

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

In September, France will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

This month, the Security Council will hold a debate on [peacekeeping reform](#) pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017. France intends to highlight the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda at this meeting. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is the anticipated briefer.

The Council will convene for a briefing by [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) Barham Salih in September.

Additionally, Council members are expected to hold three informal interactive dialogues (IIDs) during the month. The first one is a high-level IID with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), Nabil Fahmy, and members of the Arab Summit Troika—a group of three rotating countries that monitor the implementation of resolutions and commitments adopted by the LAS, which consists of the outgoing, current, and incoming Arab Summit chairs. The meeting is convened in accordance with a 29 January 2021 Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2021/2) that encouraged the holding of an informal meeting between Council members and LAS representatives on the margins of the General Assembly's high-level segment.

The second IID is being organised by Bahrain, France, Greece, and Latvia and will focus on artificial intelligence (AI). Additionally, Denmark and the UK intend to convene an IID on the situation in Sudan, which follows a similar IID that they convened in December 2025.

On 11 September, France plans to convene a meeting to mark the 25th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. It might also propose a product in connection with this event.

Middle Eastern issues that will be discussed in September include:

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

- [“The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”](#), the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments.

The Council plans to address several African issues this month:

- [Sudan](#), renewal of the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime; and
- [Democratic Republic of the Congo \(DRC\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO).

Regarding Asian issues, the Council is expected to hold a briefing and consultations on the [UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan \(UNAMA\)](#).

The only issue in the Americas that the Council plans to address in September is [Haiti](#). Council members are expected to negotiate the re-authorisation of the Gang Suppression Force (GSF), whose mandate expires on 30 September.

Regarding non-proliferation issues, the Council is scheduled to hold the 90-day briefing on the work of the 1737 Sanctions Committee concerning [Iran](#) and to discuss the mandate renewal of the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the committee, which expires on 26 September.

As in previous months, the Council may hold one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in September. Other issues could be raised during the month depending on developments. For instance, Council members will continue following closely the crisis in the Middle East and any spillover effects, such as the disruption to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. Members are also likely to continue considering possible arrangements after the termination of the [UN Interim Force in Lebanon \(UNIFIL\)](#).

In September, Council members are expected to continue conducting “straw polls” to gauge support for candidates for the position of [UN Secretary-General](#).

1 September 2026

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In Hindsight: The Security Council and the Changing Maritime Domain

Introduction

The Security Council has traditionally approached maritime security through specific geographic situations and discrete threats, rather than as a broader and interconnected peace and security challenge. However, in more recent years, several Council members, predominantly elected ones, have focused on the geographically widespread security implications of this challenge while calling for a more holistic approach. This reflects a growing recognition that maritime security—and preserving the oceans as part of the global commons—requires greater attention to the links among conflict, international law, economic security, and new technologies.

Long-standing threats such as piracy and armed robbery at sea, transnational organised crime, and illicit trafficking increasingly intersect with emerging challenges, including the use of drones, advanced weaponry, and cyber threats. Disruptions to freedom of navigation have also become more prominent, particularly around strategic chokepoints and heavily trafficked maritime routes, as illustrated by recent developments in the Strait of Hormuz. Such disruptions can have significant consequences for international trade, with cascading effects on food and energy security. Taken together, these developments underscore the increasingly interconnected and transnational nature of maritime security threats, which are difficult to address through an episodic or situation-specific approach.

Against this backdrop, several elected members have sought to give maritime security greater attention within the Council. Greece convened a high-level debate during its May 2025 presidency on strengthening maritime security through international cooperation. Panama followed in August 2025 with a debate focused on prevention, innovation, and emerging challenges with regard to maritime security, while Bahrain again placed maritime security prominently on the agenda during its April 2026 presidency amid the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz. The attention given to the issue by elected members from different regions reflects a growing recognition that maritime security requires more sustained consideration at the Council level and a more coherent approach to addressing increasingly interconnected threats.

The Evolution of the Council's Approach to Maritime Security

Since the Council first began engaging more systematically with piracy off the coast of Somalia in 2008, its consideration of maritime security has gradually broadened. A range of other threats at sea have captured the Council's attention, often through country-specific files. These have included migrant smuggling and human trafficking in the Mediterranean, illicit arms transfers, sanctions evasion, and other forms of transnational organised crime.

In addition to Somalia, the Council has also dealt with piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, adopting resolution 2039 of 29 February 2012, which encouraged a regional counter-piracy strategy and contributed to the development of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct and the region's maritime security architecture.

In a significant development, the Council expanded its use of maritime enforcement measures in the Mediterranean in 2015. Resolution 2240 adopted under Chapter VII on 9 October 2015 authorised member states to inspect and seize vessels on the high seas off Libya suspected of migrant smuggling or human trafficking. This was followed by resolution 2292 of 14 June 2016, also acting under

Chapter VII, which authorised inspections of vessels suspected of carrying arms in violation of the Libya arms embargo.

The Council has also used maritime interdictions and related measures to support sanctions implementation, including in the DPRK, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, particularly where illicit trade helps sustain conflict, organised crime, or terrorism. In some cases, the Council has authorised action by states and regional organisations.

An effort to move beyond a country-specific approach came in August 2021, when India, then serving as Council president, convened the first thematic meeting on maritime security. The meeting sought to frame the issue more holistically, examining the wider security, economic, and environmental effects of maritime crime. Following the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement identifying a range of maritime threats, including piracy, armed robbery at sea, terrorist activities exploiting maritime routes, and attacks on shipping and critical infrastructure, while stressing the importance of international and regional cooperation. As noted above, in recent years, several elected members also chose to highlight maritime security in signature events during their Council presidencies.

Differences Among Council Members

As maritime security has become more closely tied to armed conflict and geopolitical competition, divisions within the Council have become more pronounced, both over the scope of the Council's role and the measures available to protect navigation at sea.

The Council has repeatedly recognised the importance of international law, including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), in maintaining maritime security. Its 2021 presidential statement on maritime security reaffirmed that international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, sets out the legal framework applicable to activities in the oceans. Differences remain, however, over how some of these principles are interpreted and applied, particularly in relation to navigational freedoms, coastal-state rights, and military activity at sea.

These differences are especially apparent in China and the US' positions. China is a party to UNCLOS, while the US is not, although Washington regards many of the convention's provisions as reflecting customary international law. The two countries have differed sharply over freedom of navigation and over China's maritime claims in the South China Sea, which the US and several other countries consider excessive and unlawful. The US routinely conducts freedom-of-navigation operations in the region using naval and air forces to challenge maritime claims that it considers inconsistent with international law.

China and Russia, while also affirming freedom of navigation, have generally placed greater emphasis on the limits of its exercise. China has stressed that navigational freedoms must be exercised with due regard for the sovereignty, security, and legitimate rights of coastal states. Russia has placed particular emphasis on flag-state jurisdiction and has opposed maritime interdictions it considers inconsistent with the law of the sea or based on an overly expansive interpretation of enforcement powers, including those undertaken pursuant to unilateral sanctions.

These differences have affected negotiations on Council products. China, for instance, has favoured language that does not present UNCLOS as an all-encompassing legal framework for activities at sea.

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During negotiations on resolution 2634 of 31 May 2022 on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, China sought to narrow the formulation describing UNCLOS by using language from the Council's 2021 presidential statement, which referred to the convention as setting out the legal framework "applicable to activities in the oceans, including countering illicit activities at sea". Earlier counter-piracy resolutions, including resolution 2608 of 3 December 2021, referred to UNCLOS as setting out the legal framework "within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out".

China argued that UNCLOS itself recognises that matters not regulated by the convention remain governed by other rules and principles of general international law, while other members resisted language, they saw as limiting the scope and universality of the convention. (For more information, see our 30 May 2022 *What's in Blue* story.)

Similar differences have emerged over the measures that states may take when navigation is threatened. Following the adoption of resolution 2722 of 10 January 2024, Russia argued that the resolution's reference to states' right to defend their vessels lacked a clear basis in international law. The US and the UK, by contrast, maintained that states may defend their vessels in accordance with the inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter. (For more information, see the brief on the Red Sea in our July 2026 *Monthly Forecast*.)

There are also differences over how far the Council should venture into maritime issues. Russia has argued that many matters frequently discussed under the heading of maritime security—including transnational organised crime, illicit arms and drug trafficking, trafficking in persons, and the illegal exploitation of marine resources—do not fall within the Council's remit unless they have clear peace and security implications and are better addressed in specialised forums. China has similarly resisted an expansive Council role in certain areas, maintaining, for example, that specific maritime disputes such as those in the South China Sea should not be addressed by the Security Council.

Conflict, Chokepoints, and the Council's Response

A striking feature of several of the conflicts that have occupied the Council in recent years is the extent to which their effects have spilled into the maritime domain. Russia's invasion of Ukraine turned the Black Sea into an active theatre of conflict, affecting commercial shipping, ports, and grain exports, while also demonstrating the growing role of naval mines, maritime drones, and other new technologies in naval warfare. The Houthis attacked commercial vessels in the Red Sea, which disrupted shipping through the Bab el-Mandeb and Suez route, which the group framed as a response to Israel's military operations in Gaza. The conflict involving the US and Iran has placed the Strait of Hormuz at the centre of wider regional hostilities. The conflict has also underscored the vulnerability of critical maritime infrastructure, including ports, energy terminals, pipelines, and other facilities that support the movement of goods and energy across the region. Shipping through the Strait fell sharply as security risks mounted, pushing up war-risk insurance premiums and contributing to higher and more volatile oil prices,

while forcing governments and companies to consider alternative supply routes.

The effects have extended well beyond the states directly involved in the conflict. Given the concentration of global energy flows through Hormuz, prolonged insecurity in the Strait carries implications for importing economies far removed from the Gulf region, with knock-on effects for transport costs, supply chains, and price stability.

These cases have presented the Council with very different maritime security challenges, and its response has varied considerably depending on the nature of the conflict, the actors involved, and the political dynamics surrounding the underlying situation.

In the case of Ukraine, the Council repeatedly discussed the maritime consequences of the war, including the disruption of commercial shipping, attacks on Black Sea ports, and the impact on global food security. Yet the most significant practical response in the maritime domain came from outside the Council. The Black Sea Grain Initiative, brokered by the Secretary-General and Türkiye in July 2022, sought to establish a maritime corridor for the safe export of grain and other foodstuffs from Ukrainian ports. The Council helped keep attention on the initiative and the wider maritime consequences of the war, but deep divisions—particularly Russia's position as a party to the conflict and a permanent Council member—left little scope for collective action.¹

The Red Sea crisis prompted a more direct Council response. On 10 January 2024, the Council adopted resolution 2722, demanding that the Houthis cease their attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and taking note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks, including those that undermine navigational rights and freedoms. The resolution also established monthly reporting by the Secretary-General on further Houthi attacks, a requirement that has since been repeatedly renewed and has provided the Council with a regular mechanism for following developments in the Red Sea.

