SECURITY COUNCIL REPORT
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# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In November, Latvia will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Latvia plans to organise an open debate on emerging technologies and security under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item.

Latvia also intends to convene an additional briefing during the month, but the topic had not been confirmed at the time of writing.

African issues on the programme of work in November are:

- Libya, the semi-annual briefing by the ICC concerning the Court's work in the country;
- Sudan/South Sudan, briefing and consultations and mandate renewal of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA);
- Somalia, a private meeting on the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) and the work of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, as well as extension of the mandate of the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime and renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the committee;
- South Sudan, briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and
- Central African Republic (CAR), renewal of the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

Middle Eastern issues include:

- Syria, monthly meeting on political and humanitarian developments;
- Yemen, briefing by the chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, and renewal of the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the committee;
- Lebanon, consultations on the implementation of resolution 1701, which was adopted in 2006 and called for a cessation of hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel; and
- "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments.

On non-proliferation issues, consultations are scheduled on the work of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee.

On counter-terrorism issues, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the work of the three counter-terrorism-related committees: the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee; the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC); and the 1540 Committee, which assists member states in preventing non-state actors from obtaining access to weapons of mass destruction. Unless Council members are able to agree on this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies by the time of the briefing, Latvia, as president of the Council in November, is likely to brief members on the work of the three committees, consistent with recent practice.

The Security Council and General Assembly will hold simultaneous, separate elections for the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in November. There are nine candidates running for the five available seats. In order to be elected, a candidate has to receive an absolute majority of votes in both the Council and the General Assembly.

The 15 current Council members and the incoming five—Austria, Kyrgyzstan, Portugal, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe—will participate in the annual "Hitting the Ground Running" workshop organised by Finland on 5 and 6 November.

Other issues, such as Ukraine, could be raised in November depending on developments. Council members will continue closely following the crisis in the Middle East and any spillover effects, such as the disruption to freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab Strait. Members are also likely to continue considering possible arrangements after the termination of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Additionally, they are likely to continue monitoring developments in Ethiopia.

In November, Council members are expected to continue conducting "straw polls" to gauge support for candidates for the position of UN Secretary-General as well as meet with any new candidates.

# In Hindsight: The Security Council's Role in the Last Tigray Crisis

## Introduction

In August, intense clashes were reported between the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. Fighting in northern Ethiopia escalated in late September after the TPLF formed an alliance with six other armed groups called the "Alliance for Survival" coalition. The group is seeking to oust Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and on 23 September, it said it was engaged in a "defensive war". In addition to clashes in Tigray, fighting has also been reported in Ethiopia's Afar and Amhara regions.

The fighting marks the most serious escalation of violence in the area since the 2020-2022 war between the TPLF and the Ethiopian government in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia, which also saw Eritrean troops fighting alongside the ENDF. In contrast, in the current conflict Ethiopia is accusing Eritrea of supporting the TPLF, as relations between the neighbouring countries have soured in recent years, with Eritrea accusing landlocked Ethiopia of harbouring ambitions of gaining access to the Red Sea by seizing parts of the Eritrean coastline, particularly the port city of Assab.

To date, the Security Council has met twice in informal consultations on the current crisis, on 30 September and 13 October.

This *In Hindsight* explores how the Council's role in the 2020-2022 crisis was highly constrained by difficult dynamics, marked by considerable deference to the regional mediation process and concerns about undermining Ethiopian sovereignty. As a result of these dynamics, expressing a unified position often proved challenging, and considerable time and energy was consumed agreeing on meeting formats that would be acceptable to all members, rather than grappling with the substantive drivers of the conflict. The Pretoria Agreement of 2 November 2022 ultimately ended the war, but only after two years of fighting and enormous human suffering. A key, but perhaps unanswerable, question is whether a more assertive role by a more united Council could have helped to resolve the conflict sooner at considerably less human cost.

## The 2020-2022 Tigray War

Between 4 November 2020 and 2 November 2022, the Ethiopian government and the TPLF, the main political party in the country's northern Tigray region, engaged in conflict in Tigray that also spilled over into the Amhara and Afar regions. The conflict had clear effects on international peace and security: from the early stages of the fighting, Eritrean forces actively supported the Ethiopian government, and over the two years of the conflict, tens of thousands of Tigrayans were displaced by the fighting, with many fleeing to neighbouring Sudan. In addition to fomenting a humanitarian crisis, the two-year war was marked by allegations of widespread violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict. Although no official figures have been released, the estimated death toll from the conflict was about 600,000. While the Pretoria Agreement halted active fighting and created a framework for disarmament, some analysts link the current escalation to its incomplete implementation.

## The Security Council's Approach to the 2020-2022 Tigray War

The Security Council held 16 meetings on the conflict, spanning the period from 24 November 2020 to 20 October 2022, with the bulk of the meetings held in 2021. In this timeframe, in spite of the gravity of the situation on the ground, it produced two written products, both press statements, which are not considered formal outcomes of the Council.

### *Council Dynamics*

A clear split among members on how to respond to the crisis emerged early on and pre-empted a significant role for the Council. China, Russia, and the Council's African members (A3),[1] among others, asserted the importance of national and regional actors finding a peaceful solution to the conflict, while highlighting the need to respect Ethiopia's sovereignty and political independence. Other Council members, notably the European members and the United States, recognised the importance of respecting national and regional mediation processes, but preferred a more active role for the Security Council, especially as conflict mediation efforts faltered and the security and humanitarian situations in Ethiopia continued to deteriorate with devastating consequences for the civilian population.

### *Council Statements*

The two press statements were adopted in 2021. Ireland, which served as penholder on the file, worked closely with A3 plus members at times to calibrate the language on these products. The first one, issued on 22 April 2021, expressed concern over the humanitarian situation in Tigray and allegations of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence against women and girls in the region. In addition, while acknowledging efforts by the Ethiopian government to provide humanitarian assistance, the statement noted that challenges remained and called for a scaled-up humanitarian response. The second one was issued on 5 November 2021. Among other things, it expressed deep concern about "the expansion and intensification of military clashes in northern Ethiopia", reiterated a call for scaled-up humanitarian assistance and a lasting ceasefire, and reiterated support for regional organisations, particularly, the AU, in "resolving conflicts and sustaining regional peace and security". This had originally been initiated by Ireland as a draft presidential statement—which is a formal Council outcome—on 28 October, but some members wanted it to be downgraded to a press statement. The limited output of just two press statements belies the desire from several members for additional outcomes on Ethiopia in 2021 and 2022.

At some points during this period, Ireland produced additional draft press statements—and in at least one case, a draft presidential statement—for the consideration of its Council colleagues. These included, for example, a draft press statement in early October 2021 that would have reiterated members expectation of full cooperation between Ethiopia and the UN after the expulsion of UN officials from the country, a draft presidential statement in early April 2022 that would have welcomed the humanitarian truce that had been agreed by the parties in late March, and a draft press statement in September 2022 calling for an end of hostilities in northern Ethiopia

1 Please note that the composition of the A3 group of members changes each year, as they are elected members that rotate on and off the Council annually. As a result, for the 2020-2022 period of Council engagement on Tigray, the A3 included the following configurations: Niger, South Africa, and Tunisia (2020); Kenya, Niger, and Tunisia, joined in the bloc by "plus" member Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (2021); and Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya (2022).

after fighting resumed. These statements were ultimately thwarted. In all of these cases, some members—for example, the A3, China, and Russia—believed that a product would not be helpful at that moment, preferring a more low-key approach from the Council.

### *Council Meetings*

The propensity with which members did (or did not) call for meetings on this file and the meeting formats selected are also revealing about the Council positions on the Ethiopia conflict. Western countries (European members or the US) called for most meetings on the issue, while other members, notably African countries whose region was embroiled in the conflict, were more cautious in requesting Council meetings. Out of the 16 meetings, 13 were requested by one or more Western countries, two by the A3 group of members, and one jointly by the A3 plus group of members, Ireland, and Mexico.

The most typical format under which Tigray was discussed was "any other business", or AOB. Nine of the 16 meetings between 2020-2022 were held under this format, which is often used for more sensitive issues. In part, this was because it allows Council members to meet without the attention of a public meeting, which would also have put it on the formal agenda. AOB is a standing agenda item in consultations, which is a closed informal meeting where only Council members and UN Secretariat officials are permitted to participate. The topic of an AOB discussion does not appear on the Council's monthly programme of work, so there is no public record that the discussion took place.

Two meetings on this file were convened as informal interactive dialogues (one on 15 June 2021, another on 28 September 2022). Careful consideration went into determining the format of these sessions. The 15 June 2021 informal interactive dialogue (IID) marked the first time that Council met on Ethiopia (Tigray) outside the AOB format. The IID is also an informal, closed setting without a record, which makes it an enticing option for a discrete discussion outside the media spotlight. Unlike AOB, this format allows for the country concerned (that is, Ethiopia) to participate and thus state its case but without public scrutiny. Some members would have preferred for the 15 June 2021 session to be public, but it appears that the A3 plus one members (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) found the IID format more acceptable.

Another IID was convened on 28 September 2022. In early September 2022, Ireland, together with Albania, France, Norway, the UK, and the US, called for an open briefing on Ethiopia in light of the relapse into conflict in late August. However, this open format was opposed by the A3 members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya), which only agreed to a meeting in the IID format. It also appears that this was the meeting format preferred by Ethiopia.

Four of the meetings were convened as public briefings. They were all held under the "Peace and Security in Africa" agenda item. The broad regional scope of the agenda item was likely employed to avoid the perceived stigma often associated with placing a specific country situation on the Council's agenda—in this case, the situation in Ethiopia.

The Council held one meeting on Ethiopia in the private meeting format. This was the 21 October 2022 meeting, the final session the Council held on the conflict before the signing of the Pretoria Agreement. It was initiated by the A3 members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and Kenya). The private meeting is a formal, closed session that enables the concerned country (Ethiopia) to participate. Like the four public briefings on this file, it was convened under the "Peace and Security in Africa" agenda item.

Although the African members had generally been reluctant to support active Security Council engagement on the file, it seems that a statement by the AU Commission and an AUPSC meeting on the issue may have prompted them to call for the meeting. The request by the A3 followed a 15 October statement by AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat expressing concern at the increased fighting in Tigray and calling for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) also convened for a briefing on 21 October 2022 on the AU-led peace process for Ethiopia ahead of the Security Council's meeting, adopting a press statement in which the AUPSC expressed deep concern at the resumption of fighting in northern Ethiopia and welcomed the AU-led peace talks.

## Concluding Observations

Ethiopia is once again at risk of devolving into full-scale war. On 9 October, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, through his spokesperson, expressed grave concern at the renewed fighting, urged all parties to cease hostilities and return to dialogue, and warned of the risk of escalation further undermining stability in the region. In a letter to the Security Council on the same day, Ethiopia said that it was "taking measures in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence in response to the armed attack and continuing acts of aggression" by Eritrea (S/2026/797). Eritrea in turn wrote to the Council on 10 October, challenging Ethiopia's assertions of self-defence as "hollow in substance and…an insult to the intelligence of the international community" (S/2026/798).

A notable dimension this time is the heightened involvement of several external actors supporting the different parties to the conflict, which makes a new war in Ethiopia even more dangerous. The Council's engagement could play an effective preventive role especially given that both Ethiopia and Eritrea have already approached the body. The fact that Council members have convened twice in consultations is, at the very least, a signal to the parties that the Council is engaged. Efforts to secure agreement first on press elements after the second consultations and subsequently on a draft press statement that would have urged Ethiopia and Eritrea to de-escalate were apparently resisted by some members. A further step could be to bring together the parties in the IID format to hear both sides.

Another issue raised by the Tigray case is how to calibrate the most effective relationship between the Council and regional bodies when working together to promote peace and security. Each case is unique, and the ideal level and substance of burden-sharing will vary depending on the situation. What is striking about the 2020-2022 period is the sharply divergent perceptions in the Council of the relationship between the Council and the AU: some members believed that the Council's limited role was appropriate because they thought that the Council should not interfere with the AU's efforts; in contrast, others believed that the AU-led mediation process unfolded too slowly and that the Council should have been more engaged.[2] Regardless of one's view in this particular instance,

2 See UN document S/2023/206 (17 March 2023), "Hitting the ground running": report on the twentieth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, held

it is important to underscore that the Council has the *primary* [our emphasis] responsibility for international peace and security and often takes action where regional efforts to resolve a dispute peacefully are still ongoing.[3] While regional organisations can take the lead in promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the Council has the authority to step in when such efforts falter. In other words, there is no obligation for the Council to defer to regional peace initiatives if it does not believe they are working.

