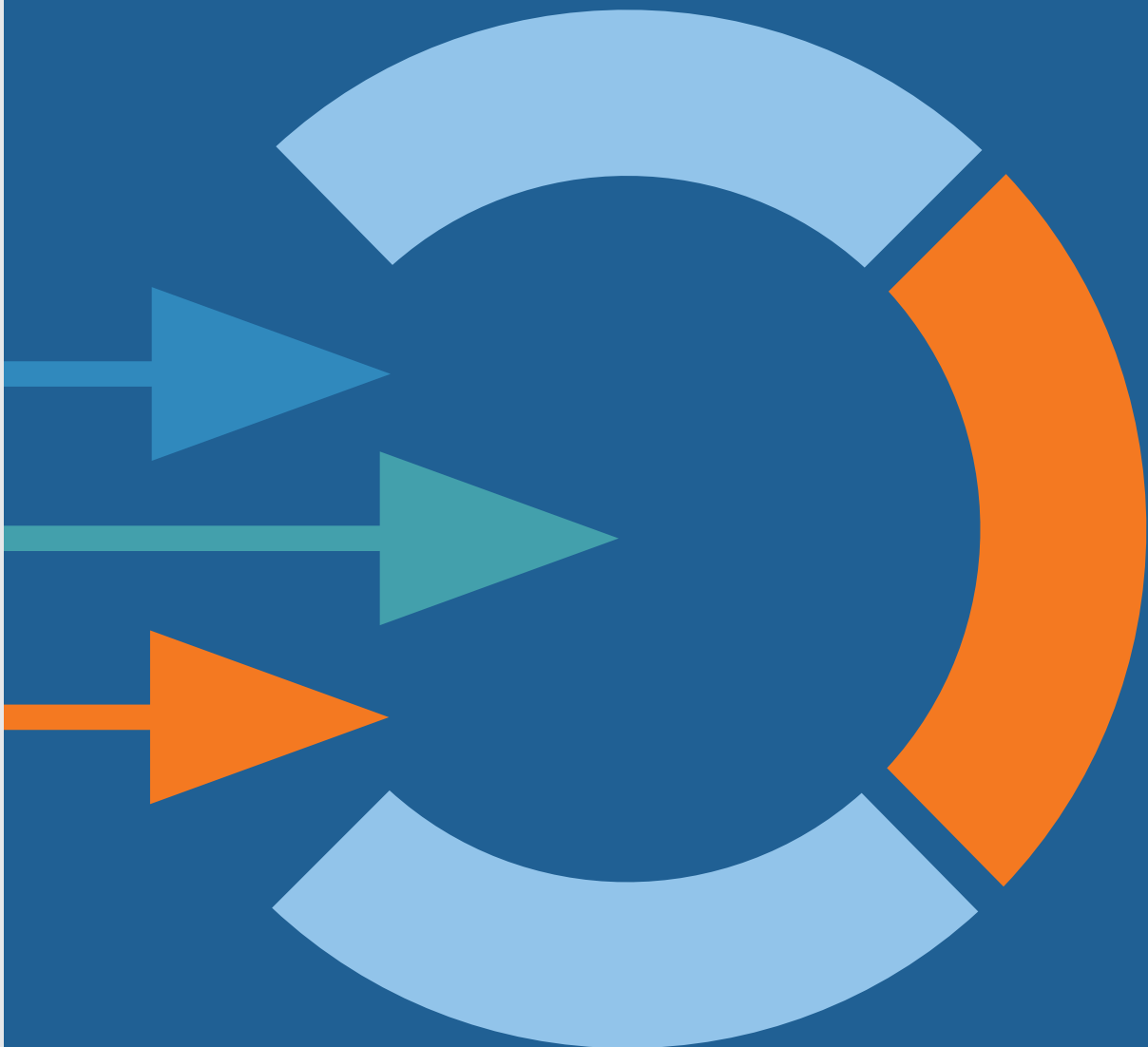


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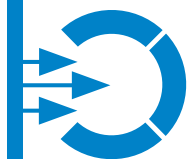
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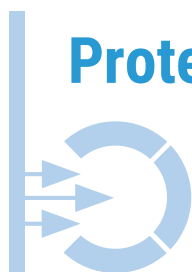
Security Council Report is grateful to the government of Switzerland for its funding for this publication, which will be a legacy to incoming and other future members of the Council. The concept for the project came from conversations with Switzerland during its two year term on the Security Council and the work of elected members of the Security Council. The views and opinions expressed here reflect the views of Security Council Report.

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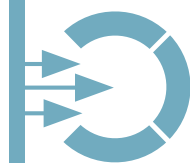
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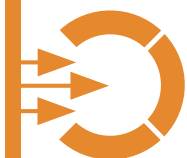
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Introduction

World leaders attending the Summit of the Future in September 2024 adopted the *Pact for the Future*. The document agreed through intergovernmental negotiations led by Germany and Namibia is meant to adapt international cooperation and institutions to today's realities and the challenges of the future.

The *Pact* outlines 56 actions and is divided into five chapters: 1. Sustainable development and financing for development; 2. International peace and security; 3. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation; 4. Youth and future generations; and 5. Transforming global governance. This policy paper mainly focuses on the key action points of most relevance to the Security Council, which are contained in the chapter on international peace and security (Chapter 2). It provides an analysis of the Council's activity related to the action points and offers a menu of recommendations that Council members can pursue in implementing the *Pact*. It also connects some of the ideas in the *Pact* with *A New Agenda for Peace* and highlights some areas that were not included.

Background: From *A New Agenda for Peace* to Chapter 2 of the *Pact for the Future*

In July 2023, UN Secretary-General António Guterres released *A New Agenda for Peace*. This was one of 11 policy briefs connected to his 2021 report, *Our Common Agenda*, reflecting his vision for the future of multilateralism and intended to feed into the UN's Summit of the Future in September 2024. In keeping with UN General Assembly resolution 76/307 of 8 September 2022, the summit aspired to reinvigorate the multilateral system and culminated in the adoption of the *Pact for the Future*.

A New Agenda for Peace represented the Secretary-General's ideas for member states to prevent conflict and advance peace and security. Several of the Secretary-General's ideas from *A New Agenda for Peace* found their way into Chapter 2 of the *Pact*. Some did not survive the bruising negotiations. Others were watered down. In the end, what emerged was nonetheless a wide-ranging commitment to addressing traditional and emerging threats to international peace and security in keeping with the principles of international law, including the UN Charter. This was no small feat at a time of increasing geopolitical tensions that threaten the effectiveness of the multilateral peace and security system.

The international peace and security chapter demonstrates the continued commitment of member states to promoting and refining many of the traditional tools of international peace and security that have historically been within the Council's purview: for example, conflict prevention measures, peace operations, and support for humanitarian assistance. Other thematic issues that have become a focus of the Council's work in recent decades—such as women, peace and security; youth, peace and security; counter-terrorism; and peacebuilding—also feature prominently in the chapter.

As well, the threat posed by new and emerging domains of conflict is included in Chapter 2 of the *Pact*. The Security Council has begun discussing such threats, although only in cursory fashion and not without reservations from some of the major powers about whether the Council is the appropriate forum for grappling with such issues. Although the negotiations on many areas were not easy, there were some notable achievements. Robust language calling for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of the international architecture governing non-proliferation and disarmament was incorporated in the *Pact*. This seems to be significant in the context of heightened rivalry among the nuclear powers.

The *Pact* also includes the issue of Security Council reform in the section on Transforming Global Governance (Chapter 5). In that chapter, member states call for an enlarged Security Council that balances “representativeness and effectiveness” and for an effort to “improve and democratise the working methods of the Security Council and strengthen its relationship with the General Assembly”. While the structure of the Council and the use of veto are primarily addressed through the General Assembly's intergovernmental negotiations, the Council is more directly engaged in refining its own working methods, and there have been several advancements in this regard in recent years.

Overview of the Policy Paper

Following this short introduction, this policy paper provides an analysis of the Security Council's activities regarding the peace and security aspects of the *Pact* and presents recommendations for how the Council can build upon related action points in the *Pact*.

The paper is not designed to be an exhaustive analysis of the international peace and security aspects of the *Pact*. We have chosen to focus on some of the key areas where the Council has already been active or areas where there appears to be the potential for greater Council involvement. It should be noted as well that the paper briefly references other parts of the *Pact*, where these are relevant to the Council's work. Further, it includes a discussion of climate, peace and security, which was removed from the *Pact* at the end. However, this topic was a focus of the negotiations, and notwithstanding its controversies, we anticipate climate, peace and security will remain a significant area of interest for many Council members.

The paper is organised in three clusters. The first cluster focuses on “Protection and Participation” issues. In this section, we concentrate on the following areas:

- Protection of Civilians
- Women, Peace and Security; and
- Youth, Peace and Security.

The second cluster explores the “Peace Continuum” with a discussion of:

- Conflict Prevention
- Peace Operations
- Peacebuilding; and
- Climate change, peace and security.

The third cluster focuses on New Potential Domains of Conflict, including:

- New and Emerging Technologies
- Security and Use of Information and Communication Technologies; and
- Outer Space Security.

The objective of the policy paper is to stimulate thinking on how the Security Council can innovate, break impasses, and solve problems at a very difficult time in its history. Our hope is that this policy paper will enhance understanding of the Council's recent activity in some of the areas covered in the *Pact* and offer recommendations that will prove useful to members who want to build a future based on the peace and security ideas outlined in the *Pact*.

Protection and Participation

The *Pact for the Future* places protection and participation at the heart of the Council's efforts to maintain international peace and security amidst an evolving and increasingly volatile global threat landscape. These two interconnected priorities cover a range of actions aimed at safeguarding civilians, accelerating the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda, amplifying the contributions of women and youth, and ensuring that all voices are heard and protected in conflict-affected and post-conflict settings.

Based on an examination of past practice and current challenges, this cluster of the paper proposes concrete recommendations for the Security Council to translate the *Pact's* commitments on protection and participation—as outlined in Actions 14, 15, 19, and 20—into impactful initiatives. The section on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict underscores the need to uphold international humanitarian law and addresses obstacles to ensuring civilian safety in the face of growing non-compliance and rising geopolitical tensions. The women, peace and security (WPS) section suggests measures to fulfil commitments on the full, equal, safe,

and meaningful participation of women in peace and decision-making processes and emphasises survivor-centred approaches and accountability mechanisms to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence. Finally, the youth, peace and security (YPS) section highlights the transformative potential of young people as peacemakers and peacebuilders, while addressing structural barriers to their participation in international security governance.

