment in South Sudan continues to deteriorate, marked by ongoing hostilities across the country between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO), alongside other opposition and affiliated groups. Insecurity has been widespread, at a scale not seen since the signing of the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018.

Meanwhile, the political landscape in South Sudan has remained highly volatile in light of President Salva Kiir Mayardit's ongoing unilateral actions, including the dismissal of officials without consultations, in violation of the R-ARCSS. The trial of First Vice President Riek Machar and seven co-defendants is ongoing, reflecting deep political divisions. The opposition remains fragmented, with Kiir appointing members of an SPLA-IO splinter faction led by Stephen Par Kuol to legislative positions. These developments have significantly undermined the agreement, with recurrent ceasefire violations, stalled security sector reform, and entrenched political deadlock severely eroding its viability. (For background and more information, see the brief on South Sudan in our February 2026 *Monthly Forecast* and 9 February *What's in Blue* story.)

In a 1 March press release, UNMISS expressed alarm over surging violence in Abiemnom county, Ruweng Administrative Area, where tensions had been escalating since 27 February and culminated in an attack by "unidentified armed youth" on the county headquarters on 1 March. Media reports indicate that as many as 169 people were killed, including around 90 civilians and several local officials. Local administrators reportedly attributed responsibility to the SPLA-IO, which has denied involvement. UNMISS provided temporary shelter to over 1,000 civilians who fled the fighting within its base in the area and maintained an enhanced protective presence to reinforce security around the site.

According to a 2 March UNMISS press release, a peacekeeping convoy comprising an engineering contingent, accompanied by a security escort of peacekeepers, was ambushed while travelling from Akobo in Jonglei State to Pibor in Greater Pibor Administrative Area.

On 6 March, ahead of a planned military operation in Akobo, the SSPDF issued a 72-hour ultimatum ordering civilians, UNMISS personnel, UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to vacate the area. Akobo is strategically located along the border with Ethiopia and has been under the control of the SPLA-IO since the outbreak of civil war in December 2013. In a 9 March press release, UNMISS said it engaged intensively with national, state, and

local stakeholders following the SSPDF's 6 March announcement, and reaffirmed that its peacekeepers remained in Akobo to maintain a protective presence.

Despite repeated warnings from civil society and the wider diplomatic community about risks to civilian safety and security, clashes erupted in Akobo, after which the SSPDF took control of the town. In a 13 March flash update, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) noted that the violence led to an estimated 100,000 people crossing into Ethiopia following the SSPDF order. Other internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled to Wanding, Nasir, and Ulang counties in Upper Nile state. OCHA indicated widespread looting of markets, NGO compounds, and Akobo Hospital. Prior to SSPDF's order, Akobo hosted an estimated 270,000 people, including many IDPs.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 10 March press release, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk voiced alarm at growing accounts of serious human rights violations during the ongoing conflict in South Sudan. Over 160 civilians have reportedly been killed, with more than 280,000 people displaced since late December in Jonglei, Lakes, and Upper Nile States. Türk called for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the surging violence, while urging all parties to the conflict to take prompt and meaningful steps to rescue the fledgling peace agreement.

On 19 February, the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan submitted its annual report on the human rights situation in South Sudan. The report noted that the continued "erosion [of the revitalised agreement] has heightened atrocity risks and undermined legal and institutional safeguards". It further said that South Sudan's political and military leaders are systematically dismantling the peace agreement by undermining governance and security safeguards and exposing civilians to grave risks of renewed armed conflict and mass atrocity crimes.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 16 March statement, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten expressed grave concern about the stalled implementation of critical protection measures to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in South Sudan – including the Action Plan for the Armed Forces on Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in South Sudan. She noted that the persistent gap between commitments and action has created a "protection vacuum" in which sexual violence remains a "cost-free" tactic of war. Patten highlighted verified CRSV incidents in 2025 implicating state security forces, the SPLA-IO, and other non-state armed groups, and urged the government to expedite the implementation of its commitments on addressing and responding to CRSV and allocate the necessary resources. She called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and CRSV and urged all parties to engage in inclusive dialogue. Noting the critical work of South Sudanese women human rights defenders in maintaining community trust and frontline access for CRSV survivors, Patten called on the international community to close the resource gap that threatens monitoring and life-saving care for survivors.

Key Issues and Options

The renewal of UNMISS' mandate will be a key priority for the Council in April. A related issue for Council members is how to calibrate the mission's mandate, particularly its support for the R-ARCSS, amid its increasing erosion. The peace process has been undermined by deep mistrust among political leaders, unilateral actions by the government (including the consolidation of power

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2779](#) (8 May 2025) renewed the UNMISS mandate until 30 April. [Security Council Press Statement SC/16295](#) (13 February 2026) expresses grave concern at the escalating violence in Jonglei and Eastern Equatoria, and across South Sudan. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10103](#) (10 February 2026) was the regular meeting on the situation in South Sudan.

South Sudan

over state institutions and the weakening of opposition and allied groups), and recurring clashes between parties to the agreement. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources and delays in legal and political decisions continue to stall key transition processes.

One option for members is to amend UNMISS' mandate, in light of the country's deteriorating political and security environment, and to consider the following issues.

An important issue is how to approach UNMISS' electoral support mandate, given that this will be the last renewal ahead of the planned elections in December 2026, which have already been postponed multiple times. An option for the Council would be to request the Secretary-General to report by October an assessment of whether the critical components necessary for holding the elections have been put in place by the South Sudanese authorities, in order to help determine UNMISS' role in the months leading up to December.

The obstacles to UNMISS' ability to fulfil its mandate and responsibilities, including restrictions on its freedom of movement and violations of the Status of Forces Agreement, are another issue of concern that will need to be addressed. Attacks against peacekeepers and civilian personnel remain a significant concern for Council members as well. In the upcoming mandate renewal, Council members could consider strongly condemning such attacks and urging the government to ensure accountability, guarantee the safety and security of peacekeepers, and uphold its obligations, including under the Status of Forces Agreement.

UNMISS has recently completed the implementation of a contingency plan in response to the UN-wide financial crisis. An important consideration for the Council in renewing the mandate will be to ensure that the mission has the resources and capacity to deliver on its mandate, particularly its protection of civilians tasks, amid widespread insecurity.

In renewing the mandate, the Council could request UNMISS' strategic review to inform potential revisions to the mandate, given the rapidly changing situation in South Sudan.

An overarching issue remains how to prevent South Sudan's continued descent into political and security breakdown, while addressing the structural drivers of recurring violence and instability. The deteriorating humanitarian situation, marked by mass displacement, restricted humanitarian access, and heightened risks to civilians and aid workers, remains a major concern, as does the need to ensure accountability for human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law.

The broader regional context is also a major issue for Council members as it continues to pose serious challenges to South Sudan's political and security situation, particularly through the spillover effects of the ongoing conflict in Sudan, including its humanitarian, security, and socio-economic repercussions.

The Council could also consider inviting the Chair of the AU High-Level Ad hoc Committee on South Sudan to brief the Council on its efforts to support the peace process and update members on the outcome of the Ad hoc Committee's retreat held in Addis Ababa on the margins of the AU Summit in February.

Council Dynamics

Council members share similar concerns regarding the significant challenges facing the revitalised agreement, the deteriorating security situation resulting from fighting among armed factions, ongoing

sub-national and intercommunal violence, and the deepening economic and humanitarian crises.

However, Council members hold differing views on the overall assessment of the situation. The US has taken a more critical stance, arguing that the actions of South Sudan's leadership have systematically undermined peace prospects and repeatedly brought the country to the brink of war. By contrast, members such as China and Russia have emphasised the need for the international community to exercise patience, prioritise support for regional mediation efforts, and avoid exerting excessive pressure, while continuing to back the government's efforts to strengthen state institutions. The African members have generally shown understanding towards the concerns of the South Sudanese authorities, while also acknowledging persistent security violations, the continued detention of Riek Machar and other SPLA-IO leaders, and unilateral political reshuffling, which they argue risk undermining the progress of the transitional government and prospects for peaceful and credible elections.