Notwithstanding the Council's muted response to the 2020-2022 Tigray crisis and the political divisions that coloured its engagement, the body did meet 16 times in less than two years on the matter. Yet, after the Pretoria Agreement was signed, it neglected the adverse consequences of its lax implementation. As African Security Analysis wrote in March 2025, "[d]espite the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) in November 2022, the situation remains unstable, with ongoing human rights abuses, restricted humanitarian aid, and the continued occupation of Tigrayan territories".[4] Difficult Council dynamics most likely would have continued to constrain its efforts on the file. Nonetheless, the cost of ignoring the combustible situation unfolding now is high. Ideally, actors on the continent such as AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will be able to play a useful role in finding a solution to the current crisis with support from the Council. But if they are unable to do so, in no small part because of the conflicting interests of their member states, Council members should avoid falling victim to their own divisions and find a way to work together. The lessons from the Council's handling of the last crisis in Ethiopia may be helpful if members are to ensure a full-scale war with regional repercussions does not ensue.

## Status Update since our October Forecast

### AU-UN Cooperation

On 6 October, the Security Council held a briefing on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focused on the AU (S/PV.10233). Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the AU and Head of the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga briefed on the Secretary-General's annual report on strengthening the partnership between the UN and the AU. He also covered issues of peace and security in Africa, including the work of the UNOAU (S/2026/682). Senior Adviser at the Permanent Observer Mission of the AU to the UN Zinurine Alghali also briefed.

Additionally, the 20th annual joint consultative meeting of members of the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) was held on 23 October. The annual meeting rotates between New York and Addis Ababa; this year's meeting was held in New York. The annual consultation was preceded on 22 October by the 11th informal joint seminar of the Security Council and the AUPSC, which was convened in retreat format at the Greentree Estate in Manhasset, NY, and hosted by the Greek Security Council presidency.

### Sudan

On 8 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2830 (S/PV.10235), which extended the 1591 sanctions regime until 11 December and the Panel of Experts' mandate until 11 January 2027.

On 16 October, the Security Council held an open briefing on the situation in Sudan (S/PV.10245). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo provided the briefing, noting that there was continued fighting in the country, most notably in North Kordofan, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile states. She added that drone and air strikes continued to put civilians at risk. The open briefing was followed by closed consultations, during which Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan Pekka Haavisto briefed.

### UNDOF (Golan)

Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on 8 October. 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. Following the consultations, Council members issued press elements which included a "call on the parties to fully respect and implement the 1974 Disengagement Agreement" between Israel and Syria and to respect the principles of sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria.

### Ukraine

On 9 October, the Council held an emergency briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.10237). The meeting was requested by Ukraine in an 8 October letter and supported by the Council's European members (Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK). Mohamed Khaled Khiari, the 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), and Gemma Connell, Director of the Crisis Response Division at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), briefed. Estonia, Germany, Norway, Poland, and Ukraine participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, while the EU participated under rule 39.

On 14 October, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting titled "Piercing the Blind Spots of Violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law in the Context of the Ukrainian Crisis: Putting the Spotlight on Activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU)". The briefers included Rodion Miroshnik, Ambassador-at-Large of the Russian Foreign Ministry on the crimes committed by the Kyiv regime, and Larry C. Johnson, political commentator and former analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

on 17 and 18 November 2022 at the Greentree Foundation, in Manhasset, New York, pp. 5, 8, and 14.

3 Matthew Blainey, Security Council Report, The Security Council and Regional Arrangements: Towards Effective Engagement, Research Report, No. 4, 3 September 2024, p. 10.

4 African Security Analysis, "Ongoing Humanitarian Crisis in Tigray: Conflict, Starvation and Displacement", 13 March 2025, https://www.africansecurityanalysis.com/reports/ongoing-humanitarian-crisis-in-tigray-conflict-starvation-and-displacement.

# Status Update since our October Forecast

### Colombia

On 12 October, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.10238). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Miroslav Jenča briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2026/759).

On 30 October, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2833, renewing the mandate of the verification mission for another year, until 31 October 2027. The resolution removed the mission's task to verify implementation of the comprehensive rural reform chapter of the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP). It retained the mission's tasks to verify implementation of the chapters concerning reincorporation of former FARC-EP combatants and personal and collective security guarantees, including for communities and organisations in conflict-affected areas.

### Great Lakes region

On 13 October, the Security Council held an open briefing on the Great Lakes Region followed by closed consultations (S/PV.10240). Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia briefed on the Secretary-General's latest biannual report on the implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC-F) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region, which was circulated to Council members on 30 September and covers the period between 16 March and 15 September (S/2026/782). Burundi participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

### Ethiopia (Peace and Security in Africa)

On 13 October, Security Council members held closed consultations on the situation in the Horn of Africa in light of the escalation in northern Ethiopia. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martin Kimani briefed.

### Haiti

On 14 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2831, renewing the 2653 Haiti sanctions regime for another year. The resolution received 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia).

On 19 October, the Security Council held an open briefing on Haiti (S/PV.10246). The briefers were: Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Special Representative for the Gang Suppression Force (GSF) Jack Christofides, and Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the UN Support Office in Haiti (UNSOH) Daniela Kroslak.

### Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 15 and 16 October, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.10243 and Resumptions I and II). The briefer was Acting Special Coordinator and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) Ramiz Alakbarov. Approximately 50 countries from the broader UN membership participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, in addition to the observer state of Palestine.

### Children and Armed Conflict

On 19 October, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2832 on the impact of digital technologies on the perpetration of violations and abuses against children. The text, which was authored by Greece, was co-sponsored by 93 member states.

On 26 October, the Security Council held an open briefing to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the children and armed conflict mandate by the General Assembly (S/PV.10251). Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs Giorgos Gerapetritis chaired the meeting, which was a signature event of Greece's October Council presidency. The briefers at the meeting were Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Vanessa Frazier; UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell; the AU Special Envoy for Children Affected by Armed Conflict, Jainaba Jagne; and the Director of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, Bethany Ellis.

### Kosovo

On 20 October, the Security Council convened its second regular briefing this year on the situation in Kosovo (S/PV.10250). Special Representative and Head of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) Peter Due briefed on the Secretary-General's latest report on UNMIK (S/2026/779), which was published on 30 September and covers developments from 16 March to 15 September. Serbia participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, while Kosovo and the EU participated under rule 39.

### Iraq/Kuwait

On 26 October, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Iraq-Kuwait file concerning missing persons and property (S/PV.10252). Mari Yamashita, the Secretary-General's Senior Representative supporting the implementation of resolution 2792, briefed. Iraq and Kuwait participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

### Iran

On 27 October, the Security Council held a briefing under the "Non-proliferation" agenda item to discuss the recent referral of Iran to the Security Council by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) (S/PV.10253). Prior to the meeting, Russia, supported by China, requested a procedural vote on the adoption of the agenda. It was adopted with 11 votes in favour, two against (China and Russia), and two abstentions (Pakistan and Somalia). Germany and Iran participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Closed consultations were held after the open briefing.

### Women, Peace and Security

On 27 October, the Security Council held its annual open debate on women, peace and security (WPS), which this year was titled "Women, peace and security in the next quarter century: fulfilling the promise through implementation" (S/PV.10254). The briefers were: UN Secretary-General António Guterres, UN Women Executive

Director Sima Sami Bahous, and Afghan human rights activist Tamana Zaryab Paryani. The open debate resumed on 28 October (Resumption I) and ended on 30 October (Resumption II).

### International Court of Justice

On 28 October, the Security Council held its annual briefing with the president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Judge Yuji Iwasawa, during a private meeting (S/PV.10255).

### Emerging Technologies and Maritime Security

On 29 October, the Security Council convened for an open debate titled "Emerging technologies and maritime security: implications for peace and security", under the agenda item "Maintenance of international peace and security" (S/PV.10256 and Resumption I). Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis chaired the meeting, which was a signature event of Greece's October Council presidency. The briefers included: Martin Kimani, the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO); Fareed Zakaria, a journalist and author; and Michail Bletsas, the Governor of Greece's National Cybersecurity Authority.

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

On 30 October, the Security Council held its semi-annual debate on Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) (S/PV.10258). There was no briefer. Denis Bećirović, the Bosniak member of the rotating tripartite interethnic presidency of BiH and the incumbent Chairman of the Presidency, as well as representatives of Croatia and Serbia, participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, while the EU took part under rule 39. During the meeting, the Council unanimously adopted resolution S/RES/2834 renewing the authorisation of the EU-led multinational stabilisation force (EUFOR ALTHEA) for an additional year.

### Western Sahara

On 8 October, Council members received a briefing in closed consultations on the Secretary-General's annual report on the situation in Western Sahara (S/2026/781). The briefers were the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for Western Sahara, Staffan de Mistura, and the Special Representative for Western Sahara and Head of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), Alexander Ivanko.

On 30 October, Russia vetoed a US-proposed draft resolution that would have renewed the mandate of MINURSO for one year, until 31 October 2027, and renamed the mission as the UN Mission in Western Sahara (MINUSO) as of 1 November (S/2026/868). The draft described autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty as the "most feasible solution". Eleven Council members (Bahrain, Colombia, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Panama, UK, and the US) voted in favor of the draft, while three (China, Pakistan, and Somalia) abstained.

Subsequently, a Russian draft resolution proposing a straightforward renewal of MINURSO's mandate for another year did not garner sufficient votes to be adopted, with three members voting in favour (China, Russia and Somalia), one voting against (US), and 11 abstaining (Bahrain, Colombia, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Panama, Pakistan, and UK) (S/2026/870).

# Emerging Technology and Security

### Expected Council Action

In November, Latvia will convene a high-level open debate on emerging technologies and security under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item as a signature event of its Council presidency.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

Over the past decade, the Security Council has devoted growing attention to the implications of technological change for international peace and security. Its thematic discussions have addressed the international peace and security implications of information and communications technologies (ICTs), artificial intelligence (AI), and emerging scientific and technological developments more broadly, often examining overlapping risks and opportunities.

AI has become an increasingly prominent focus of the Council's thematic discussions. Since its first formal meeting on AI and international peace and security, convened by the UK in July 2023, Council members have held six formal and informal meetings examining the technology's risks and opportunities. Among the most recent have been an informal interactive dialogue (IID) on AI and conflict resolution, organised by Bahrain, France, Greece, and Latvia on 2 September, followed by a high-level briefing convened by France on 23 September, which examined safety risks posed by increasingly capable AI systems.

Council members have also examined the broader implications of emerging technologies for international peace and security. In May 2021, China, together with Kenya and Mexico, convened an Arria-formula meeting on the subject. Switzerland subsequently organised an Arria-formula meeting on the potential of science for peace and security in May 2024, followed by a high-level briefing on anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security on 21 October 2024. At the latter meeting, the Council adopted a Swiss-authored presidential statement recognising that the convergence of scientific fields could accelerate technological advances, with both positive and negative implications for international peace and security. The statement expressed the Council's

**UN DOCUMENTS ON EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND SECURITY Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2026/3 (11 September 2026) was a French-authored presidential statement on counter-terrorism. S/PRST/2024/6 (21 October 2024) was a Swiss-authored presidential statement on science, technology, and innovation. S/PRST/2021/17 (18 August 2021) was an Indian-authored presidential statement on the use of technology in UN peacekeeping.. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.10256 (29 October 2026 and Resumption I) was an open debate on emerging technologies and maritime security convened by Greece.

commitment to take scientific advances into account more systematically, where appropriate and in accordance with its mandate.

Most recently, on 29 October, Greece convened a high-level open debate examining the implications of emerging technologies for maritime security, including their potential to improve maritime domain awareness and the risks posed by increasingly autonomous systems and cyber threats to maritime infrastructure.

Latvia's November open debate on emerging technologies and security is expected to build on these recent discussions, particularly the 2 September IID, titled "From Early Warning to Durable Peace: Leveraging AI in Conflict Resolution". At that meeting, the briefers highlighted practical applications of AI across the conflict cycle, including its potential to strengthen early warning, mediation, peacekeeping, and evidence-based decision-making. The discussion also covered risks associated with AI-enabled disinformation and the importance of appropriate safeguards, including human oversight, data protection, and respect for human rights. One briefer also highlighted how advances in AI and other emerging technologies, including their increasing autonomy and convergence, are creating risks and opportunities across issues on the Council's agenda, including counter-terrorism, the protection of civilians, sanctions, and UN peacekeeping.

Another recent development relevant to Latvia's initiative was the announcement on 23 October by Greece and Latvia, together with eight other Council members, of the establishment of an Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Technology, Peace and Security. The group has ten founding members: Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Denmark, France, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Panama, and the UK. Greece and Latvia will co-chair the IEG for the remainder of 2026, with its first meeting scheduled for November.