Combined, these sections offer targeted proposals for the Security Council to advance inclusive, rights-based, and forward-looking strategies that operationalise the protection and participation-related commitments enshrined in the *Pact for the Future*. Providing a roadmap to reinforce accountability, institutionalise inclusion, and address gaps in the implementation of existing frameworks, this cluster aims to support the Council in realising the *Pact's* pledges to protect all civilians in armed conflict and empower critical actors in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Protection of Civilians

Introduction

The protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict has been on the Security Council's agenda since the adoption of resolution 1265, which was the first thematic resolution on this issue.¹ It condemned the deliberate targeting of civilians in conflict; urged conflict parties to respect international humanitarian law (IHL); stressed the importance of safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid; and expressed the Council's willingness to take measures to ensure compliance and to provide protection through UN peace operations. While these provisions remain cornerstones of the PoC agenda, the Council has since institutionalised and operationalised these priority areas by adopting resolutions on a range of sub-topics; mainstreaming PoC tasks across peacekeeping mandates; requesting the Secretary-General to address PoC issues in thematic and country-specific reporting; establishing PoC-related monitoring and accountability mechanisms; and creating the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on PoC as a standing forum to discuss protection concerns, among other measures. Reflecting the salience of the issue, the Council issued presidential statements in 2015 and 2018 describing PoC as one of the “core issues on the Council agenda”.²

Notwithstanding this progress, PoC efforts have faced new challenges in recent years. One trend is growing non-compliance with IHL in situations of armed conflict, exacerbated by rising geopolitical tensions that have typically prevented effective Council responses, leading to impunity for widespread violations in numerous conflict situations around the world. Another is mounting political pushback from countries hosting peace operations with PoC mandates, resulting in the closure or transition of some operations despite continued threats to civilians in these contexts. It is against this backdrop that the Secretary-General's 2024 annual report on

PoC described the current state of the protection of civilians in armed conflict as “overwhelmingly tragic”.³

Security Council Engagement on Protection of Civilians

For the 20th anniversary of the PoC agenda in 2019, OCHA published an occasional policy paper reviewing the evolution of the Council's protection practices.⁴ The paper reaffirmed the enduring relevance of resolution 1265's main provisions, which remained the agenda's “building blocks”. According to the paper, the Council's subsequent PoC engagement centred on strengthening the agenda's architecture through the adoption of thematic resolutions on relevant sub-topics, integrating and addressing protection concerns in country-specific resolutions, and developing monitoring and accountability tools that seek to ensure effective protection of civilians on the ground.

In April 2024, OCHA published a follow-up policy brief that reviewed developments over the past five years.⁵ The brief described increasingly detailed and specific PoC-related language in Council resolutions, notably with regard to the actors bound by IHL; prohibited conduct; and protected persons and objects. It also noted the further development of monitoring mechanisms to track progress on the ground, including dedicated reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict (CAAC) and conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Additionally, the brief observed that special attention has been given to specific vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, missing persons, and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, while there has been a call for increased involvement of women, youth, and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in peace processes. The Council has also increasingly used UN sanctions regimes as vehicles to

1 Resolution 1265 (17 September 1999) (S/RES/1265).

2 Statement by the President of the Security Council, (25 November 2015) (S/PRST/2015/23); Statement by the President of the Security Council, (21 September 2018) (S/PRST/2018/18).

3 Report of the Secretary-General on the Protection of civilians in armed conflict (14 May 2024) (S/2024/385).

4 OCHA, ‘Building a Culture of Protection: 20 Years of Security Council Engagement on the Protection of Civilians’ (9 May 2019).

5 OCHA, ‘Policy Brief on the Security Council's Consideration of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’ (2019 - 2023).

protect civilians by establishing designation criteria related to IHL and human rights violations.

Since the adoption of resolution 1265, the Council has issued numerous thematic resolutions of increasing specificity on a growing range of PoC issues. As further detailed below, these resolutions have stipulated international legal obligations and rights pertaining to particular groups and objects, such as children, journalists, humanitarian and UN personnel, and critical civilian infrastructure. They have also enhanced the UN's institutional infrastructure in these areas, for instance, by establishing targeted reporting mandates for the Secretary-General.

In addition to the adoption of such cross-cutting resolutions, the Council has taken more concrete measures to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian access in country-specific situations on its agenda. Examples in this category include routinely mandating UN peace operations to support the delivery of humanitarian aid and to help create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of IDPs and refugees, as well as more specific actions such as tasking the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to manage PoC sites; establishing the cross-border mechanism for aid delivery into Syria;⁶ and requesting the Secretary-General to appoint a Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator to facilitate the delivery of aid into Gaza.

Other trends complicate the progress that these resolutions and measures ostensibly represent for the PoC agenda, however. First, the tangible impact on the ground of the Council's PoC efforts has been limited by conflict parties' increasing flouting of Council resolutions and IHL more broadly. A lack of effective accountability mechanisms, exacerbated by rising geopolitical tensions within the Council that typically prevent robust enforcement action, has reduced conflict parties' incentives to comply with their international legal obligations. Thus, as OCHA notes in its April brief, in recent years, the gap between the PoC agenda's expanding normative framework and the realities experienced by civilians on the ground has "remained, if not widened". Similarly, the Secretary-General's 2024 PoC report refers to a range of contemporary conflict situations—including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gaza, Myanmar, Nigeria, the Sahel, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine—in which "compliance with [IHL] and human rights law is often lacking; and in which the demands of the Council's [PoC] resolutions of the past 25 years have gone largely unheeded".

This observation underscores the importance of ensuring accountability for IHL violations to maintain the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council's professed commitment to protecting civilians in armed conflict. The Council has previously taken a variety of actions to this end, including referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC), as in the cases of Darfur and Libya; the establishment of criminal tribunals, as in the cases of Yugoslavia and Rwanda; and the establishment of investigative mechanisms, such as the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD). Given the Council's current political dynamics, however, the prospects for similar action in other situations on its agenda appear dim, likely perpetuating the pattern of impunity that has blunted the impact of the body's broader PoC engagement.

Another challenge concerns increasing political pushback from

countries hosting peace operations with PoC mandates, resulting in the closure or transition of some operations despite continued threats to civilians in these contexts. In June 2023, for instance, the Council terminated the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) after the country's transitional government withdrew its consent for the mission. In December 2023, at the host government's request, the Council ended the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), a special political mission (SPM) that was mandated to support national and local authorities in protecting civilians in conflict-affected areas. Similarly, in May 2024, also at the host government's request, the Council decided to close by 31 December 2025 the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), another SPM that was mandated to support Iraqi authorities in promoting human rights and accountability. Multidimensional peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the DRC are also engaged in various stages of transition planning despite continued protection concerns. This trend has prompted widespread reflection about the future of peacekeeping and its continued viability as a tool for providing protection in country situations on the Council's agenda. (See the section on Peacebuilding for more details.)

Proposals from Council Meetings

The context described above has informed thinking about possible measures to enhance the Council's PoC practices. While Council members routinely raise protection concerns in country-specific meetings, it is the Council's annual open debate on PoC that serves as the main forum for a cross-cutting discussion on PoC as a thematic issue. In May 2024, Mozambique, the Council president for that month, convened the open debate as a signature event, focusing on the 25th anniversary of resolution 1265 as an opportunity to address current threats to IHL and consider the broader state of the PoC agenda.⁷ The briefers were Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide Alice Wairimu Nderitu, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, and Executive Director of the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) Hichem Khadhraoui. The briefers and participating member states made recommendations for Council action in several areas, including:

Accountability and Compliance

- Call on parties to armed conflict to fully comply with their international legal obligations and support the strengthening of IHL by encouraging the ratification and implementation of all relevant conventions, including the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Convention;
- Support robust accountability mechanisms to address and deter IHL violations, including through the ICC and UN sanctions regimes; and
- Strengthen documentation and reporting systems to monitor IHL violations, for instance, by establishing a standing mechanism through which the Council is automatically notified of documented violations.

Humanitarian Access and Protection

- Guarantee safe and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel and aid delivery in conflict situations, including by establishing humanitarian corridors;

⁶ The Syria cross-border mechanism was terminated in July 2023 following a veto cast by Russia. For more information, see Security Council Report, 'In Hindsight: The Demise of the Syria Cross-border Aid Mechanism', August 2023 Monthly Forecast, (31 July 2023).

⁷ Security Council Meeting Record (21 May 2024) (S/PV.9632). For more information on the meeting, see Security Council Report, 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Open Debate', What's In Blue (20 May 2024), <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/05/protection-of-civilians-in-armed-conflict-annual-open-debate-3.php>>.

- Take action on the draft resolution penned by Switzerland on the protection of humanitarian personnel and UN personnel;⁸ and
- Consider and address the potential threats to civilians posed by new and emerging technologies, including online hate speech, cyberattacks, and autonomous weapon systems.

National Protection Policies

- Support the development of national protection policies and frameworks aligned with international standards;
- Encourage states to voluntarily report on domestic implementation of IHL; and
- Encourage states to endorse and implement international commitments such as the 2015 Safe Schools Declaration and the 2022 Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA).

Protection through Peacekeeping Mandates

- Prioritise protection in peacekeeping mandates, adapting strategies to evolving threats and vulnerabilities, especially during mission draw-downs and transitions, emphasising prevention and early warning;
- Cooperate with host countries and regional partners, fostering local support for implementing protection mandates and ensuring sustained protection efforts; and
- Provide dedicated protection capacities for vulnerable groups, including women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, addressing their unique needs in conflict settings.

Resource Mobilisation and Funding

- Call on humanitarian donors to address funding gaps, support the equitable prioritisation of relief efforts, and enhance delivery efficiency through the promotion of public-private partnerships.

In addition to these recommendations from the 2024 open debate, Council members have advocated for more specific PoC measures at thematic meetings held on a variety of sub-topics, several of which are referenced in the following section.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Action 14. We will protect all civilians in armed conflict.

The preamble to Action 14 of the *Pact for the Future* condemns the impact of conflict on civilians, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, and other persons in vulnerable situations; emphasises that genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes—including deliberate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure—are prohibited under international law; and reaffirms that member states will uphold their international legal obligations. Action 14(a) then vows to “take concrete and practical measures to protect all civilians in armed conflict” before outlining six more specific commitments.

Action 14(b): Accelerate the implementation of the CAAC agenda.

Council Action

Since the adoption of resolution 1261, the Council’s first resolution on CAAC, this agenda has become one of the most highly developed and institutionalised components of the Council’s broader PoC engagement.⁹ The agenda now comprises 13 thematic resolutions that have established a variety of monitoring, reporting, and accountability tools. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) provides the Council with timely and reliable information from the field on the six grave violations against children.¹⁰ The Secretary-General’s annual CAAC report, which lists in its annexes parties that have perpetrated grave violations against children, is an important tool to compel parties to conflict to cease committing such violations. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopts conclusions from the Secretary-General’s periodic country-specific reports, which contain recommendations for the Security Council, UN, member states, donors, and the concerned parties. The conclusions also play a crucial role in promoting accountability and encouraging conflict parties to take concrete action aimed at preventing and ending violations against children. Combined, these and other tools have created a robust normative framework that has helped promote positive change on the ground. For instance, since the creation of the mandate of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in 1996, over 170,000 children have been released from armed forces and armed groups.¹¹

Recommendations for Council Members

- Continue to strengthen the CAAC monitoring and accountability framework, including by ensuring the timely adoption of conclusions by the CAAC Working Group and encouraging the Secretary-General to consistently apply in the annexes to his annual report the listing and de-listing criteria set out in his 2010 annual report;¹²
- Increase cooperation between the CAAC Working Group and the IEG PoC, including by convening joint expert briefings on relevant country situations from the Special Representative for CAAC, OCHA, and civil society organisations;
- Promote the inclusion of provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of relevant UN peace operations and follow up on the deployment of adequate personnel to carry out such tasks, including in the context of UN peace operation transitions; and
- Strengthen cooperation with regional organisations to promote child protection measures at the regional level, including by establishing mechanisms for regular information sharing and supporting the provision of technical assistance and capacity-building to regional forces, such as African Union-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs).

Action 14(c) Restrict or refrain from the use of EWIPA when their use may be expected to cause harm to civilians or civilian objects.

⁸ Later adopted as resolution 2730 on 24 May 2024.

⁹ Resolution 1261 (30 August 1999) (S/RES/1261).

¹⁰ Resolution 1612 (26 July 2005) (S/RES/1612).

¹¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, ‘Study on the Evolution of the Children and Armed Conflict Mandate’ (1996-2021) <<https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Study-on-the-evolution-of-the-Children-and-Armed-Conflict-mandate-1996-2021.pdf>>

¹² Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (13 April 2010) (S/2010/181).

