

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In May, China will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

China plans to convene one signature event, a ministerial-level open debate titled “[Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centered international system](#)” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi will chair the meeting, during which UN Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief.

In May, the Security Council is also expected to hold its annual open debate on the [protection of civilians](#). The anticipated briefers are officials from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

African issues on the programme in May are:

- [South Sudan](#), renewal of the 2206 South Sudan sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee;
- [Sudan/South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the work of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA); and
- [Libya](#), vote on a draft resolution renewing measures outlined in resolution 2292 of 14 June 2016 in support of the full implementation of the arms embargo on the country and a

briefing by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on the Court’s Libya-related activities.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1559; and
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments.

Regarding European issues, the Council will hold its semi-annual debate on [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#). As in previous months, there may also be one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in May.

In terms of non-proliferation issues, Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the work of the [1718 Democratic People’s Republic of Korea \(DPRK\) Sanctions Committee](#).

Meetings could be convened on other issues—including [Iran](#) and [Sudan](#)—during the month, depending on developments.

In May, Council members are also expected to discuss the modalities for meeting the candidates running for the position of [UN Secretary-General](#).

1 May 2026

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In Hindsight: The Search for the Next Secretary-General

In April, the selection and appointment process for the next Secretary-General began in earnest as four candidates for the position presented their vision for how they would lead the UN and answered questions from members of the General Assembly and civil society.

This selection and appointment process for the tenth UN Secretary-General is unfolding against a background of shifting global power dynamics and geopolitical uncertainty. The next Secretary-General will take over an organisation that is impacted by financial constraints, ongoing reform processes, and escalating crises. These concerns were apparent in the emphasis candidates put on the importance of restoring trust in the multilateral system and the UN, as well as in their vision for the role of the Secretary-General.

The four current nominees are:

- Michelle Bachelet Jeria (Chile) nominated by Brazil, Chile and Mexico on 2 February, with Chile withdrawing its nomination on 24 March;
- Rafael Mariano Grossi (Argentina) nominated by Argentina on 26 November 2025;
- Rebeca Grynspan Mayufis (Costa Rica) nominated by Costa Rica on 3 March; and
- Macky Sall (Senegal) nominated by Burundi on 2 March.

Virginia Gamba (Argentina), who was nominated by the Maldives on 11 March, had her nomination withdrawn on 25 March.

One of the differences between the current process and the one that took place in 2016 has been the low number of candidates—four compared to nine at this stage in 2016. Another difference has been that several candidates were nominated by countries of which they are not nationals. Although there is a strong sense that it is time for a woman Secretary-General and that it is the turn of the Latin American and Caribbean region to provide the next Secretary-General, two of the candidates are men, and one is from Africa.

Unlike 2016, one of the candidates, Bachelet, was nominated by a group of countries (Chile, Brazil and Mexico) rather than a single member state. Chile, however, withdrew its nomination before the start of the interactive dialogue sessions. The joint letter issued on 25 November 2025 by the presidents of the Security Council and the General Assembly and the 2025 General Assembly resolution on the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly provided clear guidelines for the withdrawal of candidates, stating that this needs to be done through formal notification to the two presidents. For instance, the Maldives' notification led to Gamba being withdrawn as a candidate. However, while the joint letter made clear that candidates could be nominated by a member state or a group of member states, it was not explicit about the status of a candidate if one of the members of a nominating group of states were to withdraw. It is now clear from Bachelet's case that the formal withdrawal of one member of a nominating group does not affect the status of the candidate, so long as there remains at least one member state supporting the nomination.

An innovation with respect to the 2016 process is the expectation that candidates disclose their sources of funding at the time of nomination. Compliance with this requirement to date has been perfunctory, however, with none of the candidates nominated at the time of writing having disclosed the amount received for their campaign in the documents submitted at the time of nomination.

The General Assembly informal dialogues or hearings were perhaps the most significant innovation introduced in 2015/2016. They opened up the process, allowing member states to engage directly with candidates. They also brought the race to the attention of the wider public. But they were not without criticism. Observers noted that sessions were too short, questions were often lengthy, and exchanges could feel more like prepared statements than genuine dialogue.

Most of the feedback from 2016 has been taken on board by the President of the General Assembly. The sessions have been extended—from two hours to three—and stricter time management has been introduced, including limits on the length of time for questions and answers, and candidates need to immediately respond. To some extent, these changes helped streamline the sessions, but more succinct and less repetitive questions might have allowed candidates to provide more in-depth answers in the allocated time. Although many of the questions and answers focused on themes that were widely anticipated, and member states had already heard from the candidates in other fora, the hearings helped provide a broad audience with a better perspective of some of the differences among the candidates and where they stand on key issues. If additional candidates are nominated, they are expected to take part in an interactive dialogue session, although there is no formal obligation to do so.

Security Council Report's recent research report, *Power, Process and Participation: The Search for the Next Secretary-General*, is a comprehensive guide to understanding the rules, evolving informal practices, and key actors shaping the selection and appointment process. It also maps anticipated Council and wider dynamics, as well as key issues at different stages of the process, and outlines possible options for addressing related challenges. This In Hindsight highlights some of the anticipated activities and issues that may arise between May and the expected start of the Security Council straw polls at the end of July.

Meetings with Council Members

The candidates who took part in the interactive dialogues in April are expected to move into the next phase, where they will be engaging with Council members in an informal meeting format. In 2016, these meetings took place in the mission of the Council president and were conducted in June, July and October.

The immediate challenge for the Security Council is to agree on the modalities for meeting candidates. Members are expected to discuss this in May during China's presidency of the Security Council. They will need to decide where meetings should be held, what format they should take, and how structured or flexible the discussion should be. One issue regarding the format that may come up is whether a slightly less informal setting compared to 2016 could promote greater transparency, including the possibility of issuing press elements following each meeting, as Council members did when the mandate of António Guterres was renewed in 2021.

One criticism of these meetings in 2016 was that they did not give members more information about the candidates' positions and views than what had already come up in the General Assembly hearings. While Council members may not all have the same idea about the type of leadership needed from the next Secretary-General,

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there are some traits that they were able to agree on in the joint letter. These included managerial abilities, experience in international relations, as well as diplomatic, communication, and multilingual skills. Members will be looking for ways of eliciting answers from candidates that could provide a clearer understanding of whether they have these qualities—as well as additional skills they individually attach importance to.

Allowing Greater Access to Candidates

In parallel with the meetings with Council members, there will most likely be other opportunities for the candidates to present their vision on how they intend to address major issues on the international agenda. One option that has been put forward is to organise additional informal dialogues in different locations where the UN has a significant presence—Geneva, Nairobi, Bangkok, and Panama City.¹ This would provide opportunities for broader engagement. Among other ideas reviewed in the report, additional possible formats include town hall-style events and one-to-one interviews with candidates, as well as civil society-organised debates. There is likely to be a civil society debate in Geneva in early June, and the UN Association-UK (UNA-UK) will be hosting a moderated presidential debate-style hustling in London at the end of May. In addition, during the General Assembly interactive dialogues, the President of the General Assembly, Annalena Baerbock, announced that a “town hall” format event will also be organised.

General Assembly and UN Staff Input

There has been interest in the past for exploring ways of allowing the wider UN membership to express collective sentiment about candidates. Proposals for conveying the General Assembly’s views on the candidates reflect enduring concerns about inclusivity, transparency, and the perceived legitimacy of outcomes.

Proposals for the General Assembly to conduct its own straw polls, or otherwise survey member states’ views on candidates, have been one of the most contested issues in the process, as seen in the negotiations of the 2025 revitalisation resolution and the joint letter. Currently, there appears to be limited appetite among member states for any such proposal, alongside firm resistance among permanent members, who have consistently viewed these initiatives as encroaching on Council prerogatives. At the same time, civil society campaigns, such as 1 for 8 Billion, may explore the idea of informal polls of permanent representatives to gauge preferences among the wider membership.

Besides the General Assembly straw polls, the report reviews other options that have been suggested, including the idea of an additional dialogue session after the Council has put forward its recommendation and before the Assembly makes the appointment. This would remain within the Assembly’s powers and not formally change the Council’s role, but it is still likely to be controversial, particularly among some permanent members.

The report also builds on calls by analysts, such as Loraine Sievers, to better reflect UN staff perspectives.² One option would be to commission an anonymous, staffwide survey to capture views on leadership and management qualities, as well as strategic priorities. The survey findings could then be synthesised by an independent third party and fed back into the process, for example through a closed-door staff town hall with candidates, without altering formal appointment modalities.

Security Council Straw Polls

By the end of July, Council members are expected to begin conducting straw polls to gauge support for candidates ahead of a formal Council vote on its recommendation. These informal ballots are used to determine the viability of the candidates, starting with undifferentiated ballot papers and moving to colour-coded ballots that differentiate permanent members from elected members. While it appears generally accepted that straw polls will continue to be a feature in the current process, key considerations will include the timing and frequency of the straw polls and when to move from undifferentiated to colour-coded ballots.

There is also likely to be difficulty in getting agreement on how much information to release following the polls. In 2016, although members had agreed not to release results, they were quickly leaked, which was particularly uncomfortable for the Council presidents who could only provide very limited information even though the results were widely known.³ Members will need to decide if and how to release the results, the level of detail, and the modalities of communication. Members could choose to release limited information in line with the 2016 process, disclose the full details of the straw polls results, or provide partial or aggregated information, such as the number of candidates that received “encourage”, “discourage”, or “no opinion expressed” votes. The limited transparency surrounding the straw polls was one of the main criticisms of the 2016 process.⁴

The Final Stages of the Process

The report also describes how the Council has made its recommendation in a private meeting with a secret vote, and the modalities through which the General Assembly has appointed the recommended candidate, and it examines relevant historical examples that may provide some options should the Council be unable to agree on a candidate by the end of 2026.

An issue that may re-surface at this stage of the process is the idea of a single term for the Secretary-General. The report reviews different options, such as the Council specifying a non-renewable term in its recommendation; early General Assembly action recommending that the Council considers a single term; or voluntary commitments by candidates. Some members have also called for more than one candidate to be recommended to the General Assembly, though Council agreement on this appears unlikely.

¹ Adam Day, “UN Secretary-General Candidates Should Come to Geneva” (30 March 2026) <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2026/03/un-secretary-general-candidates-should-come-to-geneva/>

² CIC NYU, “Navigating the Next Secretary-General Selection and Appointment Process” (YouTube 2 December 2025) 1:08:50 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ5xk-lqZY&t=1s>

³ Letter from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (1 February 2017) (A/71/774-S/2017/93).

⁴ SCR, “The UN Secretary-General Selection and Appointment Process: Emerging from the Shadows” 12. See also A/71/774-S/2017/93 [16]; Letter from the President of the General Assembly to the President of the Security Council (13 September 2016) (S/2016/784).

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Concluding Observations

The selection process is unfolding against increasingly strained Security Council dynamics. Compared to 2015/2016, Council interactions are more polarised and transactional, reflecting wider geopolitical tensions and diminished confidence in multilateral cooperation. With the partial exception of France, the permanent members have largely coalesced around preserving flexibility of the process, while the elected members (E10) have sought—with varying levels of determination—to advance predictability, transparency, and a more structured process. Although the E10 have thus far demonstrated the ability to coordinate and overcome differences, cohesion may prove difficult to sustain if the distance among these members widens

during the next steps of the process. Convergences across permanent and elected members on specific aspects of the process, or around particular candidates, could also materialise going forward.