The Council was able to agree on the need to protect commercial navigation, but agreement over the causes of the crisis and the measures needed to address it have been more difficult. Members differed over how the attacks should be understood in relation to the war in Gaza and over the legality of subsequent military action against Houthi targets in Yemen. These differences later carried over into discussions on strengthening the Yemen sanctions regime. Proposals to restrict the supply of dual-use components and to provide for maritime interdictions encountered opposition from China and Russia. (For more information, see our 13 November 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

The situation in the Strait of Hormuz has presented the Council with a particularly difficult maritime security challenge, given the legal and political questions involved, the parties to the conflict, and the wider implications of disruption to a critical waterway. Unlike the Red Sea crisis where the immediate threat to commercial shipping came from a non-state armed group, in Hormuz, the maritime crisis unfolded amid direct hostilities involving Iran, Israel, and the US, with disruption to navigation becoming part of the wider interstate confrontation.

¹ Apart from resolution 2623 of 27 February 2022, which called for an emergency special session of the General Assembly, the Council's only adopted outcome on the war until 2025 was a presidential statement of 6 May 2022 (S/PRST/2022/3). The statement expressed strong support for the Secretary-General's efforts to find a peaceful solution and requested him to brief the Council in due course. The Council did not adopt another outcome on the conflict until resolution 2774 of 24 February 2025.

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The Council was initially able to agree on a limited response. On 11 March, it adopted resolution 2817, condemning Iran's strikes against Gulf countries and Jordan, as well as actions or threats aimed at obstructing international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour, while China and Russia abstained. Both countries argued that the text focused disproportionately on Iran while failing to adequately reflect the US-Israeli military action that had preceded the regional escalation.

The divisions widened when the Council moved from condemning the disruption to considering how navigation through the Strait might be secured. In late March, Bahrain, working closely with Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Jordan, proposed a draft resolution that initially invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter and would have authorised member states to use "all necessary means" in and around the Strait to secure transit passage and deter attempts to obstruct international navigation.

China and Russia objected to the proposed authorisation of force language arguing that it could legitimise military action without clearly defined limits. They also maintained that the draft addressed the consequences of the crisis while failing to deal with what they regarded as its underlying cause—the military confrontation triggered by US and Israeli actions against Iran. Although the explicit authorisation of force was subsequently removed, China and Russia vetoed the draft. They subsequently put forward an alternative draft text calling broadly for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urging all parties to refrain from further escalation in the Middle East and beyond. The text was put in blue but was not brought to a vote.

The impasse continued. The US and Bahrain subsequently copenned another draft, supported by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar, aimed at restoring freedom of navigation through the Strait. Among other measures, it called on Iran to cease attacks, mining, and the imposition of tolls; disclose the number and location of sea mines it had laid; and cooperate with efforts to remove them. Despite attracting broad support among the wider UN membership, the draft, although put in blue, was not brought to a vote amid continuing objections from China and Russia and the prospect of another veto. (For more information, see our 6 April and 5 May *What's in Blue* stories as well as the brief on Maritime Security in our April 2026 *Monthly Forecast*.)

From Council Action to Coalition Responses

Operational responses to maritime insecurity have increasingly taken shape outside the Council through regional arrangements and smaller coalitions of states. In response to Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, the US established the multinational Operation Prosperity Guardian in December 2023, while the EU launched Operation ASPIDES in February 2024 with a defensive mandate to protect commercial shipping and safeguard freedom of navigation. Military responses also included Operation Poseidon Archer, led by the US and the UK from January 2024, and the US-led Operation Rough Rider, launched in March 2025.

As the crisis escalated in the Strait of Hormuz, US President Donald Trump called for a multinational naval coalition to help secure the waterway, although several US allies were cautious about participating in enforcement operations. The US subsequently began enforcing a naval blockade on traffic to and from Iranian ports, including through the interception and, in some cases, seizure

of Iran-linked vessels. Its maritime operations later expanded under "Project Freedom", aimed at facilitating the movement of vessels through restricted waterways.

Such arrangements are able, at times, to provide rapid responses to threats at sea. There have, however, been disagreements over the legal basis, scope, and objectives of some of these operations. Their proliferation also raises a broader question about the Council's place in an increasingly crowded maritime security architecture. If responses to threats with implications for international peace and security are developed primarily through unilateral action or unilateral coalitions outside the UN, the Council risks becoming peripheral to decisions and arrangements taking shape elsewhere. This is particularly consequential where military action is involved, since competing interpretations of the legality and purpose of such operations can themselves deepen existing tensions.

The Changing Nature of Maritime Security Threats

The nature of threats to maritime security is rapidly evolving. The use of naval mines, missiles, and increasingly sophisticated uncrewed systems has widened the range of threats facing both commercial and military vessels. Disruptions to freedom of navigation have also become more frequent, particularly around strategic chokepoints and heavily trafficked maritime routes, where even relatively localised incidents can have wider consequences for trade, energy flows, and supply chains.

Sanctions evasion has become more difficult to detect, including through deceptive shipping practices and sub-standard or so-called shadow fleets. The growing dependence of maritime trade on digital systems has also increased exposure to cyber threats, while ports, energy installations, pipelines, undersea cables, and other critical infrastructure have become increasingly vulnerable to attack or disruption.

Environmental and climate-related pressures add another layer of risk. Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and the degradation of marine ecosystems can place additional strain on coastal infrastructure and communities, while illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, pollution, and unsustainable resource exploitation can contribute to economic insecurity and tensions over access to maritime resources.

A further difficulty is the lack of a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of maritime security threats at the global level. This limits understanding of how different threats are evolving, where they are converging, and how risks in one part of the maritime domain may affect another. The growing range of threats therefore raises a broader question for the Council: whether mechanisms designed largely to respond to individual incidents or country situations remain sufficient when the threats themselves increasingly cut across geographic, legal, and institutional boundaries.

Conclusion

The increasingly transnational and interconnected nature of maritime threats to international peace and security makes sustained Council engagement particularly relevant. Many such threats exceed the capacity or jurisdiction of any single coastal or flag state, while their consequences can quickly spread across regions. Maritime security should therefore be treated more clearly as a cross-cutting peace and security issue. The Council has tools that other bodies do

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not: It can adopt binding measures, establish sanctions and monitoring regimes, and authorise interdictions. More importantly, it can connect incidents at sea to the political and security conditions on land from which they often emerge. There is also growing recognition among Council members that military responses alone are unlikely to provide lasting solutions, and that addressing underlying drivers—including weak governance, poverty, and limited economic opportunities—may require concerted and integrated international, regional, sub-regional, and national approaches.

Yet the response across the UN system remains fragmented. Briefing the Council in May 2025, Christian Bueger argued that the UN system's approach to maritime security needed to be recalibrated and streamlined, noting that more than 22 UN entities address different aspects of the issue under separate mandates without an overarching global strategy or coordination mechanism. Among other options, he suggested establishing maritime security as a standing item on the Council's agenda or creating a dedicated capacity to support more systematic coordination, information-sharing,

and strategic thinking. Another option could include more regular reporting to the Council, possibly on an annual basis, to provide a broader assessment of emerging maritime security trends and areas of convergence. Such an arrangement could strengthen the Council's ability to identify emerging risks, assess how threats are evolving across different regions, and move beyond an approach driven primarily by individual crises.

However, a more coherent approach does not mean that the Council should become the world's maritime regulator or displace the International Maritime Organization, UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and other specialised bodies. Rather, as the body with primary responsibility for international peace and security, the Council could work towards creating a political and security framework that brings greater coherence to the current fragmented response. While this may be challenging given the current dynamics, the growing impact of threats at sea on international peace and security is making it increasingly difficult for the Council to remain at the margins.

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Counter-Terrorism

On 5 August, the Security Council convened for a briefing on the Secretary-General's 23rd biannual strategic-level report (S/2026/638) on the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) to international peace and security (S/PV.10205). The briefers were Oguljeren Niyazberdiyeva, the Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism (OUSG) at the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), and Carmen G. Cantor, the Deputy Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED).

On 6 August, the members of the Security Council issued a press statement condemning suicide terrorist attacks outside a police station in Kabal, Swat District, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan, on 2 August 2026 (SC/16428). The attack resulted in the deaths of at least 16 Pakistani nationals. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

South Sudan

On 6 August, the Security Council held an open briefing on the situation in South Sudan and the work of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) (S/PV.10206). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS Anita Kiki Gbeho briefed on the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report (S/2026/640), which was circulated to Council members on 31 July and covered developments from 16 April to 15 July. Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) Major General (retired) George Aggrey Owinow and Founder and President of the South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network Lilian Riziq also briefed. Closed consultations followed the open briefing.

On 27 August, Council members issued a press statement condemning in the strongest terms an attack by armed individuals on an UNMISS force-protection convoy in Jonglei State, which killed two peacekeepers and injured seven others. Council members stressed

that attacks against UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law and called for a full, transparent, and immediate investigation. They also expressed deep alarm at persistent intercommunal and armed violence in Jonglei State and its impact on civilians, humanitarian workers, and peacekeepers.

Ukraine

On 10 August, Latvia and the UK, with co-sponsorship from Ukraine, convened an Arria-formula meeting titled "Implementing international humanitarian law: prisoners of war, civilian detainees and foreign fighters, in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine". According to the concept note circulated by the co-organisers, the objective of the meeting was to draw attention to the treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees in Russian custody, alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and what the note describes as the deceptive and coercive recruitment of foreign nationals into the Russian armed forces.

The briefers included: Claudia Fuentes Julio, the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in New York; Leniie Umerova, a Crimean Tatar activist and human rights defender; Khuan Alberto Leyva Garsiya, a soldier in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, who spent more than three years in Russian captivity before his release in August 2025; Oleg Gushchyn, a Ukrainian lawyer and legal expert with the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, a Ukrainian governmental body that coordinates state activities related to compliance with the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions; and Sheida Kiran, a British-Turkish-Iranian documentary filmmaker who recently produced the film *Into the Void: Putin's Foreign Fighters*, an investigation into the recruitment of foreign nationals to fight in the war.

On 24 August, the Council held an open briefing on the situation in Ukraine (S/PV.10212). The meeting coincided with the anniversary

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of Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991 and marked four and a half years since Russia's invasion of the country on 24 February 2022. The Council's five European members—Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK, collectively known as the "E5"—requested the meeting, which Denmark's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, chaired. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher briefed, while Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

1718 Sanctions Committee (DPRK)

On 11 August, Council members discussed in closed consultations the 90-day report on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee. Ordinarily, the chair of the 1718 Sanctions Committee would brief Council members on the report. At the time of writing, however, the chair had not been appointed, as members remained unable to agree on the allocation of the Council's subsidiary bodies for 2026. Denmark, which held the Council presidency in August, therefore briefed members on the report, consistent with recent practice.

Yemen

On 7 August, Security Council members issued a press statement expressing concern at heightened tensions in Yemen (SC/16429). The statement condemned "unauthorized landings of aircraft at Sana'a International Airport on 3 July and Hudaydah Airport on 13 July, without permissions and clearances from the Government of Yemen in violation of international civil aviation rules, and missile attacks launched by the Houthis against Saudi Arabia since 13 July, as well as commercial vessels since 22 July".

On 13 August, the Security Council held a briefing on the situation in Yemen (S/PV.10208). UN Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Tom Fletcher briefed. Yemen participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Libya

On 18 August, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Serwaa Tetteh briefed the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and the Secretary-General's latest report on UNSMIL (S/2026/661). While noting progress on the political process and UNSMIL-facilitated roadmap, Tetteh noted that Libya continues to face numerous challenges on the domestic front. She expressed concern over the fragile security situation along the country's western coast and recent power and water disruptions across the country.