Council Action

The Council has not pronounced itself extensively on EWIPA, but it has adopted several resolutions with provisions relating to this issue. For instance, resolution 1265 recalled the prohibition against deliberately targeting civilians and civilian objects in situations of armed conflict, while resolution 1894 highlighted the prohibitions against indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks in armed conflict and against the use of civilians to render certain sites immune from military operations.¹³ More recently, resolution 2573 (2021) condemned attacks on civilian infrastructure in conflict and called on parties to protect objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.¹⁴ Additionally, in January 2022, Norway convened a high-level open debate on PoC in the context of urban warfare, during which several briefers and Council members raised the issue.¹⁵

Recommendations for Council Members

- Encourage member states that have not yet done so to endorse the 2022 Political Declaration on EWIPA and operationalise it in national PoC strategies and military doctrines;
- Consider adopting a stand-alone resolution or presidential statement on EWIPA, potentially building on elements from the 2022 Political Declaration and/or the draft presidential statement on PoC in urban contexts that Norway proposed in connection with its January 2022 high-level open debate;¹⁶ and
- Under arms embargoes established by country-specific UN sanctions regimes, prohibit or limit the transfer of explosive weapons to conflict parties with a documented pattern of EWIPA-related IHL violations.

Action 14(d): Enable safe, rapid, and unimpeded humanitarian access and assistance.

Council Action

Facilitating humanitarian access and assistance in conflict zones is an essential aspect of the Council's PoC engagement. Among Council resolutions on this matter, resolution 1265 underlined the importance of safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflict, while resolution 1894 more broadly called on parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance; stated the Council's willingness to respond to situations where assistance is being deliberately obstructed; and stressed the importance of upholding and respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. In addition to such thematic pronouncements, the Council has routinely directed UN peace operations to facilitate humanitarian access in specific country situations, as well as created or supported additional mechanisms to this end, such as the Syria cross-border mechanism established by resolution 2165¹⁷ and the mandate of the Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza established by resolution 2720.¹⁸ The Council also adopted resolution 2664 (2022), which established a standing humanitarian exemption to all UN sanctions regimes.¹⁹

¹³ Resolution 1894 (11 November 2009) (S/RES/1894).

¹⁴ Resolution 2573 (27 April 2021) (S/RES/2573).

¹⁵ S/PV.8953. Also see, Security Council Report, Protection of Civilians in Urban Warfare: High-level Open Debate, (24 January 2022).

¹⁶ The draft failed to garner the necessary consensus because of disagreement on a reference to international humanitarian law.

¹⁷ Resolution 2165 (14 July 2014) (S/RES/2165).

¹⁸ Resolution 2720 (22 December 2023) (S/RES/2720).

¹⁹ Resolution 2664 (9 December 2022) (S/RES/2664).

²⁰ Resolution 1502 (26 August 2003) (S/RES/1502).

²¹ Resolution 2175 (29 August 2014) (S/RES/2175).

²² Resolution 2730 (24 May 2024) (S/RES/2730).

Recommendations for Council Members

- Urge parties to armed conflict to take steps to ensure safe and secure humanitarian assistance, in accordance with humanitarian principles and IHL, including by streamlining bureaucratic and administrative impediments, and strengthening language in relevant resolutions to this end;
- Establish and enforce humanitarian corridors in conflict zones, including through peacekeeping mandates, and actively consider other measures to facilitate humanitarian access, such as cross-border mechanisms and delivery coordinators, building on past experience and lessons learned;
- Ensure protection mandates remain fit for purpose in today's peacekeeping environments, including through UN-supported regional or multinational forces, especially in transition settings, emphasising host state cooperation, community outreach, the needs of vulnerable groups, and emerging threats such as online hate speech and climate-related security risks; and
- Monitor member states' implementation of resolution 2664, including by appointing humanitarian experts to sanctions regimes' panels of experts.

Action 14(e): Respect and protect humanitarian and UN personnel.

Council Action

The Council has adopted three thematic resolutions on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel in armed conflict. Resolution 1502 (2003) condemned violence against such personnel and recalled the obligations of parties to armed conflict to protect them.²⁰ Resolution 2175 (2014) subsequently reiterated the Council's condemnation of violence against them and expressed its determination to take appropriate steps to ensure their safety and security.²¹ Most recently, resolution 2730 (2024) recalled resolutions 1502 and 2175; emphasised that their protections also apply to nationally and locally recruited personnel, as well as to their premises and assets; and requested the Secretary-General to submit recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel and to report swiftly to the Council when widespread issues regarding their safety occur.²²

Recommendations for Council Members

- Monitor and enforce compliance with relevant resolutions, including by convening briefings when notified by the Secretary-General of widespread issues regarding the safety and security of humanitarian and UN personnel; and
- Support implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations on measures to prevent and respond to attacks against such personnel.

Action 14(f): Respect and protect journalists, media professionals, and associated personnel working in situations of armed conflict.

Council Action

The Council has adopted two thematic resolutions on journalists and media professionals in armed conflict. Resolution 1738 condemned intentional attacks against them and requested the Secretary-General to include their safety and security as a sub-item in his annual PoC report.²³ Resolution 2222 later stressed the need to combat impunity for attacks against journalists, enhance reporting on violence against them, and improve international coordination to strengthen their protection.²⁴ Additionally, in May 2022, Ireland convened an Arria-formula meeting on the issue, focusing on how the Council can assist states in addressing impunity for crimes against journalists and help assure the safety and freedom of movement of journalists in conflict situations.²⁵

Recommendation for Council Members

- Convene a follow-up briefing to the May 2022 Arria-formula meeting to consider the implementation of relevant Council resolutions, the protection of journalists in specific conflict situations, and new and emerging threats against them, such as online hate speech, misinformation, and disinformation.

Action 14(g): Redouble efforts to end impunity and ensure accountability for IHL violations.

Council Action

Enforcing compliance with IHL is another core responsibility of the Security Council as the body charged with maintaining international peace and security. Since the adoption of resolution 1265—which stressed “the need to hold accountable” perpetrators of attacks against humanitarian and UN personnel—the Council has routinely invoked the importance of this principle in its pronouncements. Although political polarisation has typically prevented robust enforcement action in recent years, the Council has previously demonstrated a willingness to innovate a range of tools for this purpose and should recommit to a more proactive approach to end widespread impunity for violations of IHL and the body’s own resolutions.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Support capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening member states’ national legislation and judicial institutions, consistent with IHL and international human rights law, including through UN peace operations;
- More consistently refer conflict situations to the ICC or other international tribunals when the conflict parties are unwilling or unable to ensure accountability for international crimes;
- More consistently apply IHL violations as stand-alone listing criteria for UN sanctions and more consistently designate individuals on this basis;
- Establish a reporting mechanism whereby the Secretary-General swiftly notifies the Council of situations of armed conflict in which the risk of widespread IHL violations is present (building on similar reporting mandates established by resolution 2730 on the protection of humanitarian and UN personnel and resolution 2417 on armed conflict and food security);

²³ Resolution 1738 (23 December 2006) (S/RES/1738).

²⁴ Resolution 2222 (27 May 2015) (S/RES/2222).

²⁵ Security Council Report, Arria-formula Meeting on the Protection of Journalists, (23 May 2022).

²⁶ Resolution 1674 (28 April 2006) (S/RES/1674).

²⁷ Resolution 2417 (24 May 2018) (S/RES/2417).

- More regularly convene the IEG on a broader range of PoC-related issues, including to receive early warning of humanitarian emergencies and/or the risk of widespread IHL violations in situations of armed conflict; and
- In relevant situations, invoke and abide by Article 27(3) of the Charter, which stipulates that parties to a “dispute” shall abstain from voting on Chapter VI decisions regarding that dispute.

Action 15. We will ensure that people affected by humanitarian emergencies receive the support they need.

The preamble to Action 15 expresses grave concern about the unprecedented number of people affected by humanitarian emergencies, including those experiencing forced and protracted displacement and those afflicted by hunger, acute food insecurity, famine and famine-like conditions. Similar to Action 14, the section then makes a broad pledge to “strengthen efforts to prevent, anticipate and mitigate the impact of humanitarian emergencies on people in need” (Action 15[a]), after which it outlines three more specific commitments.

Action 15(b): Address the root causes of forced and protracted displacement and implement durable solutions for IDPs, refugees, and stateless persons.

Council Action

The Security Council has not adopted a stand-alone resolution on displaced persons in armed conflict, but several other resolutions have touched on this issue. Resolution 1265 stressed the particular vulnerability of IDPs and refugees in conflict situations, while resolution 1674 recalled the prohibition against the forcible displacement of civilians in conflict; urged the international community to provide support and assistance to enable states to fulfil their responsibilities regarding the protection of refugees; and reaffirmed the need to maintain the security and civilian character of refugee and IDP camps.²⁶ Additionally, while mainly concerned with conflict-related food insecurity, resolution 2417 stressed its reciprocal link with forced displacement.²⁷ The Council also commonly refers to displacement in country-specific resolutions, although the emphasis and prominence given to the issue varies depending on context.

Recommendation for Council Members

- Consider the adoption of a stand-alone resolution or presidential statement on displaced persons in armed conflict to provide more comprehensive and consistent guidance to member states on this issue, including on the facilitation of durable solutions for the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of IDPs and refugees, their local integration, or resettlement, and the resolution of housing, land, and property issues.

Action 15(c): Eliminate hunger, acute food insecurity, famine, and famine-like conditions in armed conflict.

Council Action

As noted above, resolution 2417 is the principal Council product on conflict-related food insecurity. The resolution affirmed the reciprocal link between armed conflict, food insecurity, and displacement; condemned the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare; and requested the Secretary-General to report swiftly to the Council when the risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity in armed conflict contexts occurs. The Council has since convened to discuss such notifications regarding a range of country situations, including Burkina Faso, DRC, Ethiopia, Gaza, Haiti, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan, and Yemen. The Council has also held numerous thematic meetings on the topic, including, most recently, a February 2024 high-level open debate convened by Guyana on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security.²⁸

Recommendations for Council Members

- Monitor and enforce compliance with resolution 2417, including by continuing to hold briefings on the Secretary-General's notifications of conflict-induced famine and more consistently issuing press statements in connection with those briefings;
- Consider the impact of climate change on food insecurity as a threat multiplier in situations of armed conflict, including by convening the IEG on PoC and the Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security to receive joint briefings on relevant country situations from OCHA, the World Food Programme, the UN Secretariat's Climate Security Mechanism, and other entities; and
- Condemn and ensure accountability for starvation as a method of warfare, including through UN sanctions and referral to the ICC.

Action 15(d): Significantly increase financial and other forms of support to countries and communities facing humanitarian emergencies, including by scaling up timely and predictable funding and innovative and anticipatory financing mechanisms.

Council Action

While funding and resource mobilisation are primarily the concern of UN funds and programmes, humanitarian organisations, and the General Assembly's Fifth Committee, the Council still has leverage and influence on this issue as it concerns matters of international peace and security. Recent examples of Council action in this regard include the adoption of resolution 2719 on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs)²⁹ and resolution 2699 establishing a UN trust fund to support the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission in Haiti.³⁰ In September 2023, Albania convened an open debate on advancing public-private partnerships for humanitarian responses.³¹

Recommendations for Council Members

- Ensure that UN peace operations are adequately funded and resourced to implement their protection mandates;
- Advance implementation of resolution 2719 on the financing of AUPSOs and consider other mechanisms to effectively support non-UN security support missions, in accordance with international human rights standards and the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy (HRDDP);
- Encourage member states to fully fund OCHA's humanitarian response plans in country situations on the Council's agenda; and
- Support innovation in public-private partnerships for humanitarian aid delivery, building on proposals and initiatives discussed during the Council's September 2023 open debate.