As the General Assembly interactive dialogues showed, member states are aware that the UN faces increasing strains alongside significant geopolitical challenges. The next Secretary-General will need to have the requisite leadership, experience, and legitimacy in order to sustain confidence in the UN at a time of global uncertainty.

It will now be up to Council members and the wider membership to ensure that, in spite of the difficult dynamics and transactional pressures, this process delivers a Secretary-General who rises above—rather than reflects—the limitations of this difficult moment.

Status Update since our April Forecast

UN-GCC Cooperation

On 2 April, the Security Council held a high-level briefing under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”, with a focus on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (S/PV.10128). The briefing, which was one of the signature events of Bahrain’s April Council presidency, marked the first dedicated Council meeting on cooperation between the UN and the GCC. Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani chaired the meeting, with briefings delivered by Mohamed Khaled Khiari, the 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), and GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi.

In connection with the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2026/1), which emphasises the importance of strengthening institutional cooperation between the two organisations in promoting regional stability and maintaining international peace and security. Bahrain authored the presidential statement.

Cooperation between the UN and the LAS

On 2 April, the Security Council held a briefing on cooperation between the UN and the League of Arab States (LAS) (S/PV.10129). The meeting was a signature event of Bahrain’s April Council presidency and was chaired by Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani. 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 LAS Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit briefed. Egypt participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

At the meeting, Council members adopted a presidential statement noting that the UN and the LAS “share common objectives in promoting and facilitating the resolution of conflicts in the Arab region” (S/PRST/2026/2).

Middle East (Strait of Hormuz)

On 7 April, the Security Council voted on a draft resolution proposed by Bahrain in close coordination with other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)—Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—as well as Jordan (S/2026/273) (S/PV.10130). Members had met in consultations on 1 April to discuss the draft. The draft strongly encouraged states interested in the use of commercial maritime routes in the Strait of Hormuz to coordinate efforts of a defensive nature to contribute to ensuring the safety and security of navigation across the Strait of Hormuz, including through the escort of merchant and commercial vessels. The draft was vetoed by China and Russia. Eleven members voted in favour, while two members (Colombia and Pakistan) abstained.

Kosovo

On 9 April, the Security Council held a briefing on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.10132). Special Representative and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Peter Due briefed on the latest Secretary-General’s report (S/2026/264). Marko Đurić, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, participated under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure, and Glauk Konjufca, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo, participated under rule 39.

Cooperation between the UN and the EU

On 13 April, the Security Council held its annual briefing on cooperation between the UN and the European Union (EU) under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security” (S/PV.10133). 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 EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas briefed.

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Yemen

On 14 April, the Security Council held a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on the situation in Yemen (S/PV.10135). UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Director of the Crisis Response Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Edem Wosornu briefed. Yemen participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Great Lakes Region

On 15 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on the Great Lakes Region (S/PV.10136). UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed on the Secretary-General's latest biannual report on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC-F) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region, which was circulated to Council members on 31 March and covers the period between 16 September 2025 and 15 March (S/2026/256). UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous also briefed. Angola and Rwanda participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Closed consultations followed the open briefing.

Sudan

On 17 April, Security Council members convened for closed consultations on Sudan, at the request of Denmark and the UK (the penholder on the file). The Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Sudan, Pekka Haavisto, briefed members for the first time since his appointment on 24 February. The UK proposed press elements following the meeting; however, Council members were unable to reach agreement due to divergences, including on language related to accountability.

Ukraine

On 20 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10140). The meeting was requested by Ukraine in a 14 April letter following large-scale Russian aerial attacks on the city of Dnipro and other cities across Ukraine on that day. Council members Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, and the UK supported the meeting request. 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 Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed.

Colombia

On 21 April, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.10141). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Miroslav Jenča briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2026/229). The Council was also briefed by Olga Quintero, a social leader and co-founder of the Catatumbo Peasant Farmers Association.

Haiti

On 23 April, the Security Council held its quarterly open briefing on Haiti (S/PV.10144). Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Carlos Ruiz Massieu, and Special Representative for the Gang Suppression Force (GSF) Jack

Christofides briefed. Closed consultations followed the open briefing. Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) Daniela Krosiak briefed Council members during the closed consultations.

Western Sahara

On 23 April, Council members convened for closed consultations on the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Personal Envoy for Western Sahara Staffan de Mistura and Special Representative for Western Sahara and Head of MINURSO Alexander Ivanko briefed. Asif Khan, the Director of the Policy and Mediation Division in the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), also briefed on the strategic review regarding MINURSO's future pursuant to resolution 2797 of 31 October 2025.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 28 April, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.10146 and Resumption I). Bahrain—the Council's president in April—convened the meeting as a high-level signature event, which Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani chaired. A briefing was given by 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. Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Espen Barth Eide also briefed in his capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which is a 15-member international committee established in 1993 following the Oslo I Accord to coordinate the delivery of international aid to Palestinians and to facilitate dialogue on economic, political, and security issues. Additionally, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair briefed in his capacity as a member of the Executive Board of the Board of Peace (BoP), which the Council endorsed through resolution 2803 of 17 November 2025 as a "transitional governance administration" in Gaza. Over 70 UN member states and regional organisations delivered statements.

Peacekeeping

On 29 April, Security Council members held closed consultations on UN peacekeeping operations. Denmark and Pakistan, two Council members who have peacekeeping as a key priority, requested the meeting. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed on the contingency measures implemented by UN peacekeeping operations to address the UN's liquidity crisis, resulting from member states' failure to pay their assessed contributions to the peacekeeping budget in full and on time.

Protection of Civilians

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will receive the Secretary-General's annual report on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict and hold its annual open debate on the topic. Representatives of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) are expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Civilians continue to bear the burden of proliferating armed conflicts worldwide and growing disregard for international law. In 1999—the year that the Security Council adopted resolution 1265 as its first thematic resolution on PoC, establishing the issue as a stand-alone issue on its agenda—the ICRC reported 20 armed conflicts globally and estimated that between 35 and 64 percent of conflict casualties were civilians. In 2024—the 25th anniversary of resolution 1265 and the most recent year for which there is complete data—the ICRC counted over 120 armed conflicts, and the civilian casualty ratio was 95 percent in incidents involving the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, the leading cause of the more than 36,000 civilian deaths that the Secretary-General's annual PoC report recorded that year. That was an increase from the 33,443 deaths recorded in 2023, which already represented a 72 percent rise from 2022, mainly due to the war in Gaza.

This drastic deterioration in the protective environment holds across multiple protected categories and patterns of civilian harm. The year 2024 was the deadliest on record for journalists, humanitarian personnel, and healthcare workers in conflict. The UN recorded a 25 percent increase both in cases of conflict-related sexual violence and grave violations against children compared with 2023—a year in which the proportion of women and children killed had already doubled and tripled, respectively, from the year before. Displacement also reached record levels, with over 123 million people forcibly displaced by the end of 2024, an increase of six percent compared to the end of 2023, with children accounting for 40 percent of that total. Additionally, more than 295 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity worldwide—13.7 million more than in 2023 and the sixth consecutive annual increase—with conflict the primary driver for approximately half of that total, affecting nearly 140 million people across 20 countries and territories. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) declared conflict-induced famine in parts of Sudan in December 2024 and in parts of Gaza in August 2025, marking the first time that the monitoring body detected two ongoing famines simultaneously.

Eroding respect for international law has fuelled these trends. As the Secretary-General's 2025 PoC report observed, conflict parties increasingly rely on permissive interpretations of distinction, proportionality, precautions, and detention standards to justify high levels of civilian harm, which, combined with politically selective applications of the law and the uneven pursuit of accountability, have weakened the credibility of the normative framework. The ICRC has also

described this pattern, emphasising the structural and interpretive erosion of international humanitarian law (IHL) through expansive targeting doctrines, reversals in disarmament commitments, irresponsible arms transfers, and emerging military technologies that strain the law's protective purpose.

Speakers expressed concern about these trends at the last PoC debate, which was held on 22 May 2025. Greece—the Council president that month—convened the meeting at the ministerial level as one of its signature events. Members were briefed by Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher, UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, and President and Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children US Janti Soeripto. The discussion focused on the need to enforce international law; safeguard humanitarian space; address the military impact of new and emerging technologies; and protect women, children, and humanitarian and UN personnel, among other issues. On 8 April, the Council held its second annual briefing on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel, in accordance with resolution 2730 of 24 May 2024. (For more information, see the brief in our April 2026 Monthly Forecast.)

At this year's open debate, a thematic area expected to receive particular attention is the protection of health care in conflict, as 2026 marks the tenth anniversary of resolution 2286 on the topic. Among other provisions, this resolution strongly condemned attacks on medical personnel, facilities, and transport; demanded that all conflict parties comply with their obligations under international law and facilitate safe and unimpeded passage for personnel engaged in medical duties; and urged states to develop effective measures to prevent and address attacks against medical personnel and facilities. It also requested the Secretary-General to report annually on the implementation of the resolution and to submit recommendations on preventive and accountability measures. Nonetheless, as noted above, independent monitoring groups documented a record number of incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in conflict in 2024, identifying 3,623 such incidents that year—a 15 percent increase from 2023 and a 62 percent rise from 2022. The increase was driven by “intense and persistent violence” against health care in Gaza, Lebanon, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine, among other contexts.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching challenge for the Security Council is the continued erosion of IHL and the normative framework on which it rests, as civilians increasingly bear the brunt of armed conflicts worldwide. Violations either perpetrated or supported by Council members themselves—including the permanent five members (P5)—have contributed to this trend.

In this context, strengthening accountability for IHL violations remains a key issue for the Council. To this end, members could consider launching a voluntary political initiative focused on the issue, for instance by adopting a “statement of shared

UN DOCUMENTS ON PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2730 (24 May 2024) was a resolution on the protection of humanitarian and UN and associated personnel and their premises and assets. S/RES/2286 (3 May 2016) was a resolution on the protection of health care in armed conflict. 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. Secretary-General's Letters S/2024/852 (22 November 2024) transmitted the Secretary-General's recommendations for measures to prevent and respond to attacks targeting humanitarian and UN personnel, as requested by resolution 2730. S/2016/722 (18 August 2016) transmitted the Secretary-General's recommendations on the protection of health care in armed conflict, as requested by resolution 2286. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.10131 (8 April 2026) was the annual briefing on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel, held in accordance with resolution 2730. S/PV.9921 (22 May 2025) was the annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Protection of Civilians

commitments on accountability” modelled on similar initiatives concerning the women, peace and security (WPS) and climate, peace and security agendas. These voluntary pledges could commit Council members to using their terms to promote accountability for international crimes, including by holding joint stakeouts on the issue prior to relevant country-specific meetings; focusing on the topic in their national statements; bringing situations of widespread impunity to the Council’s attention; inviting briefers with relevant expertise, such as representatives of international tribunals and independent fact-finding missions; and more consistently applying PoC-related designation criteria in sanctions regimes.