The IEG is intended to provide a forum for structured, expert-level discussions on the implications of emerging technologies for international peace and security. Its envisaged activities include horizon-scanning, examining the implications of technological developments for existing thematic mandates, and convening discussions ahead of relevant mandate renewals. The group is open to all Council members and may draw on expertise from the UN Secretariat, non-government organisations (NGOs), and the private sector. (For background information, see our March research report, titled "Maintaining International Peace and Security in the Age of Rapid Technological Change", and our September policy paper, titled "Artificial Intelligence, Geopolitics, and the UN Security Council", which proposed the establishment of such an IEG.)

### Human Rights-Related Developments

In June, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a report examining states' human rights obligations and corporate responsibilities throughout the AI lifecycle. It recommended continuous human rights impact assessments, independent oversight, and restrictions on high-risk applications where potential harms cannot be adequately mitigated.

In July, the Human Rights Council's Advisory Committee released a study on technology-facilitated gender-based violence. It called for enforceable regulation of technology companies, effective remedies, and survivor-centred responses to digital abuse.

At its 63rd session, which concluded on 7 October, the Human Rights Council adopted two resolutions addressing AI and human rights. One focused on strengthening protection of women's and girls' rights in digital environments, while the other called for further discussions on human rights-based AI capacity-building.

On 23 October, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) issued new guidance in which it asserted that states need to take concrete action to "dismantle deeply rooted gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls". It warned that emerging technologies, including AI, risk magnifying such stereotypes and exacerbating additional gender-based violence. CEDAW called on states to regulate AI and digital platforms to create effective mechanisms to report and remove abusive and discriminatory material and provide victims with remedies. It further called for "transparency, independent oversight and meaningful human review of AI-assisted decisions in education, employment, healthcare, financial services and the administration of justice".

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to assess the implications of rapidly evolving and converging technologies for international peace and security. AI is already influencing military operations, cybersecurity, and information environments, while advances in quantum computing, synthetic biology, and neurotechnology could introduce additional security risks and opportunities. The convergence of these technologies may also generate effects that are difficult to anticipate. Strengthening the Council's capacity to understand technological developments before their security implications become fully apparent is therefore an important consideration.

The newly established IEG offers an opportunity for more systematic and forward-looking engagement. Members could convene regular horizon-scanning discussions, drawing on expertise from the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), relevant UN entities, NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector. Such discussions could assess, for example, how increasingly autonomous AI systems may affect cyber threats to critical infrastructure, how advances in quantum computing could undermine communications security, and how the convergence of AI and biotechnology could lower barriers to biological weapons development.

Another issue is how the Council can better integrate technological considerations into its existing work. Emerging technologies can support conflict analysis, ceasefire monitoring, and the protection of civilians, but their use may also raise concerns about reliability, privacy, accountability, and human oversight. UN peace operations, in particular, face increasingly technology-intensive operational environments, while their access to advanced technological capabilities remains uneven.

Council members that are members of the IEG could examine these questions ahead of thematic debates or relevant mandate renewals. For example, an IEG meeting preceding a Council debate on UN peacekeeping could bring together Department of Peace Operations (DPO) officials, mission representatives, and technical experts to assess how emerging technologies could improve situational awareness, protect UN personnel, and strengthen mandate implementation. Similar discussions could examine how AI and other technologies might support sanctions monitoring, counter-terrorism, or the protection of civilians.

The IEG could also convene situation-specific discussions ahead of peace operation mandate renewals, helping members assess whether missions face new technology-related threats or could benefit from additional technical capabilities. Where relevant, these discussions could inform members' consideration of mandate provisions and requests for analysis in the Secretary-General's reporting.

A further option would be for the IEG to establish regular exchanges with other intergovernmental processes addressing technological developments, including the Global Mechanism on ICTs, the Group of Governmental Experts on lethal autonomous weapons systems, and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance. Such exchanges could allow Council members to draw on expertise and findings from these processes, assess their relevance to issues on the Council's agenda, and strengthen coordination between the Council and other UN forums, while avoiding duplication of efforts.

As a possible outcome of the November debate, Latvia could prepare a chair's summary capturing the main issues raised and proposals for future Council engagement and transmit it for circulation as a Security Council document. Looking ahead, Council members could also convene an IID with the president of the General Assembly, relevant Secretariat officials, and representatives of other UN bodies to explore ways to strengthen coordination and complementarity across the UN system in addressing the peace and security implications of emerging technologies.

### Council Dynamics

Council members increasingly recognise that advances in AI and other new and emerging technologies have implications for international peace and security. Many have expressed concern about their potential misuse in armed conflict, cyber operations, disinformation campaigns, and terrorist activities. There is also considerable interest in harnessing these technologies to strengthen conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and other aspects of the UN's work. The importance of human oversight, respect for international law, and equitable access to technological capabilities has featured prominently in Council discussions.

Differences remain, however, over the extent of the Council's role in addressing new and emerging technologies. Several members, including Bahrain, France, Greece, Latvia, and the UK, support more sustained engagement on technology-related security issues. Russia, however, has questioned whether AI as a broad thematic issue falls clearly within the Council's mandate, arguing that related questions should be addressed in more inclusive and specialised forums. Other members have also emphasised the importance of ensuring complementarity with existing UN processes.

These divisions have complicated efforts to translate thematic discussions into Council products. During negotiations on the October 2024 presidential statement, one member apparently requested the removal of a paragraph inviting the Secretary-General to consider scientific advances in conflict prevention, conflict analysis, and integrated mission assessments and planning. The paragraph, which was omitted from the final text, also proposed an annual briefing on the subject and the inclusion of relevant considerations in reports on situations on the Council's agenda. More recently, during negotiations on the September presidential statement on counter-terrorism, Russia apparently requested the deletion of all proposed language on emerging technologies, citing divergent views on the issue. In an apparent compromise, the penholder removed some provisions while retaining others. In particular, a paragraph expressing concern about the misuse of AI by terrorists and noting its potential benefits for counter-terrorism was removed.

The establishment of the IEG by ten members suggests growing support for more structured engagement through informal working methods. Its effectiveness will depend in part on whether participating members can use its discussions to develop a shared understanding of emerging technological developments and incorporate relevant findings into the Council's consideration of specific situations and thematic issues.

## Somalia

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to hold a private meeting on the AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martin Kimani and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of AUSSOM El Hadji Ibrahima Diene are the anticipated briefers.

The Security Council is also expected to receive a briefing on the work of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee. At the time of writing, the chair of the committee, who would customarily provide the briefing, had not been appointed, as Council members have not been able to agree on this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. Latvia, as president of the Council in November, is likely to brief members on the committee's work, consistent with recent practice. Panama served as chair of the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee last year.

Additionally, the Council will vote to extend the mandate of the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime, including the provision for maritime interdiction, which expires on 30 November, and to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2713 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee, which expires on 31 December.

### Key Recent Developments

The UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), a special political mission established pursuant to resolution 2753 of 30 October 2024 to replace the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), with a two-year mandate to transition its functions to the UN Country Team (UNCT), ceased its operations by the end of October after the conclusion of the transition process and the termination of its mandate. According to a 26 October statement by the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General, "the mandated functions of UNTMIS have been transferred to Somali institutions and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes", in line with the transition roadmap jointly agreed between the Somalia federal government and

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2809 (23 December 2025) extended the authorisation of AUSSOM until 31 December 2026.

the UN. The mission is departing Somalia at a time when the country is going through a political and constitutional crisis. (For background, see the brief on Somalia in our June 2026 *Monthly Forecast*.)

There have been persistent calls by regional and international organisations including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), AU, UN, and the EU for a resolution of the crisis through dialogue. In this regard, the federal government has held several rounds of talks with the opposition alliance organised under the Somali Future Council. During the talks in August both sides agreed to continue dialogue, but these efforts have not yielded the desired results. Major disagreements over constitutional amendments, presidential term extensions, and regional election frameworks remain unresolved.

On 15 October, the National Independent Elections and Boundaries Commission (NIEBC) announced new dates for national elections, with parliamentary elections planned for 15 April 2027 and the presidential election scheduled to take place on 15 May 2027. However, the Somali Future Council rejected the new electoral calendar on the basis that the decision was made without an inclusive consultation with the country's key political stakeholders. In a national address on 25 October, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud renewed his call for opposition leaders to engage in talks aimed at resolving the dispute over the country's electoral process.

In the meantime, the country's political and constitutional crisis appears to have worsened amid growing tensions between the Somalia federal government and the federal member states. Puntland and Jubaland severed their relations with the federal government in 2024. Additionally, the security situation in South West state escalated after the federal government intervened in March to remove the region's president, Abdiaziz Laftagareen. In recent months, pro-Laftagareen forces known as Darawish have mobilised against federal government forces, reportedly retaking several towns in the region.

Al-Shabaab has taken advantage of the political situation to expand its control of territory, worsening insecurity in the country. The group continues to launch deadly attacks, ambushes, and bombings across central and southern Somalia. On 17 October, US Africa Command (AFRICOM) announced that it conducted an airstrike targeting Al-Shabaab around Dhooble Airport, approximately 180 kilometres north-west of Kismayo, the capital of Jubaland, in coordination with the Somali federal government.

AUSSOM also continues to support the federal government in its offensive operations against Al-Shabaab in line with its mandate. However, AUSSOM's funding constraints remain a major challenge undermining the mission's future. From 29 to 31 July, AUSSOM troop contributing countries (TCCs) held an extraordinary summit in Kampala, Uganda, to discuss the situation. According to the communiqué issued at the end of the summit, the TCCs, among other things, "stressed the need for an orderly, coordinated and phased exit of AUSSOM". The summit also underscored the need for sustained support to the mission for a period of 18 to 24 months "to enable the implementation of agreed milestones, strengthen the capacity of Somali security institutions and facilitate the orderly transfer of security responsibilities". Accordingly, the summit mandated the TCC ministers of foreign affairs to engage in diplomatic outreach to secure predictable and sustainable financing for AUSSOM during this transition period.

In a 10 September letter to the AU Commission, the US Mission to the AU notified the commission of the US decision to discontinue its support for the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) beyond the current authorisation period for AUSSOM, which expires on 31 December. The US opposed the request by AUSSOM TCCs for sustained support over 18 to 24 months, indicating instead its willingness to allow UNSOS sufficient time to liquidate its operations through a 12-month drawdown process. This, the US argued, would also give AUSSOM time to prepare for the withdrawal of UNSOS support.

### Sanction-Related Developments

Pursuant to resolution 2806 of 12 December 2025, which last extended the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime, the Panel of Experts were expected to submit an annual report by 31 October. It seems that the report was circulated in mid-October to Council members for their consideration ahead of the extension of the sanctions regime in November.

The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to submit a technical assessment by 31 October, regarding the arms embargo targeting Al-Shabaab, in consultation with the Somali federal government, UN entities, and other relevant stakeholders.

## Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for the Council in November is the extension of the 2713 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts. This decision will be informed by the report and recommendations of the panel. A likely option for Council members is to extend the sanctions regime and renew the panel's mandate by another year.

The future of the UN's political engagement in Somalia following the termination of UNTMIS' mandate is another key issue for Council members in November. The roles of the UNCT and the UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, whose broader regional mandate includes Somalia, are likely to be important going forward to sustain the UN's continued engagement in Somalia in promoting political dialogue, institution-building, and the implementation of national priorities.

Over the coming months, Council members will also have to grapple with the future of UNSOS and AUSSOM. At the core of the challenge will be how to ensure sustained funding for at least one year to allow for an orderly drawdown and exit of both UNSOS and AUSSOM in a manner that ensures a responsible handover of tasks to the Somali federal government and avoids any security gap.

One option for the Council would be to encourage additional international support for AUSSOM, including through the convening of a pledging conference as called for by the Kampala summit. Another option would be to hold an informal interactive dialogue (IID) with representatives of the AU, the Federal Government of Somalia, TCCs, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the mission's financial and operational needs ahead of its mandate renewal in December.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members recognise the many challenges facing Somalia, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. They support ongoing efforts to fight the group and recognise the important role of AUSSOM in this regard. The majority of Council members support addressing AUSSOM's funding

challenges. However, the US remains strongly opposed to considering the issue within the framework of resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, which authorises the use of UN-assessed contributions to finance AU-led peace support operations on a case-by-case basis. Against this backdrop, efforts to trigger this framework resolution in the case of AUSSOM failed to materialise in 2025. (For more information, see our 10 May 2025 *What's in Blue* story.)

While the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) was expected to meet and discuss the challenges facing AUSSOM following the Kampala summit to endorse its decision and recommendations for onward transmission to the Security Council, it has not yet done so. Mohamud, who attended the summit, had initially objected to the draft communiqué of the summit, which contained references to his country's internal politics and called for a mediated solution. Eventually, as a compromise, specific reference to these issues was dropped and broad language calling for rebuilding national confidence, democratic governance, and strengthening national state institutions was included instead. It is possible that the AUPSC will meet in November in advance of the mission's anticipated reauthorisation by the Security Council in December.