Finally, it should be noted that several other actions in Chapter 2 of the *Pact* are relevant to the Council's PoC engagement. These actions pertain to issues such as the root causes of conflict (Action 13); the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda (Action 19); peace operations (Action 21); counterterrorism (Action 23); transnational organised crime (Action 24); disarmament (Action 26); and the risks of new and emerging technologies (Action 27). Additionally, in Chapter 5 on "Transforming Global Governance", member states agree to support credible, timely, and decisive action by the Security Council to prevent or end the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes (Action 41).³² While most of these actions are beyond the scope of this paper, they suggest additional avenues for the Council to follow up on *Pact*-aligned protection priorities.

Observations

As a central and cross-cutting concern in multilateral peace and security efforts, PoC is relevant both to the Security Council's core mandate and to many of the commitments outlined in the *Pact for the Future*. It is clear that the Council's PoC activity over the years overlaps with many of the protection-related actions outlined in the *Pact*, which similarly focus on accountability, compliance, humanitarian access, vulnerable groups, and resource mobilisation, among other issues. These points of convergence thus highlight the Council as a central venue for implementing the *Pact's* PoC commitments.

The above recommendations are possible options for Council members seeking to advance the *Pact's* protection-related actions. Some of them will be more difficult than others to implement, given the current geopolitical environment and growing trend of non-compliance with IHL discussed above. However, in a climate where permanent members are either commissioning or abetting such violations, this may energise elected members who are looking for ways of ensuring that PoC continues to be a central part of the Council's work.

²⁸ S/PV.9547. Also see, Security Council Report, Climate Change and Food Insecurity: High-level Open Debate, 12 February 2024.

²⁹ Resolution 2719 (21 December 2023) (S/RES/2719).

³⁰ Resolution 2699 (21 December 2023) (2 October 2023).

³¹ S/PV.9418. Also see Security Council Report, Open Debate on "Advancing Public-Private Humanitarian Partnership", (13 September 2023).

³² Based on the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group's "code of conduct" regarding Council action on atrocity crimes.

Women, Peace and Security

Introduction

In October 2025, the Security Council will mark 25 years since the adoption of resolution 1325, the first Security Council resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Since then, the Council has adopted nine further resolutions on WPS focusing on a broad range of issues such as women's participation in peace and decision-making processes, protection from sexual violence in armed conflicts, including through "recognising the need for a survivor-centred approach",³³ and enhanced socioeconomic conditions in post-conflict contexts.³⁴ Over the past years, these ten resolutions have contributed to establishing a broad normative framework on WPS helping to guide states and the UN towards concrete actions in this area.

Resolution 2493—which was adopted in 2019 and is the most recent resolution on WPS—reiterated the importance of the "full implementation" of the WPS agenda.³⁵ This objective has lagged behind, however, and the Council's failure to take urgent action to expedite an end to the wars in Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine, among other situations, has had devastating consequences for women in these regions.

In the *New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P), UN Secretary-General António Guterres raised a critical warning, emphasising that as "generational gains in women's rights hang in the balance around the world", so does the transformative potential of the WPS agenda.³⁶ Amid rising armed conflict, militarism, growing Council divisions, and backlash against women's rights and feminist objectives, the warning from the Secretary-General resonates more strongly than ever.

Security Council Engagement on WPS

Recent years have seen Security Council members hesitant about advancing new products on WPS, fearing the difficulty of securing substantive progress amid enduring Council tensions, after the failed adoption of a Russian draft resolution commemorating the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 and the difficult negotiations over the two most recent WPS resolutions in 2019—resolutions 2467 and 2493—which sparked fears of regression.³⁷ These challenges have fostered a cautious approach, with Council members supportive of the WPS agenda and civil society coalitions emphasising the preservation and implementation of the existing framework rather than pursuing new thematic resolutions. These difficult dynamics on WPS have been exacerbated by the Council's growing polarisation in the context of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Dynamics on WPS are regularly tested during negotiations over country-specific situations. In recent years, Council members have retained WPS-related language in several resolutions and were at times able to strengthen it, while at other times, struggled to include effective WPS references. This is often due to direct opposition from some Council members, mainly Russia and China, but also to the prioritisation of issues that members, including some penholders, view as more central to mandate renewals compared to WPS. Overall, the average of Council decisions, which explicitly include

gender-related issues, has been trending down for the past two years and reached 58 percent in 2023, the lowest in seven years, according to the 2024 Secretary-General's annual report on WPS.³⁸ (This compares with the overall average of over 65 percent of Council decisions between 2015 and 2023.) Based on past experience, the return of the Trump administration could further complicate the dynamics on WPS, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

The Security Council convenes an annual open debate on WPS and one on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). In 2024, these focused respectively on women's participation in efforts to build and sustain peace, under Switzerland's October Council presidency, and on preventing CRSV through demilitarisation and gender-responsive arms control under the presidency of Malta in April. Council members have also held additional thematic meetings on WPS and interrelated issues. In March, Switzerland organised an Arria-formula meeting on leveraging the synergies between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the WPS framework. In May, the Council held a debate on "The Role of Women and Young People in Maintaining Peace and Security", which was one of the signature events of Mozambique's presidency.³⁹ In August, Sierra Leone convened a briefing on "Sustaining WPS Commitments in the context of accelerated drawdown of peace operations". In December, the US held a briefing on intergenerational leadership and dialogues between young and senior women peacebuilders.

Council members have also continued to meet regularly in the context of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS, which in 2024 was co-chaired by Switzerland and Sierra Leone.⁴⁰ In 2024, Council members discussed Sudan, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Myanmar, and Ukraine. In November, the IEG also held a meeting with women's protection advisers (WPAs).

Council members Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US have given continuity to the Shared Commitments on WPS initiative, which was started in 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico.⁴¹ In this context, some members participating in this initiative—Malta, ROK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia and the US—included a WPS focus during meetings on a country situation on the Council's agenda, on the Great Lakes in April, Sudan in June, Libya in August, and Afghanistan in September and December, respectively.

Proposals from Council Meetings

Recommendations at the 2024 annual open debates on WPS and CRSV included:

- Take concrete steps to increase women's direct participation in peace processes, including as mediators, and integrate gender expertise in peace processes. Create a safe environment for women's participation in peace dialogues and use quotas as a steppingstone toward achieving parity;
- Analyse conflicts through the lens of women's expertise and use

33 Resolution 2467 (23 April 2019) (S/RES/2467).

34 Resolution 1889 (5 October 2009) (S/RES/1889).

35 Resolution 2493 (29 October 2019) (S/RES/2493).

36 Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 20

37 Russian Federation: draft resolution (S/2020/1054). For more on these issues, see generally, Security Council Report, 'Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative' (30 December 2022) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/wps_goldenthreads_2022.pdf>

38 Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security (24 September 2024) (S/2024/671), 33.

39 The debate was held under the "Maintenance of international peace and security" agenda item.

40 For more on the IEG, see our list of IEG on WPS meetings: Security Council Report, "Meetings of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security" <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Meetings-of-the-Informal-Experts-Group-on-WPS.pdf>>

41 Security Council Report, 'Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative' (30 December 2022) <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/wps_goldenthreads_2022.pdf>

gender-responsive conflict analysis in conflict prevention, resolution, security sector reform (SSR), and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). Promote collaborative approaches that prioritise gender equality, including participatory planning and robust monitoring and evaluation systems;

- Increase women's participation in decision-making processes, including in forums dealing with disarmament, arms control and arms trade. Enact legislation to ensure that women's political participation is free from violence and harassment, including in online spaces. Improve the gender balance of UN deployments;
- Provide funding and support for women's organisations and human rights defenders, including local women-led peacebuilding organisations.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms at the Security Council for reprisals against civil society.
- Enhance interactions with local and grassroots women's organisations, including through allocating sufficient funding for this purpose;
- Dismantle patriarchal structures and foster gender equality across political, social, and economic spheres. Systematically address gender inequality as a root cause of gender-based violence, including in conflict. Invest in education for all, poverty eradication, and job creation as key to empowering women. Address the socio-economic and cultural factors that perpetuate inequality;
- Prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and strengthen survivor-centred responses, including access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services such as contraception, safe abortion and medical, psychosocial and legal support;
- Pursue accountability for gross violations of women's human rights, including through international courts and targeted sanctions. End impunity for CRSV. Demand women's participation in accountability efforts. Include SGBV as a designation criterion for targeted sanctions in all relevant regimes;
- Curb military spending and halt arms exports to conflict zones. Adopt robust gender-responsive arms control mechanisms to prevent weapons from being used to perpetrate SGBV. Sign, ratify, and implement the Arms Trade Treaty;
- Address the root causes of conflict and take effective actions to promote ceasefires and cessations of hostilities in conflict areas; and
- Urge developed countries to honour their official development assistance commitments and increase their financial, technical and capacity-building support.
- Encourage international multilateral financial institutions to allocate more funds to improve women's livelihoods in developing countries.

Among the recommendations made at the briefing on WPS in the context of accelerated drawdowns of UN peace operations were:

- Integrate a gender-responsive conflict analysis in all phases and components of UN peace operations, including in transition processes and all aspects of their operations. Develop transition plans ahead of transitions and build the capacity of national and local institutions to assume WPS responsibilities;
- Include technical gender expertise among transitions specialists. Enable gender advisers and WPAs to work closely with departing missions and UN Country Teams (UNCTs);
- Integrate gender-responsive benchmarks in all components of a UN mission from the moment it is deployed, including as a way to ensure that

missions are not forced to exit without fulfilling minimum conditions for civilian safety and security. Determine the benchmarks through an inclusive process and apply them consistently;

- Prevent protection gaps between withdrawals and new missions, terminations, and handovers to host state authorities. Facilitate UN missions, host governments, and the international community working together to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including CRSV, as missions depart, and develop coordinated, survivor-centred approaches to address CRSV;
- Hold meaningful and regular consultations with women's groups and survivor-led groups and incorporate their views into transition planning by the UN and host governments. Strengthen synergies between UN missions, UNCTs, and UN member states towards this goal;
- Mobilise and allocate adequate financial resources to support WPS initiatives beyond missions' mandates through, for instance, international donor funding, the Peacebuilding Fund, and the UN regular budget;
- Support the efforts of regional organisations, like the African Union, in providing assistance to states on WPS issues in transitions contexts; and
- Encourage mission leaders to assess the impacts of climate change on the security situation using a gender lens and transfer this knowledge to the host government, the UNCTs, and other entities.

In 2024, women civil society representatives briefed the Council on a range of situations, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Gaza, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Yemen, Myanmar, Syria, and Sudan. They presented specific demands to the Security Council, including for a ceasefire in Gaza and in Sudan; for the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) to be tasked with prioritising the WPS components of its mandate; to recognise and stop gender segregation in Afghanistan; and for the accelerated implementation of the Luanda Roadmap, a framework developed to address the conflict in the eastern DRC focusing on relations between the DRC and Rwanda. Other recommendations included:

- Equip UN missions with robust mandates to document human rights abuses, including SGBV, and provide regular reporting to the Security Council;
- Demand the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and LGBTQ people in the implementation of peace agreements and negotiations;
- Strengthen protections for human rights defenders and peacebuilders against intimidation, attacks, and reprisals;
- Provide direct, flexible, and sustained funding for women's organisations, particularly those working in humanitarian, peacebuilding, and human rights efforts;
- Demand the implementation of existing national-level commitments (including quotas) regarding the political participation on women and marginalised communities;
- Demand unimpeded, safe, and sustained humanitarian access for civilians in need;
- Expand and enforce arms embargoes in conflict zones and hold violators accountable;
- Demand an immediate end to all acts of SGBV;
- Ensure perpetrators of war crimes, including gender-based violence, are held accountable. Guarantee that justice mechanisms prioritise gender-sensitive approaches.