Another expected focus of this year’s annual debate is the tenth anniversary of resolution 2286 on the protection of health care in conflict. To mark the occasion, Council members could consider adopting a presidential statement reaffirming the Council’s commitments and requesting the Secretary-General to provide a written update on the implementation of his 2016 recommendations.

The debate is also expected to address the protection risks posed by new and emerging technologies. These include the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in military targeting and decision-making, cyberattacks on essential services, and the digital spread of harmful misinformation in conflict settings. The Secretary-General’s 2025 report included for the first time a dedicated section on such threats, and this year’s report is expected to further explore them. As the Council has yet to institutionalise its consideration of these issues, members could consider establishing an Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Technology, Peace and Security to help lend coherence to its approach, as recommended in our March 2026 research report on the topic.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members still express broad rhetorical agreement that protecting civilians in armed conflict remains a core component of the Council’s mandate to maintain international peace and security. Deep divisions persist over how the Council should implement the PoC agenda in both thematic and country-specific contexts, however, as intensifying geopolitical divisions and gridlock have constrained its responses to multiplying protection crises.

This is evident in recent trends in Council products and language. Consistent with the general decline in the annual number of Council outcomes since 2021, the number of Council decisions containing PoC-related provisions has decreased in recent years, falling to 29 in 2025—the lowest number recorded in the PoC Dashboard maintained by the UN Security Council Affairs Division (SCAD), which

tracks the Council’s PoC language going back to 1999. Meanwhile, the average volume of PoC-related keywords in each adopted decision has also decreased, with last year marking the lowest level since 2011. This overall decline in PoC-related decisions and language has persisted despite the global increase in armed conflict and civilian harms described above.

These trends are unfolding amid widening normative divergence among Council members. One recurring area of disagreement concerns the appropriate framework for humanitarian assistance. While Western members typically invoke the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence, others—particularly China and Russia—have for some years emphasised the General Assembly’s 1991 resolution on the UN’s guiding principles for humanitarian assistance, which stress state sovereignty and host-country consent. These tensions have typically affected Council negotiations on PoC language across mandates and resolutions.

Similar disagreements have emerged in peacekeeping contexts. China, Russia, and some African members underscore the primary responsibility of the host state to protect civilians, whereas other members stress that the Council has an obligation to act in contexts where state authorities are unwilling or unable to ensure protection. This debate has taken on renewed salience as several UN peace operations with PoC mandates—such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lebanon, Mali, and Sudan—have drawn down or transitioned amid worsening security conditions, often at the request of host governments.

Council members also differ in their views on the scope of the PoC agenda. Some have expressed concern that linking PoC to other thematic areas, including emerging threats such as climate change or AI, could dilute the agenda or exceed the Council’s mandate. Others view such linkages as necessary to reflect contemporary protection challenges.

Geopolitical tensions have further strained discussions of accountability. Western members tend to condemn IHL violations by Russia in Ukraine, while Russia and many Arab states are more strongly critical of Israel’s conduct in Gaza and allege Western double standards. During the ongoing Middle East crisis, all parties to the conflict have reportedly hit critical infrastructure and civilian objects—which may constitute war crimes—but the Council only condemned the strikes conducted by Iran. These dynamics have contributed to accusations of selectivity in the Council’s engagement on PoC and have complicated consensus on both country-specific and thematic outcomes.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

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

In May, Council members are likely to receive a letter from the Secretary-General detailing options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701 after the withdrawal of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and might have informal discussions with the Secretariat on this issue. Resolution 2790, which in August 2025 extended UNIFIL's mandate for a final time until 31 December, requested the Secretary-General to provide these options by 1 June, including regarding "assistance in respect of security and monitoring of the Blue Line" and ways to enhance the support to the Lebanese Armed Forces' redeployment south of the Litani River through the UN's "tools". (The Blue Line is a withdrawal line set by the UN in 2000 to confirm Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon. While not an international border, the Blue Line acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between the two states.)

Key Recent Developments

Since early March, the security situation in Lebanon has sharply deteriorated. Overnight between 1 and 2 March, shortly after the US-Israeli attacks on Iran and the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Hezbollah fired projectiles at Israel, stating that the action was taken in response to Khamenei's assassination. This was followed by large-scale Israeli airstrikes in areas across southern Lebanon, the Bekaa valley, and Beirut, on what the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said were Hezbollah targets.

Fighting rapidly intensified. Israel undertook sustained ground operations in some areas of southern Lebanon, carrying out demolitions and maintaining a presence in several areas near the Blue Line, where Israeli authorities stated the IDF would establish a "buffer zone". Heavy fighting between the IDF and Hezbollah has been reported in several areas south of the Litani, including in the towns of Bint Jbeil and Khiam. Israel has carried out extensive airstrikes, including on 8 April, when a coordinated wave of strikes across Lebanon resulted in over 300 people being killed. Hezbollah has also continued to launch rockets and other projectiles, such as drones, towards Israel and at IDF troops in Lebanese territory.

A 23 April update by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), citing figures from the Lebanese government, reported that at least 2,489 people have been killed and 7,719 injured in Lebanon since 2 March, and more than one million people have been internally displaced. According to media

reports citing figures provided by Israel, as at 26 April, two civilians were killed in Israel in connection to Hezbollah's attacks, and 16 IDF soldiers died in Lebanon.

In response to Hezbollah's 2 March strikes, the Lebanese government banned all military activities carried out by the group, urging it to confine itself to the political arena and demanding that it surrender its weapons to the state. Lebanese authorities have also called for and pursued direct diplomatic engagement with Israel to end the conflict—a position that Hezbollah has firmly rejected.

On 14 April, the US facilitated direct talks in Washington between the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the US, framed as exploratory talks, on ending the fighting and addressing long standing security concerns. These talks took place against the backdrop of the US-Israeli conflict with Iran and a dispute over whether a ceasefire reached on 7 April extended to Lebanon. During the talks, Lebanon reportedly emphasised ending the hostilities and securing an Israeli withdrawal from its territory, while Israel insisted on Hezbollah's disarmament.

On 16 April, the US announced a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. On the same day, the US issued a statement containing details of the understanding reached between Lebanon and Israel. It said that:

- Israel and Lebanon commit to engage in "good-faith direct negotiations" facilitated by the US, "with the objective of achieving a comprehensive agreement that ensures lasting security, stability, and peace between the two countries".
- The two countries will implement a cessation of hostilities, but "Israel shall preserve its right to take all necessary measures in self-defense, at any time, against planned, imminent, or ongoing attacks". It added that, "[b]esides this", Israel "will not carry out any offensive military operations against Lebanese targets, including civilian, military, and other state targets, in the territory of Lebanon by land, air, and sea".
- The Lebanese government "will take meaningful steps" to prevent Hezbollah and other non-state armed groups in Lebanon from "carrying out any attacks, operations, or hostile activities against Israeli targets".
- The initial 10-day period could be extended "by mutual agreement between Lebanon and Israel if progress is demonstrated in the negotiations and as Lebanon effectively demonstrates its ability to assert its sovereignty".

The understanding, which did not include Hezbollah, reduced the intensity of fighting but was quickly tested by incidents on the ground, underscoring its fragility. While the US announced a three-week extension on 23 April, UN and media reports indicate that military activity has continued, although at a lower intensity, including airstrikes, direct combat, and demolitions. A 27 April update by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) warned that social and inter communal tensions are rising in several areas in Lebanon.

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2790 (28 August 2025) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for a final time until 31 December 2026 and established several functions that UNIFIL is authorised to fulfil during the drawdown and withdrawal period. It also requested the UN Secretary-General to explore, by 1 June 2026, "options for the future of the implementation of resolution 1701" following the withdrawal of UNIFIL. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. It also expanded UNIFIL's mandate. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory. Security Council Meetings S/PV.10127 (31 March 2026) was the meeting record of a Security Council meeting on Lebanon. S/PV.10118 (11 March 2026) was the meeting record of a Security Council meeting on Lebanon.

Lebanon

In a 29 April update, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) indicated that Lebanon has experienced a sharp deterioration in the food security situation since early March, with around 1.24 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. It says that the decline is primarily driven by renewed conflict and large-scale displacement, disruptions to livelihoods and income opportunities, as well as factors including market disruption in conflict-affected areas and rising food and fuel prices.

UNIFIL has repeatedly come under attack during the latest round of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, with several UNIFIL peacekeepers killed or wounded since 2 March. The mission has also reported repeated restrictions on its freedom of movement.

In response to attacks against UNIFIL peacekeepers, Council members adopted two press statements, on 1 April and 20 April, condemning the killing of peacekeepers; reaffirming full support for UNIFIL; and calling on all parties to respect the safety, security, and freedom of movement of UN personnel and to fully implement resolution 1701.

Since early March, the Security Council has convened three meetings to address developments in connection with the resumed hostilities in Lebanon, two open sessions (11 and 31 March) and one closed consultations (14 April).

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 2 April statement, three UN special rapporteurs of the UN Human Rights Council said that the targeted killing of three Lebanese journalists on 28 March constituted an attack on press freedom by Israeli forces and called for a prompt and independent investigation of the incidents. The experts underscored that journalists carrying out their professional duties in armed conflict are civilians and must not be targeted, warning that the deliberate killing of journalists not directly participating in hostilities amounts to a serious violation of international human rights and humanitarian law and a war crime. The statement says that at least 259 journalists and media workers have been killed by Israel since 2023, including in Gaza and Lebanon, adding that at least 64 of them appear to have been directly targeted.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 30 March update, UN Women assessed the gendered impacts of displacement outside collective shelters during the current escalation of hostilities in Lebanon. The update said that an estimated 87 percent of all displaced people are residing outside organised shelter settings and are living in hosted arrangements, rented accommodations, and informal settings. UN Women's analysis found that displacement is exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities. The update identified heightened protection risks linked to overcrowding, lack of privacy, and "dependence on others for shelter", noting that such conditions increase the risk of exposure to harassment, exploitation, and gender-based violence. The update further underscored that barriers to accessing humanitarian assistance – including information gaps and safety concerns – disproportionately affect women, especially those with caregiving responsibilities or limited autonomy. Displacement has increased women's responsibility for household management and caregiving, including for children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, particularly in hosted and shared living arrangements. Loss of livelihoods, rising costs, and increased dependence on host families or male relatives were also found to reinforce patterns of women's economic exclusion.

Key Issues and Options

Supporting the full implementation of resolutions 1559 and 1701 remains a key issue for the Security Council. While the Council is largely uninvolved in facilitating diplomatic efforts between Lebanon

and Israel, Council members are likely to continue monitoring developments in Lebanon and the wider region closely. Depending on developments, members may assess whether additional Council engagement is warranted. For instance, members may opt for additional closed briefings to assess military and diplomatic developments, particularly in light of evolving regional dynamics.

A pressing concern is to avoid a deterioration in the diplomatic and security situation, which could see Lebanon drawn into a dual crisis, facing both internal strife and a wider regional confrontation.

Another key task for the Security Council would be to decide on how to respond to the options presented by the Secretary-General for monitoring the implementation of resolution 1701 after the drawdown of UNIFIL.