During the negotiations on resolution 2779 of 8 May 2025, which extended UNMISS' mandate until 30 April, changes introduced by the US to thematic language on women, peace and security (WPS); climate change; misinformation and disinformation; and human rights were contentious. It seems that the European Council members Denmark, France, Greece, and the UK, as well as like-minded members such as Panama, strongly opposed these revisions and coordinated efforts to retain previously agreed thematic language. Another issue related to the extent to which the Council should exert political pressure on South Sudanese leadership. Some members, including the African members, China, and Russia, argued that the draft should maintain a balanced tone vis-à-vis the government and favoured a more measured approach to avoid placing undue pressure on the host-country authorities. (For more information, see our 8 May 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

With regard to UNMISS' mandate renewal, there appears to be broad support within the Council for the mission's continued presence. In February, most Council members underscored UNMISS' important role in promoting peace, its stabilising effect, and its contribution to the protection of civilians, particularly as it operates in an increasingly complex environment. At the same time, members highlighted the need to ensure the mission is equipped with adequate resources for effective mandate implementation amid financial challenges.

The US administration's current approach to UN peacekeeping most likely will influence the tenor of the negotiations in April, as it has emphasised the need for missions to be more cost-effective and streamlined, with a focus on core peace and security priorities and clearly defined benchmarks.

In its remarks at the 10 February Council meeting, the US expressed strong concern about developments in South Sudan, stating that violence across the country is directly obstructing UNMISS' ability to protect civilians and is worsening an already dire humanitarian situation. It also condemned what it described as government interference, imposing unnecessary costs on the mission, warning that any further non-cooperation by South Sudan could threaten the mission's viability and would factor into its future decisions regarding assistance, diplomatic engagement, and the mission's future.

South Sudan

Apparently, the US, in its role as penholder on the South Sudan file, sought to include language during negotiations on the 13 February press statement indicating that the actions of the transitional government could jeopardise the mission's operations and overall viability. This formulation appears to have been opposed by several

Council members who were concerned about its implications for the mission's future and linking the mission's viability to the government's actions. Eventually, this language was omitted from the final version of the press statement.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Miroslav Jenča will brief on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2026/229), which was circulated to Council members on 26 March and covers the period from 27 December 2025.

The verification mission's mandate expires on 31 October.

Key Recent Developments

On 8 March, Colombia held legislative elections for both houses of Congress (the Senate and House of Representatives) for 2026–2030. These were the third national elections in the country since the signing of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP).

Under the 2016 agreement, which provided for the political participation of ex-combatants as part of their reintegration into society, ten seats were guaranteed to the Comunes party (comprising former FARC-EP members) for the 2018–2022 and 2022–2026 electoral periods. The recent elections were the first in which the Comunes competed on an equal footing with the other political parties. The party did not win any seats and failed to secure the requisite half million votes to maintain its legal status. Following the elections, the party's leadership reaffirmed its commitment to the comprehensive implementation of the peace agreement.

“Pacto Histórico”, the left-wing party of Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego, won 25 seats in the 103-member Senate, a larger share than any other party. The second-largest party, the conservative “Centro Democrático”, secured 17 seats. The results leave a fragmented Congress requiring coalition-building by the next president to pass any reforms. (Under Colombia's constitution, the president is elected for a single four-year term and cannot run for re-election.)

Also on 8 March, some parties held presidential primaries. Subsequently, 14 candidates registered to run in the presidential elections scheduled for 31 May. If no candidate wins over 50 percent of the votes in the first round, a second round will be held on 21 June. At the time of writing, the leading candidates according to polls were Iván Cepeda of the “Pacto Histórico”, Paloma Valencia of the “Centro Democrático”, and a far-right independent candidate named Abelardo de la Espriella. Candidates have presented different views on how to curb violence in the country; while Cepeda has

expressed support for negotiations with armed groups operating in the country, others have advocated for stronger military action against these groups.

The Secretary-General's report noted that the election day was largely peaceful. However, the run-up to the elections saw several significant instances of violence against candidates from across the political spectrum. The electoral cycle began with the assassination of Senator Miguel Uribe Turbay, a presidential hopeful who was shot on 7 June 2025. Other instances of political violence have been reported since then, including a fatal attack on the protection team of a Senator in the Arauca department, the disappearance of a candidate to the Senate in the Cesar department, and the holding of an Indigenous Senator by an armed group for several hours in the Cauca department.

Insecurity continued to negatively affect the implementation of several aspects of the peace agreement, including the reintegration of former combatants. During the period covered by the Secretary-General's report, the mission verified the killing of four former combatants, bringing the number of ex-FARC killed since the signing of the peace agreement to 491. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported that conflict between non-state armed groups, which are present in 60 percent of municipalities, has intensified large-scale humanitarian emergencies. In 2025, more than 1.6 million people were impacted by violence—including more than 150,000 individuals who faced movement restrictions and nearly 100,000 others who were displaced—three times more than in 2024. Additionally, there was a 58 percent increase in attacks against civilians in 2025 compared with the previous year.

According to OCHA, the humanitarian response has been hindered by access constraints, with 416 incidents reported in 2025 that affected the ability to deliver assistance to 1.6 million people. In a recent relevant development, on 18 March, the dissident group of the former FARC-EP known as the *Estado Mayor Central* (EMC) announced that it will restrict in areas under its control the access of the verification mission, the Mission to Support the Peace Process of the Organization of American States (MAPP/OAS), and Colombia's Ombudsman's Office. The group alleged that humanitarian and verification activities have been used to gather intelligence on its positions, adding that it would only cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on humanitarian issues. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed concern about the announcement, emphasising that the organisations restricted by the EMC contribute to the protection of civilians.

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2798 (31 October 2025) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10095 (23 January 2026) was the latest quarterly meeting on Colombia.

Colombia

The Secretary-General's report noted that the government has activated some protection mechanisms established under the peace agreement to respond to emerging risks. However, progress in operationalising the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organisations—which was presented on 7 September 2023 by the National Commission on Security Guarantees (NCSG)—has “remained limited, given persisting coordination challenges among concerned institutions”. According to the report, the verification mission has urged more frequent high-level meetings of the NCSG to advance implementation of the public policy.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 January, OHCHR submitted its annual report on the human rights situation in Colombia. The report examines the country's security landscape in 2025 as well as its progress on the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement in relation to human rights. Its findings highlighted that the “persistence of violence and armed conflict in several territories, together with the consolidation of non-State armed groups and criminal organizations, continues to seriously affect the civilian population and to weaken the organizational processes and social fabric of Indigenous Peoples and Afrodescendent and campesino communities”. Among other matters, the report warned that the country faces the prospect of returning to the grave human rights conditions it endured before the peace agreement, stressing the importance of strengthening the state's response to prevent violence and protect the civilian population.

On 5 February, the UN Child Rights Committee (CRC) issued its findings on Colombia regarding concerns and recommendations on implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It expressed concern about the worsening impact of the armed conflict on children, particularly the increased recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups, marked by disproportionate harm to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children. Among other things, the CRC called on Colombia to end the recruitment and use of children by the military and police and to include in peace processes with armed groups the immediate halt of child recruitment.

In a report released on 19 March, OHCHR described the grave dangers faced by human rights defenders in Colombia, noting that 972 such individuals were killed between 2016 and 2025. Stressing that “Colombia remains one of the deadliest places on earth to be a human rights defender”, OHCHR urged immediate action to reverse these negative trends. The report notes that more than 70 percent of perpetrators were assessed as non-state armed actors. While acknowledging steps taken by the Colombian authorities to address the issue, the report also points to weak and overwhelmed state institutions, high impunity levels, and corruption as contributing factors to violence.

Key Issues and Options

As this month's meeting will take place in the middle of the electoral cycle, Council members could emphasise the urgent need to use mechanisms contained in the peace agreement, such as the Comprehensive Security System for the Exercise of Politics (SISEP), to facilitate the secure conduct of elections. (The SISEP aims to promote a holistic approach to security, including regarding prevention and protection mechanisms for elected officials, opposition members, and community leaders.)