Working Methods

On 19 August, the Security Council held its annual open debate on working methods (S/PV.10210 and Resumption I). The open debate was convened under the agenda item "Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2024/507)", referring to the most recent version of the comprehensive compendium of Council working methods. Shamala Kandiah Thompson, the Executive Director of Security Council Report, briefed. Besides Council

members, 49 member states participated in the meeting. Among the issues raised were the need for greater transparency in the process of selecting the next Secretary-General, the lack of agreement in the appointment of subsidiary body chairs, and penholderships.

Georgia

On 20 August, following the closed consultations on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Council members discussed the situation in Georgia under "any other business" (AOB). The E5 requested the meeting to mark the 18th anniversary of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Europe, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed.

Conflict and Food Insecurity

On 25 August, the Security Council held a high-level open debate on conflict-related food insecurity under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security" (S/PV.10213, Resumption I, and Resumption 2). The meeting, titled "Food under fire: the Security Council's role in mitigating global and local food rises" was a signature event of Denmark's August Council presidency and was chaired by Denmark's Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen. Secretary-General António Guterres briefed. He expressed concern at the record numbers of people facing food insecurity worldwide due to conflict, while urging Council members to use all tools available to prevent and end conflicts, including resolution 2417, to mitigate the impact of conflict on food systems. Carl Skau, the Acting Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), also briefed the Council and spoke about several situations where conflict and hunger are in a vicious cycle. He also warned of a new dimension in which certain conflict zones—such as those in the Black Sea, the Red Sea, and the Strait of Hormuz—have created choke points that have impacted food and energy supplies and threatened to push tens of millions more into hunger. Perrine Benoist, the Co-CEO of Action Against Hunger, representing the Coalition Against Conflict and Hunger, briefed as well.

Lebanon

On 28 August, Security Council members held closed consultations on Lebanon. France, the penholder on Lebanon, called the meeting in light of the deteriorating situation in the south of the country and to begin discussion of possible arrangements after the termination of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 28 August, at Russia's request, Security Council members discussed the death of Ratko Mladić under "any other business" (AOB) following the closed consultations on Lebanon. Mladić was serving a life sentence at the UN Detention Unit in The Hague after being convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for genocide, crimes against humanity, and violations of the laws or customs of war committed during the 1992-1995 conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). There were no briefers.

UN Peacekeeping

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold a debate on peacekeeping reform pursuant to resolution 2378 of 20 September 2017. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is the anticipated briefer. France, the September Security Council President, intends to highlight the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda at this meeting.

Key Recent Developments

At the Summit of the Future in September 2024, member states adopted the *Pact for the Future* which, among other things, requested the Secretary-General to conduct a review on the future of all forms of UN peace operations “taking into account lessons learned from previous and ongoing reform processes, and provide strategic and action-oriented recommendations for the consideration of member states on how the United Nations toolbox can be adapted to meet evolving needs, to allow for more agile, tailored responses to existing, emerging and future challenges”.

The Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) jointly conducted the peace operations review which built on *A New Agenda for Peace*—the Secretary-General’s July 2023 report providing his vision for the future of multilateral engagement on peace and security issues—and the comprehensive studies that the two departments carried out on the future of peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions (SPMs), respectively. DPO commissioned an independent study on: *The Future of Peacekeeping, New Models, and Related Capabilities*, which was published in October 2024 and was intended to inform the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial held in Berlin in May 2025. DPPA worked on a comprehensive compendium of the history and evolution of SPMs that was published in June.

On 20 August, the Secretary-General’s report on the review on the future of all forms of peace operations was submitted to both the Security Council and the General Assembly. The report outlines the spectrum of peace operations and advocates for resetting peace operations for a new geopolitical era, including a sharper focus on peacemaking, stronger partnership with host states, and more focused mandates. It also emphasises the importance of a networked approach that continues to capitalise on the UN’s comparative advantages, while also leveraging partnerships with regional organisations, troop and police contributing countries, and others. The report offers a series of recommendations and commitments on how to adapt UN peace operations and ensure they remain fit for purpose in a changing geopolitical landscape. On 26 August, the Secretary-General briefed the General Assembly on his report and recommendations. This was followed by a Security Council closed consultation that the peacekeeping duo—Denmark and Pakistan, supported by Latvia—convened on 27 August in which Lacroix and Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed, highlighting the relevant aspects of the report and its recommendations on peacekeeping and SPMs, respectively.

On 23 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2823 which focuses on ensuring accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. The resolution, co-authored by Denmark and

Pakistan, garnered the support of 153 co-sponsors from the wider UN membership. Among other things, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Security Council an annual report on the status of the investigation and prosecution of cases related to the killing of and all acts of violence against UN personnel serving in peacekeeping operations. The first report, due within 120 days of the adoption of the resolution, is expected to include a range of options for the Council’s consideration on ways and means of addressing crimes against peacekeepers and strengthening accountability for such acts.

In April, DPO launched an updated implementation framework for the Action for Peacekeeping Plus (A4P+), an implementation strategy released in March 2021 to accelerate peacekeeping reform through the Secretary-General’s A4P initiative. It seems that the implementation framework took into consideration the evolving security and operating environment, resource constraints, as well as the progress and challenges faced in implementing A4P. In this regard, it outlines a strategic, focused, and streamlined set of priorities to ensure that UN peacekeeping operations remain effective, cost-efficient, and responsive.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in September is how to reform and adapt peacekeeping operations to meet current and future challenges. In this regard, Council members could focus on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General’s report on the comprehensive review of all forms of UN peace operations which are expected to be considered by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. A possible option would be to work on a draft presidential statement in response to the report and the relevant aspects of the recommendations to the Security Council.

The updated implementation framework for A4P+ is another issue that could be of interest to Council members. Lacroix may take advantage of the September meeting to provide a briefing on the framework and update Council members on the implementation of A4P+ across different mission settings. So far, DPO has released eight progress reports, with the last publicly available report issued in March.

Another issue is the implementation of resolution 2823. The peacekeeping duo are likely to keep sustained attention to its implementation in the remainder of their terms. A possible option would be for them to convene a Council meeting following the submission of the 120 days report expected in October.

The mandate renewal of several missions over the coming months will also be a major issue. In particular, Council members will consider the Secretary-General’s report on the feasibility of an eventual handover of tasks from the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to the host country authorities or the UN country team which is expected in September. This is likely to inform upcoming negotiations on MINUSCA’s mandate renewal in November 2026, which may pave the way for the beginning of the mission’s drawdown.

In October, Council members will consider the findings of a strategic review to determine the future of the UN Mission for the

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING Security Council Resolution S/RES/2823 (23 June 2026) was on accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2026/600 - A/80/798** (22 July 2026) was the Secretary-General’s review on the future of all forms of UN peace operations.

UN Peacekeeping

Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). In November, Council members will also negotiate the mandate renewal of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Both the renewal and the mission's future will depend on progress by both Sudan and South Sudan in implementing a set of benchmarks outlined by the Security Council in resolution 2802 of 14 November 2025.

The UN's liquidity crisis and the continued efforts to ensure cost-efficiency and effectiveness across the organisation, including within peace operations, remains an ongoing issue. Council members held two closed consultations, one in November 2025 and another in April, to receive updates on the implementation of contingency measures across peacekeeping missions to address this challenge. They may want DPO to keep them abreast of the latest developments in this regard, including constraints to their operational effectiveness in implementing their mandated tasks.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The peacekeeping duo are working together to draw attention to peacekeeping issues within the Council, including by convening meetings and proposing Council products. They are likely to continue do so in collaboration with other like-minded members by focusing on the outcome of the review and the implementation of resolution 2823.

Last year, the Council renewed the mandates of four UN peacekeeping operations non-unanimously. This year, so far, the mandate of two UN peacekeeping missions was adopted non-unanimously, an indication that the trend observed in 2025 may continue, with Council members expected to hold critical discussions on the mandate of several other missions over the coming months as discussed above. While some members, particularly the US, are expected to advocate for the potential draw down and eventual closure of some missions, others may push back underscoring the implications of such decisions for peace and security in host countries.

The General Assembly approved a \$5.1 billion peacekeeping budget for the 2026/2027 fiscal year, which showed a ten percent reduction from last year. The US, which has accumulated significant arrears in its contributions to the UN peacekeeping budget, has been strongly pushing to reduce the cost of UN peacekeeping operations. In this context, over the past year and half, it has been calling for strategic reviews, assessments, and benchmarks to determine the future of peacekeeping missions and evaluate their performance. Following the adoption of the 2026/2027 peacekeeping budget, the US vowed to continue maximising efficiencies and identifying additional opportunities to reduce unnecessary expenditures.

Syria

Expected Council Action

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

Key Recent Developments

In August, Syrian courts sentenced several high-profile former government, military, and security officials for crimes committed during the civil war (2011-2024). These included former president Bashar al-Assad and his brother Maher al-Assad, who were found guilty of murder, torture, and crimes against humanity and, on 11 August, were sentenced to death in absentia. (The brothers fled to Russia following Assad's ouster in December 2024 and have reportedly lived there since.) On 18 August, Assad's cousin Wassim al-Assad was also sentenced to death for crimes against humanity and war crimes. The rulings were celebrated by many Syrians as an initial step for transitional justice efforts in the country.

On 24 August, the US removed Syria from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, lifting its remaining sanctions on the country. This marked an important milestone for the prospect of socioeconomic reconstruction and rehabilitation in Syria, following years of heavy sanctions imposed on the Assad government.

The Syrian interim government has also continued to promote the unification of the country. On 25 August, the Kurdish-led Syrian

Democratic Forces (SDF) announced its dissolution and merging of its forces with those of the Syrian military, in line with the integration agreement reached on 29 January.

On 9 August, Syria's foreign ministry announced that the Syrian and Russian governments agreed to a memorandum of understanding regarding Russia's presence in Syria. Russian facilities include an airbase in Hmeimim and a naval base in Tartous, on the Mediterranean Sea. The new agreement says that civilian facilities previously under Russian control will be managed by the Syrian government, while the military bases are "to be transformed into joint training and qualification centers".

Syria continues to grapple with challenges to its security, however. According to Syria's foreign ministry, Israel conducted airstrikes on the Abu al-Duhur military airbase in Idlib governorate on 18 August, reportedly causing no casualties. Syria condemned the attacks as a threat to regional security, calling on the Security Council to oppose continued Israeli violations of Syrian sovereignty. Israel said Syria was on the verge of violating Israeli-Syrian security arrangements by permitting Turkish troops to deploy at the airbase, which it considers a security threat. Türkiye reportedly rejected the claim, while Syria denied plans to establish a Turkish presence at the site. The US Special Presidential Envoy for Syria and Iraq, Tom Barrack, expressed concern at the strikes, and on 24 August, the US reportedly mediated Syrian-Israeli de-escalation talks.

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 SDF regarding the integration of northeast Syria, and Syria's commitment and actions to counter ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10215](#) (27 August 2026) was a meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria.

Syria

Since the ouster of Assad's government in December 2024, the Israeli military has conducted hundreds of incursions and strikes into Syria citing security risks. The government of interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa has responded with de-escalatory and diplomatic overtures, despite Israel's expanded occupation of territory in southern Syria, which is also impacting local communities. On 17 August, Syrians from the southern governorate of Quneitra held a protest outside the headquarters of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), demanding information about the fate of dozens of Syrians detained by Israeli forces and calling on the UN to intervene.