Council Dynamics

There is broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and unity.

Many Council members have accused Hezbollah of dragging Lebanon into a confrontation that the Lebanese population did not seek and welcomed the Lebanese government's decisions to move towards the disarmament of the group, noting that this is essential to restoring Lebanese sovereignty. On the other hand, Russia does not see Hezbollah as the primary problematic actor and has focused its criticism on Israel and on wider regional dynamics.

Members continue to express strong support for UNIFIL and have condemned attacks against peacekeepers. The US, the main driver behind the Council's decision to terminate UNIFIL by 31 December, has joined Council press statements in response to attacks against UNIFIL. At the same time, at the 31 March emergency meeting on Lebanon, the US framed its support for peacekeepers in language that pointed towards drawdown, arguing that the high number of casualties among UNIFIL peacekeepers since the mission's inception requires the Council to rethink the effectiveness of the mission.

In contrast, several Council members have interpreted the current escalation as evidence of the need for a sustained UN presence even after UNIFIL's mandate ends in December 2026. For instance, Denmark has argued that the current situation underscores the need for continuity in UN presence beyond drawdown. China has highlighted the tensions as an indication of UNIFIL's continued relevance. Bahrain has stressed that any withdrawal must be coordinated and responsible, with no security vacuum in southern Lebanon.

France is the penholder on Lebanon. At the same time, the US has assumed a more active role on Lebanon, including in facilitating talks between Israel and Lebanon and exerting pressure on Lebanese authorities for the implementation of commitments to disarm non-state actors, particularly Hezbollah.

It seems that, at the insistence of the US, references to the November 2024 cessation of hostilities arrangement, international humanitarian law, civilian casualties, and mass displacement were removed from an earlier draft of the 1 April press statement on UNIFIL. However, the US accepted a reference calling on parties to comply with the 16 April cessation of hostilities in the 20 April press statement. (For background on the November 2024 cessation of hostilities arrangement, see the brief on Lebanon in our November 2025 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Sudan/South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), due by 1 May, as requested in resolution 2802 of 14 November 2025. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

The mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) expire on 15 November.

Key Recent Developments

On 14 November 2025, the Security Council adopted resolution 2802, renewing UNISFA's mandate for another year. The resolution was adopted with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Russia, and Pakistan). It incorporated findings from the Secretary-General's strategic review of UNISFA, submitted on 18 August 2025 pursuant to resolution 2760 of 14 November 2024. The resolution expressed the Council's intention to base future renewal of the mission on demonstrable progress by Sudan and South Sudan against a set of benchmarks. These include the withdrawal of all unauthorised armed forces and armed elements from the Abyei area and steps towards its full demilitarisation; the resumption and documentation of meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM), a body employed by Sudan and South Sudan to discuss security matters of mutual concern; and the establishment of the Abyei Joint Security Police, including progress on recruitment, training, and deployment. (For background and more information, see the brief on Sudan/South Sudan in our November 2025 Monthly Forecast and our 13 November 2025 What's in Blue story.)

On 2 December 2025, UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Lieutenant General Ganesh Kumar Shrestha of Nepal as the new Force Commander of UNISFA, where he also serves as Acting Head of Mission. Shrestha undertook his first visit in this capacity to Juba from 2 to 4 February, leading a UNISFA delegation to engage with South Sudanese officials, reinforce cooperation, and discuss the implementation of the UNISFA and JBVMM mandates. During the visit, the delegation also met with the High-Level Committee for Dialogue, Expedition and Follow-Up on the Final Status of Abyei and the Abyei Joint Oversight Commission and held coordination discussions with the leadership of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on issues of mutual interest and inter-mission cooperation.

On 12 February, Shrestha met with Juba-appointed Chief Administrator Justice Charles Abyei. According to a UNISFA press release, the discussions focused on key issues affecting the mission's area of operations, including the security situation, the presence of state and non-state armed actors, and the construction of main supply routes, among others.

The annual Ngok Dinka and Misseriya seasonal pre-migration conference took place from 20-23 November in Noong, Abyei, co-organised by UNISFA, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Concordis International (a peacebuilding non-governmental organisation). The two communities have had long-standing disputes

over land ownership, access to water, and grazing areas, which often intensify during seasonal migration. According to a UNISFA press release, participants signed an agreement renewing their commitment to prevent conflict, safeguard livelihoods, and ensure the protection of civilians along migration corridors, while also pledging to strengthen trust between herders and farming communities.

The security situation in the mission's area of operations has remained tense, with fighting in Sudan and South Sudan further aggravating conditions and contributing to the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situations in the Abyei region. On 13 December 2025, a drone attack hit the UN logistics base in Kadugli, South Kordofan state in Sudan, which resulted in the deaths of six peacekeepers and injured nine others. In a 21 December 2025 press statement, Council members condemned the attack in the strongest terms and called for those responsible to be held accountable without delay. They reiterated that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law and called on host authorities to take all appropriate steps to support the safety and security of all UN premises, personnel, and peacekeepers.

In a 24 December 2025 press release, UNISFA confirmed the completion of the evacuation of its logistics base in Kadugli, including mission personnel and some staff from non-governmental organisations. The evacuation followed a comprehensive assessment of the security situation in Kadugli after the 13 December drone attack on the mission's logistics base.

In early March, an attack by "unidentified armed youth" on the county headquarters in Abiemnhom county in South Sudan, located approximately eight kilometres from Abyei, resulted in significant civilian casualties and large-scale displacement, including into Abyei, where conditions are characterised by limited access to livelihoods, constrained coping capacities, and a high reliance on humanitarian assistance. In response, UNISFA reinforced protection measures in south-eastern Abyei, with peacekeepers deploying to protect civilians and intensifying patrols following the attack. (For background, see the brief on South Sudan in our April 2026 *Monthly Forecast*.)

Key Issues and Options

The fundamental issue for the Council remains how to reinvigorate the political process to address the final status of Abyei and outstanding Sudan-South Sudan border issues amid the war in Sudan and political uncertainty in South Sudan. Securing a ceasefire in Sudan is widely seen as essential to mitigating the conflict's impact on the security, humanitarian, and socioeconomic conditions in Abyei, while addressing the underlying drivers of insecurity in South Sudan remains closely linked to long-term stability in the area.

Also, a significant concern for the Council is the presence of armed actors, including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary group, and South Sudanese forces in Abyei, in violation of the area's demilitarised status. The ongoing fighting in Sudan—combined with shifting intercommunal dynamics in Abyei and particularly in South Sudan below Abyei's southern border has contributed to an increased presence and influence of armed groups, fuelling criminality, insecurity, and risks to the safety of peacekeepers. The

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2802 (14 November 2025) renewed UNISFA's mandate for another year, until 15 November 2026. The resolution also extended for one year the mission's support for the JBVMM. The text received 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia). **Secretary-General's Report S/2025/649** (15 October 2025) was the Secretary-General's report on UNISFA. **Security Council Letter S/2025/518** (18 August 2025) was UNISFA's strategic review, mandated by resolution 2760.

Sudan/South Sudan

proliferation of small arms in Abyei further risks exacerbating intercommunal tensions and undermining the overall security situation.

Council members remain concerned about the operational challenges facing UNISFA and the JBVMM, including restrictions on the freedom of movement of the mission. These difficulties have been compounded by the fighting in Sudan, which has forced UNISFA to adjust supply routes. This has resulted in significant logistical and security constraints for both the mission and the JBVMM, including the closure of its logistics base in Kadugli. A persistent issue remains the lack of deployment of Council-authorized formed police units and the appointment of a civilian deputy head of mission, due to a lack of agreement from the Sudanese government.

One option for Council members would be to hold an informal meeting with the new Force Commander and acting Head of the Mission Shrestha, along with troop- and police-contributing countries, to discuss the operational challenges facing UNISFA and the JBVMM.

Another key issue relates to the parties' ability to meet the benchmarks established by the Council. As outlined below, the US appears increasingly reluctant to support the continued presence of the mission in the absence of demonstrable progress by the parties toward resolving their differences. In this context, Council members may wish to consider convening an informal interactive dialogue, bringing together representatives of the concerned parties as well as regional and sub-regional organisations, to address challenges related to the implementation of these benchmarks.

One option for Council members could also be to issue a presidential statement in which the Council underscores the operational challenges facing the mission, including restrictions on freedom of movement, and urges the parties to fully cooperate with UNISFA to address these concerns. The Council could further call on the parties to adhere to their respective obligations, respect UNISFA's mandate and Status of Forces Agreement, and ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. It could also reaffirm its support for the mission and encourage efforts to address underlying drivers of insecurity, notably the presence of armed groups and the proliferation of weapons.

Council Dynamics

Council members have traditionally agreed on the important roles that UNISFA and the JBVMM play in supporting peace, security, and stability in Abyei and the broader region. However, they have expressed concern about recurring intercommunal violence, the presence of armed actors in the area, attacks against peacekeepers, and the compounding effects of Sudan's conflict on the political, humanitarian, and security situation in Abyei, as well as the operational and logistical challenges facing the mission.

In the past, the US, as penholder, emphasised UNISFA's role in protecting civilians and called for adequate resourcing of the mission, stressing the importance of ensuring freedom of movement and removing obstacles to mandate implementation. However, during the negotiations of the last renewal resolution, the US took a different approach, reflecting broader efforts under the current US administration to reduce financial support to UN peace operations, including through the use of benchmarks to assess UNISFA's performance and inform decisions on the mission's future.

This approach was strongly opposed by African members of the Council, as well as China and Russia, which rejected the idea of conditioning the mandate renewal on benchmarks. Amid the fragile security and political situations in Sudan and South Sudan, several Council members underscored the continued importance of UNISFA's role in supporting peace and stability in Abyei and the wider region, with many expressing reservations about any automatic drawdown or withdrawal of the mission in the near term.

In their explanations of vote, China, Pakistan, and Russia emphasised UNISFA's positive contribution to promoting stability in Abyei and reiterated their concern over the linking of the mission's renewal to the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in the resolution. In particular, Pakistan and Russia stressed that conditioning UNISFA's renewal on such objectives is unrealistic, as the fate of the mission is being made contingent not on its performance, but on external factors beyond the mission's control.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council will hold its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). High Representative for BiH Christian Schmidt is expected to brief on the latest report of the Office of the High Representative (OHR).

The current authorisation for the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) expires on 31 October.

Key Recent Developments

On 26 February 2025, the BiH state court sentenced former Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad Dodik to one year in prison and banned him from holding political office for six years

for defying the decisions of the High Representative. The trial began in February 2024 following the filing of charges in August 2023 by the BiH Prosecutor's Office. In response to the verdict, the RS National Assembly (RSNA) passed legislation the following day banning BiH state-level judicial and law enforcement institutions from operating in RS—a move described by the OHR as “hint[ing] at de facto secession”.