- Enhance sanctions regimes to address noncompliance with arms embargoes and violations of international law;
- Establish inclusive reconciliation and transitional justice processes that include women and marginalised groups;
- Focus on the root causes of conflict. Tackle systemic issues such as apartheid, occupation, and structural inequalities, which perpetuate cycles of violence and displacement;
- Demand the lifting of restrictions on women's movement, work, and freedom of expression, as well as an end to systemic discrimination; and
- Address climate change as a driver of conflict and displacement and ensure adaptation strategies are gender-responsive.

At the Arria-formula meeting on synergies between the CEDAW and the WPS framework, members called for leveraging the CEDAW to advance the WPS agenda. Some members recommended using the CEDAW's comprehensive reporting framework and General Recommendations to monitor progress on implementing WPS resolutions and guide states toward protecting women's rights in all stages of conflict and peace.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Consistent with the Security Council's ten WPS resolutions, Action 19 in Chapter II of the *Pact for the Future* condemns violence against women and girls and recognises that the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women in decision-making at all levels of peace and security is essential to achieve sustainable peace.

Action 19. We will accelerate the implementation of our commitments on women, peace and security.

Action 19(a): Redouble our efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including by preventing setbacks and tackling the persistent barriers to the implementation of the WPS agenda, and ensure that initiatives to advance these efforts are adequately financed.

Action 19(c): Take concrete steps to eliminate and prevent the full range of threats and human rights violations and abuses experienced by women and girls in armed conflict, post-conflict situations and humanitarian emergencies, including gender-based violence and CRSV.

Council Action

The Security Council has increasingly recognised the critical role of women in peace and security, particularly in terms of inclusion in peace processes,

peacekeeping, and protection from CRSV. Although with varying degrees of forcefulness and specificity, Council members often express support for gender equality issues, call for funding for the implementation of the WPS agenda, and condemn setbacks during thematic and country-specific Council meetings. Members also regularly condemn CRSV and express concern about human rights violations and abuses experienced by women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

During the meetings of the IEG on WPS, Council members are briefed and regularly ask questions about issues impacting gender equality, women's rights in conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as SGBV.⁴² Council members that have signed on to the WPS Shared Commitments also address these issues in their joint statements at the stakeout, such as the 7 November statement on South Sudan, which underscored the importance of women's participation in politics, called for swifter progress on tackling SGBV, and welcomed South Sudan's commitment for a 35 percent affirmative action quota for women in all transitional governmental institutions in the 2018 Revitalised Agreement.⁴³

Women civil society representatives have briefed the Security Council on the issues referenced in Action 19(a) and (c), bringing their expertise and perspective to the Council's attention. Recent research shows, however, that invitations are decreasing, meaning, as the NGO Working Group on WPS stressed, that "Security Council members hear less and less from the women whose lives are affected by their decisions".⁴⁴

While recognising that progress on the issues referenced in Action 19(a) and (c) requires structural change and the cooperation and political will of local authorities and conflict parties, several Council members supportive of the WPS agenda—mainly a core group of elected members—often try to include or strengthen language in Council outcomes with the objective of promoting gender equality and addressing backsliding. For instance, they have urged local authorities to act on these issues and requested peace operations to provide monitoring and support in this regard. These attempts are not always successful, as Russia and China often counter that the proposed language may unduly expand the tasks of a UN mission or impose external constraints on sovereign authorities.

The Security Council has also recently sanctioned individuals in relation to SGBV, among other violations, in the DRC⁴⁵ and Haiti,⁴⁶ and, in November, it sanctioned two generals of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under the Sudan sanctions regime. While this sanctions regime does not have a standalone criterion for SGBV, the narrative summaries accompanying the listing cited attacks against civilians by the RSF and allied militia during which women and girls were "reportedly raped and sexually abused".⁴⁷ Nevertheless, numerous parties with a documented record of SGBV violations, including those mentioned in the Secretary-General's annual reports on CRSV, are not sanctioned or are not sanctioned for SGBV specifically.⁴⁸ As noted by Russo and McGowan, this gap originates partly from constraints

42 For instance, see: Letter dated 5 August 2024 from the representatives of Sierra Leone, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2024/591). This was the summary of the IEG's 25 June meeting on Libya.

43 Statement of Shared Commitments (7 November 2024) <<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1qs015rb9>>

44 Alexis Fessatidis, 'Protecting Participation: Women civil society at the UN Security Council (January 2023–September 2024)' (21 October 2024) <<https://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/protecting-participation-women-civil-society-at-the-unc-2023-2024/>>

45 The following individuals were listed in 2024 pursuant to paragraph 7(e) of resolution 2293 (2016) concerning the DRC which refers to rape and other sexual violence and with the narrative summary citing SGBV: Narrative Summary 'CDi.039: Apollinaire Hakizimana' (20 February 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/apollinaire-hakizimana>>; Narrative Summary 'CDi.042: Mohamed Ali Nkalubo' (20 February 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/mohamed-ali-nkalubo>>; Narrative Summary 'CDi.043: William Amuri Yakutumba' (20 February 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/william-amuri-yakutumba>>; Narrative Summary 'CDi.044: Willy Ngoma' (20 February 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/willy-ngoma>>

46 Narrative Summary 'HTI.004: Luckson Elan' (27 September 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/luckson-elan>>

47 Narrative Summary 'SDi.005: Abdel Rahman Juma Barkalla' (8 November 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/abdel-rahman-juma-barkalla>>; Narrative Summary 'SDi.006: Osman Mohamed Hamid Mohamed' (8 November 2024) <<https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/osman-mohamed-hamid-mohamed>>

48 Jenna Russo and Lauren McGowan, 'UN tools for addressing conflict-related sexual violence: an analysis of listings and sanctions processes', International Peace Institute, (April 2024) <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UN_Tools-for-Addressing-CRSV.pdf>

faced by panels of experts investigating such violations and a lack of political will among member states to support both SGBV-specific designations and sanctions designations more generally.⁴⁹ The inclusion of a standalone listing criterion for SGBV has also proven controversial. During the negotiations of resolution 2734 on the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL and Al-Qaida sanctions regime, Algeria, China, Mozambique, and Russia opposed a US-led proposal to add acts of SGBV as a standalone listing criterion. As a compromise, language was added instead, recognising that acts involving SGBV may be covered by the existing listing criteria in specific circumstances.⁵⁰

On a broader scale, the Security Council has failed to address and promote a prompt resolution to major crises which have severely impacted women, including in Afghanistan, Gaza, Myanmar, Haiti, Sudan, and Ukraine. Civil society groups monitoring the Council's implementation of the WPS agenda have emphasised that ending violence is the most effective way to protect the rights of women and girls in conflicts and crises.⁵¹ In this context, they have called for a host of measures including Security Council reform, the imposition of ceasefires and sanctions, as well as measures to stop arms transfers.⁵² But these measures have not been forthcoming. Rather, in direct contradiction with the principles underpinning the WPS agenda, some Council members, including the US and Russia, have used the veto, or threat thereof, to stop urgent action to facilitate a resolution of these crises. More generally, and as observed in the Secretary-General's annual report on WPS, while military spending continues to rise, bilateral aid with gender equality objectives has dropped, with the report recording a decrease for the third year in funding reaching women's civil society organisations in conflict and crisis settings.⁵³

Echoing the calls of generations of feminist activists and scholars, in the NA4P, the Secretary-General called for dismantling "the patriarchy and oppressive power structures which stand in the way of progress on gender equality or women's full, equal and meaningful participation in political and public life".⁵⁴

Achieving Action 19(a) and (c) requires addressing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression, inequality, exclusion, and discrimination, including patriarchy. At the same time, there are a number of actions that members can take.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Actively support, and refrain from obstructing Council action aimed at preventing and peacefully ending conflicts, including by renouncing the use of the veto on resolutions designed to halt or avert atrocities;⁵⁵
- Step up efforts to address the root causes of conflict and support inclusive, gender-responsive, and peaceful conflict resolution efforts;
- Lead by example in stopping arms transfers and impose arms embargos when there is a risk that weapons are being used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law;

- Intensify efforts for disarmament and demilitarisation, and redirect funds towards implementing Action 19(a) and climate action.⁵⁶ Such action would be in line with Article 26 of the UN Charter, which called for the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources; Action 7 of the NA4P, which called on UN member states to "commit to reducing the human cost of weapons by moving away from overly securitized and militarized approaches to peace, reducing military spending and enacting measures to foster human-centred disarmament"; and historic calls from the feminist peace movement;
- Preserve and strengthen WPS language in thematic and country-specific Council outcomes and follow up on the implementation of these decisions, in line with resolution 2242 on WPS in which the Council decided to integrate WPS concerns "across all country-specific situations on the Security Council's agenda".⁵⁷ This would include supporting language on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Continue to invite diverse women civil society representatives to brief the Council regularly and follow up on their information and recommendations. It is essential that members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briefer, including carrying out risk assessments, developing protection plans, and responding to any reprisals. At the same time, the NGO Working Group on WPS has stressed that "managing risks and thinking carefully through protection, while important, should never compromise women civil society's participation or censor their independent views".⁵⁸ Members should instead effectively manage risks by "investing political and financial capital in enabling women civil society to participate";⁵⁹
- Lead by example in increasing funding to support the implementation of the WPS agenda, including through contributing to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund,⁶⁰ which supports local and grassroots women's organisations in conflict and crisis settings, and through allocating 15 percent of official development assistance (ODA) to gender equality, and providing a minimum of 1 percent of ODA in direct assistance to women's organisations, especially grassroots groups mobilising for peace, as called for by the Secretary-General in the NA4P; and
- As suggested by Russo and McGowan, include sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as a standalone criterion in sanctions regimes for contexts where it may be taking place, enhance alignment between the parties identified in the annual report on CRSV and those designated under sanctions regimes, and establish a "standing capacity within the UN to engage with designated parties, with the aim of encouraging compliance and facilitating de-listing".⁶¹

49 Ibid.

50 Security Council Report, 'Counter-Terrorism: Vote on a Draft Resolution on the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions Regime', What's in Blue, (10 June 2024) <<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/whatsinblue/2024/06/counter-terrorism-vote-on-a-draft-resolution-on-the-isil-daesh-and-al-qaida-sanctions-regime.php>>

51 NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, '2024 Open Letter to Permanent Representatives to the United Nations in advance of the annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, (08 October 2024) <<https://www.womenpeaceandsecurity.org/resource/open-letter-un-wps-2024/>>

52 Ibid.

53 Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security, supra note 6, 3.

54 Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 7.

55 See also Action 39(g), Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations, (September 2024), 27.

56 Ibid. See also Actions 25 and 26. Action 13(c) is also relevant although it calls for ensuring that military spending does not compromise investment in sustainable development and building sustainable peace.

57 Resolution 2242 (13 October 2015) (S/RES/2242).

58 Protecting Participation: Women civil society at the UN Security Council, supra note 12, 4.

59 Ibid (original emphasis).

60 The United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) at <https://wphfund.org/>

61 Jenna Russo and Lauren McGowan, "UN tools for addressing conflict-related sexual violence: an analysis of listings and sanctions processes", International Peace Institute, (April 2024), 20.

Action 19(b): Deliver on our commitments to ensure that women can fully, equally, safely and meaningfully participate in all UN-led mediation and peace processes.