One option is to convey such messages in a press statement. Such a product could also encourage the current government to continue prioritising implementation of the peace agreement in the remainder of its term, which ends in August, including by putting in place structures that can help facilitate continuity in the next administration. Several Council members emphasised this point at the Council's latest quarterly meeting on Colombia, held on 23 January. Colombia, which made its first intervention on the file as a non-permanent Council member, expressed its intention to do so, including by elevating the entity in charge of implementation to a Presidential Advisory Office, in line with the September

2025 ruling by Colombia's Constitutional Court on the matter.

Supporting relief efforts for conflict-affected communities is a critical issue. OCHA highlighted in its 2026 Colombia Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, which was launched on 13 February, the growing humanitarian needs—with seven million people estimated to need assistance this year—while capacities and resources are diminishing and access constraints are increasing. At the Council's next meeting on Colombia, some Council members may choose to call on donors to enhance their support for humanitarian efforts in the country. They may also call on armed groups to cease restricting access for the UN and other humanitarian personnel.

The effects of the conflict on children in Colombia are an ongoing matter of concern. A 12 February report by the non-governmental organisation International Crisis Group (ICG) highlighted the severe scale of child recruitment by armed groups, including through social media platforms. How to increase public-private partnerships to mitigate such risks is of increasing interest for Council members, and was most recently addressed during a 2 March open briefing titled “Children, technology, and education in conflict”. The ICG report further described the difficulties in reintegrating children released from armed groups and in mounting prevention efforts. Council members may seek more information on how the international community can support the Colombian government's work in this regard, including by inviting to its meetings on Colombia relevant briefers such as UNICEF or the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Council Dynamics

Colombia had previously been considered a file that enjoyed Council consensus. However, the strains in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the US since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025 have created significant challenges in the Council's engagement on the file.

These difficult dynamics were evident in the contentious negotiations on resolution 2798 of 31 October 2025, which last renewed the verification mission's mandate, and in the fact that Council members have not adopted any press statements on Colombia since October 2024, although it had previously been the practice for them to do so after every quarterly meeting. Resolution 2798 removed from the mission's mandate two tasks related to verifying implementation of the peace agreement's ethnic and transitional justice chapters. The US insisted that these tasks be removed, while most other Council members strongly advocated for their retention. (For more information, see our 30 October 2025 *What's in Blue* story.) Colombia, who would have liked to see the two tasks retained in the mission's mandate, emphasised during the Council's 23 January meeting the government's commitment to continue working on these issues as part of the full implementation of the peace agreement.

Bilateral tensions between Colombia and the US appear to have reduced following Petro and Trump's 8 January telephone call and subsequent in-person meeting at the White House on 3 February. It remains to be seen how much this will affect US engagement on the Colombia file at the Council. The US is nonetheless expected to continue stressing the need for Colombia to curb the illicit drug trade originating from its borders, both in its messaging at the Security Council and to the country's next administration.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

On 15 March, Syrians marked the 15th anniversary since the start of the uprising against former President Bashar al-Assad in March 2011, which culminated in his ouster in December 2024 and the rise to power of interim president Ahmed al-Sharaa.

March saw heightened regional escalation following Israel and US strikes on Iran, with spillover effects on Syria. Since the outbreak of the conflict on 28 February, both Israeli and Iranian strikes—targeting each other’s assets—have violated Syrian airspace with missile debris, causing deaths and injuries inside Syrian territory. On 23 March, Syria said that one of its military bases in northeastern Hasakah governorate—a formerly US-controlled base close to the Iraqi border—was targeted by missiles launched from Iraq, reportedly attributed to an Iraqi armed group. Pro-Iranian Iraqi armed groups have claimed multiple attacks against US regional assets since the beginning of the war in Iran.

The regional escalation has also had other impacts on Syria, including the closure of Syrian airspace and wider economic disruptions, such as interruptions to natural gas supplies, which have led to increased electricity rationing.

Spillover effects of the conflict have also included intensified Israel-Hezbollah hostilities in Lebanon. This led to Syria reinforcing its border with Lebanon, including by deploying thousands of troops. Syrian officials have said that these measures are aimed at tightening border control to prevent arms and drug smuggling, as well as to block infiltration by Hezbollah and other militant groups. The Syrian army accused Hezbollah of targeting its positions when, on 9 March, shells fired from Lebanese territory landed near the town of Serghaya, west of Damascus. In his briefing to the Council on 18 March, Cordone said that Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon have resulted in approximately 140,000 persons—mostly Syrians—crossing into Syria seeking safety.

Sharaa, who has expressed support for Lebanon’s efforts to disarm Hezbollah, characterised the broader regional escalation as an existential threat to the Middle East.

On 20 March, southern Syria witnessed renewed Israeli strikes following clashes between government forces and Druze factions in Suweida, in southern Syria. Israel characterised its strikes on Syrian military compounds in the south as a response to attacks on the Druze community and reiterated its stated commitment to protecting Syria’s Druze population. The strikes are the latest example of Israeli military intervention in Syrian territory, which has compounded pressure on the interim government as it grapples with fragile social and territorial cohesion in the south.

On 17 March, the Syrian National Investigation Committee submitted its report on the violence that erupted in Suweida in July 2025 between Bedouins and government forces on the one hand, and Druze militias on the other. According to the report, a total of 1,760 people were killed and 2,188 were injured, and approximately 36 villages were destroyed or burned, leading to mass displacement. The committee characterised the violations as individual rather than systematic, and 23 security and military personnel have reportedly been detained and are facing trial. Some human rights observers criticised the findings. They noted that framing the violations as individual acts effectively exempts leadership from accountability and that the committee’s lack of independence—having been appointed by the government, itself implicated in the events—raised questions about whether the process constitutes meaningful transitional justice.

Regarding northeast Syria, Cordone told the Council on 18 March that “the integration process between the government and the [Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)] is moving forward on the basis of the 29 January agreement”. Positive steps have included the appointment of an SDF-nominated Assistant Minister of Defense, the beginning of returns to Ayn al-Arab (Kobane) and other areas, and the 19 March exchange of around 600 detainees between the two sides in Hasakah. Cordone noted, however, that a number of key issues remain to be resolved, from security sector integration and the status of Kurdish women’s forces (the Women’s Protection Units) to the integration of civil employees and Kurdish-language education.

Underlying tensions surfaced when reportedly on 21 March the Syrian flag was lowered during Nowruz celebrations—a Persian traditional festival that is also celebrated by Kurds in Syria—in Kobane, triggering angry social media posts and protests in several areas. The following day, local groups, reportedly linked to the SDF, stormed government internal security forces’ headquarters in Qamishli, damaging vehicles and removing the Syrian flag from the city’s airport, while in Aleppo there were attacks on Kurdish civilians. The government condemned both the flag incident and the retaliatory attacks and stated that the integration process would continue.

On 17 March, indirect elections were held for four vacant seats in Raqqa governorate, marking a further step in completing the People’s Assembly that was partially elected in October 2025, when votes in Raqqa, Hasakah, and Suweida governorates and the Kobane district were postponed due to security concerns. In his most recent briefing to the Council, Cordone noted that the voting for a further 11 seats in Hasakah and in Kobane would follow in the coming weeks, after which Sharaa is expected to announce his list of 70 presidential appointees and the opening of the parliament. Cordone stressed the importance of Syria’s regions and diverse communities—particularly women—being meaningfully represented in the Assembly, “given its role in shaping legislation and potentially Syria’s permanent constitution”.

Briefing the Council on 18 March, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya noted that while conditions

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolutions 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 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions list. [S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2025/6](#) (10 August 2025) condemned violence against civilians in Suweida in July 2025, called for unhindered humanitarian access to the region, and called on the Syrian interim authorities to ensure accountability. [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.10123](#) (18 March 2026) was a Security Council meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria.

Syria

in northern and eastern Syria have recently stabilised, significant humanitarian needs persist. Over 100,000 people remain displaced in Aleppo and Hasakah governorates, and water systems, hospitals, and water stations across the country continue to be disrupted by irregular electricity supply. Key roads linking northeastern governorates and Damascus have reopened, improving people's mobility. Humanitarian partners are reaching over 200,000 people per month in areas of return, though Msuya stressed that aid is not a substitute for state-led services. She noted that Syria's humanitarian appeal for 2025 received only around a third of the \$3.2 billion required, and urged Council members to bolster funding, support diplomatic efforts to resolve remaining flashpoints, and accelerate Syria's economic reintegration to reduce the country's long-term dependence on humanitarian assistance.