On 1 October 2025, Dodik's Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) party named RS Interior Minister Siniša Karan as its candidate for the 23 November 2025 snap presidential election in RS. On 18 October 2025, the RSNA appointed Ana Trišić-Babić as acting president and repealed several laws

UN DOCUMENTS ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10028 (31 October 2025) was the semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2025/8 (29 December 2025) was a presidential statement on BiH. Security Council Letter S/2026/72 (11 February 2026) was a letter from the permanent representative of BiH to the UN addressed to the president of the Security Council.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

adopted since 2023 that had been annulled by BiH's Constitutional Court, including legislation on the non-application of the court's decisions.

These steps coincided with—and, according to Washington's own account, were influenced by—a notable shift in US policy on BiH. On 17 October 2025, the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) lifted sanctions on four associates of Dodik; on 29 October, it lifted sanctions on Dodik himself, along with his allies, family members, and companies associated with them. At the Council's 31 October 2025 debate on BiH, the US framed the lifting of sanctions as a “responsive measure” to the “significant steps” taken by the RSNA to set BiH on a “more stable footing”. It further acknowledged that, in the months preceding the October 2025 developments, the US had led discreet diplomatic efforts aimed at “defus[ing] the crisis and promot[ing] stability” in BiH.

On 23 November 2025, Karan, who campaigned to continue Dodik's policies, narrowly won the early presidential election in RS. On 24 December 2025, BiH's Central Election Commission (CEC) annulled the results in 136 polling stations across 17 constituencies, reportedly citing “numerous irregularities”. In the partial re-run held on 8 February, Karan again narrowly defeated opposition candidate Branko Blanuša and is expected to serve out the remainder of Dodik's mandate until the general elections scheduled for October 2026.

In the days following the election, Dodik reiterated divisive and separatist rhetoric. He said that he would propose to the RSNA that competences—which he argues were originally vested in RS under the Dayton Agreement, including those relating to the army, border police, intelligence services, and the fiscal system—be restored to the entity, and that this would be a condition for political talks.

Against this backdrop, RS leaders have increasingly sought to strengthen ties with the US administration. On 6 February, Dodik travelled to Washington, alongside Trišić-Babić and Željka Cvijanović, the Serb member of the rotating tripartite inter-ethnic presidency of BiH, to ask for the US' support to define RS' status. In an interview during the visit, Dodik said he had “high expectations” of US President Donald Trump and suggested that Trump's “America First” message encouraged a “Republika Srpska first” approach. On 7 April, Donald Trump Jr. visited Banja Luka, where he met with local political and business figures. The US embassy in Sarajevo said that the visit was conducted in a private capacity.

On 25 February, Council members discussed BiH under “any other business” (AOB) at the UK's request, following a 11 February letter submitted to the Security Council by BiH Foreign Minister Elmedin Konaković. The letter highlighted a lobbying contract filed with the US Department of Justice under the Foreign Agents Registration Act between RS authorities and the Canadian firm Dickens & Madson, which, according to Konaković, identified the independence of RS from BiH as the ultimate objective. Konaković argued that the filing constituted the clearest formal articulation to date of the secessionist objectives pursued by Dodik and the SNSD party and warned that it represented an attempt to “internationalise and legitimise” actions undermining BiH's constitutional order and the Dayton Peace Agreement.

On 29 December 2025, the Council adopted a presidential statement marking the 30th anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The statement reaffirmed the Council's unwavering commitment to BiH's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence, and to its multi-ethnic character. It welcomed the continued presence of EUFOR ALTHEA under the Council's Chapter VII authorisation and encouraged dialogue among the three constituent peoples (along with others) on shared priorities to ensure a transition of the international presence.

Human Rights-Related Developments

At the 61st session of the UN Human Rights Council, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders Mary Lawlor presented a report on her June 2025 visit to BiH, during which she assessed the situation of human rights defenders in the country. In the report, Lawlor observed that human rights defenders face significant challenges at both the state and entity levels, particularly in RS. She also noted that legislative initiatives in RS have “contributed to a further shrinking of civic space, with human rights defenders exercising self-censorship and caution when deciding on their advocacy work”. In this regard, Lawlor found that the “Law on the Special Registry and Transparency of the Work of Non-Profit Organizations”, although never enforced and despite its annulment by the Constitutional Court of BiH, has contributed to a climate of fear and legal uncertainty for civil society organisations. In light of these findings, she recommended proactive measures by the BiH authorities to address negative narratives concerning the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. Among other recommendations, Lawlor called on RS authorities to refrain from legislative action that would violate freedom of association or restrict civic space.

Key Issues and Options

The role of the OHR and Schmidt's legitimacy as High Representative for BiH remain key divisive issues for the Council. China and Russia do not recognise Schmidt as High Representative and have called for the closure of the OHR. Western Council members, including France, the UK, and the US, have traditionally opposed imposing a time frame for the OHR's closure without referencing the 5+2 Agenda, which is a set of five objectives and two conditions established by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) that need to be fulfilled prior to the OHR's closure.

One option the Council could consider is to request the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel, Elinor Jane Britt Hammarskjöld, to provide a legal opinion on the procedures for designating High Representatives under Annex 10 of the Dayton Peace Agreement and on whether the PIC Steering Board's decision of 27 May 2021 designating Christian Schmidt complied with those procedures. Such an opinion would likely analyse the Council's own record of acting on earlier designations and assess whether endorsement by the Council, unanimity in the Steering Board, or consent of the Bosnian parties is legally required. By providing an authoritative legal baseline, the request could provide a common point of reference for future Council discussions on the OHR.

A continuing key issue for the Council is how to preserve stability in BiH while discouraging unilateral actions that undermine BiH's constitutional order and the Dayton framework. While the steps taken by RS authorities since October 2025 have helped reduce immediate tensions, a related issue is whether the de-escalation is sustainable given the persistence of underlying drivers of instability,

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particularly disputes over state competences and the legitimacy of the High Representative. The formal articulation of secessionist objectives by RS authorities, raised by BiH in its 11 February letter and discussed by Council members at the 25 February AOB, remains a related concern. One option for Council members would be to issue a press statement taking note of the de-escalatory steps taken by RS since October 2025, while reaffirming the Council's commitment to BiH's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order, and calling on all parties to address remaining disputes through dialogue and in accordance with BiH's constitutional framework and judicial decisions.

Council Dynamics

Council members have similar concerns about BiH's divisive ethnic politics. The presidential statement adopted by the Council on 29 December 2025 demonstrates unity on fundamental matters, including support for BiH's sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and its multi-ethnic character, as well as the continued role of EUFOR ALTHEA.

Underlying divisions on the OHR nonetheless remain pronounced. At the Council's 31 October 2025 debate on BiH, Russia

described the OHR as "incompatible with the sovereignty of [BiH]" and accused certain Western countries of eroding the Dayton system to the detriment of Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats. China reiterated that the OHR and the Bonn Powers should not become long-term, let alone permanent, arrangements and argued that their invocation had exacerbated divisions. European members, by contrast, have continued to support the OHR and emphasise BiH's EU accession trajectory as the country's principal anchor for reform.

The US appears to have recalibrated its approach to BiH, stating at the October 2025 debate that it was "no longer pursuing nation-building or heavy-handed international intervention" and that the time had come for "local solutions, led by local actors representing [BiH's] three constituent peoples". The US' decision to lift sanctions on RS authorities, which it framed as part of a deliberate diplomatic effort, marked a notable departure from years of US policy. Although this approach appears to have contributed to a reduction in political tensions, its longer-term sustainability remains uncertain. Moreover, a 27 March bipartisan congressional letter to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury, urging the reimposition of sanctions on Dodik and his associates, suggests that the administration's posture is not uniformly shared across Washington.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

In April, the Syrian interim government continued efforts to insulate the country from the Middle East crisis triggered on 28 February by Israeli and US military strikes on Iran. Spillover effects of the conflict have had a direct impact on Syria. These have included multiple missile and drone attacks by pro-Iranian militias from Iraq aimed at US military bases in northeastern and southeastern Syria, launched prior to the 7 April announcement of a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the US. On 16 April, the US reportedly finalised the redeployment of its forces out of Syria and the handover of bases to the interim government—a process which started in 2025. On 8 April, Syria reopened its airspace, which had been closed due to the regional hostilities.

Israel has continued its military activities in southern Syria, which it says are necessary for its national security. In April, these included incursions, arrests, and road closures in the governorate of Quneitra in southwestern Syria. On 3 April, the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) reported that an Israeli tank fired across the ceasefire line established by the 1974 Disengagement of Forces

Agreement between Israel and Syria. The mission has launched an investigation into the incident, which coincided with reports of a civilian death caused by Israeli tank fire in the municipality of al-Rafid in Quneitra that was condemned by the Syrian government.

On 11 April and 19 April, the Syrian Interior Ministry said that it had foiled plots by Hezbollah-affiliated cells to conduct attacks in Damascus and Quneitra, respectively. Hezbollah has denied the accusations and said that it has no presence in Syrian territory. Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa has said that he supports Lebanon in disarming Hezbollah and will prevent the militia from operating in Syria.

As the government continues its efforts to promote Syrian national unity, intercommunal tensions have also persisted in recent weeks. On 28 March, individuals from the Sunni-majority town Qalaat al-Madiq reportedly stormed the neighbouring Christian town of Suqaylabiyah and attacked shops, homes, and cars before government forces calmed the situation. In the southern governorate of Suweida, although the ceasefire between Damascus and Druze factions continues to hold, on 11 April, hundreds of Druze reportedly held protests and called for self-determination and accountability for violence committed in the July 2025 clashes.

Meanwhile, in the northeast, the implementation of the 29 January agreement to integrate the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Democratic Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (DAANES) into government institutions continues. However, several significant issues remain unresolved. On 15 April, DAANES Foreign Relations co-chair Ilham Ahmed and SDF

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA 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.10143** (22 April 2026) was a Security Council meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria.

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commander Mazloum Abdi met with Sharaa in Damascus to discuss accelerating the process. Reportedly, Ahmed subsequently acknowledged that disputes over administrative appointments are posing a key obstacle and that recognition of educational certificates issued by the DAANES remains unresolved. Women's representation has also emerged as a sticking point, with Ahmed noting that appointments approved so far have been limited to men despite DAANES' broad inclusion of women in its own structures. A number of issues continue to be discussed, including the status of the Women's Protection Units, the management of border crossings, the modalities of Kurdish representation in the People's Assembly, and the role of Kurds in the eventual constitutional drafting process.

In his 22 April briefing to the Security Council, Cordone described Syria as making tentative progress towards stabilisation and political transition despite significant challenges. He said that although overall violence has declined to its lowest levels in years, localised insecurity, sectarian tensions, and the continued threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) persist, compounded by serious human rights concerns stemming from past abuses. Cordone said that deteriorating economic conditions are driving social unrest and emphasised the need for inclusive governance, credible transitional justice, and the importance of international support. He also highlighted ongoing preparations for indirect elections for nine vacant seats in the new People's Assembly in Hasakah governorate—left unfilled during the September 2025 vote—and stressed the importance of swiftly establishing a functioning and broadly representative legislature.

Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher noted progress on the humanitarian front in his 2 April visit to Syria and his subsequent briefing to the Council on 22 April. In that briefing, Fletcher expressed cautious optimism about the millions of returnees, growing markets, and improvements in essential infrastructure, while underscoring the need to support development, resilience, and recovery.