See also in Chapter I of the Pact on “Sustainable Development and Financing for Development”: Action 8(b) Urgently remove all legal, social and economic barriers to achieve gender equality and ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Council Action

Council members regularly express support for women’s full, equal, safe and meaningful participation in peace processes. The need for further action in this area was also highlighted in one of the Shared Commitments on WPS, through which participating Council members pledged to call on the UN to “lead by example in ensuring the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the peace processes it leads or co-leads”.⁶²

However, analysis carried out by UN Women and cited in the Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS shows a striking lack of progress on this objective. On average, in 2023, women made up only 9.6 percent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace agreements and ceasefire agreements, with the proportion of women signatories dropping to 1.5 percent if agreements in Colombia are excluded.⁶³

Addressing the Security Council at the annual open debate on WPS, Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed stressed that the UN “is not always present” in the current global mediation landscape, as mediation processes are increasingly led by diverse regional, state, and other actors. Noting that overlapping peace initiatives in many contexts mean that “no single mediator can affect global and meaningful change on women’s participation”, Mohammed launched, on behalf of the Secretary-General, a “Common Pledge for Women’s Full, Equal and Meaningful Participation in Peace Processes”.⁶⁴ The Common Pledge commits participants to a set of actions, including appointing women as lead mediators and ensuring that women are an integral part of mediation teams, as well as to carry out consultations by mediation teams “consistently and with a broad range of women leaders and women-led civil society in all stages of peace processes”.⁶⁵ UN member states, regional organisations, and other key actors that are actively engaged in mediation are invited to join the initiative and report on their progress at the 2025 annual open debate on WPS. As of 18 November 2024, six Council members joined the Common Pledge.

In July 2024, Switzerland convened a two-day retreat at the Greentree estate with representatives of regional and Swiss women mediator networks in preparation for the WPS annual open debate. According to a report summarising the key points raised during the retreat, participants stressed, among other issues, the need for gender-responsive conflict analysis, greater awareness of the risks and potential of digital technologies for peace-making, and political and financial support for women-led peacebuilding

and alliance-building.⁶⁶ Participants also stressed the importance of establishing mechanisms linking processes along different tracks in order to counter challenges such as the fragmentation of the mediation space, the persistent hierarchy between different tracks, and the continued marginalisation of women at the track 1 level (that is, formal talks between the key political-military elites at the heart of conflicts). That peace tables are based on “an increasingly narrow, issues-based, and piece-meal approach negotiated between ‘a few men’, and often focused exclusively on short-term fixes to ceasefire and security arrangements or humanitarian access” was identified as a further challenge and as a factor highlighting the need for “political processes designed for inclusivity, based on international norms and principles, and aspiring to achieve transformative peace”.⁶⁷

Recommendations for Council Members

Council members could:

- Lead by example through concretely supporting diverse women’s participation at all levels and stages of peace processes and across all issues. Among other actions, members can:
 - Provide long-term, flexible funding for women’s organisations and networks working on peacebuilding.
 - Support equitable care systems as a way to mitigate inequalities that hinder women’s participation in peace and political processes;⁶⁸
- Ask UN briefers to provide substantive updates on women’s participation in peace processes, in line with resolution 2122 on WPS, which requested senior UN officials briefing the Council to provide updates on issues relevant to WPS and specifically on “progress in inviting women to participate, including through consultations with civil society, including women’s organizations, in discussions pertinent to the prevention and resolution of conflict, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding”.⁶⁹ This can be done bilaterally but also during open meetings, particularly where the presentation of gender elements is insufficient or absent altogether;
- Join, implement, and report on the Secretary-General’s Common Pledge. Members not involved in mediation can still call on others to join and implement the Common Pledge; and
- Lead by example through adopting best practices when involved in peace processes and call on others, including the UN, to do the same.

Regarding mediation, the recommendations elaborated in the report on the two-day retreat with representatives of women mediator networks (WMNs) are useful,⁷⁰ including:

- Adopt a multi-track approach with formal mechanisms for linking peace processes along different tracks, ensuring that women’s voices are heard from grassroots to high-level negotiations, and that continuous and reciprocal information flows across all tracks.
- Ensure that gender expertise is integrated into process design decision-making and implementation of peace processes. Mapping of women mediators, peacebuilders, and experts across sectors

62 Security Council Report, No. 3, “Golden Threads and Persisting Challenges: The Security Council Women, Peace and Security Presidencies Initiative”, (30 December 2022), 21.

63 Report of the Secretary-General, Women and peace and security, supra note 21, at 9.

64 UN Security Council, ‘Women and peace and security’, (S/PV.9760), (24 October 2024).

65 UN Peacemaker, available at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/thematic-areas/gender-women-peace-security/common-pledge>

66 Women Building Peace In A Changing Environment, Report of the Women Mediator Networks Retreat, (July 2024).

67 Ibid.

68 See Public Service International, Recognising Care as a Human Right and a Public Good in the Pact for the Future (September 2024). Available at: <https://publicservices.international/resources/news/recognising-care-as-a-human-right-and-a-public-good-in-the-pact-for-the-future?id=15382&lang=en> and Actions 8(d) and 34(d).

69 Resolution 2122 (18 October 2013), (S/RES/2122).

70 Report of the Women Mediator Networks Retreat, supra note 34, at 6.

relevant to negotiations was identified as a gap in gender-responsive conflict analysis.

- Leverage WMNs as a key asset for peace and security. Several participants called for formal recognition of WMNs as key partners and the institutionalisation of their role in all UN-led peace processes.
- Support mediation actors in safely and ethically using digital technologies to enhance women’s inclusion in peace processes while ensuring virtual tools complement rather than replace meaningful in-person participation.⁷¹

Action 19(d): Accelerate our ongoing efforts to ensure the full, equal, safe and meaningful participation of women in peace operations.

Council Action

Several Security Council resolutions renewing the mandate of peacekeeping operations contain language calling on the Secretary-General and troop and police-contributing countries to increase the number of women in missions and ensuring women’s participation in all aspects of operations, with some also referring to enabling and gender-sensitive work environments for women in peacekeeping.⁷² Often, these texts reference resolution 2538 of 2020 on women in peacekeeping, which called on states, the Secretariat and regional organisations to strengthen their efforts to “promote the full, effective, and meaningful participation of uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping operations at all levels and in all positions, including in senior leadership positions”.⁷³

Over the past five years, the proportion of women in most categories of uniformed personnel has doubled.⁷⁴ The UN Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028 set targets to achieve 25 percent representation of women among military experts and staff officers and 15 percent among troops in UN peace operations by 2028.⁷⁵ According to an analysis by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the proportion of women among military experts and staff officers reached 24 percent in June 2024, approaching the strategy’s goal and exceeding the 2024 intermediary target set at 21 percent. The proportion of women among troops has also been growing, but at a slower rate and, at 7.8 percent in June 2024, it remains below both the 2024 intermediary target of 11 percent and the 2028 objective.⁷⁶ Moreover, most UN peace operations have yet to reach the goal set in the UN’s 2017 System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity, which established targets for achieving equal representation—defined as a range of 47–53 percent—of women and men, including among civilian personnel in peace operations. The Secretary-General has also stressed the importance of ensuring that the UN is adequately equipped with specialised gender expertise, including gender advisers and WPAs.⁷⁷

Beyond numerical representation, UN missions’ work to deliver on the WPS mandate on the ground is a key area of attention for the implementation of commitments on women’s full, equal, safe, and meaningful participation in peace operations. The Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS highlights several such examples, with, for instance, the UN

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) supporting the establishment of twelve “circles of peace made up of local women leaders and mediators working to advance social cohesion in their communities”.⁷⁸ In this regard, while several Security Council resolutions contain language calling on UN peace operations to support national authorities or relevant parties towards women’s participation in peace and political processes and decision-making,⁷⁹ some also include language specifically mandating peace operations to engage with women’s and civil society organisations. For instance, resolution 2760 requested the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to prioritise the implementation of the WPS resolutions “including through engagement with local women’s networks and civil society organizations”.⁸⁰

Situations in which UN peace operations face accelerated drawdowns are an area of growing concern, including from a WPS perspective, as highlighted during the August Security Council briefing organised by Sierra Leone on this issue. However, Council members have struggled to advance effective language on this issue in recent negotiations. For instance, during the negotiations on resolution 2748, which renewed the mandate of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) until 31 December 2024, a proposal supported by several members to include a reference to women’s participation and the need for a gender-responsive transition process in ATMIS’ drawdown was opposed by China and Russia and not included in the final version of the resolution.

Recommendations for Council Members

Recognising that an emphasis on quantitative targets decoupled from substantive changes to how the Security Council approaches conflict, peace and security will not deliver on the objectives of the WPS agenda, Council members could:

- Promote a broad reading of Action 19(d) that is not limited to reaching numeric targets for women’s representation in peace operations and focusing on ensuring that UN peace operations are equipped to support the success of local-level, women-led peacebuilding initiatives. Council members can ask the Secretariat for more information on the impact of UN missions’ work to deliver on the WPS mandate on the ground and include language in Council resolutions calling on peace operations to work with diverse women’s networks and civil society organisations towards these objectives;
- Provide enhanced support to the deployment of gender advisers and WPAs in peace operations, including those undergoing transitions; and
- Implement the recommendations put forward by Council members at the August briefing on WPS and transitions, including through inclusion of specific language in relevant resolutions. Members can also focus on recommendations specifically related to follow-up actions, including:
 - Engage with national authorities and partners on WPS during periodic Security Council visiting missions, particularly in transitions, and conduct IEG on WPS field visits after the departure of a UN mission to monitor and report on the situation of women and girls so that this analysis can be included in decision-making. Members can follow up

71 See also Action 31, Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations, *supra* note 23, 22.

72 See, for instance S/RES/2756 (MINURSO), S/RES/2723 (UNFICYP), S/RES/2695 (UNIFIL), S/RES/2760 (UNISFA).

73 Resolution 2538 (28 August 2020), (S/RES/2538).

74 Report of the Secretary-General, (S/2024/671), *supra* note 21, at 13.

75 UN Department of Peace operations, Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018-2028, 4.

76 Claudia Pfeifer Cruz, Women in multilateral peace operations in 2024: What is the state of play?, (October 2024), SIPRI, 2. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.55163/VYHM5282>

77 Secretary-General, System-wide strategy on gender parity, (October 2017), 12.

78 Report of the Secretary-General, (S/2024/671), *supra* note 21, at 14.

79 Resolution S/RES/2685, Resolution S/RES/2717, Resolution S/RES/2729.

80 Resolution 2760 (14 November 2024) (S/RES/2760).

on this through Security Council decisions and statements, and during Council and member state interactions with host governments and with regional or sub-regional organisations providing peacekeeping support.

- Request the Secretary-General to provide periodic reports on country situations after mission drawdowns applying a WPS lens, with support from relevant UN bodies, such as UN Women.

Observations

The *Pact for the Future* is significantly less ambitious and specific than the Secretary-General's NA4P. While it reaffirmed existing commitments to equality, protection, and participation of women in peace and security, as well as ending discrimination, it failed to directly address patriarchy in its relationship with other intersecting forms of power and inequality. It fell short of feminist civil society organisations' calls for the *Pact* to centre demilitarisation as a conflict prevention strategy and "reflect how patriarchy

and militarised masculinities are part of the root causes of armed conflict and must be dismantled to prevent violence".⁸¹ The omission of these issues from the *Pact* does not make them any less crucial and should not prevent individual members or like-minded coalitions from championing them at the Security Council.

As the 25th anniversary of the WPS agenda approaches, Council members' commitment to the WPS agenda will not be measured by their statements or by the meetings on WPS they convene, but by their actions—specifically, how consistently they align with and implement the agenda's principles while fulfilling the Council's mandate to maintain peace and security. Their failure to do so in contexts such as Gaza and Ukraine has undermined the Council's credibility and revitalised calls for the Council's reform, including among WPS advocates.⁸² Closing the widening chasm between rhetoric and action on WPS remains a critical priority for all members committed to the agenda.

Youth, Peace and Security

The Council's engagement on the interlinkages between the role of young people and the peace and security architecture has helped in reimagining global perceptions, shifting the narrative of youth merely as victims or perpetrators to working with them as active partners and positive agents of change. Young people are increasingly recognised for their vital contributions in decision-making processes and their ability to offer innovative solutions to contemporary peace and security challenges.