Meanwhile, identifying and optimising resources and support mechanisms for AUSSOM was one of the agenda items discussed at the annual consultations between Security Council members and the AUPSC on 23 October in New York. It seems that AUPSC members once again raised the possibility of applying the financing framework under resolution 2719 to address the mission's resource constraints. Additionally, during their stay in New York, AUPSC members also engaged with the Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Atul Khare, on the logistical and operational support provided by UNSOS to AUSSOM. On 15 October, members of the Security Council and the Joint AU-UN Task Force attended an informal discussion on the implementation of the joint AU-UN roadmap on operationalising resolution 2719 organised by the AU, UN, and Security Council Report.

Somalia, which currently holds seats on both the Security Council and the AUPSC, appears to be reluctant to have its internal situation discussed publicly in New York and Addis Ababa. Since the country joined the Security Council as an elected member in 2025, discussions on Somalia have been taking place in a private meeting format with a communiqué usually issued afterwards. However, a communiqué has yet to be issued following the most recent private meeting on Somalia held in June, apparently due to a lack of consensus.

# Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to renew the Yemen financial and travel ban sanctions measures, which expire on 14 November, and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts (PoE), which expires on 15 December. (The targeted arms embargo on the Houthi rebel group established by resolution 2216 on 14 April 2015 is open-ended.)

The Council will also receive the annual briefing on the work of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee. Ordinarily, the chair of the committee would brief Council members on developments. However, at the time of writing, the chair had not been appointed, as Council members have yet to agree on this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, Latvia, as president of the Council in November, is likely to brief members on the report, consistent with recent practice.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

Resolution 2140 (adopted on 26 February 2014) imposed the asset freeze and travel ban sanctions measures on individuals and entities engaging in or providing support for acts that threaten the peace, security, and stability of Yemen. It also established a committee to make such designations and to oversee the resolution's implementation, as well as a PoE to support the committee's work. Through the adoption of resolution 2216 in 2015, the Council imposed an arms embargo on the Houthi rebel group, while broadening the committee's designation criteria and the PoE's mandate to also cover the targeted arms embargo and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance in Yemen. Several individuals from the Houthi rebel group—including its leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi—have been designated under the sanctions regime.

On 14 November 2025, the Council adopted resolution 2801, renewing both the sanctions measures and the panel's mandate. The resolution also requested the PoE to present two ad hoc reports and advice to the Council by 15 April 2026: one on the flow of dual-use components and precursor chemicals to Yemen and another on improving information sharing and flag state capacity to prevent vessels suspected of violating the sanctions regime from entering Yemen. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). The PoE presented the two reports to the committee in July, after requesting an extension of the submission deadline due to delays in the appointment of relevant experts.

Despite Council members' inability to agree on this year's chairs of subsidiary bodies, at the time of writing, the committee has met

**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2801 (14 November 2025) renewed the 2140 Yemen sanctions regime for another year, until 14 November 2026, and the mandate of the PoE supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee until 15 December 2026. The resolution also requests the PoE to present two ad hoc reports and advice to the Council by 15 April 2026. S/RES/2216 (14 April 2025) demanded the Houthis to withdraw from all seized areas and to relinquish all seized arms, and established an arms embargo on the Houthis and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. S/RES/2140 (26 February 2014) expressed the Council's strong support for the next steps of the political transition and established sanctions against those threatening the peace, security, or stability of Yemen. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2026/4 (15 October 2026) condemned continued and escalatory Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, the group's attacks and threats against commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab, and the Houthi military escalation in Yemen, while demanding that the Houthis cease their military escalation and cease attacks impacting civilians and civilian objects. **Sanctions Committee Document** S/2025/650 (17 October 2025) was the final report of the Yemen PoE, covering the period from 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

three times in informal consultations to give members the opportunity to discuss the PoE's reports. Each meeting was chaired by the Council's president for that month. On 28 May, the PoE presented its midterm update to the committee. On 31 August, the committee met the PoE to discuss the two ad hoc reports requested by resolution 2801 and their respective recommendations. The PoE seems to have reported that Houthi capabilities have increased in recent months, as more arms are being produced within Yemen, and as their supply chains have become more sophisticated. It also stressed that the arms embargo has become insufficient to stop the flow of sanctioned materiel.

On 22 October, the committee held its most recent meeting for a presentation by the PoE on its final report and to discuss the panel's recommendations. The final report, which has yet to be published, apparently assesses persisting issues in the implementation of the sanctions regime, and—like the ad hoc reports—states that the Houthis continue to improve their military capabilities in violation of the arms embargo, including through developing local manufacturing capabilities which are gradually reducing the group's dependence on external support. It apparently notes that the Houthis have developed domestic weapons systems assembly capabilities, including by utilising commercially available products and diversified supply chains. The report also apparently says that the implementation of the travel ban and asset freeze continues to be limited, while the group also maintains access to revenue through its control over key economic sectors. It also reports on indications of systematic human rights violations committed in Houthi controlled areas, including the instrumentalisation of education, child recruitment, torture, and arbitrary detentions, among others.

The resumption of full-scale hostilities in Yemen since early September has fundamentally transformed the conflict landscape. The Houthis launched a rapid military offensive along Yemen's western coast, seizing territory extending south towards the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab Strait, and declared a maritime blockade against Saudi-linked shipping. The group has also simultaneously sustained a campaign of deadly ballistic missile and drone attacks against Saudi cities, airports, and oil facilities. In response, the Saudi-led "Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen" launched a counteroffensive seeking to retake Houthi-controlled territory. The conflict is widely understood to be deeply intertwined with the broader regional war involving Iran—a principal backer of the Houthis. (For more information, see the brief on Yemen in our October 2026 *Monthly Forecast* and our 8 October *What's in Blue* story.)

The humanitarian consequences have been acute, particularly in Taiz—Yemen's third largest city—which the Houthis effectively encircled in early October after severing the road connecting it to Aden—the seat of the internationally recognised government of Yemen. More than 800,000 people have been cut off from humanitarian assistance, with UN entities warning that time is running out to restore access, hospitals are nearing collapse, and approximately 258,679 people are displaced with the majority of them from Taiz and Lahj governorates.

The Security Council has responded to the escalation with increasing urgency, convening two emergency meetings in September and issuing two press statements—on 7 August and 18 September. On 15 October, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2026/4) condemning in the strongest terms continued and escalatory Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia, the group's attacks and threats against commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab, and the Houthi military escalation in Yemen. The statement also called for stronger international cooperation to prevent the Houthis from obtaining weapons in contravention of the 2140 sanctions regime and reiterated the Council's support for Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg's efforts toward a negotiated, inclusive, Yemeni-led political settlement. (For more information see our 15 October *What's in Blue* story.)

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 October, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk issued a statement saying that he was appalled by the attacks on Saudi Arabian airports in the preceding days. He noted that international humanitarian law prohibits attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure. He called for those responsible to be held accountable.

On 20 October, Türk released a statement expressing alarm at the encirclement of Taiz, indicating that humanitarian aid must be allowed to enter the city immediately to prevent a human rights catastrophe. He added that "[t]he Houthis' closure of the only supply route linking Taiz to Aden is placing civilians at grave risk, blocking humanitarian aid and cutting off essential supplies".

## Key Issues and Options

A key priority for the Council in November in the light of the full resumption of hostilities in Yemen and the collapse of the 2022 UN-mediated truce is renewing the Yemen sanctions regime and the mandate of the PoE supporting the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee. A related issue is the effectiveness of the sanctions regime and whether it needs to be expanded given growing Houthi military capabilities. Council members could use the PoE's recommendations based on the three reports presented at the committee's August and October meetings to determine what adjustments could be made to expand the scope of the sanctions regime to include provisions on the importation of dual-use items and on maritime interdictions. Differences among the Council's permanent five (P5) members, however, may complicate agreement on such adjustments during negotiations on the renewal this month.

The impact of renewed hostilities on the already dire humanitarian situation, compounded by severe access constraints, also remains a priority. Members could consider inviting a senior official from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to brief specifically on access constraints and their operational impacts in a meeting focused specifically on the humanitarian situation in Yemen, including the protection of humanitarian personnel.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for an inclusive Yemeni-led political process under UN auspices and share similar concerns over the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the Houthis' continued detention of UN, non-governmental organisation, and diplomatic staff. The full resumption of hostilities in Yemen and the Houthis' seizure of territory along the Red Sea coast, along with Houthi attacks against Saudi Arabia have drawn strong condemnation from Council members of the group's actions, as demonstrated by the 15 October presidential statement.

Divisions exist, however, on how to characterise Houthi actions; the political, military, and financial support they receive; and what actions the Council should take to respond to the group's violations of the Council's resolutions.

Several members, including P5 members France, the UK, and the US, continue to favour increased pressure on the Houthis and Iran, including through expanded sanctions, maritime interdictions, and PoE scrutiny, with the US in particular framing recent developments in Yemen within its broader confrontation with Iran. In its explanation of vote following the adoption of resolution 2801, the US lamented that the sanctions regime renewal did not include provisions to "address importation of dual-use items, oil smuggling, and [to increase] maritime interdictions". It also criticised the absence of an asset freeze on the Houthis, which it had apparently sought during the negotiations.

On the other hand, Russia and China have stopped short of attributing sole blame to the Houthis or implicating Iran for its support for the group. Both have urged a negotiated solution involving all relevant political forces in Yemen, including the Houthis.

They contend that the ineffectiveness of the Yemen sanctions regime stems from a lack of proper implementation of the existing provisions. During the renewal of the Yemen sanctions regime in 2025, both argued that expanding the sanctions regime would escalate tensions and push the parties further away from a political settlement.

China has also become increasingly critical of the PoE and its reports. It seems that the panel's latest report—like the 2025 report—contains references to China as a country of origin for dual-use items which are being utilised by the Houthis for military purposes, including for drone assembly. China has rejected such accusations and, in the 5 November 2025 Council briefing on the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, it stressed that it has "always taken a prudent and responsible approach to military exports, strictly controlling the exports of dual-use items, including drones". During the 22 October 2140 committee meeting, China apparently questioned the PoE's independence and objectivity, criticising the panel's latest report for containing inconsistencies, lacking credibility, and being politically motivated.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen.

# Sudan/South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).

The Security Council is also expected to renew the mandate of UNISFA and the mission's support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM), both of which expire on 15 November.

### Key Recent Developments

Abyei's communities are exposed to the wider dynamics of the conflict in Sudan, political uncertainty in South Sudan, and the external support fuelling conflicts across the region. These overlapping pressures have contributed to a deteriorating security situation in Abyei over the past year.

On 7 May, the Council received a briefing on the Secretary-General's report on UNISFA (S/2026/378), which covered 2 October 2025 to 15 April. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee reported 196 security incidents, with 58 deaths and 69 injuries, a significant increase from the previous period. She described the 13 December 2025 drone attacks on the Kadugli logistics base, which killed six Bangladeshi peacekeepers, as a profound operational setback for the JBVMM. UNISFA subsequently closed all JBVMM team sites and suspended its presence in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone for the first time since its establishment. UNISFA has also reported that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary force, remained in northern Abyei and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) in southern Abyei, in breach of existing agreements. (For more information, see our 6 May *What's in Blue* story.)

In July, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) held its first meeting on Abyei since October 2022. The prolonged gap was largely due to Sudan wanting the issue to be removed from the agenda. The AUPSC called for the withdrawal of all unauthorised armed groups, welcomed Uganda's mediation between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities, and urged the UN to continue supporting UNISFA until Abyei's final status is resolved.

On 31 August, the Secretary-General submitted a letter responding to the request in resolution 2802 of 14 November 2025 (S/2026/703) to assess progress on five benchmarks established by the Council and the security implications of a potential drawdown of UNISFA. The benchmarks are the withdrawal of unauthorised armed elements and the demilitarisation of Abyei; the resumption of Joint Political and Security Mechanism (JPSM) meetings; the establishment of the Abyei police service and temporary administrative and security arrangements; the issuance of visas for UNISFA police and other critical personnel; and support for appointing a civilian Deputy Head of Mission.

The letter noted that there was "some meaningful progress" on several benchmarks but little on demilitarisation or on policing and administration. It assessed that any drawdown would create an immediate protection, security, and accountability vacuum, increasing the risk of intercommunal violence and serious human rights violations, and that conditions are not yet conducive to significant adjustments to the mission's configuration.

The letter described several positive steps. The JPSM met in Juba on 10 August, marking the resumption of direct bilateral engagement. The parties welcomed UNISFA's options for the JBVMM's future, which reportedly include remote monitoring, and said they

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN/SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2802 (21 December 2023) (14 November 2025) renewed UNISFA's mandate for another year, until 15 November 2026. The resolution also extended for one year the mission's support for the JBVMM. The text received 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia). **Security Council Letter** S/2026/703 (31 August 2026) was an assessment of progress on five benchmarks set out in resolution 2802.

would respond by the next JPSM meeting. However, the meeting scheduled for 20 October in Khartoum did not take place.