Syrian forces have continued efforts to combat Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and dismantle its network in Syria. On 18 August, Syria's interior ministry said that Syrian forces had arrested a senior ISIL military leader close to Manbij in Aleppo governorate.

The Secretary-General's 23rd biannual report (S/2026/638) on ISIL, published on 31 July, estimated that ISIL maintained up to 3,000 fighters in Syria and had shifted operationally from the central desert towards urban areas, prioritising "hit-and-run attacks against religious, political and military sites". It also said several plots on Sharaa and other senior officials have been disrupted. Following the closure of the al-Hol camp on 22 February, 15,000 to 20,000 former residents—mostly women and children believed to be associated with ISIL members—remain unaccounted for, while the fate of approximately 3,000 ISIL-affiliated detainees is unclear following the transfer of thousands of detainees to Iraq. The report says that "[m]ore than 1,000 unaccounted-for individuals were assessed to have joined Da'esh or other armed groups".

On 13 August, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Barham Salih concluded a week-long visit to Syria during which he travelled to Damascus, Idlib, and Aleppo governorates and met with Sharaa, Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, and other officials. Salih said that with over 3 million Syrians having already returned since December 2024, Syria is at a "historic turning point" which necessitates scaled-up international support to help the country recover and rebuild. Around 4 million Syrian refugees remain in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Türkiye, while approximately 5.5 million Syrians remain displaced in their own country.

On 18 August, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi and Shaibani held a joint press conference in Damascus. Grossi said that, "a few tons of nuclear material" were discovered in an undisclosed site previously used by the former government. Grossi confirmed that the agency and Syria will work together to secure the materials in line with the international safeguards system, while Shaibani affirmed that the materials will remain in Syrian national custody.

Syria has also continued to advance its cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) towards eliminating remnants of the chemical weapons programme developed by the former government. On 9 July, the OPCW's Executive Council reinstated Syria's rights and privileges at the organisation that were suspended since 2021 due to the former government's failure to declare the full scope of its chemical weapons programme and the use of such weapons in Syria. The OPCW is also working on strengthening Syria's capacity to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention.

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 encourage the Syrian government to make continued progress on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR); security sector reform (SSR); transitional justice; and social cohesion—including through accountability and reconciliation processes.

Following the dissolution of the SDF, a remaining issue regarding Syria's unity is the situation in the southern governorate of Suweida, which remains largely out of Damascus' control amid tensions with Druze groups.

The continued violations of Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity by Israel also remains a related and pressing issue.

Furthermore, ISIL continues to pose a threat to Syrian security, despite Damascus' enhanced counter-terrorism efforts.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement calling for full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for full respect for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Such a statement could also:

- welcome progress made towards Syrian unity, while also calling on progress on the Suweida political roadmap;
- welcome further cooperation with the OPCW and IAEA;
- urge Damascus to strengthen independent accountability mechanisms and meaningfully engage victims and civil society on transitional justice;
- call for sustained support towards advancing Syria's counter-terrorism efforts, SSR, and capacity-building for Syrian security forces; and
- call for enhanced financial support for humanitarian needs and long-term recovery.

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 significant value at this juncture. Council members, in close collaboration with Syria, could consider requesting written advice from the PBC on how best to support the country's transition.

Council members could further continue to press for progress on an expedited agreement for the UN Special Envoy's office to relocate to Damascus, given the importance of a meaningful and well-resourced UN presence on the ground to support the transition.

Sustaining international support for Syria's shift from emergency humanitarian assistance to longer-term recovery remains a key issue. Council members could consider convening an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with relevant UN entities and international financial institutions—including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—to coordinate on addressing humanitarian needs and accelerating Syria's reintegration into international financial systems.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly aligned on the need for the Syrian authorities to advance an inclusive, Syrian-owned and Syrian-led

Syria

political process based on the key principles of resolution 2254. They broadly agree that intercommunal tensions 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, Syrian Interior Minister Anas Khattab, and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions list signalled unified support for Syria's interim government and the overall transition following years of deep divisions on the file.

The 24 August US decision to lift its remaining sanctions on Syria and its continued efforts to support Syria's security reflects Washington's deepening engagement with Damascus. Russia's recent agreement with Syrian authorities also shows a renewed cooperative approach with the transitional authorities. Other members have also taken steps to normalise relations and reinforce the transition's momentum. On 21 August, France and Syria issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to uncovering the truth and addressing impunity related to the legacy of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. On 20 August, Shaibani concluded a visit to Pakistan—the first by a Syrian foreign minister in 19 years—to discuss new prospects for cooperation. Additionally, during the Council's 27 August monthly briefing on Syria, the Permanent Representative of Denmark Christina Markus Lassen said that her country will soon be reopening its embassy in Syria, which was closed in 2012.

Members differ in their criticism of Israel's continued attacks on Syrian territory and its military presence in the south of the country, with western members tending towards more measured language, while the A3 group (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Somalia), China, Pakistan, and Russia are more likely to condemn Israeli actions in stronger terms. On 21 August, Council members Pakistan and Somalia issued a joint statement together with ten other countries which condemned Israeli airstrikes on the Abu al-Duhur airbase in Syria, framing them as threat to Syria's transition and stability. Despite the US' strong support for Israeli security, Washington's presidential envoy for Syria also criticised the strikes.

Colombia's position on the Golan seems to have shifted after President Abelardo de la Espriella assumed office. On 10 August, the new government recognised Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, a break from the previous government's approach and only the second such recognition globally following the US.

Many Council members remain aligned on the importance of counter-terrorism efforts in Syria, while calling for sustained support for Syrian counter-terrorism capacity. China has been particularly vocal in calling on Damascus to take a stronger stance against all Security Council-listed terrorist organisations, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, whose members have reportedly been integrated into the Syrian armed forces.

Iran

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council is scheduled to hold the 90-day briefing on the work of the 1737 Sanctions Committee concerning Iran.

The mandate of the Panel of Experts (PoE) assisting the committee expires on 26 September.

Background and Recent Developments

The 1737 Sanctions Committee was established by resolution 1737 of 23 December 2006, which required the committee to report to the Council every 90 days on its activities. Prior to the agreement on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme, and the adoption of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015 endorsing it, these briefings were held every three months under the "Non-Proliferation" agenda item.

Resolution 2231 suspended all prior sanctions resolutions on Iran, rendering defunct the 1737 Committee and its reporting requirement. Subsequently, the Council held biannual briefings on the implementation of resolution 2231, which also took place under the "Non-Proliferation" agenda item.

In August 2025, the "E3" parties to the JCPOA—France, Germany, and the UK—triggered the deal's "snapback" mechanism to

reimpose UN sanctions on Iran that the JCPOA and resolution 2231 had suspended. China and Russia contested the E3's legal and procedural standing to do so and argued that all sanctions were permanently lifted on 18 October 2025, when the JCPOA and resolution 2231 were originally set to expire. On that date—absent an activation of the snapback—resolution 2231 stated that the Council would end its consideration of the Iranian nuclear file and "Non-Proliferation" would be removed from the list of matters of which the Council is seized. China and Russia—as well as Iran—contend that this has now happened.

By contrast, the E3 and like-minded Council members have argued that the triggering of the snapback mechanism was valid and therefore only specific paragraphs of resolution 2231 related to the suspension of sanctions have expired. As such, they maintain that all previous UN sanctions measures on Iran have been re-activated and that the 1737 Sanctions Committee and its PoE have been restored.

In March and June, the US and Colombian presidencies, respectively, included the committee's 90-day briefing in the month's programme of work, prompting China and Russia to block the programme's adoption on both occasions. Because the dispute over the committee has also prevented agreement on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs, each president assumed the functions of committee

UN DOCUMENTS ON IRAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2817 (11 March 2026) was authored by Bahrain on behalf of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council—which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—as well as Jordan. S/RES/2231 (20 July 2015) was a resolution that endorsed the JCPOA on Iran. S/RES/1737 (23 December 2006) banned trade with Iran of certain nuclear proliferation-sensitive items, imposed an asset freeze on a list of persons and entities involved in proliferation-sensitive activities, and established a sanctions committee. Secretary-General's Report S/2026/506 (19 June 2026) was the Secretary-General's biannual report on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the JCPOA.

chair and circulated a draft report on the committee's activities under a no-objection procedure. China and Russia objected in both cases. As a result, there was no committee report for the presidencies to deliver at the briefings. The meetings nonetheless proceeded under the "Non-Proliferation" agenda item, as did the 10 July briefing on the Secretary-General's biannual report on the implementation of resolution 2231, held under the presidency of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At all three sessions, Russia requested a procedural vote on the agenda, which was adopted each time with the same voting pattern: 11 votes in favour, two against (China and Russia), and two abstentions (Pakistan and Somalia).

Without a chair and unable to convene, the committee's substantive work remains blocked. In April, China and Russia also apparently rejected eight candidates proposed by the Secretariat to serve on the PoE. The Council originally established the panel through resolution 1929 of 9 June 2010 and annually renewed its mandate, unlike the sanctions measures themselves, which were open-ended until resolution 2231 lifted them. Most Council members believe that the PoE was reinstated when the snapback took effect and that its current mandate expires on 26 September.

Since the PoE has not been reconstituted, the only independent reporting on Iran's nuclear programme is conducted by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which also faces challenges in its monitoring and verification activities. The agency's most recent quarterly report on Iran, dated 4 June, states that it remains largely unable to verify the country's implementation of its Safeguards Agreement under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. As a result, the IAEA has lost continuity of knowledge across all of Iran's declared nuclear facilities and cannot account for the size or whereabouts of its stockpile of enriched uranium. On 10 June, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution calling on Iran to disclose information about the stockpile and to grant inspectors immediate access.

The Middle East crisis and volatile regional situation have also continued to affect the Council's consideration of the Iranian nuclear file. On 17 June, Iran and the US signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that ended hostilities, called for the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and a waiver of US sanctions on Iranian oil, and provided for a 60-day negotiating period on a final agreement on Iran's nuclear programme to be endorsed by the Council. The MoU came under strain almost immediately, and hostilities resumed within weeks, prompting an emergency Security Council briefing on 2 July at Bahrain's request. The MoU officially expired on 17 August without a final agreement, as the strait remains effectively closed, attacks on shipping have continued, and the US revoked its sanctions waivers on Iranian oil. On 24 August, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent announced additional sanctions on Iran and entities with which it does business, which he said were intended to "sever every economic lifeline" to the country—although several of the measures would not take immediate effect. Iran vowed to retaliate in response.

Human Rights-related Developments

Recent press releases issued by independent experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council have focused on the ill-treatment of and human rights violations against ethnic minorities in Iran. On 29 July, UN experts issued a press release in which they expressed grave concern regarding "allegations

of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment against members of the Bahá'í religious minority in Iran". A subsequent press release issued by UN experts on 6 August called on Iranian authorities to "end the escalating arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment and arbitrary executions of ethnic minorities, particularly Kurdish and Baluch minorities".

UN experts also issued a press release on 27 July in which they condemned death sentences imposed on 12 young men for their participation in the January 2026 protests in Iran. The experts observed that the sentencing in a single closed hearing without "clarity as to each defendant's individual responsibility violates established fair trial standards" and called for the sentences to be immediately halted.