During the visit, he was joined by UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator Alexander De Croo and together they launched the 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) for Syria. The plan recognises ongoing challenges, including that millions remain in need of food, clean water, and healthcare support, with high numbers of displaced persons particularly vulnerable. It identifies three strategic objectives: saving lives and alleviating suffering; protecting safety and rights; and restoring life-saving services and livelihoods in support of national recovery priorities. The HNRP seeks \$2.92 billion to assist 8.6 million of the 15.6 million people in need across all sectors—a prioritised approach reflecting resource constraints due to acute funding cuts.

At the 22 April Council meeting, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier also briefed, in her first formal briefing to the Council since she was appointed to this role. Frazier spoke of her three-day visit to Syria, which concluded on 19 February, and said that she was encouraged by Damascus' willingness to engage with the UN on the child protection file and its commitment to international obligations, including those in line with the Convention on the Rights

of the Child. She also highlighted challenges including those pertaining to displaced and detained children, access to education, and the threat of widespread contamination of explosive remnants of war. Frazier noted that in 2025, the level of grave violations against children in Syria remained elevated, and that the Syrian government has agreed to develop an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use, and the killing and maiming of children, as well as to prevent other grave violations by its forces.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 24 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) renewed the mandate (A/HRC/61/L.25) of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) for another year. The renewal maintained the COI's independent investigative duties pertaining to all alleged violations of international human rights law since March 2011 and to, where possible, identify those responsible with a view to ensure accountability. Additionally, the renewal expanded the COI's mandate to provide advice to the Syrian government in support of national investigations into allegations of human rights violations and to Syrian national entities, including the National Commission for Transitional Justice, "in areas related to ensuring justice and accountability, preventing violations and improving the human rights situation".

On 27 March, the COI released a comprehensive report examining international human rights and humanitarian law violations in the context of and following the July 2025 escalation in Suweida governorate, which left more than 1,700 people dead and forcibly displaced up to 155,000. The report found that the July escalation entailed human rights violations involving widespread executions, torture, and gender-based violence, among other abuses, which may amount to war crimes and, should such elements be established through further investigation, crimes against humanity. Considering these findings, the COI called on the Syrian government to urgently strengthen accountability and accelerate concrete efforts to resolve key human rights issues affecting communities in Suweida, among other recommendations.

On 13 March, the COI published an earlier report on the progress and challenges facing Syria as it continues its political transition. Among other recommendations, it urges the government to expand efforts to advance reforms, accountability, and professionalism in the security sector, and to integrate human rights education across all sectors.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is ensuring 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 maintaining a united position anchored in the principles of resolution 2254, Council members could consider linking enhanced political support for the Syrian government to concrete progress on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); security sector reform (SSR); transitional justice; and social cohesion—including through accountability and reconciliation processes.

While the Iran-US ceasefire announced on 7 April has reduced some of the immediate pressure on Syria, Israeli military activity in the south continues to pose a risk to Syria's sovereignty and to the stability of the transition and represents a distinct challenge for the Council.

Another issue is the SDF integration process, which is advancing but remains incomplete.

Accountability for the July 2025 violence in Suweida also remains a pressing concern. The recent COI and the national investigative committee's reports on the violence point to recommendations that would improve accountability efforts. Members

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could encourage confidence-building steps laid out in the 16 September roadmap agreed by Jordan, Syria, and the US to address the tensions in Suweida.

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

- calls for full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, urges adherence to the 1974 Agreement, and calls on Israel to cease violations and on both parties to engage constructively in US-facilitated talks on sustainable security arrangements;
- encourages progress on both the SDF integration agreement and the Suweida roadmap, while pressing the government to ensure the protection and rights of Druze and Kurdish civilians;
- highlights the importance of Damascus continuing its counter-terrorism efforts against a resurgent 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 humanitarian needs and long-term recovery and development.

The Council could also consider encouraging the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) on the Syria file. The PBC's convening role and its capacity to mobilise sustained, coordinated international support for countries navigating fragile transitions could be of value at this juncture. Council members, in close collaboration with Syria, could consider the possibility of an advisory opinion from the PBC on how best to support the country's transition.

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 could 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 and its decisions to delist Sharaa, Syria's interior minister Anas Khattab, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions list signaled unified support for Syria's interim government and the overall transition following years of deep divisions on the file.

Furthermore, several Council members have taken steps to normalise bilateral relations with Syria and to support its recovery. High-level officials of the Syrian government have visited all the capitals of the Council's five permanent members. Most recently, on 31 March, Sharaa and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met in London and discussed, among other things, opportunities for British businesses to contribute to the restoration of Syria's infrastructure. The European Union (EU)—which includes Council members France, Denmark, Greece, and Latvia—also announced plans to fully resume its 1978 cooperation agreement with Syria and begin formal talks on strengthening economic and security ties on 11 May; on 24 April, Sharaa attended the informal meeting of the EU and regional partners in Cyprus.

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 have so far managed to keep Syria-specific discussions relatively insulated from these broader tensions—in part due to Syria's efforts to insulate itself from the escalation—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.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution renewing the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo.

The current authorisation expires on 25 May 2026.

During May, the Council is also expected to receive the semi-annual briefing on the International Criminal Court's (ICC) activities related to the situation in Libya.

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 a 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.

On 22 April, the Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, briefed the Council on political and security developments in the country. She said that progress on the UN-facilitated political roadmap remained inadequate. She noted that some Libyan actors continue to disregard public expectations for democratic participation and instead operate through parallel structures that undermine institutional reunification. (The roadmap announced by UNSMIL in August 2025 consists of three core pillars: adopting a viable electoral framework for presidential and legislative polls; unifying institutions under a new government; and launching a structured dialogue on governance, economic, security, and reconciliation issues to pave the way for these elections and address long-term conflict drivers.) Tetteh noted that while UNSMIL had advanced the structured dialogue across security, governance, economic reform, and reconciliation and human rights tracks, this has yet to translate into the political compromises needed to move toward elections. She warned that maintaining “business as usual” may entrench the status quo and carry significant national and regional risks, underscoring the need for sustained political will and concrete implementation to reunify institutions and restore democratic legitimacy. In addition to political challenges, Tetteh warned of Libya's deteriorating economic situation, characterised by inflation, fuel shortages, and rising poverty. She

called for urgent governance reforms in the hydrocarbon sector to strengthen transparency, prevent money laundering, and address the diversion of national wealth.

Elaborating on the approach outlined in her February briefing, Tetteh said in April that UNSMIL has begun engaging a smaller group of Libyan stakeholders to unblock the two election-related milestones in the political roadmap: the adoption of a viable electoral framework and the establishment of a unified government to support the electoral process and governance. She explained that this format is intended to identify practical steps that Libyan institutions can take to move the process forward. She noted that these efforts draw on the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, established by UNSMIL in 2025 to address outstanding issues hindering the holding of elections in Libya. The committee comprises a diverse group of Libyan personalities whose selection was based on several criteria, including expertise in legal, constitutional, and electoral issues; the ability to build compromise; and an understanding of the political challenges facing Libya. She reiterated that if this approach fails to produce sufficient progress, she would return to the Council with proposals based on existing Libyan political agreements.

The first such meeting with a smaller group of Libyan stakeholders took place on 29 April in Rome under the auspices of UNSMIL. At the meeting, this group reached an agreement on reconstituting the Board of the High National Elections Commission and committed to maintaining ongoing talks facilitated by UNSMIL.

On 14 April, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2819, extending the authorisation of measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 1 August 2027, and renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 August 2027. In addition, under strict conditions, the resolution allows frozen Libyan Investment Authority assets to be transferred between custodial institutions within the same jurisdiction, solely to facilitate a change of global custodian.

On 1 December 2025, the German authorities surrendered Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri to the custody of the International Criminal Court (ICC). German authorities arrested El Hishri on 16 July 2025 pursuant to an arrest warrant issued by the ICC. El Hishri was a senior official in the Special Deterrence Forces (SDF), an armed group in Tripoli, and one of the top officials at Mitiga Prison in Tripoli. The ICC Prosecutor's Office alleges that he is responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in and around Mitiga Prison between February 2015 and early 2020.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 24 March, the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee was published. The Panel concluded that armed groups have entrenched themselves as the main drivers of governance in Libya. It noted that these groups exert coercive and cartel-like control over political, security, and economic institutions, operating with near-total impunity and undermining accountability mechanisms and the rule of law. The Panel found that this situation has enabled widespread violations of the arms

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2819 (14 April 2026) extended the authorisation of measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya until 1 August 2027. The resolution also renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 August 2027. S/RES/2804 (25 November 2025) renewed for six months the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. S/RES/2796 (31 October 2025) extended UNSMIL's mandate for twelve months and encouraged the mission to implement the recommendations from the strategic review. **Sanctions Related Document S/2026/224** (24 March 2026) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee

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embargo, facilitated the movement of fighters and weapons across borders, and contributed to regional instability. It also reported that armed groups have interfered in elections, committed serious human rights abuses, and enabled unprecedented levels of illicit petroleum exports. According to the Panel, these activities diverted billions of dollars from state institutions and reinforced cycles of conflict within Libya and across the region.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council in May is the renewal of the authorisation for maritime inspections off the coast of Libya, which is limited to arms embargo enforcement.

Ahead of the mandate renewal, Council members could continue the regular practice of holding an informal interactive dialogue with an EU representative to discuss the implementation of these measures.

An option for the Council is to consider whether and how to expand the mandate to also include authorisation to member states acting through regional organisations in enforcing measures related to the illicit export of petroleum. The EU naval force in the Mediterranean (Operation EUNAVFOR MED IRINI) has remained the only regional organisation to inspect vessels under the authorisation.

Given that the two most recent renewals of the maritime inspections' authorisation were for six-month periods, the Council could consider extending the mandate to one year. This was the standard practice prior to the renewal in May 2025.

A key issue relevant to the ICC is how to promote accountability for the crimes committed in Libya in recent years. An option would be for Council members who are parties to the ICC to hold a joint press stakeout in connection with the meeting to assert their support for the court's work in Libya and encourage the Libyan authorities to cooperate closely with the ICC.

Council Dynamics

During the early rounds of negotiations on resolution 2819 in April, the UK (penholder on Libya) sought to introduce a substantive proposal concerning the role of member states acting through regional organisations in enforcing measures related to the illicit export of petroleum from Libya. One of the aims of this was to align the

oil smuggling enforcement framework more closely with existing maritime provisions applicable to the Libya arms embargo. Russia, supported by some other members, raised concerns about the scope and oversight of the proposed enforcement role for the regional organisations and suggested alternative approaches, including a limited pilot phase combined with enhanced reporting to the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee. China, for its part, questioned the appropriateness of considering the issue in the context of the sanctions renewal and suggested instead that the text express a willingness to revisit the matter at a later stage following further consultations. The A3 members also expressed reservations, including on issues related to oversight arrangements. The UK ultimately dropped this proposal. However, France and Greece (co-penholders on maritime inspection authorisation) might raise this issue during the maritime inspection authorisation in May.