The letter also identified new sources of tension. On 13 July, Sudan objected to South Sudan's announcement that Abyei would be included in its electoral districts for the December 2026 general elections, and on 17 July, South Sudan said it would proceed despite Sudan's objection.

Violence has escalated in recent weeks at the Amiet Common Market, a major trading centre serving the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. On 15 September, violence broke out after a Ngok Dinka man and a Misseriya man were killed in separate incidents. UNISFA reported at least 26 people killed and 82 injured, and later UN reporting put the toll at about 40 killed.

On 19 October, drone strikes hit the market, killing over 150 people. Abyei's administration blamed the SAF, though responsibility has not been independently confirmed. Media reports indicate that the strikes hit the section of the market where fuel is sold, which the RSF has used to supply its forces. This development reflects the market's exposure to widening regional instability. On 20 October, the Secretary-General condemned the attacks, saying there will need to be accountability and called on Sudan and South Sudan to take all possible steps to prevent further attacks and uphold Abyei's demilitarised status.

### Women, Peace and Security

In a recent update, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) highlighted the deteriorating humanitarian and security situation in Abyei. The update notes that funding cuts, a reduced UN presence, and persistent humanitarian access constraints are preventing the delivery of aid, including essential services for women and girls. It states that providers have reported gaps in sexual and reproductive health services, including post-exposure prophylaxis kits, HIV/AIDS treatment, and maternal and newborn care. Among other recommendations, the NGO Working Group on WPS urged the Security Council to renew UNISFA's mandate as contained in resolution 2802 and ensure the inclusion of language on women, peace and security. In this regard, the update recommends including references to the mission addressing gender considerations as a cross-cutting issue throughout its mandate; strengthening efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence; integrating gender-sensitive conflict analysis into early warning and prevention mechanisms; and promoting the full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation of women in local peace initiatives. The update also calls on the Council to demand respect for Abyei's demilitarised and weapons-free status and that all parties comply with international humanitarian law, including by immediately ceasing attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

## Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members is the renewal of UNISFA's mandate. The Secretary-General's 31 August letter and recommendations are likely to inform their deliberations and subsequent decisions in this regard. A related issue is how to address the assessment of progress in implementing the five benchmarks outlined in resolution 2802. One option for Council members is to renew the mission's mandate for another year while urging the parties to make progress on some of the key benchmarks. However, this would not be straightforward, given the prevailing Council dynamics and the division among Council members on the mission's mandate renewal. A second option would be to consider a shorter extension of the mission's mandate and the introduction of new benchmarks to pressure the parties to make the necessary progress.

The 19 October attack raises immediate questions regarding civilian protection and accountability. Given the threat posed by recent aerial attacks, Council members could condemn the attack, call for an independent investigation, and urge all parties to respect international humanitarian law. Furthermore, the Council could request UNISFA to assess its counter-UAV (drone) operational capabilities and report on measures it could take to protect both civilians and mission personnel against unmanned aerial systems.

Another major issue is the work of the JBVMM, whose team sites have been closed since the Kadugli attack. The Council could adjust the mission's support to the mechanism in line with the parties' response to the options, including remote monitoring. Members could also follow up on accountability for the Kadugli attack, which was raised in the Council's meeting in May. The delay in deployment of the three authorised formed police units has affected the mission's capacity. The problem appears to be one of funding rather than visas or logistics. The Secretary-General's letter cites the mission's liquidity constraints. Interviews for the civilian Deputy Head of Mission are ongoing, and an appointment would strengthen the mission's political capacity and support work on peaceful coexistence inside Abyei.

On the political process, the August 2025 strategic review (S/2025/518) called for increased high-level diplomatic outreach and regional collaboration to break the gridlock. While progress on the final status of Abyei and border issues is unlikely in current dynamics, members could encourage the Special Envoy to step up outreach and support the AU's role in enhancing the JPSM as well as the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) to maintain contact and help prevent any relapse. They could also call on South Sudan to withdraw the SSPDF, on the RSF to leave northern Abyei, and on both governments to avoid unilateral actions.

## Council Dynamics

Members broadly agree on UNISFA's important role in Abyei, but they differ on how to hold the parties to account and on determining the mission's future.

The US, the penholder, introduced the benchmarks last year as part of wider efforts to reduce funding for UN peace operations. In May, it said "progress on all benchmarks is not optional", and demanded the withdrawal of all unauthorised forces, including the SSPDF and the RSF. It appears the US may propose additional benchmarks as a way to maintain pressure on the parties. The UK has called for progress on the benchmarks and for accountability for the Kadugli attack, and France has called for the RSF to withdraw.

For their part, the A3 (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Somalia) have emphasised dialogue. At the Council's May meeting, the A3 called Abyei a "test" of whether unresolved questions are managed through discussion or slide back into violence and urged the parties to reactivate the JPSM and AJOC under AU auspices. China has said a solution must be political, while Russia called the SSPDF deployment "a necessary measure". Resolution 2802 was adopted with 12 votes in favour and three abstentions (China, Pakistan, and Russia). Last year, the A3 plus grouping at the time (Algeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Guyana), China, and Russia opposed conditioning renewal on benchmarks and cautioned against a precipitous drawdown. The Secretary-General's assessment may strengthen those opposing a drawdown, while the 19 October attack and limited progress on demilitarisation could bolster calls for continued pressure on the parties.

# South Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the situation in South Sudan. Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Anita Kiki Gbeho is the anticipated briefer.

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 30 April 2027.

## Key Recent Developments

Political developments in South Sudan are closely linked to the upcoming elections in December. On 26 August, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) expressed concern over the deteriorating political situation and armed confrontations in Jonglei and Upper Nile, stressing that credible elections require political consensus, inclusivity, and an open civic space. It appears that funding shortfalls may prevent all planned elections from being held, with authorities possibly prioritising the presidential and, if feasible, gubernatorial races. The AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) continue to seek consensus among the parties, but significant disagreements over the implementation of the peace agreement, the participation of opposition groups, and the electoral timetable remain unresolved. Separately, Sudan has objected to South Sudan's plan to include Abyei in the elections.

In her 6 August briefing to the Council, Gbeho said that concerns were growing about whether conditions for credible, peaceful, and inclusive elections could be created in time. Interim Chairperson of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission George Aggrey Owinow said preparations were "way behind schedule". (For more information, see our 5 August *What's in Blue* story.)

On 21 September, President Salva Kiir signed amendments to the National Elections Act, removing the requirement to complete a permanent constitution and national census before elections can be held. The changes were contested by the opposition, raising further questions about political consensus and the implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

On 23 September, Kiir dissolved the transitional government, the national legislature, the ten state governments and their assemblies, and the authorities in three administrative areas. He appointed caretaker ministers to key portfolios, including defence, interior, justice, national security, and finance. This followed his 15 September dismissal of the chairperson of the National Elections Commission. First Vice-President Riek Machar remains suspended and under house arrest while facing murder and treason charges, which he denies.

On 24 September, Kiir opened an inter-party dialogue on election-related matters. In a 29 September declaration, the AU High-Level Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan (C5) Plus, a five-nation AU body chaired by South Africa that supports South Sudan's peace, transition, and electoral processes, welcomed the commencement of the dialogue. It also called for broader political participation and engagement with opposition groups outside the process, underscoring the need to build wider consensus around the elections and the post-election transition. The C5 Plus also reaffirmed its support for the 2018 R-ARCSS; called on the parties to cease hostilities and refrain from unilateral measures that undermine the agreement; and urged the authorities to consider releasing political detainees, including Machar, as a confidence-building measure. The declaration also called for a coordinated AU-IGAD-UN taskforce to support preventive diplomacy and monitor implementation of agreed measures.

The turbulent political situation has led to a significant increase in insecurity in South Sudan. The Secretary-General's 31 July report recorded 107 incidents affecting 940 civilians, including 418 deaths, and 30 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) between 16 April to 15 July. Fighting between government forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) continues in Jonglei State and the Greater Upper Nile region, alongside intercommunal violence in Warrap and Lakes States. On 24 August, armed individuals attacked an UNMISS force-protection convoy in Jonglei State, killing two peacekeepers and injuring seven. In a press statement, Council members condemned the attack, demanded an investigation, and urged South Sudanese leaders to take immediate action to end the violence. On 8 and 9 October, clashes between armed youths from the Pakam and Nyang communities in the Rumbek area of Lakes reportedly killed between 60 and 70 people and temporarily displaced about 500 families. UNMISS deployed a quick-reaction force and helped evacuate 17 humanitarian workers. UNMISS has also continued to report localised violence and displacement in Jonglei State, including recurring clashes between youth from Duk and Twic East counties, underscoring the continuing civilian-protection challenges beyond the main areas of confrontation between government and opposition forces.

On 28 August, the Secretary-General transmitted the findings of the military and police capability study requested in resolution 2820. The study found that the mission's ability to respond to threats has been significantly constrained by a 33 percent cut in its military component under the UN liquidity contingency plan, resulting in staffing shortfalls, reduced mobility, and restrictions on its freedom of movement. Planned military patrols fell by more than 50 percent between October 2025 and March 2026, and UNMISS had 9,308 troops deployed in August against an authorised ceiling of 12,500. The study recommended a threat-based review of force posture, stronger reserve and quick-reaction capacity, better mobility and enabling capacities, and a protection-oriented police approach, including possibly restoring police capacity in the towns of Wau, Bor, and Yambio. It identified Upper Nile, Jonglei, Warrap, and Lakes States and parts of the Equatoria region as areas needing particular attention. It assessed that electoral risks arise less from polling itself than from militarised political competition and disputes over the post-election arrangements.

The humanitarian situation remains severe, driven by conflict, displacement, acute food insecurity, disease outbreaks, and climate-related shocks. The Secretary-General's report projected that 7.8 million people (56 percent of the population) were expected to face crisis or worse levels of food insecurity between April and July, including about 73,000 in catastrophic conditions. More than 420,000 people have been newly displaced since January, and there

**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2820 (30 April 2026) renewed UNMISS' mandate for another year, until 30 April 2027. The text received 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). **Secretary-General's Report** S/2026/640 (31 July 2026) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report covering developments since 16 April 2026. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.10206 (6 August 2026) was the Security Council's regular 90-day meeting on the situation in South Sudan.

have been more than 109,000 cases of cholera resulting in 1,700 deaths as of July. Access remains a major concern, with the World Food Programme (WFP) condemning a security incident on 29 September that led to humanitarian staff being forced to offload life-saving food assistance in Jonglei State. On 15 October, OCHA reported that nearly four million people have been affected by El Niño-related drought-like conditions, and that it has allocated millions of dollars from its emergency fund to support early action. South Sudan also hosts 1.4 million people who fled the conflict in Sudan. At least 39 humanitarian personnel have been killed so far this year. Recent UNMISS reporting has highlighted the continuing impact of flooding in Unity State and drought-like conditions in Upper Nile State, where climate shocks are undermining livelihoods and aggravating local tensions.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

The human rights situation is closely linked to the political and security environment, with concerns about restrictions on civic space and intimidation of political opponents, journalists, and civil society ahead of the elections. Following a visit to South Sudan in early September, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan warned that elections without adequate safeguards and inclusive dialogue could fuel renewed conflict. At the 6 August briefing, civil society representative Lilian Riziq highlighted a 147 percent increase in civilian victims of CRSV between July and September 2025, compared with the same period in 2024.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members in November is how to support a peaceful and inclusive political process, given the dissolution of the transitional institutions, Machar's detention, and the lack of progress on the peace agreement's security and constitutional provisions. Members could urge the signatories to resume inclusive dialogue, implement the peace agreement, refrain from unilateral actions, and encourage the AU and IGAD mediation efforts to coordinate engagement with South Sudanese stakeholders. The proposed AU-IGAD-UN task force has yet to be operationalised, and given that UNMISS does not have an electoral support mandate, Council members may wish to encourage its operationalisation ahead of the elections. One option would be for the Council to convey these messages in a presidential statement before the elections. Travel restrictions related to the Ebola outbreak permitting, it could also consider a visiting mission to Juba to engage with authorities, opposition representatives, civil society, and regional actors ahead of elections, along the lines of what the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission suggested in August. (The Council last visited South Sudan in 2019.)

Another key issue is whether UNMISS has the capacity to protect civilians during the electoral period and its aftermath. The capability study and its recommendations may inform Council discussions on prioritising UNMISS' limited resources, including its reserve and quick-reaction capacity, mobility, and presence in high-risk areas. The extent to which these recommendations can be implemented will depend on available resources and the mission's operational freedom, including the removal of restrictions on its movements.

Members could request regular updates on the implementation of the study's recommendations. They could also support additional deployments or enabling capacities within the 12,500 ceiling where operationally justified. The Council could also press the government to end restrictions on UNMISS' freedom of movement. (In the latest reporting period, 84 of 86 violations of the status of forces agreement involved government restrictions.)