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 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 concrete progress on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); security sector reform (SSR); transitional justice; and social cohesion—including through accountability and reconciliation processes.

The regional escalation represents a growing and distinct challenge for the Council, and one that carries particular risks for Syria, given its fragile transition. At a moment when the interim government is working to consolidate institutions, restore services, and build public trust, the spillover effects of the conflict in the region risk destabilising hard-won gains and diverting political and economic attention away from the transition process.

Another issue is the SDF integration process, which is advancing but remains incomplete. Key pending issues will require sustained attention, while the unrest in Qamishli and Aleppo illustrates the communal tensions that could undermine the process if left unaddressed.

Accountability for the July 2025 Suweida violence and persistent tensions in that region remain an important issue. The submission of the national investigative committee's report is a step forward, but criticism from human rights observers suggests the process had shortcomings.

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.

To address the many-faceted challenges facing Syria, the Council could also consider adopting a presidential statement that:

- calls for full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and urges all parties to the regional conflict to take measures to prevent further spillover into Syrian territory;

- encourages both Damascus and the SDF to prioritise confidence-building measures and to engage constructively on outstanding issues of the comprehensive agreement, while pressing the government to ensure the protection and rights of Kurdish civilians;
- highlights the importance of Damascus continuing its counter-terrorism efforts against a resurgent Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in the region;
- urges Damascus to strengthen independent accountability mechanisms, including through their cooperation with existing international mechanisms on Syria, while also meaningfully engaging with victims and civil society on transitional justice and reconciliation; and
- calls for enhanced financial support to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

The UN's future role in Syria is another key issue. Cordone's office is actively negotiating its relocation to Damascus and areas of cooperation with the Syrian government. Council members could express support for an expedited agreement and early relocation, as a meaningful UN presence on the ground is essential to supporting Syria's political transition. Members should also continue pressing for progress on the appointment of a Special Envoy following Geir O. Pedersen's resignation in October 2025.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly 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 progress on DDR, SSR, and transitional justice, alongside a credible political process. The Council's December 2025 visit to Damascus represented an important signal of unified support for Syria's transition following years of deep divisions on the file.

Furthermore, the Council's decision to delist the Al-Nusrah Front for the People of the Levant (also known as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham [HTS]) from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions list on 27 February was a significant step towards legitimising the interim government. This followed an earlier decision to delist Sharaa and his interior minister from the same list through the US-authored resolution 2799 of 6 November 2025.

The US has played a particularly active role on the Syria dossier in recent weeks. US Special Envoy for Syria Thomas Barrack—who also serves as US Ambassador to Türkiye—chaired the 18 March Council meeting. In his remarks, Barrack highlighted the significant transformations Syria has undergone in the past 15 months and reaffirmed the US commitment to facilitating Syrian-led processes and supporting a unified Syria at peace with itself and its neighbours. The UK, in its statement at the 18 March meeting, explicitly credited the US—and Barrack personally—for brokering the January SDF integration agreement.

The regional escalation triggered by the US-Israeli strikes on Iran on 28 February, however, could strain Council dynamics on the Syria file. Members that have traditionally aligned themselves or expressed support for Iran—most notably Russia and China—are likely to take a more critical posture towards the US and its regional actions, potentially complicating the unified approach to Syria that has characterised the past year. While Council members

Syria

have so far managed to keep Syria-specific discussions relatively insulated from these broader tensions, a prolonged regional conflict risks eroding that separation.

Many Council members agree on the need for the Syrian interim government to take decisive measures to address the threat posed by 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.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council is expected to hold its 90-day briefing on the situation in Haiti. Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Carlos Ruiz Massieu is expected to brief the Council on recent developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH. Closed consultations are expected to follow.

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

In recent months, the Haitian security forces have intensified operations against the gangs, with some reports that the police have retaken pockets of downtown Port-au-Prince, although their ability to maintain control remains uncertain. Gangs retain the capacity to carry out attacks in the capital and perpetrate abuses against the population and have expanded their reach beyond Port-au-Prince, including to the Artibonite and Centre departments. Overnight between 28 and 29 March at least 30 people were killed in an attack by the Gran Grif gang in Petite-Rivière de l'Artibonite.

Overall levels of violence remain high. According to a 23 March report by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, between 1 March 2025 to 15 January, at least 5,519 people were killed and 2,608 were injured in Haiti. The report says that most casualties occurred during security operations against gangs, with at least 3,301 people killed during such operations. Gang violence was responsible for 27 percent of the total casualties, followed by acts of “popular justice” by self-defence groups and non-organised members of the population, and summary executions carried out by the police outside anti-gang operations. The report describes the continued perpetration of sexual violence by the gangs as a tactic to subjugate and punish the population, as well as violence against children, kidnappings, and extortion. The report also highlights the “unnecessary or disproportionate” use of force by Haitian and other security forces and the high number of casualties “among residents, who were killed or injured by stray bullets and by drone strikes” during security operations against gangs.

In this regard, the report refers to the operations carried out by private military company Vectus Global which was reportedly hired by the Haitian government to combat gangs. Since March 2025, Vectus Global has carried out operations independently and jointly with the national security forces involving mainly drone strikes and firing from helicopters. The report says that, among the casualties documented in connection with operations against gang members, 60 people not affiliated with gangs were killed and notes that “[s]ome, or even most, of these drone strikes and helicopter operations could be described as targeted killings”. A recent Human Rights Watch report documented similar patterns and provided additional details on some of these incidents.

On 30 September 2025, the Security Council adopted resolution 2793, authorising UN member states to transition the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti into a “Gang Suppression Force” (GSF) for an initial period of 12 months. Like the MSS, the GSF is not a UN mission, but its mandate represents a clear shift from the MSS mission's model. While the MSS mission focused on supporting and training the Haitian National Police (HNP), the GSF has been mandated to conduct “counter-gang operations to neutralize, isolate, and deter gangs” independently or in cooperation with the HNP and Haitian armed forces. It also authorised a personnel ceiling of 5,550, compared to the 2,500 envisaged (but never achieved) under the MSS mission's concept of operations.

Although resolution 2793 authorised the transition from the MSS to the GSF, Kenyan personnel who formed the bulk of the MSS—along with its force commander—remained in Haiti during the initial phase of the transition even though they are ultimately expected to end their deployment. While media reports indicate that some officers will remain until replacement units are in place, some Kenyan contingents have already begun repatriating. In recent months, the Standing Group of Partners for the GSF—comprising The Bahamas, Canada, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Kenya, and the US—has been working on force generation and funding for the new mission. While a small contingent of soldiers from Chad is reportedly expected to deploy to Haiti in April, the GSF is not expected to reach full operational capacity until October.

On 2 December 2025, the Standing Group of Partners for the GSF appointed Jack Christofides, who has held several leadership roles in the UN, as GSF Special Representative.

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2814](#) (29 January 2026) renewed BINUH's mandate for a year, until 31 January 2027. [S/RES/2794](#) (17 October 2025) renewed the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime for one year and added Dimitri Herard and Kempes Sanon to the 2653 sanctions list. [S/RES/2793](#) (30 September 2025) authorised UN member states to transition the MSS mission in Haiti into the GSF for an initial period of 12 months. The text also requested that the Secretary-General establish the UNSOH. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10066](#) (12 December 2025) was the meeting record of the Council's quarterly open briefing on Haiti.

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Resolution 2793 also requested that the Secretary-General establish a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) to provide support to the GSF, among other entities, “with a view to assume full logistical support responsibility of the GSF within six months” of the resolution’s adoption, that is by the end of March. On 19 March, Daniela Krosiak was appointed Assistant Secretary-General and Head of UNSOH. The office is apparently ready to start providing operational support to the GSF.