In a 5 August statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk expressed alarm at the increase in executions and death sentence in Iran since March, noting that "capital punishment continues to be used to instill fear among the population and suppress dissent" and urging the authorities to "urgently halt all executions and move towards the abolition of the death penalty".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council in September is the expiry of the PoE's mandate. The immediate effect of a lapse would be limited in practical terms, as the PoE has not been operationalised since the snapback took effect, and the committee itself and the sanctions measures that it oversees will remain in effect in the view of most Council members. Allowing the mandate to expire would nonetheless formalise a reporting vacuum that the US, the E3, and like-minded Council members have procedurally contested until now.

Those members may therefore pursue a draft resolution renewing the PoE's mandate for another year, which China and Russia would most likely block.

In the continued absence of a PoE, like-minded members could consider alternative reporting arrangements outside the Council, as they did after Russia vetoed a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the PoE supporting the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee in 2024. At that time, some members considered mandating another monitoring mechanism through the General Assembly, but a group of states ultimately bypassed the UN altogether, establishing a Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) comprising 11 countries that has submitted its own reports to the Council.

A related but broader issue is the lack of agreement on the restoration of the 1737 sanctions regime itself. Most Council members maintain that all previous UN sanctions on Iran are in force and binding on all member states, but the committee overseeing implementation is unable to conduct effective oversight without a chair, regular reporting, or the ability to convene. This challenge is growing increasingly acute as the broader political and security context in the region continues to deteriorate, with the collapse of the MoU and the absence of effective IAEA verification. The most effective option in this regard remains a political agreement between Iran and the US, endorsed by the Council, that ends the current armed conflict and addresses Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.

Council Dynamics

One year after the invocation of the snapback, Council members remain deeply divided on the Iran file, which continues to undermine the Council's basic functioning by blocking agreement on the allocation of subsidiary body chairs and preventing the adoption of

Iran

the provisional programme of work every three months. The past three meetings on Iran also saw procedural votes on the agenda item.

At those recent meetings, Council members such as Bahrain, Panama, the US, and the five European members—Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK—have been the most vocal in asserting the validity of the snapback and pressing for the 1737 Committee's full operation. Several of these members also criticised Iran's actions in the region, including its strikes on Gulf countries and its support for non-state armed groups.

By contrast, China and Russia have consistently reiterated their arguments against the snapback's legal and procedural standing

and blamed the US for causing the crisis by withdrawing from the JCPOA in 2018 and—with Israel—striking Iran in February, initiating the current conflict. Russia has also accused the Secretariat of violating Article 100 of the UN Charter by restoring the committee's website and sanctions list and by proposing experts to serve on the PoE.

Other members, such as Colombia, the DRC, and Liberia have voted in favour of the agenda at each meeting but placed greater emphasis on preserving the functioning and legitimacy of the Council's machinery than on the merits of the legal dispute. Pakistan and Somalia have abstained throughout.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution to extend the Sudan sanctions regime, which expires on 12 September.

The mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee expires on 12 October.

Key Recent Developments

On 12 August, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese militia, launched simultaneous kamikaze drone attacks targeting several major cities, including El Obeid, Atbara, Omdurman, and Khartoum. El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan state, has faced mounting pressure amid a significant build-up of RSF and allied fighters around the city. Repeated drone strikes have targeted critical civilian infrastructure in and around El Obeid, including power and fuel stations, forcing medical facilities and water stations to shut down. While the hostilities have continued, displacement sites in the city have expanded, and people have fled violence in surrounding areas. The security situation remained highly volatile, with waves of drone strikes inside the city and fighting southwest of El Obeid reportedly killing scores of civilians.

In late July, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) launched a major ground offensive in North Kordofan and announced that it had recaptured the Al Sadarat highway and five key towns along the route, including Bara, Um Sayala, and Gebrat al-Sheikh, following two days of intense clashes with the RSF. The SAF has since consolidated its control over much of the corridor, although the RSF reportedly has continued to challenge these gains.

In Blue Nile state, the security and humanitarian situation deteriorated following the expansion of fighting around the towns of Kurmuk and Geisan along the Ethiopian border. Media reports indicated that the RSF, together with its ally the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), retook the towns in mid-August. The fighting has raised concerns about the further regionalisation of the conflict, amid allegations of external support to the RSF,

including claims that Ethiopian territory has been used as a supply conduit for RSF operations and that the latest RSF offensive in Blue Nile was reportedly launched from inside Ethiopia.

In late July and early August, the Quintet—comprising the AU, the EU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the UN—held consultations in Addis Ababa with Sudanese political blocs and parties. The latest discussions built on the Quintet's initial engagement with a group of Sudanese civilian actors on the sidelines of the international Sudan conference held in Berlin on 15 April and further consultations in early June. Media reports indicate that some groups, including Somoud and Tasis, declined to participate in this round of talks, citing reservations about the way the mediators designed the consultations process.

On 16 and 17 August, a delegation of the AU Peace and Security Council undertook a field visit to Sudan and met with senior Sudanese officials, including SAF leader General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Transitional Prime Minister Kamil El-Tayeb Idris. Discussions covered the country's political, security, socioeconomic, and humanitarian situation, as well as governance challenges and efforts towards an inclusive national dialogue. The AU has sought to reopen its liaison office in Sudan to facilitate engagement with stakeholders at different levels and provide technical support to the country. Sudan's membership in the AU was suspended in the wake of the country's 2021 military coup d'état. (For more information, see our 25 June, 4 August, and 21 August *What's in Blue* stories.)

On 7 August, Somalia, with co-sponsorship from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Liberia, convened an Arria-formula meeting titled "Safeguarding Education in Sudan: Investing in Peace, Recovery and Stability". Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman (Somalia) and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed delivered opening remarks. UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Management Hannan Sulieman and Executive Director of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) Lisa Chung Bender briefed.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2791](#) (12 September 2025) renewing the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime – including targeted sanctions (asset freezes and travel bans) and an arms embargo – for another year, until 12 September 2026. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10211](#) (24 August 2026) was an open briefing organised by Denmark to discuss the protection of civilians and the humanitarian consequences of the ongoing conflict. [S/PV.9993](#) (12 September 2025) was on the extension of the Sudan sanctions regime and the mandate renewal of the Panel of Experts assisting the Sudan Sanctions Committee. [Security Council Letters S/2026/657](#) (6 August 2026) was a letter sent by the UAE expressing concerns about alleged unauthorised disclosure of the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Sudan

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 28 April, following a proposal by the Council's P3 members (France, the UK, and the US), the Council designated four individuals – Al-goney Hamdan Dagalo, the RSF's procurement director and brother of RSF leader Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, and three Colombian nationals involved in facilitating the RSF's military operations.

Pursuant to resolution 2791 of 12 September 2025, which most recently renewed the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime, the Council requested the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee to submit its final report, including its findings and recommendations, by 13 July. On 13 July, Council members received the panel's final report, which had not been published at press time.

On 6 August, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) sent a letter to the Council expressing concern over the disclosure of information contained in the panel's final report in a 29 July Reuters article. (Reports submitted by the panel remain confidential until they are considered by the committee and transmitted to the Council.) The UAE had apparently corresponded with the panel earlier in August regarding information contained in the report that had appeared in the media. In a 7 August letter, the panel requested that the UAE respond by 31 August to a series of assertions linking it to the conflict in Sudan. The UAE replied in a 20 August letter, providing information and evidence in response to the assertions and maintaining that its submission should be given due consideration and reflected in the final report.

As the appointment of subsidiary body chairs remains unresolved, Denmark, in its capacity as Council president in August, sought to convene a committee meeting to discuss the panel's report and recommendations. It appears, however, that Bahrain requested to postpone the meeting seeking additional time to receive further clarifications from the panel while noting that it had submitted written questions to the panel in this regard. Liberia supported Bahrain's request.

On 20 August, Denmark convened the committee meeting following several postponements. It seems that Bahrain reiterated its concerns and requested additional time to consider the report, including to allow the UAE to respond to the questions raised by the panel in its 7 August letter. Several members, including Denmark, France, Latvia, Panama, Somalia, the UK, and the US, supported convening the meeting to discuss the panel's final report. Greece, meanwhile, apparently supported postponing the meeting to allow additional time for consideration of the report.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 6 July, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution without a vote at its 62nd session on the "Human rights situation in and around El Obeid, in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan". The resolution strongly condemned the escalating violence committed by the RSF and allied forces in and around El Obeid. It requested the independent international fact-finding mission for Sudan to "conduct, within its existing resources, an urgent inquiry into any violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law and related international crimes, allegedly committed in and around El Obeid in the context of the ongoing conflict in Sudan".

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is the renewal of the Sudan sanctions regime (targeted sanctions and the arms embargo). Ensuring strict compliance is particularly important amid reports of continuous supply and use of foreign weapons and mercenaries in the Darfur region. Accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, and other atrocities, remains a key issue. One option for the Council members is to extend the sanctions regime for one year.

A related issue is the increasing use of drones and other advanced weaponry by the warring parties. Their growing deployment has intensified risks to civilians, with attacks increasingly affecting populated areas and critical civilian infrastructure. Council members could consider strengthening existing measures aimed at preventing

the transfer of weapons and related materiel that could facilitate such attacks, including through enhanced monitoring and reporting on arms flows and the networks facilitating their supply.

An important issue for the Council is whether the sanctions regime remains sufficiently equipped to respond to the changing nature of the conflict and patterns of sanctions violations. During the Council's 24 August meeting, US Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs Massad Boulos outlined several proposals in this regard, including expanding the arms embargo to cover the entire territory of Sudan; reaffirming that unmanned aerial vehicles, systems, and related technologies fall within its scope; requesting the Secretary-General to increase the number of experts serving on the panel supporting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee; and enhancing cooperation between the panel and expert groups supporting other sanctions regimes in the region. However, achieving the necessary consensus on some of these proposals would be difficult given the prevailing Council dynamics and the divergence of views among members in this regard.

One option would be for Council members to hold an informal meeting with the Panel of Experts to assess the practical implications of the measures proposed by the US, including their potential benefits, implementation challenges, and possible impact on the effectiveness of the sanctions regime.

In light of apparent violations of the sanctions regime and the evolving political and security dynamics in Sudan and the wider region, Council members could consider requesting the Secretary-General to conduct an independent assessment to assess the underlying drivers of instability in Sudan. Such an assessment could also identify how the Council's existing tools might be better adapted to respond effectively to the situation.

Council members could also encourage greater cooperation between member states and the Panel of Experts, including through information-sharing on arms transfers, financial networks, and entities involved in sanctions violations. This could help the panel trace the supply chains and financing networks, identify those facilitating violations, and support more effective implementation of the sanctions measures.

Council members could also consider following up on the 16 December 2025 informal interactive dialogue (IID) organised by the UK and Denmark by convening a similar meeting with key regional and international stakeholders, including representatives of regional and sub-regional organisations and states involved in mediation efforts. Such a meeting could explore ways to better coordinate diplomatic initiatives, leverage comparative advantages, and support a coherent political strategy for resolving the conflict. It could also examine the regional implications of the conflict, including displacement dynamics, arms flows, and risks to regional peace and security. (For more information, see our 16 December 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Council Dynamics

Council members recognise that external interference has fuelled conflict and instability in Sudan and have urged all states to refrain from such actions, support efforts for a durable peace, comply with their obligations under international law, and implement relevant Council resolutions on sanctions in Darfur. Members, however, have diverging views on the utility of the sanctions regime. Several

Sudan

have stressed the importance of maintaining the measures in light of ongoing violence in Darfur and the Panel of Experts' role in monitoring the humanitarian and security situation and identifying violations. Russia, by contrast, has argued that sanctions have failed to stabilise the region, pointing to the continued flow of weapons into Darfur. More broadly, many members have pointed to inadequate implementation and enforcement of the sanctions regime.