Prior to 2022, the Council unanimously renewed the annual maritime inspections authorisation. Since 2022, however, Russia has abstained on the votes. In May and November 2025, the Council renewed the authorisation for six months. In both cases, China and Russia abstained, raising concerns about the effectiveness and transparency of the EU-led Operation IRINI. China has also called for the Council to conduct an assessment of Operation IRINI's mandate.

Regarding the ICC, Russia has consistently accused the court of inefficiency and pro-Western bias. It has argued that the court lacks credibility due to politicisation, double standards, and selective justice, and said it has failed to deliver meaningful results in Libya more than 14 years after the Council's referral. While not as forceful in their criticisms as Russia, some other Council members have also expressed reservations about the Court's work. China has emphasised the need for the ICC to respect national sovereignty, adhere strictly to its mandate, and uphold the principle of complementarity, while avoiding politicisation and double standards. African members have also long raised concerns about the Court's perceived disproportionate focus on their continent and its implications for national justice systems.

Upholding the UN Charter

Expected Council Action

In May, the Council will hold a ministerial-level open debate on "Upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centered international system". The meeting will be chaired by China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi. UN Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

For at least the past decade, several Council members—particularly China and Russia—have chosen to convene open debates during their monthly presidencies that focus on the UN Charter or multilateralism and have been held as a signature event. Meetings organised by China in this regard have included: "Practicing Multilateralism:

UN DOCUMENTS ON MULTILATERISM AND THE UN CHARTER [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2805](#) (26 November 2025) was on the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review. [S/RES/2788](#) (22 July 2025) urges member states to effectively utilise the UN Charter's mechanisms for the peace settlement of disputes, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2025/7](#) (24 October 2025) reaffirmed the Security Council's commitment to the UN Charter. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV10024 and Resumption I](#) (24 October 2025) was an open debate convened by Russia and titled "The United Nations Organization: Looking into the Future". [S/PV.9861 and Resumption I](#) (18 February 2025) was an open debate organised by China on "Practicing Multilateralism: Reforming and Improving Global Governance". [S/PV.9686 and Resumption I](#) (16 July 2024) was an open debate convened by Russia on "Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order". [S/PV.9308 and Resumption I](#) (24 April 2023) was an open debate convened by Russia on "Effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations". [S/PV.9220 and Resumption I](#) (14 December 2022) was an open debate organised by India on "New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism". [S/2021/456](#) (7 May 2021) was a high-level briefing held via videoconference and organised by China on "Upholding multilateralism and the United Nations-centred international system". [S/PV.8699](#) and Resumption I (9 and 10 January 2020) was an open debate initiated by Viet Nam on "Upholding the United Nations Charter". [S/PV.8395](#) (9 November 2018) was an open debate convened by China on "Strengthening multilateralism and the role of the United Nations". [S/PV.7389](#) (23 February 2015) was an open debate initiated by China on "Reflect[ing] on history [and] reaffirm[ing] the strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations".

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Reforming and Improving Global Governance” on 18 February 2025; “Upholding Multilateralism and the UN-centred International System” on 7 May 2021; “Strengthening Multilateralism and the Role of the United Nations” on 9 November 2018; and “Reflect[ing] on history [and] reaffirm[ing] the strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the UN” on 23 February 2015.

On 24 October 2025, the day the UN Charter entered into force 80 years earlier, the Security Council held an open debate at Russia’s initiative titled “The United Nations Organization: Looking into the Future” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.10024 and Resumption I). Secretary-General António Guterres briefed via videoconference. A presidential statement authored by Russia was adopted during the meeting. The statement reaffirmed the Security Council’s “commitment to the Charter of the United Nations, including its purposes and principles in their entirety and an international order based on international law”, as well as to the “central role of the United Nations in international affairs and the multilateral system as a forum for constructive dialogue among its Member States”.

This month’s meeting takes place at a time of heightened uncertainty about the future of the multilateral system and ongoing mutual recriminations between the major powers about their failure to adhere to international law, including to the Charter, and the resulting adverse effects on vulnerable populations. The Security Council, the UN body entrusted with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, is more divided now than at any point in the post-Cold War era, struggling in recent years to come together to address many pressing conflicts on its agenda—for example, Haiti, Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, and Ukraine, among others—notwithstanding the significant time and energy it devotes to these issues. Moreover, the UN is largely sidelined in many of the diplomatic efforts to resolve the world’s major crises.

At the same time, the UN system is in the middle of a major reform initiative known as UN80, which was launched by Guterres in March 2025, and is aimed at overhauling the UN system to make it more “effective, cost-efficient and responsive to the people it serves”. The reform effort is occurring in the context of a liquidity crisis facing the UN—largely driven by member states’ failure to pay their assessed contributions in full and on time—that has forced the world body to operate in a resource-constrained environment, leading to a hiring freeze and reduced services. Funding cuts have undermined the UN’s humanitarian efforts to alleviate human suffering and have contributed to deep budget cuts across all peacekeeping missions.

In his 23 September 2025 address at the opening of the 80th General Assembly, Guterres called on member states to “choose peace rooted in international law” and said that at its best, the UN is a “guardian of international law”. In their subsequent statements to the General Assembly, several world leaders similarly emphasised the importance of upholding international law as a key pillar of the international order, referring to several conflicts in which international law is being violated.

Key Issues and Options

A key underlying issue is the lack of respect for the UN Charter that continues to be exhibited by some of the UN’s most powerful member states.

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

An additional important issue for the Council is how to build trust and cooperation among its members. In the September 2024 Pact for the Future, member states committed to promoting cooperation and understanding, defusing tensions, and seeking the pacific settlement of disputes.

While it may currently be difficult for the Council to strengthen references to international law in its products, Council members could more consistently emphasise the importance of compliance with international law, including the UN Charter, in their statements in country-specific meetings, where relevant.

They could also request regular briefings on relevant legal obligations on situations where international law and the UN Charter are not being upheld.

Another option for Council members is to meet more frequently in informal contexts for frank discussions about how to revitalise under-utilised tools of the Charter related to conflict prevention and mediation. They could also use these formats to facilitate early engagement on emerging threats and broaden their discussion of possible options for Council action. In this context, members may wish to meet informally ahead of the anticipated open debate in July on the peaceful settlement of disputes requested by resolution 2788. This resolution, which was authored by Pakistan, urges member states to effectively utilise the UN Charter’s mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes, such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and judicial settlement.

The UN’s role in peacemaking is a prevailing concern of the wider membership as well. This was evident in the questions asked by member states in the General Assembly’s interactive dialogues in April with candidates running for the UN Secretary-General position (Michelle Bachelet, Rafael Grossi, Rebeca Grynspan, and Macky Sall). In the next phase of the selection process, candidates will be questioned by Council members in informal meetings. During these sessions, Council members could attempt to elicit more concrete responses to how each candidate would approach preventive diplomacy.

As Council president, China could also consider preparing a chair’s summary that highlights the key themes of the meeting and circulating it to the wider membership. This could be an opportunity to underscore any concrete ideas for bolstering adherence to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter that may be proposed at the meeting.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members consistently affirm their commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Nonetheless, contrasting views regarding which countries adhere to the values of the UN Charter are likely to be on display during the open debate. China and Russia have consistently emphasised respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and criticised what they view as the selective application of international law. In this regard, they have been highly critical of recent US military actions, including in Venezuela and

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Iran, describing them as clear violations of the UN Charter. Several Council members, in turn, continue to condemn Russia's ongoing war in Ukraine as a grave breach of the Charter.

Some Council members and the wider UN membership have raised concerns about perceived double standards and selective adherence to the UN Charter. These members would like to see enhanced efforts by the Council, and the UN system more generally, to promote the peaceful settlement of disputes.

As well, member states from different regions believe that the UN system could do a better job of integrating the three pillars of the UN Charter—peace and security, development, and human

rights—in carrying out its efforts to promote the security and welfare of vulnerable populations. The Council has long emphasised that the different pillars are mutually reinforcing and interlinked in several outcomes over the years, including in resolution 2805 of 26 November 2025 on the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, which the General Assembly also adopted in a substantively identical resolution on the same day. At the same time, since President Donald Trump returned to office in January 2025, the US, in particular, has sought to go “back to basics” and focus the UN on its core peace and security mandate.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In May, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution to extend the South Sudan sanctions regime, which expires on 31 May, and renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, which expires on 1 July.

Key Recent Developments

South Sudan's political landscape remains highly volatile, driven in part by the actions of President Salva Kiir Mayardit in violation of the 2018 Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Elections, currently scheduled for December 2026 following repeated postponements, are looking increasingly uncertain. Persistent financial constraints, coupled with delays in key legal and political decisions, continue to impede progress on critical transitional processes. In this context, the revitalised agreement appears to have been progressively hollowed out.

According to the Secretary-General's 13 April report, political fragmentation has contributed directly to military escalation, increasingly hostile rhetoric, and greater assertiveness among armed actors. The report underscored the persistent lack of political will to advance inclusive dialogue and the continued focus on the elections over the full implementation of key R-ARCSS benchmarks, which has created an environment that increasingly favours one signatory party—the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), led by Kiir—and has seriously undermined the functioning of transitional institutions.

Meanwhile, the security situation continues to deteriorate across South Sudan, marked by sustained hostilities between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), the government's forces, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) alongside other opposition and affiliated groups. The situation in the Greater Upper Nile region further deteriorated, with Jonglei State recording the highest increase in fighting and related casualties. Elsewhere, the Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr el Ghazal regions remained volatile, affected by a combination of clashes between

SSPDF and SPLA-IO elements, intercommunal violence, and cattle raids, resulting in significant civilian harm. (For background and more information, see the brief on South Sudan in our April 2026 Monthly Forecast and 16 April What's in Blue story.)

The most recent quarterly report of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC)—covering 1 January to 31 March and released on 22 April—noted that the body had received proposals from the transitional government to amend provisions of the R-ARCSS to delink constitution-making and census processes from the December 2026 elections. The RJMEC raised concerns about the prevailing political and security context, the procedure used to initiate the amendments, and their potentially far-reaching implications, such as delinking the R-ARCSS from the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan of 2011 and annulling its sanctity and supremacy. In a 26 February letter, which is not a public document, it outlined alternative approaches to safeguard the agreement and, at the time of the report, was still awaiting the government's response.

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan continued to deteriorate, driven by conflict, displacement, disease outbreaks, access constraints, and mounting operational challenges. In his remarks at the 17 April Council meeting on the situation in South Sudan, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher said that renewed fighting since late December 2025 has displaced over a quarter of a million people across multiple states, with a further 110,000 fleeing into Ethiopia, while renewed violence in and around Akobo has driven additional displacement. He noted that, according to the World Health Organization, 1.35 million people in Jonglei State have lost access to healthcare following the destruction or closure of 26 facilities. Food insecurity is also deepening, with emergency levels expected across all ten states during the lean season through July, and more than 7.5 million people will require food assistance this year, raising concerns about the risk of famine. These pressures are compounded by anticipated flooding and spill-over effects of the conflict in Sudan, which has driven approximately 1.4 million people into South Sudan.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2781](#) (30 May 2025) renewed the South Sudan sanctions regime until 31 May 2026 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee until 1 July 2026. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10139](#) (17 April 2026) was the regular 90-day meeting on the situation in South Sudan. [Secretary-General's Report S/2026/316](#) (13 April 2026) was the 90-day report covering developments since 16 January.