Several challenges remain, however, including lack of institutionalisation of the agenda in Council discussions and limited interest among members to discuss it as a stand-alone issue. These gaps hinder the agenda's potential to realise meaningful, sustained youth participation in global efforts to promote peace and security.

Security Council Engagement on Youth, Peace and Security

The elected members of the Council have played a crucial role in spearheading the discussions, recognising the positive role of young persons in issues of peace and security. The Council first addressed youth, peace and security (YPS) at the initiative of Jordan during its April 2015 presidency when it organised an open debate on the "role of youth in countering violent extremism and promoting peace". On 9 December 2015, the Council adopted resolution 2250, which recognised youth as key players in prevention and conflict resolution. It urged member states to increase inclusive youth representation in decision-making institutions and identified the following pillars for action participation; protection; prevention; partnership; and disengagement and reintegration.

In the subsequent years, the Council continued its engagement on the YPS agenda, building on the provisions of resolution 2250. This included organising open debates, convening informal meetings, and adopting additional resolutions to further strengthen the role of youth in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, such as resolution 2419 of 6 June 2018, co-authored by Peru and Sweden.

One notable achievement has been the adoption of resolution 2535 of 14 July 2020, co-authored by the Dominican Republic and France. The

resolution played a pivotal role in mainstreaming the YPS agenda into the work of the UN, marking a significant step towards institutionalisation and ensuring its sustained relevance and impact. It also introduced regular reporting on YPS, requesting the Secretary-General to submit a biennial report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolutions 2250, 2419, and 2535.

Political divisions within the Council, however, driven by different understandings of linkages between youth and peace and security, have impeded the Council in making greater progress on YPS priorities. These divisions stem from varying views on how youth initiatives intersect with security concerns and the appropriate channels for addressing them within the UN framework.

Some members see the Council as an appropriate platform to foster youth engagement, while others, such as China and Russia, have argued that YPS matters should be dealt with by other parts of the UN system, such as the UN General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Russia has traditionally argued that the Council should concentrate on issues that pose direct and immediate threats to international peace and security, expressing reservations about the role of youth as primary agents in addressing complex security challenges, especially on a global scale.

Proposals from Council Meetings

Over the years, the Council, however, has played a critical role in setting the agenda and maintaining the political momentum. In Council meetings in 2024, which included a focus on YPS, briefers and Council members have made several recommendations to strengthen youth engagement, such as:

- Providing opportunities for young individuals from diverse regions to engage directly with the Council, with protection protocols for young briefers;
- Establishing an Informal Expert Group on YPS among the Council members;
- Developing a YPS action plan modelled after the Peacebuilding Commission's Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding;

⁸¹ WILPF's Input to Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, (21 March 2024), 6.

⁸² NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security, *supra* note 19.

- Encouraging partnerships with regional bodies and structures to promote young people's leadership in conflict management and electoral processes;
- Integrating and strengthening YPS elements as part of mandate renewals for UN peacekeeping and special political missions, as well as for UN country teams and Resident Coordinators;
- Holding an annual debate to sustain momentum, rebuild trust among youth, governments, and the UN, and prioritise accountability; and
- Increasing opportunities for youth to engage with the Council on country visits, with protection protocols for them.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

The *Pact for the Future* recognises that the full, effective, safe, and meaningful participation of youth is critical to maintain and promote international peace and security. In this regard, the *Pact* outlined several action points to achieve this objective. An assessment of the recommendations and possible options for the Council are presented below:

Action 20. We will accelerate the implementation of our commitments on youth, peace and security.

Action 20(a): Take concrete voluntary measures to increase the inclusive representation of youth in decision-making at all levels in prevention and the resolution of conflict, including by increasing opportunities for them to participate in relevant intergovernmental deliberations at the United Nations.

Council and Wider Action

In *A New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P), the Secretary-General stressed that youth must be enabled to participate meaningfully in decision-making processes, underlining their crucial role in identifying innovative solutions to contemporary challenges. He called on governments to increase youth representation in decision-making and elected positions and to enact special measures to ensure their inclusion.⁸³

Nevertheless, youth participation remains unstructured in many areas, including within the Council, which lacks a dedicated mechanism to facilitate consistent and systematic engagement with young people. While the Council has, over the years, invited young briefers to participate in meetings on country-specific issues and thematic discussions—including open debates and Arria-formula meetings—such involvement remains ad hoc and lacks a structured approach. This inconsistency is evident in the number of young people who briefed the Security Council in recent years: three in 2022 and four in 2023, compared to nine in 2020 and six in 2021.⁸⁴ The Secretary-General's biennial report on YPS, dated 1 March 2024 and submitted pursuant to resolution 2535, noted that the rise in the number of young briefers in 2020 and 2021 was partly due to the higher number of online meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent years, however, the report highlighted that resource and visa limitations linked to in-person meetings, along with growing geopolitical tensions, have contributed to reducing opportunities for young people to brief the Council.

⁸³ Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 13.

⁸⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security (1 March 2024) (S/2024/207), 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁶ In December 2022, Ireland organised the meeting to commemorate the seventh anniversary of resolution 2250, and in August 2023, the meeting was organised by Ghana to reinforce the implementation of the agenda for a peaceful and stable Africa. In December 2023, Albania, France and Germany organised a side event focused on the role of young people in shaping reconciliation, peace and stability.

⁸⁷ Ostheimer, Andrea Ellen, "The Youth, Peace and Security Agenda in the Context of the United Nations", Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, (15 December 2021), www.kas.de/en/web/auslandsinformationen/artikel/detail/-/content/the-youth-peace-and-security-agenda-in-the-context-of-the-united-nations.

In recent years, the Council's engagement on the YPS agenda has faced significant challenges, including waning political momentum among its members, limited institutionalisation of the agenda and competing priorities that have diverted focus from its implementation. According to the Secretary-General's 1 March 2024 report, the proportion of references to young people in Council resolutions increased steadily from 13 percent in 2016 to 35.1 percent in 2020. However, this progress stalled, and by 2023, references to youth dropped to their lowest level since 2018.⁸⁵

Since the open debate on Youth, Peace, and Security organised by the Dominican Republic during its presidency in April 2020, the Council has not held a dedicated formal meeting on the YPS agenda as a stand-alone issue. In 2022 and 2023, discussion on YPS took place only in Arria-formula meetings.⁸⁶

The lack of focused attention by the Council represents a missed opportunity to sustain and build on the momentum achieved in previous years. This is further compounded by the failure of Council members to formally consider the findings and recommendations outlined in the Secretary-General's biennial reports, submitted in accordance with resolution 2535. These reports, which provide critical insights and guidance for advancing the YPS agenda, remain underutilised due to the absence of dedicated discussions within the Council.

In 2024, the Council nonetheless did hold three meetings with YPS component:

- In March, Japan organised an open debate, as a signature event of its Council presidency, titled "Promoting Conflict Prevention – Empowering All Actors Including Women and Youth".
- In April, the Council held a ministerial-level debate on "The Role of Young Persons in Addressing Security Challenges in the Mediterranean", organised by Malta as a signature event of its presidency.
- In May, the Council convened a debate on "The Role of Women and Young People in Maintaining Peace and Security". This was one of the signature events of Mozambique's May presidency.

These meetings underscored another trend in the Council's deliberations: when the YPS agenda is discussed, it is often merged with broader thematic debates or confined to context-specific situations, rather than treated as a stand-alone or cross-cutting issue. More regular thematic debates on YPS would help the Council to address specific challenges faced by youth in conflict and post-conflict settings and to capitalise on their role in promoting sustainable peace.

There remain significant opportunities for the broader membership to revitalise political momentum on this issue. Informal groups such as the Group of Champions on YPS, established in 2017 under the leadership of Jordan and Norway⁸⁷, could play a pivotal role in advancing this agenda. The group, which comprises 26 countries and the European Union, has provided a strategic platform for member states to engage and support the implementation of the YPS agenda.

In May 2024, Finland and Jordan, as co-chairs, re-launched the group and formalised its terms of reference for engagement. The group played an instrumental role during negotiations on the *Pact for the Future*, advocating

for strong and inclusive language in Chapter II, which addresses international peace and security. It ensured that young people's contributions were integrated across all relevant areas, avoiding their marginalisation or confinement to a siloed approach. Building on the momentum, the group could play a constructive role in following up on the implementation of the action points in the *Pact of the Future*.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Hold an annual Council open debate on youth peace and security to ensure sustained engagement and political momentum for the advancement of the agenda;
- Strengthen protection protocols to ensure the safe and meaningful participation of young briefers in Council deliberations, while recognising and addressing the unique risks they may face;
- Encourage more systematic financial resourcing of youth engagement in intergovernmental processes, including the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission;
- Agree on shared commitments to prioritise the YPS agenda, enhancing engagement and sustaining political momentum for youth inclusion;
- Establish an informal expert group (IEG) on YPS to enhance youth engagement, provide technical insights, and ensure systematic integration into Council decisions.
- Expand the use of the Council's informal meeting formats, such as Arria-formula meetings, to prioritise youth voices and ensuring their perspectives influence formal outcomes; and
- Regularly integrate youth perspectives in the deliberations and outputs of the Council's ad hoc working groups as well as in IEG meetings on climate, peace and security, WPS and POC, as appropriate. One possibility would be to invite youth representatives, experts, and organisations to contribute insights and recommendations.

Action 20(b): Strengthen and implement existing youth, peace and security national and regional road maps to deliver on our commitments, and develop them where they do not exist, on a voluntary basis.

Council and Wider Action

National and regional roadmaps are crucial for advancing the YPS agenda, as they bridge the gap between global commitments and context-specific implementation. To fully realise the agenda's potential, however, it is crucial to adopt not only vertical implementation—linking local, national, and international efforts—but also horizontal integration across its various pillars and components. This dual approach ensures a cohesive, inclusive strategy that integrates youth contributions across all dimensions of peace and security, while fostering a whole-of-society approach.

The Secretary-General's 1 March 2024 biennial report, noted that the institutionalisation of the YPS agenda has gained notable momentum, marking substantive advancements at the national, regional, and global levels. However, it also emphasised that further efforts are needed to fully institutionalise the agenda, including the allocation of adequate resources and capacities across all levels.⁸⁸

The report highlighted that the cross-cutting nature of the agenda results

in funding being absorbed into broader streams distributed across various ministries and agencies, making it difficult to effectively address youth-specific peacebuilding needs. Earmarked funding for youth and peace and security initiatives can help tackle this issue. Moreover, the report pointed out that a lack of standardised data collection on investments in youth and peace and security poses a significant challenge, hindering the ability to analyse how official development assistance supports programs designed for and led by young people.⁸⁹

At the same time, collecting and analysing data is essential in guiding policy development and informing initiatives. Reports suggest that there is a concerning lack of comprehensive data on youth political participation, complicating efforts to address impediments to political participation.⁹⁰ Furthermore, where roadmaps exist, the absence of robust monitoring mechanisms and standardised benchmarks poses an additional challenge. Without consistent data collection and clear indicators, tracking progress, assessing impact, and ensuring accountability becomes difficult, hindering the ability to adapt strategies effectively and achieve meaningful outcomes.

While it is the sovereign prerogative of each member state to develop national roadmaps aligning global commitments with local priorities, the UN, particularly the Security Council, can promote best practices, encourage collaboration and technical support, and foster inclusion to ensure these roadmaps align with international frameworks while respecting national contexts.

Among other things, resolution 2535 requested the Secretary-General to:

- Provide guidance for UN peacekeeping and other relevant UN missions on the implementation of the YPS agenda and urged UN missions to develop and implement context-specific strategies on the agenda;
- Ensure that expertise to engage young people in peacebuilding and sustaining peace at the local, national, regional and international levels and programmatic activities are in place for the accelerated implementation of the YPS agenda; and
- Include information and related recommendations on issues of relevance to young people, in the context of armed conflict, including on progress made towards participation of youth in peace processes, in thematic and geographic reports and regular briefings to the Council.