Council members also have diverging views on how to adapt the Council's tools to the evolving security situation in the country. Some, such as Denmark, France, the UK, and the US, have advocated expanding the geographical scope of sanctions measures beyond Darfur to other conflict-affected parts of the country. Several members have also expressed support for the application of targeted measures against additional individuals responsible for atrocities and sanctions violations. However, the African members, China, and

Russia have opposed expanding the scope of the sanctions regime. Russia has been particularly categorical in rejecting any extension of the measures beyond Darfur. The issue has resurfaced repeatedly in recent years, most recently during the negotiations on resolution 2791.

The use of mercenaries in Sudan's conflict has drawn increased attention from member states amid reports of Colombian mercenaries fighting alongside the RSF in Darfur. This issue was raised during the negotiations on resolution 2791, during which the UK proposed language condemning the use of mercenaries, as well as violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses committed by them. The proposal, however, was not retained in the final text, apparently because it did not garner sufficient support among Council members. (For more information, see our 11 September 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

Afghanistan

Expected Council Action

In September, the Council is scheduled to hold its quarterly open briefing on Afghanistan. The Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Rabab Fatima, who was appointed on 15 July, is expected to brief. Closed consultations are scheduled to follow the open briefing.

Key Recent Developments

While the intensity of large-scale hostilities between Afghanistan and Pakistan appears to have declined since the last escalation in late June and early July, relations between the neighbouring countries remain strained. Disagreements over cross-border militancy and the prolonged disruption of bilateral trade and transit continue to fuel tensions. (For background and more information, see the brief on Afghanistan in our June 2026 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 28 July, UNAMA released an update on cross-border civilian casualties in Afghanistan between April and June. During this period, it documented 399 civilian casualties—57 deceased and 342 wounded—resulting from cross-border armed violence between Afghanistan and Pakistan, including 40 women and 112 children. According to the update, airstrikes and ground engagements were the leading causes of civilian harm, with all documented casualties attributed to Pakistani security forces.

Internal security incidents continue to pose a significant challenge in Afghanistan. Media reports citing Taliban officials indicated that, on 28 July, two armed assailants shot and killed Zabihullah Amiri, director of the Information and Culture Department, near Fayzabad in the northeastern province of Badakhshan.

On 17 August, an explosion at an education centre in Kabul's Dasht-e Barchi area injured at least 42 children. Media reports noted that the area is predominantly home to members of Afghanistan's Shi'ite minority community, which has faced repeated attacks in recent years.

On 10 August, UNAMA released a report examining steps taken by Afghanistan's Taliban authorities since August 2021 to establish governance and oversight mechanisms for de facto security institutions and to promote accountability for misconduct by security personnel, including acts that may amount to human rights violations. The report noted that the authorities have established a range of oversight mechanisms, including internal departments within individual security institutions and separate bodies with broader oversight mandates. However, UNAMA said that it was unable to assess the extent to which internal procedures conform with international standards and good practices relating to law enforcement, accountability, and effective oversight. According to the report, a lack of trust in de facto institutions and barriers to reporting misconduct—particularly for women facing extensive restrictions in their daily lives—continue to impede accountability.

On 23 June, a delegation of Taliban authorities met with EU officials in Belgium for the first engagement in this format. European officials said that the meeting focused on the return of Afghans, particularly failed asylum seekers. Media reports citing a European Commission spokesperson indicated that officials from the commission and 15 EU member states participated in the Brussels meeting. Some reports also suggest that the Taliban authorities have sought control over Afghan consulates in Europe in exchange for cooperation on returns.

On 14 August, marking five years since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, Ambassador Christina Markus Lassen (Denmark), as Council president, delivered a joint statement on behalf of a 58 delegations during a press stakeout. The statement highlighted Afghanistan's continuing human rights, humanitarian, economic, and security challenges and warned of their implications for neighbouring countries and the wider region. It also noted that "the absence of inclusive governance continues to undermine prospects for lasting peace and stability" and that terrorist groups remain a threat to

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2822 (15 June 2026) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for another year, until 17 June 2027. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10165 (8 June 2026) was the quarterly briefing on UNAMA.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan and to regional and international security. The signatories called on the Taliban to restore girls' access to education; ensure women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation in Afghan society; and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Afghans.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 13 August, UN experts released a statement on the human rights situation in Afghanistan. They reiterated that gender discrimination, domination, and oppression in the country is part of an institutionalised system amounting to the "crime against humanity of persecution on grounds of gender" that can be described as "gender apartheid". The experts added that the ban on education for girls after the sixth grade has continued, as has the exclusion of women and girls from "employment, movement without a male guardian, healthcare, justice, sport, cultural life, public spaces and public affairs". They also expressed deep alarm at the continued use of corporal and capital punishment, while noting that child and forced marriage continues to be widespread, notwithstanding their formal prohibition.

The experts maintained that the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Afghanistan, established by the UN Human Rights Council in October 2025, requires "full resourcing, staffing without delay, dedicated gender expertise from the outset, meaningful participation/consultation of Afghan civil society, especially women, and active state cooperation, including information-sharing". They further underscored that states should not normalise relations with the de facto authorities "until there is demonstrated, measurable and independently verified progress against human rights benchmarks, particularly for women and girls".

Women, Peace and Security

Five years after the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, a UN Women update based on research conducted in 2025 and 2026 found that the systematic exclusion of women and girls from public life continues to deepen, with growing risks of long-term harm. The update highlighted that 90 percent of women responding to a nationally representative telesurvey conducted in 2026 reported requiring permission from a male family member to leave their home, while 52 percent leave home only twice a month or less. By contrast, 96 percent of male respondents reported leaving home every day. Scrutiny over dress, speech, and movement has added an additional burden for women when outside the home.

The update also described the impact that the restrictions have on women's mental health, noting that with each new restriction to avenues for education, work, mobility, and connection, women's ability to cope with ongoing pressures is increasingly strained. In focus group discussions, mothers described how hopes once centred on their daughters' education had given way to arranging their marriages because they see no other realistic alternatives. At the same time, the update stressed that Afghan women continue to aspire to shape their own future and that of the country.

UN Women stressed that the response to the crisis must address the political and systemic nature of women's exclusion, underscoring that essential, technical cooperation and service delivery alone cannot reverse these trends. Accordingly, UN Women called on the international community to keep principled engagement on women's rights at the centre of engagement strategies with the de facto authorities and to urge the Taliban to rescind, without conditions or delay, all restrictions on women and girls' education, employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public life. Among other recommendations, UN Women also stressed the importance of ensuring that Afghan women have a meaningful role in shaping decisions about Afghanistan's present and future.

Key Issues and Options

One pertinent issue for the Council has been the limited progress in establishing a coherent political process for Afghanistan. Despite continued international engagement, including through the Doha Process, little progress has been achieved on foundational political and human rights issues in Afghanistan. One option for Council members would be to convene an informal interactive dialogue (IID)

to take stock of current engagement efforts and explore ways to strengthen a more coherent and inclusive political approach to these issues. The Council could invite regional stakeholders; UNAMA; civil society representatives, including Afghan women representatives; and international partners involved in the Doha Process and broader diplomatic engagement on Afghanistan.

The Taliban's continuing refusal to adhere to many of Afghanistan's international obligations, especially those relating to women and girls, is a major issue for several Council members. At September's UNAMA briefing, Council members could reiterate calls for the reversal of restrictions affecting women and girls, particularly in relation to education, employment, freedom of movement, and participation in public life, while stressing that the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of Afghan women should remain integral to international engagement with the Taliban authorities.

Another option for Council members could be to hold an informal meeting with representatives of UN Women, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and civil society to discuss ways for the Council to exert pressure on the Taliban regarding its practices and policies that restrict human rights.

During the September briefing, Council members could further consider inviting a civil society representative to provide perspectives on the human rights situation and its implications for prospects for an inclusive political process in Afghanistan.

Deteriorating relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and recurring cross-border violence remain an important regional security issue. Council members could encourage continued dialogue between the two sides to address security concerns and prevent renewed escalation, while stressing the need to protect civilians and comply with international law. They could underscore UNAMA's important role in monitoring and reporting on the impact of cross-border violence on civilians.

Broader protection risks facing civilians in Afghanistan remain an important issue. The Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians could consider convening a meeting ahead of the Council briefing to hear from relevant UN entities regarding risks to civilians, including those arising from internal security incidents and cross-border hostilities.

The threat of terrorism coming from Afghanistan remains another issue. Members could consider convening informal meetings with regional counter-terrorism experts to assess emerging terrorism risks and discuss possible responses. Expert-level discussions could help monitor trends, including the activities of terrorist groups operating from or within Afghanistan, and enhance situational awareness.

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

The US has stated that its top priorities with regard to Afghanistan remain protecting US citizens, mitigating terrorist threats, and securing the release of US detainees. It has accused the Taliban of engaging in "hostage diplomacy" by using detainees as leverage in negotiations and has criticised what it views as insufficient progress on counter-terrorism commitments. Reports also indicate that the

Afghanistan

US had effectively halted all foreign assistance activities in Afghanistan by mid-2025.

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

During the negotiations on resolution 2822 of 15 June, which most recently extended UNAMA's mandate, text relating to engagement with Afghanistan, including references to the Doha Process and the Group of Special Envoys and Special Representatives, generated considerable discussion. Several members—including France, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Panama, and the UK—preferred language emphasising engagement linked to Afghanistan's progress in fulfilling its international obligations and reintegration into the international community. These members argued that the UN-led Doha Process remains the principal framework for coordinated international engagement on Afghanistan and should therefore continue to be explicitly reflected in the mandate.

By contrast, Russia advocated for what it described as a pragmatic approach centred on maintaining all channels of engagement, which it argued is necessary to advance efforts towards a political settlement. It also questioned the prominence accorded to the Doha Process, citing what it viewed as limited progress and arguing that regional formats have assumed a more active role in engagement on Afghanistan. (For more information, see our 14 June *What's in Blue* story.)

Some European countries have pursued selective bilateral engagement with the Taliban authorities on issues of particular interest, including migration and women's rights. Germany, for instance, has deported Afghan nationals since late 2024, reportedly following arrangements with the Taliban authorities. As part of this engagement, Germany has allowed Taliban-appointed officials to assume control of Afghan diplomatic missions in Berlin and Bonn, reportedly in exchange for cooperation in facilitating direct returns to Afghanistan.

Pakistan has linked its dispute with the Taliban to its alleged harbouring of terrorist groups, particularly the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which Islamabad claims plans and conducts attacks against Pakistani security forces from across the border. The Taliban has rejected these claims as unfounded, while accusing Pakistan of targeting civilian areas in Afghanistan and describing its actions as provocative.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Expected Council Action

In September, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Barham Salih will brief the Security Council. The briefing will focus on challenges related to forced displacement across the globe.