On 29 January, the Security Council extended BINUH’s mandate for another year, until 31 January 2027, through resolution 2814. The resolution revised BINUH’s mandate to execute six key tasks in an “integrated manner” with UN entities in the country. The tasks focus on electoral assistance and facilitating “inter-Haitian national dialogue” in support of political and constitutional processes in Haiti; support in the areas of community violence reduction and disarmament, dismantlement, and reintegration of armed gangs; assistance to the Haitian authorities on justice sector issues; as well as monitoring and reporting on “cases of gang violence, criminal activities, and human rights abuses and violations, including sexual violence”. The resolution tasked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti with playing “a good offices and coordinating role, including in promoting accountability as well as respect for human rights, the political process, and the rule of law”. (For more information, see our 28 January *What’s in Blue* story.)

The Transitional Presidential Council (TPC)—the temporary body created pursuant to a 2024 agreement facilitated by the Caribbean Community and the US after a dramatic surge in gang violence—dissolved on 7 February, the date on which its mandate expired. The dissolution of the TPC followed several days of political turmoil in January, as a majority of TPC members attempted to dismiss acting Prime Minister Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, an act which the US, other international interlocutors, and national stakeholders criticised. Following the TPC’s dissolution, Fils-Aimé, who had been appointed by the TPC in 2024, remains the only official holding executive power. General elections are still planned for August, although delays due to the security situation or other factors cannot be excluded. According to media reports, over 300 political parties have registered to participate in the elections.

The humanitarian situation remains dire, with 6.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including 2.8 million children, and over 1.45 million people internally displaced as at February 2026, levels that, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, are approaching those recorded after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

On 27 March, Bahrain and Denmark, as the co-focal points on conflict and hunger, convened an informal expert-level meeting on food insecurity in Haiti. Members were briefed by representatives of the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization in Haiti.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 20 February, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Service of BINUH published a joint report on the impact of gang violence on the human rights of children in Haiti. The report finds that children are increasingly exposed to the trafficking risks, noting that more than 500,000 children live in gang-controlled areas, where the majority of Haitian gangs are involved in child trafficking. It also shows that both structural and contextual factors contribute to creating an environment in which

children, particularly from extremely poor, marginalised families, as well as those living on the streets or in displaced persons’ sites, are at acute risk of trafficking or other forms of exploitation. The report calls for a comprehensive, human rights-centred strategy built around several pillars including expanding social protection programmes and financial services for families from marginalised areas; strengthening the role of schools as protective spaces; prioritising children’s rehabilitation and reintegration over punitive measures; and reducing gangs’ capacity through bolstering responses by law enforcement and the judicial system while ensuring compliance with international human rights law and standards.

Key Issues and Options

The Security Council’s overarching objective in Haiti is to support the country’s political transition, restore security conditions conducive to holding elections, and address the root causes of the country’s instability.

An additional issue for the Security Council is how to ensure it receives comprehensive and timely information on the GSF’s deployment, oversight arrangements, and operational conduct. Resolution 2793 requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of the resolution as part of his regular reporting on Haiti. The resolution also requested the GSF Special Representative, “in coordination with the government of Haiti and the UN, to keep the Security Council abreast of relevant developments and inform on the concept of operations, indicative financial needs to be funded by voluntary contributions, and a force generation plan”.

An option would be for Council members to invite Christofides to brief the Council on such issues as mission composition, funding arrangements, and measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and the excessive use of force. For instance, members could seek clarification on how Christofides intends to address concerns raised by human rights interlocutors reporting that the Haitian security forces—which the GSF is expected to support—have employed unnecessary and disproportionate force and have been supported by contractors whose conduct appears to violate international human rights law.

Council Dynamics

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

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

Differences among Council members also emerged during the negotiations on the renewal of the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime in October 2025. While the co-penholders (US and Panama) initially

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proposed adding four names to the sanctions list, Russia opposed the listing of political figures leading to the final version of the resolution only adding two names to the sanctions list. China and the A3 Plus sought to strengthen language on the arms embargo. While the co-penholders accommodated several of these requests, proposed

references to record “the type, quantity, and serial number of weapons and ammunition seized” and “photographing all items and relevant markings and headstamps” were not included. (The majority of weapons trafficked into Haiti come from the US.)

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action

In April, Security Council members are expected to receive a briefing in closed consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Special Representative for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO Alexander Ivanko and the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura are the anticipated briefers.

In line with resolution 2797 of 31 October 2025, which extended MINURSO’s mandate for another year, the Secretary-General is expected to submit a strategic review regarding MINURSO’s future mandate in April.

Key Recent Developments

In resolution 2797, the Council expressed its full support for the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy in facilitating and conducting negotiations, taking Morocco’s autonomy proposal as a basis, aimed at achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable resolution of the dispute. (The plan, which Morocco submitted to the UN in 2007, calls for integrating the territory into Morocco, with the Sahrawi people managing their internal affairs while being represented externally by Morocco.) The resolution also called on the parties to engage in discussions without preconditions, using the proposal as a basis, with a view to reaching a final and mutually acceptable political solution that provides for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and recognises that genuine autonomy could represent a feasible outcome. The resolution was adopted with 11 votes in favour, three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia), while then-Council member Algeria did not vote. (For background and more information, see the brief on Western Sahara in our October 2025 *Monthly Forecast* and our 31 October 2025 *What’s in Blue* story.)

Recent months have seen increased US momentum to reinvigorate efforts to resolve the Western Sahara dispute. On 22 January, a delegation from the Polisario Front (which represents the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara), led by its Foreign Minister Mohamed Yeslem Beissat, visited Washington.

On 26 January, the US Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos visited Algiers and met with several senior Algerian officials, including President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf.

According to media reports, the US convened ministerial-level delegations from Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, and the Polisario Front for direct talks in Madrid in early February. US Permanent Representative to the UN Mike Waltz and Boulos attended the

meeting, which was co-chaired by de Mistura. It marked the first time since 2019 when all stakeholders met in person under UN auspices.

Algeria has long opposed formats that bring all four stakeholders together in this manner—like the “roundtable meetings” initiated by former Personal Envoy Horst Köhler—arguing that such an approach risks reframing the issue as a regional dispute rather than one primarily between Morocco and the Polisario Front. In this context, Algeria and Mauritania have traditionally characterised their roles as observers rather than parties to the dispute. The Madrid meeting also marked a rare instance of Algerian and Moroccan representatives engaging on this issue since they severed their bilateral ties in 2021.

During the meeting, Morocco reportedly presented a revised version of its 2007 autonomy proposal with a detailed plan intended to provide a more concrete basis for negotiations. Following the Madrid meeting, the US hosted the four delegations in Washington, DC for another round of talks on 23 and 24 February, with de Mistura co-chairing. At the time of writing, the outcome of these meetings remained unclear, with no official or substantive results reported.

On 5-6 February, the UN Acting Military Advisor Lieutenant General Cheryl Pearce visited MINURSO headquarters in Laayoune, where she held bilateral meetings with Ivanko and MINURSO Force Commander Major General Md Fakhru Ahsan. During the visit, she also travelled to the Smara and Bir Lahlou team sites. Media reports indicate that a UN team comprising senior officials visited Laayoune in late March as part of broader discussions on the mission’s strategic review.

Key Issues and Options

MINURSO is one of the longest-running UN peacekeeping missions, having been established in 1991 with the key objective of facilitating a referendum for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The underlying issue for the Council remains how to facilitate and support a viable and lasting resolution to the long-standing deadlock over the status of Western Sahara.

Two fundamentally diverging positions have made a resolution to the conflict difficult. On the one hand, the Polisario Front demands the Sahrawi people’s right to self-determination, which has been recognised by the International Court of Justice in its 16 October 1975 advisory opinion and supported by several member states. On the other hand, Morocco claims sovereignty over the territory, and its autonomy plan has received support from an increasing number of member states in recent years. With renewed US efforts, including the

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convening of quadripartite meetings and Morocco's expanded proposal, there appears to be a cautious but renewed prospect for progress.

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

Another important issue remains how to preserve MINURSO's operational effectiveness amid severe financial constraints and ensure that the mission continues to address evolving dynamics on the ground and advance the implementation of its mandate. In their deliberations in April, Council members are likely to be guided by the recommendations of the Secretary-General's strategic review.