Ahead of the December elections, the protection of civic space and accountability are major issues. Members could reiterate that the authorities must protect freedom of expression, association, and assembly; call for the prevention of CRSV; and urge accountability for violations, including the 24 August attack on peacekeepers.

A related issue is the government's rejection of UN reporting on the situation. At the 6 August meeting, South Sudan's Permanent Representative said UN reports should rest on verified facts and balanced analysis. Members may also differ over the resources required for UNMISS and the degree of pressure to place on the government to facilitate its operations. One option for the Council would be to meet with the South Sudanese government in an informal interactive dialogue (IID) to address its concerns about UN reporting directly. The capability study could serve as the basis for that discussion, shifting the focus from competing characterisations of events to practical questions about strengthening civilian protection and addressing the operational constraints on UNMISS. An IID would also let members raise freedom of movement restrictions in a less adversarial setting than a formal meeting.

### Council Dynamics

While members are concerned about the security situation, the risks surrounding the elections, and the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, they differ on how much pressure to place on the authorities. Interventions at the 6 August briefing provided a clear picture of the differing perspective of members. The US, the penholder, was the most critical, declaring that "peacekeepers cannot manufacture political will where none exists" and that dialogue is "untenable" while Machar remains under house arrest and on trial. Greece and Latvia also raised Machar's detention, and Latvia called for the release of political detainees as a confidence-building measure. Panama expressed "outrage" at restrictions on UNMISS freedom of movement, while Pakistan urged that the troop ceiling be fully used.

During the briefing, China and Russia stressed patience and support for regional mediation. Russia called for the arms embargo to be eased or lifted, and China urged adjusting or lifting sanctions. Resolution 2820 was adopted with 13 votes in favour and abstentions from China and Russia, with China stating that the text weakened the mandate, cut the troop ceiling, and pressured the government.

The African members (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Somalia) emphasised that the transition's success should be measured by inclusivity rather than timelines.

The AU C5 Plus declaration provides further evidence of regional concern over unilateral measures, political detainees, and the need for inclusive elections.

# Central African Republic

## Expected Council Action

In November, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which expires on 15 November.

The 2745 sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2027, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2745 Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2027.

## Key Recent Developments

On 15 September, the Secretary-General submitted his report on MINUSCA's transition pursuant to resolution 2800 of 13 November 2025—which most recently renewed the mission's mandate for another year. The Council requested the report to help it explore the feasibility of an eventual handover of tasks to the Central African Republic (CAR) government or the UN Country Team (UNCT) in light of the overall improvement of the security situation in the country, despite persistent threats in some parts, and the completion of the national electoral process.

The report outlines the work of the interministerial committee established by CAR Prime Minister Félix Moloua in April to coordinate with MINUSCA in the gradual transfer of tasks based on a joint assessment of national readiness and capacity. The findings and recommendations of technical experts were discussed at a high-level meeting of the committee on 10 August, co-chaired by Moloua and Special Representative and Head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza. A key recommendation of the committee, whose findings helped inform the Secretary-General's report to the Council, was that MINUSCA's transition and drawdown should be conditions-based. It further recommended that the progressive transfer of tasks to the CAR authorities and the UNCT be sequenced in a manner that preserves the gains achieved by the country while avoiding the creation of protection or security gaps.

Accordingly, the Secretary-General recommended to the Council that MINUSCA retain its core security functions—including the protection of civilians and deterrence in remote and inaccessible areas—and cautioned against an additional reduction in its uniformed personnel strength, arguing that this should be guided by national priorities, conditions on the ground, and operational realities. (Following a request by the US in November last year for a reduction in MINUSCA's troop ceiling, resolution 2800 reduced MINUSCA's authorised ceiling from 14,400 military personnel and 3,020 police personnel to 14,046 and 2,999 such personnel, respectively.)

The Secretary-General's 13 October MINUSCA report recommends that the mission's new mandate "maintains its priority tasks and multidimensional nature, while placing greater emphasis on strengthening national capacities and advancing transition planning with the Central African authorities". In addition, it recommends extending the mission's mandate for an additional year with the authorised strength of 12,000 military personnel. The mission currently deploys 10,292 military personnel against its authorised strength of 14,046.

On 20 October, Council members held their regular briefing and consultations on the situation in the CAR and the work of MINUSCA. Rugwabiza's briefing focused on three major issues: consolidation of the political, peace, and security gains and progress towards the full implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR-RCA in its French acronym); the security situation in some parts of the country; and MINUSCA's mandate renewal and the conditions necessary for a gradual and responsible transition. (For more information, see our 19 October *What's in Blue* story.)

On 1 September, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) met to receive updates on the situation in the CAR. It also discussed MINUSCA's transition plan and underscored the need for the AU to be actively involved in discussions on the transition. The AUPSC had already directed the AU Commission in April to undertake a comprehensive study on the potential impact of a MINUSCA drawdown and propose concrete recommendations on the way forward. It reiterated this decision at its September meeting and requested the commission to explore the possibility of activating resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023, on the financing of AU peace support operations, in coordination with the three African members of the Security Council (A3), to support CAR's peace consolidation efforts.

While the security situation in the CAR is generally stable, challenges persist in the north-east and south-east of the country. The Secretary-General's latest report describes the persistent cross-border security threats posed by armed groups affiliated with the *Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique* (FPRC) and the *Mouvement démocratique pour le rassemblement du peuple centrafricain* (MDRPC), which operate in the north-east along the border with Sudan. These groups took control of Am-Dafock, a town in the Vakaga prefecture bordering Sudan, displacing thousands of people who sought refuge in MINUSCA's temporary operating base. The armed groups also targeted the mission's temporary operating base, injuring six peacekeepers.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the continued attacks in the south-east by the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (AAKG) militia and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan armed group which continues to operate in the CAR. The report mentions several clashes in July between AAKG elements and the CAR national defence forces (FACA in its French acronym), supported by "other security personnel"—a term the UN often uses to refer to the Wagner Group, a private Russian security company. It also mentions 26 security incidents involving the LRA in remote areas with limited state presence which affected vulnerable communities, including the killing and abduction of children.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is how to support the CAR in consolidating its political and security gains to promote long-term peace and stability. While there have been improvements in its security and the conclusion of its electoral processes, the country's political and security situation remains fragile. This underscores the need for continued support to the CAR's post conflict and peacebuilding endeavours.

A particular issue of concern for Council members remains the areas of insecurity in the north-east and south-east of the country

**UN DOCUMENTS ON CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC** **Security Council Resolution** S/RES/2800 (13 November 2025) renewed MINUSCA's mandate for one year until 15 November

along transhumance corridors and mining sites. There is also growing trepidation over the security situation along the tri-border areas between the CAR, Chad, and Sudan, where cross-border attacks by various armed groups have increased. The impact of the ongoing war in Sudan on the security situation in the CAR is also likely to remain a major issue.

An option for Council members is to focus on these issues in the context of MINUSCA's mandate renewal in November. They could explore ways to strengthen the mission's support to the CAR government in strengthening its border security with a view to curbing the movement of armed groups and the cross-border flow of illicit weapons. They could also consider further strengthening measures under the 2745 and 1591 sanctions regimes to address the cross-border activities of armed groups based on the relevant reports and recommendations of the Panels of Experts assisting the work of the 2745 and 1591 Sanctions Committees, respectively.

The reconfiguration of MINUSCA—including the possible gradual, phased, and responsible transfer of tasks to the CAR government or the UNCT—is an additional key issue for the Council. Council members will be grappling with this matter as they renew MINUSCA's mandate in November, while at the same time trying to avoid a security vacuum that could undermine the hard-won gains in recent years. The Secretary-General's report with recommendations pursuant to resolution 2800 is likely to inform the Council's deliberations and subsequent actions in this regard. A possible option for Council members will be to renew the mission's mandate for another year in line with the Secretary-General's recommendation by maintaining its priority tasks and placing greater emphasis on strengthening national capacities and advancing transition planning with the Central African authorities. However, achieving the necessary consensus around this recommendation could be challenging, given the prevailing Council dynamics and the position by some members to see the mission start drawing down.

### Council Dynamics

Council members support MINUSCA's work and appreciate its contribution to stabilising the country. They particularly appreciated the leadership of Rugwabiza, who is leaving her post at the end of the year after four and half years of service. It seems that the Secretary-General has proposed the current Deputy Special Representative, Mohamed Ag Ayoya, as her successor.

Council members also recognise that the CAR has entered a new phase of consolidation that requires building the country's capacity to gradually assume security responsibilities. In this regard, they may continue underscoring the importance of consolidating the gains made in recent years and avoiding any possibility of reversal.

At the October meeting, the CAR's permanent representative reaffirmed his country's support for the renewal of MINUSCA's mandate and backed the Secretary-General's recommendations for a gradual, coordinated, and responsible transition based on the realities on the ground. Several Council members also supported this position, maintaining that the Council has a responsibility to help the country in consolidating peace, while underscoring MINUSCA's indispensable role in this regard. They further cautioned against a hasty drawdown process and called for closer coordination with the CAR authorities to facilitate a proper transition that will help the country preserve and sustain its gains.

However, the US, which pushed for a larger reduction in troop levels than what was ultimately agreed during the last mandate renewal negotiations, appears to support a more rapid drawdown of the mission than most other members. At the October meeting, it reacted to the reports about the risks of a hasty transition and drawdown of MINUSCA, arguing that a "static mission becoming the status quo" also poses a risk and underscoring the need for continued efforts for an efficient transition of MINUSCA's tasks.

France is the penholder on the CAR.

## Syria

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

Regional insecurity and rising global energy costs threaten Syria's recovery and its fragile economy, as the country undergoes a process of political transition, state-building, and reconstruction.

In his 12 October briefing to the Council, Cordone noted that while sanctions relief has opened investment opportunities in Syria—including €620 million in EU support and a $175 million agricultural World Bank-funded project—economic pressures persist, with fuel price increases driving food prices up around 30 percent and eroding purchasing power. He also said that the UN is exploring with the Syrian government the possibility of supporting an international recovery and reconstruction conference grounded in Syria's priorities.

Syria's energy infrastructure has also faced security threats, compounding economic pressures on Damascus. On 15 October, the state-owned Syrian Petroleum Company reported damage to two pipelines in separate incidents: an explosion that struck the Jbessa gas pipeline in southern Hasakah, described as a sabotage attack; and a fuel leak on the Baniyas-Homs pipeline, reportedly linked to an attempted fuel theft. The incidents follow a series of similar attacks in late September, including a pipeline explosion in Deir

**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 Meeting Record** S/PV.10239 (12 October 2026) was a meeting on political and humanitarian developments in Syria. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/16293 (12 February 2026) welcomed the comprehensive agreement between Syria and the SDF regarding the integration of north-east Syria, and Syria's commitment and actions to counter ISIL/Da'esh and Al-Qaida.

ez-Zor. Syrian authorities have not attributed the attacks to a specific group.

Israeli military activity in southern Syria continued to intensify in October, with near-daily incidents, including raids, incursions, arrests, and artillery fire endangering and disrupting life for communities in the southern governorates of Quneitra and Daraa. Survivors of Israeli detention have recounted brutal prison conditions, including physical and psychological abuse, and at least 51 Syrians are reportedly still in Israeli custody. Israel also reportedly resumed construction of a fortified military road called "Sufa 53" which stretches into Syrian territory—through Quneitra and towards the Syrian-Jordanian border—and has disrupted the livelihoods of local communities. Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemned the project as a blatant breach of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement and international law.

On 17 October, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Golan and met with the Quneitra governor and local community leaders, who urged him to pressure Israel to halt violations, release Syrian detainees, and cease the destruction of agricultural land. On 22 October, Israeli forces reportedly killed a man with a disability during a raid in the village of Jamla in Daraa's western countryside. The following day, demonstrations were reportedly held across Syria—including in front of the UN building in Damascus—to protest Israeli incursions and attacks in Syrian territory.

On 8 October, following their quarterly consultations on UNDOF, Council members issued press elements which included a "call on the parties to fully respect and implement the 1974 Disengagement Agreement" between Israel and Syria and to respect the principles of sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of Syria.

Tensions have also escalated in the southern governorate of Suweida, parts of which remain beyond Damascus' control and are administered by Druze groups opposing the government. On 22 October, a drone attack attributed to "National Guard" Druze militias reportedly struck an Internal Security Forces' post west of Suweida city, amid media reports saying that Damascus sent reinforcements to the Suweida front. Israeli military activity has also been reported in the area, with analysts suggesting that Israel is stepping up its support for Druze militias in alignment with its stated aim of protecting Druze communities in southern Syria.

The threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in Syria persists. On 22 October, Syrian security forces reportedly raided a suspected ISIL/Da'esh cell in Rankous in the western Damascus countryside, killing five suspected fighters and arresting six others. Two security officers were killed and five wounded in the clashes. The Interior Ministry also reported foiling ISIL/Da'esh plots targeting places of worship and security patrols in Damascus and Homs earlier in the month and announced the arrest of the group's top military commander for Homs.

On 26 October, Jordan conducted air strikes in Daraa in what they said was a retaliation against terrorists linked to a deadly attack on a Greek Orthodox church in Jordan's Karak governorate on 23 October. According to the Syrian authorities, the Jordanian strikes killed seven civilians, including women, children, and an elderly man. Jordan acknowledged some civilian deaths but said that the strikes had killed 20 ISIL members. Amman also said that it had coordinated the strikes with the Syrian authorities. Damascus, however, denied any prior coordination or notification and said that it has opened an investigation into the incident.

In north-east Syria, following the dissolution of the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in August, the integration of security and administrative structures into state institutions has continued. Tensions nonetheless persist, exposing the fragility of the process. Key outstanding issues include the status of the Women's Protection Units of the SDF, the scope of Kurdish-language instruction in schools, and the rollback of subsidies previously provided by the former autonomous administration that has contributed in part to a significant cost-of-living increase.

At the 12 October Council meeting on Syria, Syrian Youth Empowerment Co-Founder George Batah and Plan International Regional Director Hajir Maalim briefed the Council on Syria's acute education crisis. They noted that around 2.7 million children in the country remain out of school and nearly 8,000 schools are non-functional or require urgent rehabilitation, with the education sector's humanitarian response plan only 16.5 percent funded. Batah focused particularly on the need to invest in universities and expand scholarships and learning programmes for those whose education was interrupted by displacement, and to support teacher training, among other education-related priorities. Maalim highlighted protection and funding gaps, warned that explosive ordinance contamination continues to threaten safe access to schools, and called on the Council to act on commitments under resolution 2601 by placing safe and equitable access to education at the centre of its engagement on Syria.

Judicial proceedings related to the March 2025 coastal violence against the Alawite minority have continued, with the Military Criminal Court in Aleppo issuing verdicts on 15 October against seven defendants. The rulings follow similar verdicts handed down in September and reportedly mark the first time members of the current government's security forces have been put on trial for acts of violence. While the proceedings are a step towards accountability, critics have raised concerns about their scope and whether investigations into command responsibility will be pursued. Syrian authorities also continued to conduct arrests of former government officials involved in attacks against civilians during former President Bashar al-Assad's rule.

## 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 pressures. 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 transparent accountability and reconciliation processes.

A remaining issue regarding Syria's unity is the situation in 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 remain a pressing issue.

In addition, ISIL/Da'esh continues to pose a threat to Syrian security, despite Damascus' enhanced counter-terrorism efforts.

The Council could consider adopting a presidential statement reiterating demands for respect of Syria's sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity and for the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement. Such a statement could also urge de-escalation of the situation in Suweida and for a negotiated solution in-line with the Suweida political roadmap, while calling on sustained support towards advancing Syria's counter-terrorism efforts and capacity-building for Syrian security forces.

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 also continue to press for progress on an expedited agreement for the Special Envoy's office to relocate an appropriate number of personnel to Damascus 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 with relevant UN entities and international financial institutions—including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—to discuss options on how to address humanitarian and economic recovery needs, such as by accelerating Syria's reintegration into international financial systems and convening a donors' conference focused on rebuilding Syria's economy.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are broadly aligned on the need for the Syrian authorities to advance an inclusive, Syrian-owned, and Syrian-led political process based on the key principles of resolution 2254. There is agreement 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 decision to delist Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's Interior Minister Anas Khattab, as well as the 1267 Committee's delisting of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) from the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions list signalled unified Council support for Syria's interim government and the overall transition following years of deep divisions on the file.

Members differ in their criticism of Israel's continued attacks on Syrian territory and its military presence in the south of the country, with European members and the US tending towards more measured language, while the A3 group (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Somalia), Bahrain, China, Pakistan, and Russia are more likely to condemn Israeli actions in stronger terms. Colombia's position on the Golan seems to have shifted after President Abelardo de la Espriella assumed office in early August. 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.

Despite these differences in Council member positions on the Golan, the Council remains united in support of UNDOF and the need for respect of the 1974 agreement, as demonstrated in Council members' 8 October press elements.

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.

## Libya

### Expected Council Action

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

### Background and Key Recent Developments

The Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through resolution 1970, which requested biannual updates from the prosecutor. The court has jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed on Libya's territory or by its nationals from 15 February 2011 onward. The ICC opened investigations in March 2011 related to alleged crimes against humanity (including murder, imprisonment, torture, persecution, and other inhumane acts) and war crimes (including murder, torture, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity). One of the cases concerned Saif al-Islam Qaddafi, the son of deposed Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi, against whom the ICC issued an arrest warrant on 27 June 2011 for two counts of alleged crimes against humanity: murder and persecution. He was killed in Zintan, north-western Libya, on 3 February.

On 18 January 2025, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Osama Elmasry Njeem for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Libya from February 2015 onward. Njeem allegedly oversaw Tripoli prison facilities, where thousands were murdered, tortured, raped, and subjected to sexual violence. Italian authorities arrested Njeem in Turin on 19 January 2025. Two days later, however, the Rome Court of Appeals ordered his release on procedural grounds, and Italian authorities returned him to Libya, citing security concerns.

On 17 October 2025, the ICC found that Italy had failed to comply with its obligations under the Rome Statute, preventing the

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.10157 (22 May 2026) was the briefing by the ICC prosecutor on Libya.

Court from exercising its functions and powers. Subsequently, on 26 January, the Court decided to refer Italy's non-compliance to the Assembly of States Parties (ASP), concerning its failure to execute requests to arrest and surrender Njeem. The ICC presidency transmitted the decision to the ASP on 29 January. Following the referral, an Italian representative was invited to the ASP Bureau's 1 April meeting to discuss the implications of the non-cooperation finding and Italy's future cooperation with the Court. The bureau is expected to submit a report on its follow-up, including any recommendations, to the assembly's next session, scheduled to be held in The Hague from 30 November to 7 December.

On 1 December 2025, the German authorities surrendered Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri to the custody of the ICC. German authorities arrested El Hishri on 16 July 2025 pursuant to an arrest warrant issued by the ICC. El Hishri was a senior official in the Special Deterrence Forces (SDF), an armed group in Tripoli, and one of the top officials at Mitiga Prison in Tripoli. The ICC Prosecutor's Office alleges that he is responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in and around Mitiga Prison between February 2015 and early 2020. On 16 July, the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber I unanimously confirmed all charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes brought against El Hishri and committed him to trial. The trial is scheduled to open on 4 May 2027.

On 30 October, the Security Council adopted resolution 2835, extending the mandate of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) for another year, until 31 October 2027. Thirteen members voted in favour, of the resolution, while two (Greece and Russia) abstained.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to advance accountability for crimes committed in Libya and support the ICC's efforts in this regard. Securing cooperation from relevant Libyan authorities and other relevant states, particularly in executing outstanding arrest warrants, remains an important challenge.

Council members that are parties to the Rome Statute could organise a joint press stakeout alongside the briefing to reaffirm their support for the ICC's investigations in Libya and call for stronger cooperation with the Court. Such a statement could welcome progress in the El Hishri case while stressing the need to arrest and surrender other suspects sought by the ICC.

### Council Dynamics

Council members remain divided over the ICC's work in Libya, reflecting broader differences regarding the Court. Members that are parties to the Rome Statute generally support its accountability efforts and emphasise the importance of cooperation, including the execution of outstanding arrest warrants.

Russia has consistently criticised the Court as inefficient and biased, accusing it of politicisation, double standards, and selective justice. It has also questioned the results of the Court's engagement in Libya since the Council's 2011 referral. China, while less forceful in its criticism, has stressed that the Court should respect national sovereignty, act strictly within its mandate, and uphold the principle of complementarity, while avoiding politicisation and double standards.

Some African members have also expressed concerns about the Court's perceived disproportionate focus on Africa and emphasised the importance of strengthening national judicial systems.

The US has adopted an increasingly confrontational approach towards the ICC. On 6 February 2025, US President Donald Trump issued an executive order authorising sanctions against foreign nationals involved in ICC investigations or prosecutions targeting US citizens or nationals of allied countries that are not parties to the Rome Statute. On 5 June 2025, the US also sanctioned four individuals serving as ICC judges for their roles in authorising investigations into US personnel in Afghanistan and issuing arrest warrants for Israeli officials. Most recently, on 9 October 2026, the US announced sanctions against the ICC as an institution, stating that it would prohibit transactions with the Court to cut off its resources and impair its ability to operate.

These measures have highlighted differences between Washington and European supporters of the Court. In a 10 October statement, the EU expressed regret over the institutional sanctions, called for their reversal, and reaffirmed its support for the ICC's independence and continued functioning.

## DPRK (North Korea)

### Expected Council Action

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

Ordinarily, the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee would brief Council members on the report. At the time of writing, the chair had not been appointed, as Council members have yet to agree on this year's allocation of subsidiary bodies. If the chair is not appointed by the time the meeting is scheduled to take place, Latvia, as president of the Council in November, is likely to brief members on the report, consistent with recent practice. Greece served as chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee last year, following the finalisation of the appointments in May 2025.

### Background and Key Recent Developments

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

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

# DPRK (North Korea)

In October 2024, 11 countries—including the Council's P3 members (France, the UK, and the US), Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea (ROK)—established the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT) to "monitor and report violations and evasions of sanctions measures" stipulated in relevant Security Council resolutions on the DPRK. Since then, the MSMT has published three reports. The first, dated 29 May 2025, was on alleged unlawful military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia following the latter's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The second, dated 22 October 2025, focused on the DPRK's alleged violations and evasion of UN sanctions through cyber and information technology activities. The most recent report, dated 16 September, is on the DPRK's overseas labour programme, which is circumventing UN sanctions and generating funding for the country's nuclear and ballistic missiles programmes, among other things. The report notes that many countries are hosting around 35,600 to 101,280 North Korean labourers, with the overwhelming majority of them working in China and Russia.

Tensions on the border between the DPRK and the ROK have escalated in recent weeks as the DPRK stepped up efforts to fortify the border. In a 22 October letter to the Security Council president, Ambassador Jihoon Cha, the ROK's Permanent Representative to the UN, said that on 21 September two landmine explosions laid by the DPRK south of the Military Demarcation Line in the demilitarised zone injured three ROK soldiers. He said the incident was a violation of the Armistice Agreement which ended the 1950-1953 Korean war. In response, on 25 October, Ambassador Kim Song, the DPRK's Permanent Representative to the UN, reportedly sent a letter to the Security Council accusing the ROK of fabricating the landmine explosions. According to the DPRK's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the DPRK's letter characterised the incident as an attempt to impede Pyongyang's fortification work on the border and warned that violations of its sovereignty could trigger self-defence measures. It also accused the ROK of firing warning shots at DPRK personnel.

On 21 October, Kim Yo Jong—the sister of DPRK leader Kim Jong Un—reportedly visited the border, where she announced that the DPRK will resume loudspeaker broadcasts of propaganda messages into the ROK, which had been halted last year after the ROK suspended its own broadcasts into the DPRK in an attempt to reduce tensions. On 23 October, the ROK defence ministry reportedly proposed military talks to agree on the precise border between the two countries and reduce the risk of accidental clashes.

On 24 October, Kim Jong Un reportedly made a one-day visit to the Chinese border city of Dandong, crossing the New Yalu River Bridge which connects China to the DPRK. The bridge was officially opened about a week earlier, 12 years after its completion. Kim was received by Wang Huning, Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, who conveyed greetings from Chinese President Xi Jinping. The visit follows Xi's June state visit to Pyongyang, during which he reportedly expressed Beijing's willingness to expand cooperation in trade, agriculture, construction, and technology, while Kim described ties with China as a top strategic priority.

The DPRK has continued to accelerate the development of its nuclear and missile capabilities. On 15 April, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi said that the country had made "very serious" advances in its nuclear weapons programme, including the likely construction of a new uranium enrichment facility and increased activity at other nuclear sites. He assessed the DPRK's current nuclear arsenal at "a few dozen" warheads.

On 14 October, the KCNA reported that the DPRK test-fired two submarine-launched cruise missiles in the Sea of Japan. The DPRK last fired similar missiles in January 2024. On 15 October, the country's military reportedly also tested a new torpedo weapon system which utilises artificial intelligence (AI) for target detection and guidance. These developments followed several other recent missile tests in the region, including what appeared to be a new hypersonic missile launched by the DPRK on 20 September, and the ROK's 8 October test of its first domestically developed hypersonic weapon. In a 20 September statement, Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said that the DPRK had launched at least 15 ballistic missiles since the beginning of the year—three times the number launched in 2025.