South Sudan

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 9 April press release, Siobhán Mullally, the UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, warned that escalating violence in South Sudan is contributing to an alarming rise in child trafficking. She highlighted reports indicating the normalisation of conflict-related sexual violence and the forced recruitment of young men and boys for use in combat and support roles. Mullally underscored the need for survivor-centred justice measures and urgent action to ensure effective access to justice for victims of all forms of conflict-related trafficking.

In a 17 April press release, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan expressed grave concern over the discovery of burial sites in Jonglei State amid renewed violence. The Commission indicated that the remains may belong to combatants killed in earlier fighting but noted that the circumstances of their deaths and burial remain unclear, adding that it could not exclude the possibility that the sites contain civilians or individuals killed in circumstances amounting to serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. It underscored the need to secure the sites, conduct proper forensic investigations, and ensure that those responsible are identified and held accountable.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 16 March, the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee circulated its final report to committee members. On 27 March, the committee held informal consultations to discuss the final report and consider the panel's recommendations.

On 15 April, the Secretary-General transmitted to the Council an assessment report on the implementation of the benchmarks outlined in resolution 2577 of 28 May 2021 for modifying, suspending, or progressively lifting the arms embargo. The report found that, in 2025-2026, South Sudan faced its most difficult period since the signing of the 2018 revitalized agreement. In addition to a lack of progress on the five key benchmarks, there were also deeply concerning reversals in the achievements made to date. While some limited initiatives continued, largely supported by UNMISS and partners, these efforts were insufficient to offset the broader stagnation across the benchmarks.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate key issue for the Council is the extension of the South Sudan sanctions regime (targeted sanctions and the arms embargo) and renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee. In their discussions in May, Council members are likely to be guided by the findings and the recommendations of the panel's 16 March final report, and the assessment provided by the Secretary-General in his 15 April report.

Another key issue for the Council is how to prevent South Sudan from descending into civil war while addressing the structural issues that contribute to recurring violence and political instability. The deteriorating humanitarian situation, with 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.

In light of the spiralling security situation, the most likely option for Council members appears to be maintaining the existing sanctions measures and renewing them alongside the mandate of the Panel of Experts for one year, while reviewing the current benchmarks

to address the current situation. Following the review of the benchmarks, although likely difficult given current Council dynamics, the Council could also consider imposing additional targeted sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for violations of the sanctions regime and expanding the designation criteria, if appropriate. In the meantime, an option would be to urge member states, particularly in the region, to enhance enforcement of the arms embargo and improve reporting on implementation measures in order to strengthen implementation and compliance.

Council members could consider holding an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with the various stakeholders of the South Sudanese political process, the leadership of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and interested regional and subregional member states and organisations to discuss strategies to address the deteriorating situation in the country. (The IID is a closed format that, unlike closed consultations, allows for the participation of non-UN officials and briefers.)

A continuing issue for the Council is the obstacles facing UNMISS in fulfilling its mandate and responsibilities. These include restrictions on its freedom of movement and violations of the Status of Forces Agreement. The situation is further compounded by the implementation of contingency measures in response to the UN-wide financial crisis, which has forced the mission to scale back its capabilities and resources, including the closure of several temporary operating bases in areas with acute protection-of-civilians needs. (For more information, see our 16 April What's in Blue story.)

Council members could also consider a visiting mission to South Sudan to assess the situation on the ground and engage with the various parties to the R-ARCSS. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan took place in 2019.)

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.

The sanctions imposed on South Sudan have long been a divisive issue in the Council. When the Council last renewed the sanctions regime in May 2025 through resolution 2781, six Council members abstained—China, Pakistan, Russia, Somalia, and then-Council members Algeria and Sierra Leone.

Several Council members—including France, the UK, and the US—continue to view sanctions as an essential tool for maintaining pressure on parties in South Sudan to advance the peace process. These members argue that the arms embargo, first imposed in July 2018 through resolution 2428, has played a significant role in reducing violence by limiting the flow of weapons into South Sudan. They have expressed concern that lifting the embargo could worsen the security situation by enabling greater access to arms in an already volatile environment. Given the deteriorating security situation and South Sudan's vulnerability to regional security dynamics, particularly the war in Sudan, several members are also likely to emphasise strict adherence to the arms embargo provisions.

On the other hand, China and Russia have long opposed the

South Sudan

South Sudan sanctions regime. These members argue that sanctions imposed on the South Sudanese government have hindered its ability to build and consolidate its security institutions and should be lifted or adjusted to support the country's peace efforts.

African members of the Council have also traditionally expressed concerns about maintaining the sanctions regime, which, in their view, undermines progress in the political and security spheres. Nevertheless, despite maintaining these positions, these members did not appear to push strongly for lifting or modifying the sanctions regime during negotiations on resolution 2781, given the deteriorating

political and security situation. (For more information, see our 29 May 2025 What's in Blue story.)

The African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have repeatedly called for the lifting of sanctions on South Sudan, while several regional states have expressed opposition to the arms embargo. However, it remains unclear how the current configuration of the Council's A3 members—with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia joining Somalia—will approach the renewal of these measures.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In May, Council members are scheduled to discuss the 90-day report on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee in closed consultations.

Ordinarily, the Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee briefs Council members on the report. At the time of writing, the Chair had not been appointed as Council members have not been able to agree on this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the Chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, China, the president of the Council during May, is likely to brief members on the report in its capacity as president. Greece served as Chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee last year, after the appointments were finalised in May 2025.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee—which monitored and submitted biannual reports on sanctions implementation—expired on 30 April 2024 after Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have extended it.

In October 2024, 11 countries—including the P3, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—established the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) to “monitor and report violations and evasions of sanctions measures” stipulated in relevant Security Council resolutions on the DPRK. Since then, the MSMT has published two reports: one dated 29 May 2025 on alleged unlawful military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia following the latter's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and another dated 22 October 2025 on the DPRK's alleged violations and evasion of UN sanctions through cyber and information technology (IT) activities. On 12 January, the participating member states of the MSMT held an open briefing on its second report at UN Headquarters. On 19 February, the participating countries held the inaugural meeting of the MSMT Steering Committee in Washington, DC.

Between 19 and 25 February, the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK)—the DPRK's ruling party—held its ninth congress, during which the party leadership reportedly reaffirmed the country's status as a nuclear-armed state. (The WPK convenes for a congress every five years, with the last one taking place in 2021.) On 15

April, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the country had made “very serious” advances in its nuclear weapons programme, including the likely construction of a new uranium enrichment facility and increased activity at other nuclear sites. He assessed the DPRK's current nuclear arsenal at “a few dozen” warheads.

On 19 April, the DPRK reportedly fired short-range ballistic missiles with cluster munitions at an island target in the Sea of Japan. Earlier this month, it conducted a three-day weapons test, which included missile-carried cluster bombs, electromagnetic weapon systems, and anti-aircraft missile systems. In March, the country reportedly tested an upgraded solid-fuel engine for missiles capable of reaching the US mainland.

Military cooperation continues to be reported between the DPRK and Russia. According to a report published last month by the Institute for National Security Strategy (INSS), a public research institute funded by the ROK government, the DPRK had sent four troop deployments to Russia as at December 2025, comprising a total of 21,000 personnel. Another report published in March by the Open Source Centre (OSC)—a UK-based non-profit organisation that uses publicly accessible information to produce open-source research products on security issues—found that sanctioned Russian vessels had transferred between eight and 11 million rounds of ammunition from the DPRK to Russia since mid-2023.

Reflecting their political support for the DPRK, both China and Russia sent letters of congratulations to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in connection with the WPK congress, emphasising their countries' strong ties and strategic partnerships. On 26 April, Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov reportedly travelled to Pyongyang to negotiate an agreement on military cooperation for the 2027-2031 period. The countries previously signed a mutual defence treaty in June 2024.

On 30 April, the Security Council convened for an open briefing under the agenda item “Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)”. The meeting was requested by Council members Bahrain, Denmark, France, Latvia, the UK, and the US, as well as non-Council members Japan and the ROK, to discuss the DPRK's “continued violations of multiple Security Council

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10147 (30 April 2026) was an open briefing held under the “Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)” agenda item. **Sanctions Committee Document S/2024/215** (7 March 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

DPRK (North Korea)

resolutions” two years after the disbandment of the PoE assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. The briefers were Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and James Byrne, the Chief Executive Officer of the OSC.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 16 February, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK, Elizabeth Salmón, submitted a report to the UN Human Rights Council on the country’s political and human rights landscape. In the report, Salmón assesses the progress made in the implementation of recommendations made during the country’s universal periodic review (UPR). The report’s findings observed that, despite engagements with UN human rights mechanisms and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2025, the country’s human rights landscape over the past 10 years has shown no improvement and, in many instances, has degraded, even with some isolated steps taken. It also highlighted challenges in monitoring the implementation of recommendations made during the UPR, noting the DPRK’s lack of political will, the genericity of some recommendations, as well as contradictions in the DPRK’s position concerning specific rights.

In a subsequent press release, Salmón underscored the importance of concrete steps and international cooperation for improving the realisation of human rights in the country. Noting the report’s findings, she called on the DPRK to urgently seek international cooperation in the areas in which it has committed to act and implement its human rights obligations.

Key Issues and Options

The Council is dealing with several long-term issues on the DPRK file. The DPRK’s ongoing development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, which violates numerous Council resolutions, is a major concern. Sanctions evasion continues to be a problem, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have increased its nuclear arsenal since the sanctions regime was first introduced in 2006. The DPRK’s continuing refusal to participate in denuclearisation dialogue and the humanitarian and human rights situations are also challenges for the Council.

Council members could consider holding an informal meeting to discuss strategies for enhancing member state compliance with existing resolutions on the DPRK and compelling the DPRK to return to dialogue.

The lack of a panel of experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is another major issue. Some members appear to feel that the MSMT does not carry the same authority as an entity mandated

by the Council. Given this concern, Council members, who are also part of the MSMT or who support its work, could explore options for enhancing its credibility, such as expanding its membership and providing more information about the way in which it operates. These members could also hold an informal meeting to discuss how the MSMT’s reports can be used to assist the Council and the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

UN agencies with relevant expertise, such as the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), could also be asked to brief the Committee on the DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Council Dynamics

The Council is sharply divided over the DPRK, and this dynamic appears to have worsened as cooperation between the DPRK and Russia has increased. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded Council members generally favour using sanctions to help manage the threat posed by the DPRK and regularly call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the DPRK to engage in dialogue and abandon its nuclear weapons programme while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some have also called for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK’s weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened the DPRK by blocking Council action on the file. Several of these members have strongly criticised the growing cooperation between the DPRK and Russia, including by highlighting evidence of arms transfers from the DPRK to Russia and noting that these transfers violate Council resolutions. Some have also called for the reinstatement of the PoE assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US and its allies for heightening tensions and have accused the US of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These two members have previously argued that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation in the country and have also blocked attempts to issue a Council product responding to missile launches carried out by the DPRK in recent years.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

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