An option for Council members could be to issue a presidential statement expressing support for ongoing mediation efforts and urging the relevant parties to negotiate in good faith and demonstrate the necessary flexibility with a view to breaking the current impasse and achieving progress towards a political solution.

Council Dynamics

Council members differ starkly in their national positions on Western Sahara. The US, the penholder on Western Sahara, recognised Morocco's sovereignty over the region in December 2020 during the first administration of President Donald Trump and

has continued to support genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty for Western Sahara.

The US position on UN peacekeeping is likely to influence discussions in April as members consider the Secretary-General's strategic review. It has emphasised the need for missions to be more cost-effective and streamlined, with a focus on core peace and security priorities and clearly defined benchmarks.

France supports the Moroccan autonomy plan as the "only basis" for achieving a political solution, while the UK describes the autonomy proposal as the "most credible, viable and pragmatic basis for a lasting resolution of the dispute". Countries such as France and the US have also sought to make significant investments in projects in Western Sahara. Denmark views Morocco's autonomy plan as "a good basis for an agreed solution between all parties", while Greece considers it a "serious and credible" approach. Somalia maintains cordial relations with both Algeria and Morocco but does not recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) nor endorse Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara.

Among the newly elected Council members Bahrain, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Liberia support Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and have opened consulates in the territory. Latvia maintains cordial relations with both Algeria and Morocco but does not recognise the SADR nor endorse Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara. Meanwhile, Colombia, under the Presidency of Gustavo Petro, reinstated its recognition of SADR and re-established diplomatic relations in 2022.

Maritime Security

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold an open debate on maritime security under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security". This will be one of the signature events of Bahrain's presidency. Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani is expected to chair the meeting.

Key Recent Developments

On 20 May 2025, the Council held a high-level open debate titled "Strengthening Maritime Security through International Cooperation for Global Stability", which was chaired by Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. In his briefing at the meeting, Christian Bueger, a research fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), stressed the need for sustained attention to the proliferation of autonomous weapons systems, naval mines, maritime cybersecurity threats, and sub-standard shipping linked to sanctions evasion, as well as the need to protect critical maritime infrastructure. He suggested that the Council consider supporting efforts to strengthen coordination, information-sharing, and

strategic thinking, including through the establishment of a standing item on the Council's agenda dedicated to maritime security or creating an office of a special rapporteur on the issue. (For more information, see our 19 May 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

On 11 August 2025, the Council held a high-level open debate titled "Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation, and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges", which was chaired by Panama's President, José Raúl Mulino. In his remarks at the meeting, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Arsenio Domínguez highlighted that emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence-driven surveillance and satellite monitoring systems, provide tools to anticipate and deter threats. He also underscored that the digitalisation of shipping and the move towards autonomous vessels increase the need for robust cybersecurity governance. (For more information, see our 8 August 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Recent developments in the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz demonstrate how land-based conflicts can spill over into the maritime domain, exposing the fragility of global trade routes and demonstrating how disruptions at critical chokepoints can affect

UN DOCUMENTS ON MARITIME SECURITY [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2722](#) (10 January 2024) demanded that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and took note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks, including those that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. [S/RES/2812](#) (14 January 2026) extended until 15 July the monthly reporting requirement for the Secretary-General on attacks by the Houthi rebel group in Yemen on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which was established by resolution 2722. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9977](#) (11 August 2025) was a meeting titled "Maritime Security: Prevention, Innovation, and International Cooperation to Address Emerging Challenges", organised by Panama as one of its signature events. [S/PV.9919](#) (20 May 2025) was a meeting titled "Strengthening Maritime Security through International Cooperation for Global Stability", organised by Greece as one of its signature events.

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international commerce and undermine economic stability. Against the backdrop of the Israel-Hamas war that started on 7 October 2023, Yemen's Houthi rebel group began launching sophisticated attacks against merchant and commercial vessels transiting the Red Sea in mid-November 2023. In response, the Council adopted resolution 2722 of 10 January 2024, which, among other things, demanded that the Houthis cease attacks on vessels and requested the Secretary-General to provide written monthly reports on further Houthi attacks in the Red Sea. Resolution 2812 of 14 January extended the monthly reporting requirement for another six months, until 15 July. (For more information, see our 13 January 2026 *What's in Blue* story.)

Recent weeks have seen a sharp escalation in and around the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway through which around 20 percent of global oil consumption and approximately one-quarter of globally traded maritime oil transit. The escalation comes against the backdrop of the US and Israeli strikes against Iranian targets that began on 28 February and Iran's subsequent retaliation against Israel as well as other countries in the Gulf region that host US military bases. (For more information, see our 28 February *What's in Blue* story.)

Iran has taken steps to disrupt maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, including attacks on commercial vessels and the reported deployment of naval mines. While initially Iran signalled efforts to choke the waterway and effectively close it, particularly for the US and its allies, it has since allowed selective passage to vessels it considers "non-hostile", with reports suggesting the emergence of a de facto controlled transit system in which ships are directed through a corridor overseen by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The US and Israel have targeted Iranian naval facilities and assets, including mine-laying vessels, reportedly inflicting significant damage on its maritime capabilities.

On 11 March, the Council adopted resolution 2817, which was co-sponsored by 136 countries and condemned any actions or threats by Iran aimed at closing or obstructing international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz or threatening maritime security in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. The resolution, which was penned by Bahrain on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Jordan, affirmed that any attempt to impede lawful transit passage or freedom of navigation in these international waterways constitutes a serious threat to international peace and security. (For more information, see our 11 March *What's in Blue* story.)

On 21 March, US President Donald Trump threatened to "hit and obliterate" Iran's power plants if the Strait of Hormuz was not fully reopened, initially issuing a 48-hour ultimatum before subsequently extending the deadline to 6 April. In a statement on social media, he called for the establishment of a multinational naval coalition, encouraging countries to deploy ships to secure the waterway.

Meanwhile, a 28 March Houthi missile attack on Israel has raised concerns about a potential new front in the conflict and risks to shipping through the Bab Al-Mandab Strait. At the same time, the US has deployed thousands of troops to the Middle East in recent weeks, including marine expeditionary units and airborne forces, amid speculation of potential operations targeting strategic sites such as Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export

hub, and along Iran's coastline to neutralise capabilities that could threaten commercial and military shipping.

On 27 March, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the establishment of a UN Task Force led by Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) Jorge Moreira da Silva, with participation from IMO, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and the International Chamber of Commerce, to develop technical mechanisms to address humanitarian needs in the Strait of Hormuz. The Task Force will support the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy on the Middle East conflict, Jean Arnault, who is mandated to lead political engagement with relevant member states.

Key Issues and Options

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

The number of vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz has declined significantly since late February, amid heightened risks, driving up insurance costs and contributing to a surge in global oil prices. These developments have raised concerns about broader supply chain disruptions, price volatility, and the resilience of global energy and trade flows.

A related issue for the Council is the safety of seafarers and maritime workers, who have been increasingly exposed to risk, with reports of casualties and crews stranded amid recent hostilities. According to some estimates, around 20,000 seafarers remain stranded in the Persian Gulf, with at least seven fatalities reported, as a result of the current conflict that began in late February.

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

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

Another important issue for the Council is the lack of a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of maritime security threats at the global level, which limits understanding of how these threats are evolving and escalating, and how they can be effectively addressed.

One option for the Council would be to request the Secretary-General to enhance system-wide analysis and reporting on maritime security trends, including by strengthening coordination across relevant UN entities and integrating maritime

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security considerations into existing global assessment processes. The Council could also encourage enhanced cooperation among member states, as well as with regional organisations, civil society, the private sector, and local authorities, to develop coherent and coordinated responses to maritime security threats.

The Council could also consider adopting a resolution reaffirming that navigational rights and freedoms must be respected, while noting the right of member states to defend their vessels and calling for a coordinated international approach to maritime security. The Council could support humanitarian-focused measures, including the Secretary-General's Task Force, to ensure the continued flow of essential goods and mitigate the humanitarian impact of maritime disruptions. It could also consider requesting regular reporting from the Secretary-General on maritime security developments in the Strait of Hormuz.