Against this backdrop, military cooperation between the DPRK and Russia continues to be reported and is believed to be helping Pyongyang in improving its arsenal. The DPRK's military has reportedly started to mass produce combat drones, building from experience it is gaining from having its troops deployed to support Russia in its war against Ukraine. On 14 September, the KCNA reportedly said that the DPRK conducted a drill on an island in the Sea of Japan which included new combat systems involving attack drones.

## Key Issues and Options

The Council continues to grapple with several long-standing issues on the DPRK file. A major concern is the DPRK's continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in violation of multiple Council resolutions. The pace and breadth of its weapons development, including efforts to modernise its conventional and naval capabilities and integrate advanced technologies into its weapons systems, present an additional challenge.

Rising tensions along the inter-Korean border present an additional risk of miscalculation. Council members could request an open Council briefing to address recent developments on the Korean Peninsula, their security implications for the broader region, and possible measures to reduce tensions and revive diplomatic engagement.

Sanctions evasion and the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime also remain key challenges, particularly as the DPRK is widely believed to have significantly expanded its nuclear arsenal since the regime was established in 2006. The DPRK's continued refusal to engage in denuclearisation dialogue, together with the country's humanitarian and human rights situations, presents further challenges for the Council.

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

The lack of a PoE assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is another major issue. Some members appear to feel that the MSMT does not carry the same authority as an entity mandated by the Council. Given this concern, Council members, who are also part of the MSMT or who support its work, could explore options for enhancing its credibility, such as expanding its membership and

providing more information about the way in which it operates. They could also convene an Arria-formula meeting with MSMT representatives and relevant experts to discuss its findings and their implications for sanctions implementation. In addition, they could consider holding joint press stakeouts following the release of MSMT reports. Such members could further convene informal expert-level meetings to consider how those findings might support the work of the Council and the 1718 Committee.

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

### Council Dynamics

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

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

At the same time, the US has recently shown signs of a more conciliatory approach towards the DPRK under President Donald Trump. On 16 August, Trump instructed the Pentagon to substantially reduce joint military exercises with the ROK, describing them as costly and hostile towards the DPRK, and citing his relationship with Kim Jong Un and Seoul's reluctance to support US efforts against Iran. Trump is the only US president to have met Kim—the two held three summits during Trump's first term. Earlier this year, Trump raised the prospect of meeting the DPRK leader again, although such a meeting now reportedly appears less likely because Pyongyang seems to have shown less interest in US diplomatic overtures. Nevertheless, a reduction of joint military cooperation between the US and the ROK raises questions about the balance between Washington's diplomatic engagement with Pyongyang and its longstanding emphasis on deterrence.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

## Lebanon

### Expected Council Action

In November, Security Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and the Officer-in-Charge of the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), Jean Arnault, are the anticipated briefers.

Council members are also likely to continue exploring options for possible arrangements to support the implementation of resolution 1701 after the termination of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). In August 2025, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2790, which extended UNIFIL's mandate for a final time until 31 December and directed the mission to begin an orderly drawdown and full withdrawal from that date, "and within one year".

### Key Recent Developments

Lebanon appears increasingly trapped in a political and security limbo. Israeli forces continue to hold positions and carry out military operations and demolitions in parts of southern Lebanon, while Hezbollah has tied any discussion of disarmament to a complete Israeli withdrawal and has raised the prospect of internal strife if directly confronted by state authority. At the same time, the lack of progress in US-mediated talks between Israel and Lebanon and the uncertainty regarding the future of the international presence in the south of the country risk allowing developments on the ground to outpace diplomatic efforts to address them.

The prospects of US-mediated negotiations between Lebanon and Israel to implement the 26 June Trilateral Framework remain unclear. The framework was signed by Israel, Lebanon, and the US to chart a way to end the latest escalation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, which began on 2 March shortly after the US-Israeli attacks on Iran on 28 February. During the hostilities, Israel deployed to an area of up to 10 kilometres in Lebanese territory. Despite the Trilateral Framework and subsequent follow-up

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2790 (28 August 2025) extended the mandate of UNIFIL for a final time until 31 December 2026 and established several functions that UNIFIL is authorised to fulfil during the drawdown and withdrawal period. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. It also expanded UNIFIL's mandate. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, and the extension of the Lebanese government's control over all Lebanese territory. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2026/790 (7 October 2026) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1559.

negotiations, hostilities have continued in southern Lebanon, albeit at lower intensity. (For background on the Trilateral Framework and its security annex, see the brief on Lebanon in our October *Monthly Forecast*.)

Following two rounds of talks in Rome over the summer, a further round, which was initially expected for mid-September, was eventually held on 20 and 21 October in Florida. The talks were held among Israeli, Lebanese, and US military delegations and focused exclusively on security aspects. This latest round of negotiations, like the previous one which took place in August, reportedly ended without reaching a breakthrough on key issues.

The most recent Secretary-General report on the implementation of resolution 1559, which was issued on 7 October and covers developments from 31 March until 14 September, notes that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continued to conduct air strikes, artillery fire, demolitions, and engineering activities in southern Lebanon in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It adds that the continued maintenance of what Israel has termed a "security zone" in Lebanon presented a considerable impediment to the deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) in southern Lebanon and "imped[ed] returns and reconstruction, including as the destruction of civilian property continues".

IDF operations in southern Lebanon continued in October. It seems that Israel currently holds several semi-permanent positions and battalions in Lebanese territory, with troop movements regularly reported, including in the area north of the Litani river. It appears that there is concern among some Council members and UN officials that construction of these positions indicates the intention by Israel of establishing a permanent presence in Lebanon.

The Secretary-General's report stresses that Hezbollah's continued rejection of disarmament north of the Litani River, contrary to the government's decisions and Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701, "impedes the State's ability to exercise sole and exclusive authority throughout its territory and establish a monopoly over weapons". It also states that since 19 June, Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility for attacks on IDF troops "unlawfully present" in southern Lebanon or against Israel's territory, while noting that Israel attributed at least three attacks in southern Lebanon to the group.

On 5 October, Lebanese authorities seized a consignment of explosives that was being transported from the Bekaa region to Beirut in a vehicle belonging to Hezbollah. In response, Hezbollah's parliamentarians have accused the authorities of subservience to foreign interests and of "bringing the country to a point of dangerous internal tension". The seizure has been cited by Lebanese authorities as the state implementing the government's decisions "aimed at extending state authority, preventing armed demonstrations, and seizing weapons and ammunition". At the same time, the Lebanese government postponed a decision to refer the case to a court with special jurisdiction over cases involving crimes against state security, pending the completion of an ongoing investigation. On 30 October, 13 people were charged in connection with the seizure.

The Secretary-General's report notes that "competing sequencing demands" are making progress in Lebanon harder to achieve, as Israel conditions its withdrawal on demonstrable progress towards Hezbollah's nationwide disarmament, while the group conditions discussion of its weapons on an end to Israeli violations and the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanese territory.

The risk of a security vacuum in southern Lebanon following UNIFIL's departure is increasing, and concerns are growing about this prospect among residents. While no draft text had been circulated at the time of writing, it appears that during the 21 October closed consultations on the implementation of resolution 1559, a Council member raised the possibility of a resolution that would authorise a UN observer mission along the Blue Line. Among the other elements in such a draft would apparently be a non-UN international force in southern Lebanon to support the LAF. This most likely is related to the initiative for an "international coalition to support Lebanon" after UNIFIL's closure, announced on 25 June by French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. While French and Italian authorities have stressed that the initiative would aim to reinforce Lebanon's sovereignty and help prevent a security vacuum in southern Lebanon, its contours remain unclear.

It seems the potential text might also reference the EU Support Mission in Lebanon that was established by the Council of the EU on 12 October for an initial duration of three years. The mission, which is yet to be deployed, is aimed at strengthening the capacities of the LAF and Lebanon's Internal Security Forces with a focus on border and maritime security. The mission is not however expected to take on UNIFIL's tasks nor to be deployed in southern Lebanon.

Lebanon has shown openness to both a limited extension of UNIFIL's mandate and to the deployment of a successor international mission. Noting that the security context in Lebanon, across the Blue Line, and in the Middle East has shifted drastically since the adoption of resolution 2790, Lebanon said in a 26 August letter to the Secretary-General that UNIFIL's termination "requires a careful re-examination" to avoid a security vacuum. The letter adds that Lebanon believes that the options for post-UNIFIL arrangements identified in the Secretary-General's 1 June letter may no longer reflect the current realities, while extending "UNIFIL's current arrangement, for a limited period of time" appears as "the most practical option, in operational, logistical, and cost-efficient terms". (For background on the Secretary-General's options, see the brief on Lebanon in our July *Monthly Forecast*.)

In his 25 September address to the General Assembly's general debate, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam did not directly address the possibility of an extension of UNIFIL's mandate, but he stressed that a successor force "should ensure the continuation of monitoring, reporting and liaison functions and its role should complement the requirements for implementing the tripartite framework".

More recently, a group of 86 members of the Lebanese parliament submitted a document to Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri calling for the extension of UNIFIL's mandate or, if that proves unattainable, "presenting alternatives" to prevent a security vacuum.

### Key Issues and Options

Supporting the full implementation of resolutions 1559 and 1701 remains a key priority for the Security Council. The Council has been largely sidelined in discussions on how to facilitate an end to the crisis in Lebanon. The Trilateral Framework does not mention the Security Council, its resolutions, nor any role for UNIFIL or a successor UN uniformed presence. A key issue for the Council is to consider what role it will play in the future in supporting the

implementation of resolutions 1559 and 1701 and in promoting peace and stability between Lebanon and Israel.

If reversing the decision on terminating UNIFIL proves impossible, Council members could focus on identifying the core functions carried out by UNIFIL that would need to be continued after the mission's withdrawal and decide which entities would be most appropriate to take them over, under which authority, and what capabilities and resources they would require.

If a decision at the Security Council on post-UNIFIL arrangements continues to be delayed, the Council could consider adopting a resolution postponing, on an exceptional basis, UNIFIL's drawdown for six months. This would allow Council members to consider appropriate options while avoiding a security vacuum. Among other things, the resolution could also demand the immediate cessation of hostilities and call on all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including regarding the protection of civilians, and to fulfil their obligations under resolutions 1559 and 1701. This would include the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanese territory; the LAF, with the support of UNIFIL, to deploy throughout southern Lebanon; the government of Lebanon to continue to extend control over all Lebanese territory; and the disarmament of all militias.

To focus the Council's attention on the need to agree on appropriate arrangements for a reconfigured presence in southern Lebanon, a group of Council members, such as the ten elected members of the Council (E10), could organise a closed Arria-formula meeting on the consequences for civilians of a security vacuum in southern Lebanon. Members could invite representatives of the humanitarian community, as well as of Lebanese civil society, to brief.

On 29 May, the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) convened on the situation in Lebanon. In their deliberations on post-UNIFIL arrangements, Council members could refer to the recommendations put forward by UN Women as the IEG Secretariat. Recalling resolution 2594 of 2021 on peacekeeping transition, UN Women recommended that Council members request that technical gender expertise, comprehensive gender analysis, the integration of gender perspectives, and consultations with women's organisations are central to all options for a future UN presence in Lebanon after the withdrawal of UNIFIL.

The Security Council undertook a visiting mission to Lebanon and Syria from 2 to 7 December 2025. If the security conditions allow, Council members could also consider a follow-up visiting mission to the UNIFIL area of operations in southern Lebanon to have a better understanding of the situation on the ground to inform their negotiations.

## Council Dynamics

Despite the eventual unanimous adoption of resolution 2790, the negotiation process highlighted sharp divisions among Council members. The US, Israel's key ally on the Council, signalled its readiness to veto the mandate renewal if it did not contain a clear date for the end of the mission, while the other 14 members—none of whom had approached the negotiations seeking the termination of UNIFIL—argued in favour of prioritising conditions on the ground in considering the mandate rather than a specific end date for the mission. The result was a compromise that tempered US insistence on a set date for the mission's exit, with a final, longer than usual renewal (16 months) reflecting the other members' concern that an accelerated end of the mission could undermine the process of Lebanon achieving full control over its territory.

Most Council members are of the view that developments since the adoption of resolution 2790 and the current situation on the ground require a sustained international presence after UNIFIL's mandate ends in December. Many members would also apparently support a temporary extension of the mission's mandate if the dynamics allowed it. The US, however, seems unwilling to revisit its position on the mission's drawdown.

Differences persist in Security Council members' views of Hezbollah. Several Council members have accused Hezbollah of dragging Lebanon into a confrontation that the Lebanese population did not seek and expressed support for efforts by the Lebanese authorities to extend state authority over the whole Lebanese territory. On the other hand, Russia does not see Hezbollah as the primary problematic actor and has focused its criticism on Israel and on wider regional dynamics.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

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