Background and Key Recent Developments

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has estimated that by the end of 2025 the number of people forcibly displaced across the globe was 117.8 million, a figure that includes refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), asylum seekers, and others in need of international protection. Of the 41.6 million refugees included in this number, 70 percent come from six countries: Afghanistan, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Over the past three decades, the Security Council has been paying more attention to the links between displacement and threats to international peace and security. Although the Council has yet to adopt a stand-alone resolution on displaced persons in armed conflict, it has highlighted this issue in several outcomes, including resolutions 1265, 1674, and 2417:

- Resolution 1265 stressed the particular vulnerability of IDPs and refugees in conflict situations.

- Resolution 1674 recalled the prohibition against the forcible displacement of civilians in conflict, urged the international community to provide support and assistance to enable states to fulfil their responsibilities regarding the protection of refugees, and reaffirmed the need to maintain the security and civilian character of refugee and IDP camps.
- Resolution 2417 stressed the link between conflict-related food insecurity and forced displacement.

The High Commissioner for Refugees has briefed the Council several times about specific country situations on the Council's agenda, such as the Sahel in December 2012, Syria in December 2015, and Myanmar in February 2018. In May 2023, the High Commissioner also briefed Council members during "any other business" on the influx of refugees into Sudan's neighbouring countries, presenting an overview of this displacement's potential impact on regional stability.

In addition to country-specific briefings, the Council typically receives an annual briefing under the agenda item "Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees", which allows for a general update from the High Commissioner on refugees in various settings on the Council's agenda. This will be Salih's first time

UN DOCUMENTS ON BRIEFINGS BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2417 (24 May 2018) was on the link between armed conflict and food insecurity. It strongly condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare, as well as the unlawful denial of humanitarian access. S/RES/1674 (28 April 2006) was on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It expressed grave concern at the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and the use of such weapons on civilians affected by armed conflict. S/RES/1265 (17 September 1999) was the Council's first thematic resolution on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9905 (28 April 2025) was Filippo Grandi's final briefing to the Council as High Commissioner for Refugees.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

briefing the Council since he was elected High Commissioner by the UN General Assembly in December 2025.

The most recent annual briefing was held on 28 April 2025. During that meeting, then High Commissioner Filippo Grandi lamented “a retrenchment away from aid, away from multilateralism”. He maintained that “[f]reezing or cutting aid budgets is already having fatal consequences on millions of lives”, adding that multilateral aid promotes stability and “remains indispensable to find[ing] solutions to crises, including forced displacement”.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues that the Council may highlight in their statements include how to:

- address the root causes of displacement in various conflicts;
- compel member states to uphold international humanitarian law and international human rights law in response to displacement crises;
- promote unhindered humanitarian access to forcibly displaced populations;
- address the differential effects of displacement on men, women, and children; and
- encourage member states to provide greater financial support to mitigate the dire humanitarian effects of forced displacement, especially given the financial crisis facing UNHCR.

Council members may use the opportunity to elicit information from Salih on country-specific situations and how member states can better advance principled, safe, voluntary, dignified, and

informed refugee returns. Some members may also suggest ways to protect IDPs and refugees from sexual/gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation.

In the future, the Council could consider pursuing a stand-alone resolution or presidential statement on displaced persons in armed conflict to provide more consistent and comprehensive guidance to member states on this issue, including on the facilitation of durable solutions for the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of IDPs and refugees and their local integration or resettlement.

Council members could also consider convening private meetings or informal interactive dialogues (IIDs) to discuss the many challenges related to displacement in country-specific situations. Unlike closed consultations, these meeting formats allow for the participation of non-Council member states. As a result, they could enable a frank exchange of ideas among Council members and affected countries that may be conducive to strategic thinking and problem-solving with regard to particular displacement crises.

Council Dynamics

The Council is generally united in its support for UNHCR and the work of the High Commissioner. It appears, however, that political sensitivities in the Council over issues such as Gaza and Ukraine have affected Council deliberations on the issue of displacement. Several Council members highlight inter-related causes of displacement such as armed conflict, economic and society instability, climate change, and human rights violations.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

In September, the US and Panama, the co-penholders on Haiti, are expected to seek re-authorisation from the Security Council for the Gang Suppression Force (GSF). The GSF was first authorised for an initial period of 12 months on 30 September 2025 through resolution 2793 as a non-UN multinational mission to combat armed gangs in Haiti. The resolution also requested that the Secretary-General establish a UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) to provide support primarily to the GSF, but also to other entities, including the Haitian National Police (HNP) and Haitian armed forces on joint operations with the GSF, as well as to the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). The GSF succeeded the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti.

Background and Key Recent Developments

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

employing tactics including murder, kidnapping, and sexual violence amid widespread impunity.

Violence and insecurity remain rampant in most of the capital as well as other areas of the country, such as the Artibonite and Centre departments. A 6 August BINUH flash report described the resurgence of armed violence in parts of the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area between 6 March and 31 July, with levels of violence not seen since January and February 2024. The report says that the violence was driven by rivalries between gangs in the context of “the reconfiguration and weakening of the *Viv Ansanm* gang coalition and by increased pressure from the security forces in other parts of the capital” which led to the displacement of gang members, “exacerbating tensions and competition for control over illicit revenue-generating opportunities” in the area of Plaine du Cul-de-Sac. During the reporting period, at least 613 people were killed and 375 injured, primarily during confrontations between criminal gangs. The report notes that over one third of the victims were not associated with gangs and were “struck by stray bullets or deliberately killed or assaulted on suspicion of having links with rival gangs

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2814 (29 January 2026) renewed BINUH's mandate for a year, until 31 January 2027. S/RES/2793 (30 September 2025) authorised UN member states to transition the MSS mission in Haiti into the GSF for an initial period of 12 months. The text also requested that the Secretary-General establish UNSOH. **Secretary-General's Report S/2026/574** (14 July 2026) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on Haiti. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10198** (20 July 2026) was the Council's quarterly open briefing on Haiti.

or the security forces”. The report further says that more than 176 women and girls were subjected to rape by gang members, and that over 18,000 people were forced to flee.

Recent media reports indicate that gangs continue to expand their reach and target the population, including through a major attack in Kenscoff, another commune in the Port-au-Prince metropolitan area previously considered relatively safe. At time of writing, the Council was expected to hold a briefing on 28 August to discuss this attack.

Earlier reports by the UN and human rights organisations have also highlighted a high rate of casualties during operations by security forces and a private military company in Haiti, including among the uninvolved population, with some of the casualties resulting from the use of explosive drones. The private military company has been identified in UN and media reports as a US company, Vectus Global, hired by the Haitian government to combat gangs.

The humanitarian situation remains severe, with approximately 1.5 million people internally displaced, including 751,000 children, according to a 20 August UNICEF update covering developments from 1 January to 30 June. Around 5.8 million people experienced acute levels of food insecurity during this period, while health authorities reported 442 suspected cholera cases, including two fatalities.

The GSF’s mandate established in resolution 2793 represented a clear shift from the MSS mission’s model. While the MSS mission focused on supporting and training the HNP, the GSF has been mandated to conduct “counter-gang operations to neutralize, isolate, and deter gangs” independently or in cooperation with the HNP and Haitian armed forces. It also authorised a personnel ceiling of 5,550, compared to the 2,500 envisaged (but never achieved) under the MSS mission’s concept of operations.

In a 29 June letter, Special Representative for the GSF Jack Christofides conveyed to the Security Council the strategy and metrics for measuring the success of the GSF, as well as benchmarks towards an end state. The letter identifies three strategic objectives:

- Removal of gang control over territory;
- Securing critical infrastructure; and
- Haitian authorities having the ability to contain gang violence.

According to the letter, the envisaged end state is for the GSF to have degraded the gangs’ ability to threaten the state and established minimum security conditions for sustained international stabilisation efforts and for the gradual rebuilding of Haitian security infrastructure. The letter sets 30 September 2028 as the target date for achieving this end state.

The GSF has yet to achieve full deployment. Following the departure in April of Kenyan troops, who formed the bulk of the MSS mission in Haiti, some contingents and personnel from new troop-contributing countries, such as Chad, Jamaica, Mongolia, and Sri Lanka, arrived in Haiti. According to the Secretary-General’s latest BINUH report, as at 8 July, the GSF’s military component comprised 1,083 personnel, while the civilian component comprised 16 staff members. UNSOH has been fully operational since 1 April.

The GSF officially began operations on 1 June but has thus far operated only in a limited capacity. It is currently expected to reach full operational capacity between October and the end of the year. On 12 August, the GSF announced its first major deployment outside Port-au-Prince, saying that Sri Lankan personnel would operate

in the Artibonite department. However, the details of the deployment, including its expected duration, number of personnel, and area of operations, have not been made public.

Following the dissolution in February of the Transitional Presidential Council (TPC)—the temporary body established in April 2024 after a dramatic surge in gang violence—the Prime Minister of Haiti, Alix Didier Fils-Aimé, who was appointed by the TPC in November 2024, remains the country’s sole executive authority.

In July, the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) announced that the first round of presidential and legislative elections will be on 13 December, with a possible second round on 21 February 2027. While Haitian authorities have recently taken several preparatory steps towards the holding of general elections—which would be the first since 2016—questions remain about the prospects for conducting an inclusive, safe, and credible electoral process within this timeline, including due to the ongoing violence affecting the country.

In a 29 May report, the UN Secretary-General highlighted options for disarmament, dismantlement and reintegration (DDR) in Haiti. The Council requested this report in resolution 2814, which in January renewed BINUH’s mandate. The report sets out three progressively comprehensive options, ranging from a 12-month “rapid, quick-win programme” assessed at \$13.5 million annually, to a multi-year programme estimated at between \$100 million and \$150 million. The Secretary-General recommended the latter option and proposed establishing a multi-partner trust fund, co-chaired by the government of Haiti and the UN, to provide pooled, predictable, flexible, and multi-year financing for DDR. As at 25 August, Council members have yet to discuss the options presented by the Secretary-General.

On 25 June, the US Supreme Court allowed the Trump administration to proceed with terminating Temporary Protected Status (TPS) that benefited more than 300,000 Haitian nationals in the US. The termination took effect on 5 August. The US Department of Homeland Security announced the decision in November 2025 following its determination that there are “no extraordinary and temporary conditions in Haiti that prevent Haitian nationals” from safely returning to the country. While most people forcibly returned to Haiti currently arrive from the Dominican Republic, deportations resulting from the end of TPS are likely to add additional pressure on the already overstretched national and international assistance system. In a 9 August interview, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Designated Expert on Haiti, William O’Neill, described the country’s human rights situation as “catastrophic”, noting that under the present conditions forced repatriation cannot be considered “safe, dignified and durable”. He stressed that “[n]obody should be deported or forced to return to Haiti”, warning that such measures would be in violation of international law.

Women, Peace and Security

The Founder and Director of the Haitian Women’s Collective, Carine Jocelyn, briefed the Security Council at the 8 July annual open debate on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). She described the dire situation in the country, including the high incidence of sexual and gender-based violence. She said women and girls are systematically raped, trafficked, and sexually exploited by gangs, noting that the violence is “facilitated by easy access to military-grade weapons” trafficked by gangs and criminal groups, primarily from the US, in violation of the UN arms embargo on Haiti. Referencing

Haiti

UN-reported cases of sexual violence committed in 2025 by members of the MSS, Jocelyn expressed concern that, while the GSF is authorised to use greater lethal force, it lacks “satisfactory oversight or accountability mechanisms” to provide support and justice for survivors, protect human rights, and prevent future abuses.