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

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members acknowledge that promoting maritime security demands coherent and effective multilateral approaches, particularly because of the transnational nature of these challenges. All Council members are also state parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), except for Colombia and the US, which nonetheless consider many of the convention's provisions as part of customary law. (For more information, see the brief on Maritime Security in our August 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

The US and China differ sharply in their legal interpretations of UNCLOS, particularly regarding the principle of freedom-of-navigation and China's expansive claims in the South China Sea, which are rejected by the US and several other countries as excessive. To reinforce its interpretation of navigational rights and freedoms, the US routinely conducts freedom-of-navigation operations across several regions using its naval and air forces.

Trump has called for a multinational naval coalition to operate in and around the Strait of Hormuz. Similar efforts were pursued during the escalation in the Red Sea, including the US-led multinational maritime security initiative Operation Prosperity Guardian (December 2023), in addition to air campaigns: Operation Poseidon Archer (January 2024), led by the UK and the US, and Operation Rough Rider (March 2025), led by the US.

A 19 March joint statement initially issued by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, and the UK was ultimately endorsed by a total of 36 countries, condemning what it described

as the de facto closure of the Strait by Iranian forces. The statement called on Iran to immediately cease threats, the laying of mines, drone and missile attacks, and other actions impeding commercial shipping, while reaffirming that the freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle of international law. It stressed that interference with international shipping and the disruption of global energy supply chains constitute a threat to international peace and security. Among Council members, in addition to France and the UK, the statement has been endorsed by Bahrain, Denmark, Latvia, and Panama.

Greece, the largest ship-owning nation in commercial shipping, has reportedly indicated that it does not intend to participate in any operation in the Strait of Hormuz.

French President Emmanuel Macron has indicated that France and its partners are preparing a possible international mission to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz once the intensity of military operations subsides. He said France is engaging with partner countries to assess whether such an effort could be placed within a UN framework. On 26 March, France said that the Chief of the Defence Staff of its armed forces, Fabien Mandon, had held talks with around 35 countries about the initiative, which has been described as independent of ongoing military operations and strictly defensive in nature.

In light of continued disruptions to maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz following the adoption of resolution 2817, Bahrain circulated a draft resolution to Council members on 21 March, again on behalf of the GCC countries and Jordan. The draft, invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, would authorise member states to use all necessary means in and around the Strait of Hormuz to secure transit passage and deter attempts to close, obstruct, or otherwise interfere with international navigation. It also expressed the Council's readiness to impose measures, including targeted sanctions, against those impeding freedom of navigation.

Responding to this initiative, China and Russia apparently expressed concerns about the draft, particularly its invocation of Chapter VII, arguing that it could be interpreted as legitimising the use of force by member states without clearly defined parameters. They also raised concerns about the potential use of sanctions referenced in the text. At the time of writing, deliberations on the Bahrain-led initiative were ongoing, with a second revised draft circulated on 29 March.

It appears that France has also penned a draft resolution, which was circulated to a limited number of Council members but not formally tabled for broader discussion. The French draft calls for a cessation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Gulf of Oman, and takes note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks and provocations that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. It is not a Chapter VII text, however.

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Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (MEPQ). Bahrain—the Council president for April—intends to convene the debate as a high-level signature event.

Key Recent Developments

April’s meeting takes place against the backdrop of a sharp escalation in hostilities in the Middle East, triggered by joint Israeli–US strikes on Iran that began on 28 February and Iran’s subsequent retaliation across the region. Israel and the US have targeted Iran’s nuclear infrastructure, ballistic missile facilities, and naval assets and killed several top military and political officials, including Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Ali Larijani. Iran has retaliated by striking Israel as well as US bases and allied assets in the Middle East, in addition to effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz. It appears that both sides have hit critical infrastructure and civilian objects, including residential buildings, energy infrastructure, fuel depots, and desalination plants.

The Security Council convened an emergency briefing on the situation on 28 February. On 11 March, the Council adopted resolution 2817, drafted by Bahrain on behalf of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—comprising Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—as well as Jordan. The resolution condemned Iran’s strikes against these countries, deplored the targeting of civilians and civilian objects, and demanded that Iran immediately halt the attacks and fully comply with its obligations under international law. The text also condemned any actions or threats by Iran aimed at obstructing international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. It was co-sponsored by 136 UN member states and adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). A competing draft resolution, penned by Russia, which did not mention individual countries but urged all parties to stop their military activities and return to diplomacy, failed to be adopted due to insufficient votes. It received four votes in favour (China, Russia, Pakistan, and Somalia), two votes against (Latvia and the US), and nine abstentions.

In the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), the regional escalation has injected additional uncertainty into international efforts to advance the US-proposed peace framework known as the “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”, which the Security Council endorsed through resolution 2803 of 17 November 2025. The first phase of the Comprehensive Plan established the current ceasefire in Gaza, secured the return of the remaining hostages held by Hamas, and called for Israel to partially withdraw from the enclave, as well as to facilitate the entry of more humanitarian aid. The second phase—which began in January—entailed the formation of an interim technocratic government comprising Palestinian

experts under the oversight of an international Board of Peace (BoP), which is chaired by US President Donald Trump. According to the plan, this body is to eventually cede control of Gaza to a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA), at which point it says that “the conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood”.

The ceasefire remains fragile and has been interrupted by periodic violence. According to the latest update from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), dated 27 March, airstrikes, shelling, and gunfire have continued across Gaza. Citing figures from local health authorities, OCHA reported that 13 Palestinians were killed between 17 and 25 March. Since the announcement of the ceasefire in October 2025, 689 Palestinians have reportedly been killed.

Impediments to humanitarian access remain another concern. In late January, following the return of the remains of the last hostage held by Hamas, Israel announced that the Rafah border crossing to Egypt would partially re-open for pedestrian passage. The crossing is the only one in Gaza that does not border Israel and had been closed since May 2024, preventing medical evacuations and the return of Palestinian refugees. Following the outbreak of regional hostilities on 28 February, Israel closed all Gaza border crossings, including Rafah, blocking the entry of all humanitarian aid and again preventing medical evacuations and the return of refugees. On 2 March, Israel re-opened the Kerem Shalom crossing, which remains the only operational crossing point for humanitarian and commercial supplies. According to OCHA, this has resulted in a “major bottleneck” and declining stocks in partner warehouses due to the imbalance between items entering Gaza and those being distributed. On 15 March, Israel announced that the Rafah crossing would partially open again for pedestrians.

On the political track, the BoP held its inaugural meeting on 19 February in Washington, D.C. There, Trump announced that the US and nine other BoP member states had pledged a total of \$17 billion for Gaza relief and reconstruction efforts, which the UN estimates will cost approximately \$70 billion. US Major General Jasper Jeffers also announced that five countries—Albania, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, and Morocco—had pledged to contribute troops to the International Stabilization Force (ISF) that resolution 2803 authorised the BoP to deploy. According to Jeffers, who serves as ISF commander, the force will consist of a total of 12,000 police officers and 20,000 soldiers and initially deploy to Rafah. Subsequent media reports, however, have indicated that Indonesia—which had pledged up to 8,000 troops, making it the largest prospective troop contributor—may have put its participation on hold due to the current Middle East crisis.

Briefing the Security Council on 24 March, BoP High Representative to Gaza Nickolay Mladenov said that mediators had presented

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2817](#) (11 March 2026) was authored by Bahrain on behalf of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council – which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – as well as Jordan. It condemns Iran’s strikes against these countries; determines that these acts constitute a breach of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security; deplores that civilian objects have been targeted and that the attacks resulted in civilian casualties; and demands that Iran immediately halt the attacks against these countries and fully comply with its obligations under international law. The text also condemns any actions or threats by Iran aimed at closing or obstructing international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. [S/RES/2803](#) (17 November 2025) endorsed the “Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict”, welcoming the establishment of a Board of Peace (BoP) and authorising the BoP to establish a temporary International Stabilization Force in Gaza. The resolution received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). [S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including acts of terror. It was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.10125](#) (24 March 2026) was the most recent quarterly update on the implementation of resolution 2334. BoP High Representative to Gaza Nickolay Mladenov also briefed on the implementation of resolution 2803 of 17 November 2025.