Jocelyn further warned that security responses centred on militarised and privately funded approaches “will not bring peace to Haiti”. She called on Security Council members to condemn all forms of gender-based violence, including CRSV, and to demand full compliance with the arms embargo. She also urged the Council to ensure that the GSF “prevents the unlawful use of force by implementing mandatory oversight measures for the protection of local populations” and that it prioritises the deployment of human rights monitors and women’s protection advisers. Among other recommendations, she also stressed the importance for states to maintain temporary protection or refugee status for Haitians and refrain from forcibly returning people to Haiti while the crisis continues.

Key Issues and Options

The Security Council’s overarching objectives in Haiti are to support the restoration of security, to facilitate the country’s political transition, and to address the root causes of instability. Given that the GSF is not expected to achieve full operational capacity until later in the year, Council members may consider a technical rollover of the mandate.

While the Council’s attention in September is expected to focus on re-authorising the GSF, Secretary-General António Guterres, UN experts, several Council members, analysts, and civil society representatives have emphasised that security responses alone will not be sufficient to sustainably reduce violence in Haiti. For instance, briefing the Council on 20 July, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier stressed that reintegration efforts for children separated from gangs are unlikely to succeed if children are returned to the same conditions of exclusion and vulnerability that contributed to their recruitment in the first place.

A key issue is to ensure that the international response, including from the Council, extends beyond narrow security measures and addresses the interconnected drivers of violence. This would include, among other things, curbing the flow of arms into Haiti; strengthening the justice system and accountability mechanisms; expanding prevention and reintegration initiatives for children and youth recruited by gangs; providing support and services to survivors of gang violence; and advancing development and recovery efforts that address the root causes of insecurity.

As Council members consider the re-authorisation of the GSF, one option would be to emphasise the mutually reinforcing nature of prevention, security, accountability, human rights, and development efforts, underscoring that adequate political attention and resources should be devoted to all these areas rather than to security interventions alone.

Council members could also begin substantive consideration of the Secretary-General’s DDR options, including whether they intend to contribute to the multi-partner trust fund for DDR. Should there be little progress, a group of interested Council members could help advance considerations of these proposals by calling for closed consultations on this issue.

In January, the Council renewed BINUH’s mandate, including its task of monitoring and reporting on human rights developments in Haiti. However, resources available for carrying out this task appear to be stretched. Council members may consider underscoring the importance of ensuring adequate monitoring and reporting capacity within the UN system in Haiti.

Council members may also continue to regularly invite Christofides to brief the Council on such issues as deployment levels and measures to prevent the excessive use of force and sexual exploitation and abuse involving GSF personnel.

Council Dynamics

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

The US was the main architect of the transition from the MSS mission to the GSF. China and Russia broke silence during the negotiation of resolution 2793 and, together with Pakistan, abstained in the vote, citing concerns about issues such as rules of engagement, sources of funding, troop composition, oversight, and accountability. While these concerns were shared by many other members, they opted to support the resolution while negotiating the inclusion of language on human rights, child protection, and Haitian sovereignty in the text in an attempt to mitigate such concerns.

Panama and the US are the co-penholders on Haiti.

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Expected Council Action

In September, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) James Swan is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The situation in the eastern DRC continues to deteriorate, despite various ceasefire agreements signed within the framework of ongoing mediation efforts. Fighting between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the *Mouvement du 23 Mars* (M23) rebel group has continued unabated, with persistent clashes reported in North Kivu.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolution S/RES/2808 (19 December 2025) renewed MONUSCO’s mandate until 20 December 2026. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.10185 (26 June 2026) was on the situation in the DRC.

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and South Kivu provinces.

On 28 July, the Congolese government signed a protocol with the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), an ethnic Hutu armed group active in eastern DRC that was implicated in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. The Congolese government indicated that the protocol is focused on the disarmament, demobilisation and cantonment of FDLR's combatants and that it is aligned with the December 2025 Washington Accords signed between the DRC and Rwanda under US auspices. In this regard, the Congolese government believes that the protocol represents progress towards fulfilling DRC's commitments, based on the Concept of Operations (CONOPs) annexed to the Accords, which provide for the neutralisation of the FDLR and the disengagement of Rwandan forces in eastern DRC.

Rwanda, however, has characterised the move as a delaying tactic, arguing that the Accords call for the FDLR's neutralisation rather than negotiations with the group. Rwanda has also accused the Congolese government of intensifying its support to the FDLR and integrating its members into the FARDC.

In a 13 August statement, the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes (ICG)—comprising Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the EU, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the US—took note of the signing of the protocol. The Group urged the Congolese authorities to develop an operational plan and a realistic timeline for the effective neutralisation of the FDLR, in line with the Washington Accord and its CONOPs. It also called on the Congolese government to work with MONUSCO as a key partner in implementing the protocol.

On 7 August, the Congolese authorities released 15 detainees in accordance with the prisoner exchange agreement signed between the Congolese government and M23 under the Doha Peace Process, a mediation initiative spearheaded by Qatar. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) facilitated their transfer to the M23. Qatar confirmed the release of the detainees, which it said represents an important step toward building confidence between the parties.

Despite this development, progress in the Doha process remains stalled, with the parties having so far signed only two of the eight protocols outlined in the November 2025 Doha Framework for Peace: the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism and the Mechanism for the Liberation of Detainees. Progress on the remaining six protocols—which focus on, among other issues, humanitarian access and judicial protection; the restoration of state authority; interim security arrangements; return of internally displaced persons and refugees; economic and society recovery; and justice, truth and reconciliation—is still needed to advance the peace process. At the time of writing, representatives of the Congolese government and M23 were in Geneva to address outstanding issues which have hampered progress in the Doha process.

From 12 to 13 August, the sixth meeting of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism, one of the structures set up under the Washington Accords, was also held in Geneva. The meeting was attended by representatives from the DRC and Rwanda, as well as from the US, Qatar, Togo (in its capacity as the AU mediator), and the AU Commission. According to a joint statement issued following the meeting, the parties agreed to take steps to strengthen monitoring and verification of the implementation of the agreement on the ground. They also agreed to convene a trilateral planning conference

with the US in October to finalise a document guiding their coordinated efforts in this regard.

The Ebola outbreak in DRC remains a major concern, with the Congolese authorities reporting that the disease has so far claimed 2,325 lives. With 4,945 confirmed cases, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned that the outbreak is outpacing response efforts. On 20 August, the WHO announced the decision by the UN's international vaccine coordination group to release 70,000 doses of the Ervebo vaccine to the DRC. The WHO cautioned, however, that it remains unclear whether the vaccine will work against the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola circulating in the country.

Sanctions-Related Developments

France, the UK, and the US proposed adding six individuals and two entities to the sanctions designation list under the 1533 DRC sanctions regime in May. Apparently, Russia had placed a hold on the proposal but eventually lifted it, paving the way for the designations to be approved in July. The list included Corneille Nangaa, the leader of the Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), a rebel coalition that includes the M23 as a major component and is among the entities designated in July under the sanctions regime.

Human Rights-related Developments

On 29 June, the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Human Rights Situation in the South and North Kivu Provinces of the DRC reported that civilians in affected areas are "vulnerable and unprotected" as a result of the deteriorating security environment, which is "marked by civilian displacement, weakened public institutions, and a highly complex regional conflict". The commission emphasised the need for victims to be the focus of accountability efforts, while calling on "national authorities and the international community ... to take concrete steps to safeguard humanitarian corridors, protect vulnerable local rights monitors, and support credible, independent investigations".

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a press release on 9 July deploring the effect of recent fighting in the eastern DRC on civilians and calling for "concerted national and international efforts to de-escalate tensions".

Four UN experts of the UN Human Rights Council issued a press release on 21 July in which they "appealed for an end to M23's reign of terror by sexual torture and violence amid a growing number of testimonies from civilian victims". The experts also called on the UN and states to resurrect the December 2025 ceasefire agreement signed by the DRC government and the M23 rebel group.

Key Issues and Options

The continuing key issue for the Council in September is the deteriorating security situation in eastern DRC and its devastating impact on civilians. In this connection, Council members are likely to reiterate their call on the parties to respect the ceasefire agreements and fulfil their commitments under the Doha and Washington processes.

A related issue is MONUSCO's role in supporting the implementation of a permanent ceasefire. In particular, Council members will be interested in receiving updates on the mission's efforts to support the full and effective operationalisation of the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanisms established under the ongoing mediation efforts. The mission's role in ceasefire monitoring, particularly in South Kivu province, appears uncertain, raising questions about whether MONUSCO could deploy to South Kivu on the basis of its existing mandate or whether a further Council decision would be necessary. MONUSCO withdrew from South Kivu in June 2024 as part of the disengagement process requested by the Congolese government in November 2023. Pursuant to resolution 2808 of 19

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December 2025, the mission's area of operation is limited to North Kivu and Ituri provinces, except when needed to support ceasefire monitoring and verification activities in South Kivu and when the mission determines that the situation permits it to do so, as mandated by the Security Council. In such circumstances, MONUSCO is requested by resolution 2808 to notify the Council in writing.

Also related is additional resources needed for ceasefire monitoring. This was raised in the context of discussions at the General Assembly's Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Matters) on the peacekeeping budget in connection with MONUSCO's proposed resource requirements. The mission has been supporting the operationalisation of the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanisms and apparently envisaged the deployment of forces in South Kivu as part of these efforts.

The latest developments regarding the peace process will also likely be a focus of attention of Council members, including the protocol signed between the Congolese government and FDLR and the release of detainees. Some Council members may encourage the Congolese government to work with MONUSCO on the disarmament, demobilisation and cantonment of FDLR combatants as one of the mission's core mandates.

The Ebola outbreak response in eastern DRC is another major issue. Since the Council's last meeting in June, the situation has deteriorated significantly amid worsening security and humanitarian situations. In this regard, one possible option would be to request a

briefing from the WHO and the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention to gain a better understanding of how the security situation in eastern DRC is affecting response efforts and further exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the region.

Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly supportive of MONUSCO's work in eastern DRC. Nonetheless, differences remain over the potential scope of the mission's role in supporting the implementation of a permanent ceasefire. China and Russia continue to argue that the necessary conditions that enable MONUSCO to assume a ceasefire monitoring role are not yet in place. They also maintain that the parties must meet these conditions before the Council can consider reviewing and adjusting the mission's posture and footprint. This issue was a key factor that prevented agreement on a draft presidential statement proposed in March by France, the penholder on the DRC, which sought to facilitate a review and adjustment of the mission's posture and footprint in accordance with resolution 2808 that last renewed MONUSCO's mandate.

Council members appear to be supportive of the mission's role in ceasefire monitoring. However, at the June Security Council meeting on the DRC, China and Russia underscored that any potential deployment in South Kivu would require prior authorisation by the Security Council.

Security Council Report Staff

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Executive Director

Katerina Limenopoulou
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

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Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

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Senior Policy Analyst

Jonathan Ahn
Operations Coordinator

Andrew Azzopardi
Policy Analyst

Gaurav Redhal
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

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Design Point Five, NY

Security Council Report
125 Park Avenue
New York NY 10017

Telephone +1 212 759 9429
Web securitycouncilreport.org