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Hamas with a formal proposal for decommissioning its weapons, which the ISF would be responsible for overseeing. According to Mladenov, the proposal is based on five principles: 1) reciprocity linking the decommissioning of weapons to Israel's staged withdrawal from Gaza; 2) sequencing whereby heavy weapons are decommissioned before small arms; 3) verification of compliance as a condition for reconstruction; 4) reintegration and amnesty programs for Hamas members; and 5) the possibility of timeline extensions if "parties are making good faith efforts" toward implementation. Hamas had not responded to the proposal at the time of writing.

In the occupied West Bank, settlement expansion, settler violence, and Israeli military operations have continued. According to a 19 March update from OCHA, the monthly average number of Palestinians injured in Israel settler attacks so far this year has risen to 105, from 69 in 2025 and 30 in 2024. In its 27 March update, OCHA reported that the number of Palestinians displaced in the context of settler violence and access restrictions has reached 1,697, surpassing the whole of 2025. These developments have occurred alongside a series of recent Israeli government measures intended to accelerate settlement activity in the West Bank, deepening Israeli administrative control over parts of the territory and facilitating the expropriation of Palestinian land. (For more information, see our 17 February What's in Blue story.)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 March, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published its annual report on Israeli settlements in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. The report provides an update on unlawful Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and examines their impact on the individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people. Over the course of the reporting period, between 1 November 2024 and 31 October 2025, OHCHR observed that the Israeli government undertook "concerted measures" to consolidate its annexation of large parts of the OPT, through the authorisation and expansion of settlements, outposts, and associated infrastructure and the transfer of governance powers from the military to Israeli civilian authorities in the occupied West Bank, among other measures. It also found that the implementation of these measures has accelerated the displacement of Palestinians from increasingly large parts of the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, reshaping the physical and demographic reality of the occupied territories. In light of these findings, the report concludes with the High Commissioner calling on Israel to immediately and completely cease and reverse the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and evacuate all Israeli settlers, among other recommendations.

In a 6 March press release, UN experts warned that "irreparable harm is being inflicted on Jerusalem, as violence engulfs the region, and genocide continues in Gaza and spills into the West Bank". In occupied East Jerusalem, extrajudicial killings, large-scale demolitions, and forced displacement have escalated. The experts also reported that between 2021 and 2025, 144 Palestinians were killed in Jerusalem Governorate and at least 11,555 were arrested, amid allegations of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment. Among other matters, the experts urged immediate international action, especially in the wake of the July 2024 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which declared Israel's occupation of the OPT unlawful and called on all states to refrain from recognising or aiding the occupation.

On 16 February, OHCHR submitted its annual report on the human rights situation in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and the obligation to ensure accountability and justice. The report raises concerns over ethnic cleansing by Israeli authorities in both Gaza and the West Bank amid increased attacks and forcible transfers in the occupied territories. During the reporting period from 1 November 2024 to 31 October 2025, OHCHR observed that "intensified attacks, the methodical destruction of entire neighbourhoods and the denial of humanitarian assistance appeared to aim at a permanent

demographic shift in Gaza". It also noted that Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups continued at that time to hold Israeli and foreign hostages seized on 7 October 2023 – along with the bodies of those who died or were killed in captivity – as bargaining tools over the course of the reporting period. (All remaining hostages have since been released and the bodies of deceased hostages have been returned.) Among other recommendations, the report calls on Israel to immediately end its unlawful presence in the OPT and urges states to ensure Palestinians' immediate participation in governance structures to determine and shape the reconstruction of Gaza.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 19 March statement, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls highlighted the impact of Israel's restrictions on humanitarian operations in Gaza and the West Bank on women and girls. The statement references the regulations issued by Israel in December 2025 restricting the operations of 37 international humanitarian organisations noting that "in an already catastrophic context" people who are "in vulnerable situations often experience the most severe impacts". The statement says that the collapse of Gaza's healthcare system has put women's lives in immediate danger and that "[d]enying access to maternal and reproductive healthcare in these conditions puts lives at direct risk". It notes that when humanitarian aid is obstructed, girls face higher risks of hunger, illness, and disrupted schooling, and women and girls may be forced to compensate for aid shortfalls through unpaid care work and harmful coping strategies, often at the expense of their own health and well-being. The Working Group concludes that, by obstructing access to aid, "Israel is denying women and girls protection and support they are entitled to under international law".

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is preventing the ongoing regional crisis in the Middle East from further destabilising Gaza and the wider OPT, including by undermining implementation of resolution 2803 and diverting attention from the ceasefire, humanitarian access, and transitional governing arrangements that it endorsed. Another immediate issue is the fragility of the Gaza ceasefire itself. Despite the current cessation of large-scale hostilities, violence has continued in the enclave, while the closure and partial re-opening of crossings have highlighted the continued vulnerability of humanitarian operations and medical evacuations.

A related issue is the Council's ability to advance the implementation of the second phase of the Comprehensive Plan in a politically credible and legally compliant manner amid the current regional crisis. Important questions remain concerning the BoP's authority and terms of reference, the mandate and deployment timeline for the ISF, and the pathway by which governing authority will eventually be transferred to the PA. Council members could seek additional clarity on these issues by requesting more regular briefings from representatives of the BoP, the ISF, or other actors involved in implementing resolution 2803. They could also request reporting on how the regional escalation is affecting the ceasefire, humanitarian access, and preparations for Gaza's transitional governance and security arrangements.

Another key issue is the deterioration of conditions in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where settlement expansion, settler violence, and Israeli military operations have continued to intensify. For some members, this reinforces the view that any approach focused narrowly on Gaza will be insufficient unless it is tied to a broader political horizon addressing the unity of the OPT and the viability of the two-state solution. In this regard, Council members could use the open debate to reiterate opposition to unilateral measures in the West Bank, call for compliance with international law,

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and stress that any transitional arrangements for Gaza should not contribute to the fragmentation of Palestinian governance or territory. Members could also encourage closer alignment between the implementation of resolution 2803 and other multilateral frameworks on the conflict, including the New York Declaration that the General Assembly endorsed in September 2025.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The adoption of resolution 2803 in November 2025 reflected a rare moment of convergence in the Council, shaped by broad regional backing for the US-brokered Comprehensive Plan and by the importance that many members attached to consolidating the Gaza ceasefire and easing the humanitarian catastrophe in the enclave. At the same time, several members—including China and Russia, which abstained on the resolution—signalled reservations about the framework's lack of clarity regarding the role of the BoP, the scope of the ISF's mandate, the timeline for a full Israeli withdrawal, and the pathway to restored Palestinian governance and statehood.

These underlying fault lines have been sharpened by the recent regional escalation. The Council's adoption of resolution 2817 demonstrated strong support among most members for condemning Iran's attacks against Gulf states and Jordan, while also revealing deep divisions over the causes and framing of the conflict. China and Russia—which again abstained—criticised the resolution as unbalanced for failing to address the initial Israeli-US strikes on

Iran, while several other members stressed the need to respond to the concerns of affected countries and to protect regional security and maritime navigation. The failure of the competing Russian draft resolution calling for a general ceasefire and de-escalation further underscored these divisions, highlighting disagreements within the Council over attribution of responsibility and the appropriate framing of the crisis.

Against this backdrop, dynamics on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are likely to be shaped by competing priorities. On the one hand, most members are expected to continue supporting efforts to preserve the Gaza ceasefire, sustain humanitarian access, and advance implementation of resolution 2803. On the other hand, there is a risk that the regional confrontation with Iran will dominate Council attention, potentially sidelining sustained engagement on Gaza and the broader Palestinian question. Members such as Bahrain and Pakistan are likely to continue emphasising Palestinian self-determination, the centrality of the PA, and the need to preserve the unity of the OPT, while China and Russia can also be expected to maintain their criticism of what they view as selective or imbalanced Council responses to the regional crisis. Western members, for their part, are likely to continue framing regional stability in terms of both de-escalation and addressing security concerns related to Iran, while seeking to preserve momentum behind the Gaza framework established by resolution 2803.

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