The resolution further encouraged the Secretary-General and relevant UN entities, to develop internal mechanisms within the UN system to integrate the YPS agenda in the UN's strategic and planning documents, conflict analyses, frameworks, initiatives and guidance tools, at the global, regional and national levels, including by appointing youth focal points. At the end of 2023, 11 peacekeeping operations, 17 special political missions and 25 UN entities had focal points appointed.⁹¹ They serve as a platform for information-sharing and coordination at headquarters and in the field under the leadership of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA)-UN Population Fund (UNFPA) inter-agency secretariat on YPS.⁹²

In line with resolution 2535, the Secretary-General continues to cover the situation of young people in his reports to the Security Council. Over the years, the frequency of substantive reporting has increased. In 2022, 28 out of 94 had dedicated YPS paragraphs, which increased in 2023 to 39 out of 92 reports having substantive references or paragraphs dedicated to YPS.⁹³

⁸⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security (1 March 2024) (S/2024/207), 11.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 17.

⁹⁰ UNDP, 'Youth, Peace and Security: Fostering Youth-Inclusive Political Processes' (2 February 2024) <<https://www.undp.org/publications/youth-peace-and-security-fostering-youth-inclusive-political-processes>>

⁹¹ Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security, supra note 5, 13.

⁹² Ibid. 12.

⁹³ Ibid. 15.

Advancing these efforts, the Group of Champions on YPS could also serve as a dynamic platform for exchanging best practices and lessons learned, enabling member states to share effective strategies for implementing the agenda. Furthermore, the group could actively encourage and assist countries in developing and implementing National Action Plans (NAPs) on YPS, providing guidance and fostering collaboration to integrate youth voices and contributions into peacebuilding processes.

In Chapter 4 of the *Pact for the Future*, titled “Youth and Future Generations”, member states committed to enhance opportunities for youth to systematically participate in shaping policies that influence their future. Key commitments include:

- Encouraging and supporting the establishment of mechanisms at the national level to consult with young people and providing them with meaningful opportunities to engage in national policymaking and decision-making processes;
- Fostering intergenerational dialogues to build stronger partnerships between governments and young people; and
- Removing barriers that prevent full, meaningful and effective participation of young persons in national policymaking and decision-making, and improve their representation in formal political structures.

In Chapter 4, member states also committed to scaling up investments in essential services for young people and ensuring that their specific needs and priorities are integrated in national, regional and international development strategies. Members further invited the Secretary-General to update member states on the proposal for a Global Youth Investment Platform to attract and better finance youth-related programming at the country level.

Recommendations for Council members

- Encourage the Secretary-General to continue reporting on the issues relevant to young persons and expand on existing mechanisms within the UN system to implement the YPS agenda, where appropriate;
- Regularly integrate YPS considerations into the mandate of peace operations and encourage missions to support the development and implementation of YPS roadmaps in consultation with the host countries;
- Invite youth briefers and regional organisations, where appropriate, to discussions on country-specific situations, to share best practices and lessons learned in the development and implementation of the YPS agenda;
- Continue to include the participation of young people in the annual UN-AU consultations following the example set at the 2024 Informal consultations, which included a discussion on YPS with a panel of young people from the African continent;
- Provide opportunities for young people to participate in the Security Council as well as subsidiary body country visits; and
- Consider adopting a presidential statement that:
 - Encourages cooperation between the UN and regional organisations to promote the advancement of the YPS agenda;
 - Requests the Secretary-General to include in his biennial report elements relating to the development and implementation of national and regional YPS roadmaps, and promote technical assistance, where appropriate;
 - Encourages the Secretary-General to establish context-specific benchmarks to monitor roadmap implementation; and

- Calls on member states to mobilise resources and ensure sustainable funding for youth-led initiatives and the development and implementation of YPS roadmaps, including through public-private partnerships.

Action 20(c): Request the Secretary-General to carry out the second independent progress study on youth’s positive contribution to peace processes and conflict resolution by the end of the eightieth session (2025).

Council Action

Efforts to harness the potential of young people in conflict prevention and peacebuilding has been limited, partly due to the lack of systematic research and data on how youth experience and influence peace and security dynamics. This lack of knowledge has impeded the development of targeted policies and has reinforced youth underrepresentation. This gap underscored the need for an independent study to provide an evidence-based framework for implementing the YPS agenda effectively.

Resolution 2250 created an opportunity for Council members to emphasise the positive role of youth in peace processes and conflict resolution. It tasked the Secretary-General with conducting a progress study on youth contributions to these efforts, aiming to provide actionable recommendations for effective responses at local, national, regional, and international levels. The study was developed through a participatory process that included consultations with 4,230 young people and research conducted in 27 countries. The process was guided by an advisory group of 21 experts and a steering committee comprising 34 partners from the UN system, civil society, and other organisations.⁹⁴

The report was submitted in March 2018. Referring to youth as the “missing peace,” the study called for a conceptualisation of youth as “partners for peace” rather than “as a problem to be solved”. It emphasised that youth need to be included in political and economic processes that promote their well-being and sense of belonging, and that “[j]ustice and human rights... are essential vehicles for prevention and lay the foundation for sustainable peace”. Key recommendations included:

- Investing in Youth Capacities and Leadership: Provide substantial funding, build networks, and strengthen capacities, recognising the diversity of youth and their organisational methods.
- Transforming Systems of Exclusion: Address structural barriers that limit youth participation in peace and security.
- Prioritising Partnerships: Build national, regional and global partnerships and collaborations; develop dialogue and consultation platforms for young people inside and outside the UN; establish advisory boards and youth advisory councils at the country and regional levels; and utilise regular reporting mechanisms on progress to the Council.

In April 2018, under Peru’s presidency, the UN Security Council held an open debate to deliberate on the first independent progress study on YPS. Among the areas members were asked to focus on were the factors that allowed youth engagement in peacebuilding, violence prevention and fostering social cohesion; how member states can support the Secretary-General in implementing the study’s recommendations and the lessons learnt from member states’ experience in advancing the peacebuilding framework in the context of resolution 2250.

⁹⁴ Graeme Simpson, *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security*, (A/72/761-S/2018/86) (March 2018), 3.

The progress study also served as the basis for resolution 2419, which was adopted unanimously on 6 June 2018. It highlighted the importance of a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace and reaffirmed the important role that youth and youth-led civil society can play in these efforts. The resolution, among other things:

- Requested the Secretary-General to consider including in his reporting to the Security Council information on the progress made towards participation of youth in peace processes;
- Recommended the Peacebuilding Commission to explore ways to meaningfully engage youth in national peacebuilding efforts;
- Expressed the Council's intent to invite youth-led organisations and civil society to provide briefings in country-specific considerations and relevant thematic areas; and
- Requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of resolutions 2250 and 2419, which was presented in March 2020.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The Council could hold a ministerial-level open debate to discuss the upcoming independent progress study, to galvanise political momentum and secure renewed commitments to advance the YPS agenda;
- Adopt a resolution that outlines concrete steps and actionable measures to implement the recommendations of the progress study. This resolution could include benchmarks for youth inclusion in peacebuilding, mechanisms for accountability, and directives for resource allocation to support youth-led initiatives; and
- Support the broad dissemination of the study's findings and mandate the integration of these findings into UN training programs, peace operations, and policy frameworks to institutionalise the YPS agenda across the UN system.

Observations

The YPS agenda remains a critical yet underdeveloped component of the Council's engagement. The absence of structured mechanisms for youth participation in Council deliberations and the lack of sustained attention to the agenda are missed opportunities to address challenges to international peace and security. The evolving geopolitical landscape and structural barriers, such as resource constraints and underrepresentation, underscore the need for a renewed and inclusive approach. While notable progress has been made in advancing the YPS agenda, momentum has slowed in recent years, leaving gaps in implementation and political commitment.

Looking forward, the Council and the broader UN membership have numerous opportunities to reinvigorate efforts toward the full implementation of the YPS agenda. For instance, the second independent progress study offers an opportunity to identify current gaps and reinvigorate global action by institutionalising youth engagement, fostering accountability, and promoting inclusive peacebuilding frameworks. It could provide a comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of resolutions 2250, 2419, and 2535, assessing how the provisions have translated into policies and practices. By leveraging its findings, the Council can adopt innovative, evidence-based approaches to youth inclusion. In addition, Council members could strengthen existing mechanisms and broaden networks and frameworks to promote greater youth participation in Council deliberations and decision-making processes.

Another key avenue for the Council to promote the implementation of the YPS agenda is through the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). In 2021, the PBC approved a Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding, focusing on advocacy, advice, coordination, partnerships, and progress monitoring to enhance youth engagement in peacebuilding.⁹⁵ The PBC follows up on the implementation of the strategy through an annual written assessment evaluating the progress on the focus areas. In 2023, 80 percent (16 out of 20) of the PBC advice and briefings to the Security Council, General Assembly and ECOSOC contained analysis and recommendations for supporting youth in peacebuilding.⁹⁶ By working more closely with the PBC on YPS issues, the Council may gain a more holistic understanding of the role of youth in the peace continuum.

In spite of having to deal with major crises and an ever-expanding workload, YPS should not be seen as an additional challenge but as a vital component that enhances the Council's conflict resolution efforts. Integrating YPS into the Council's work as a cross-cutting issue would allow it to harness the valuable contributions of young people, leading to more inclusive and effective solutions for global peace and security. Equally important is the protection of young people, who remain among the most vulnerable groups, particularly in conflict settings. They face diverse and severe threats, ranging from physical and psychological to sociocultural, financial, legal, and digital.⁹⁷ Currently, no global protection mechanism exists to provide emergency funding for their urgent and specific needs. Moreover, existing mechanisms are often under-resourced and lack the flexibility to deliver timely and effective emergency support.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Strategic Action Plan on youth and peacebuilding, (February 2021).

⁹⁶ Assessment of the Implementation of the Peacebuilding Commission Strategic Action Plan on Youth and Peacebuilding From 1 January to 31 December 2023, 5.

⁹⁷ Report of the Secretary-General on Youth, Peace, and Security, supra note 5, 6.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 8.

Peace Continuum

Ten years after the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) set a transformative vision for a people-centred and politically driven approach to conflict prevention and sustaining peace—and building on subsequent efforts to advance a continuum of actions across the conflict cycle—the *Pact for the Future* underscores the urgency of recalibrating and intensifying these initiatives to address pressing global challenges. It calls for embedding political strategies at the heart of peace operations, prioritising conflict prevention, fostering inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding, and facing the challenges posed by climate change.

This cluster of the paper examines progress, identifies challenges, and proposes options for the Security Council to translate the vision of the peace continuum—as articulated in Actions 16, 18, and 21 of the *Pact*, along with relevant climate, peace and security references—into action.

The conflict prevention section highlights the importance of early warning systems, mediation, and structural interventions to address root causes of conflict before they escalate. The peace operations section explores how they can adapt to shifting geopolitical and operational realities, emphasising mandates that are politically anchored and tailored to evolving threats. In the peacebuilding section, the focus is on fostering national ownership and inclusivity, strengthening institutions, and supporting reconciliation to sustain long-term peace. Finally, the climate, peace and security section addresses environmental stresses as threat multipliers, advocating for innovative, integrated approaches that build resilience in vulnerable regions. Together, the recommendations in these sections aim to provide the Security Council with tangible, context-specific actions to fulfill the promise of the peace continuum.

Conflict Prevention

Introduction

Council members agree that conflict prevention saves lives and is more cost-effective than managing conflicts, addressing their attendant humanitarian effects, and rebuilding post-conflict countries. But geopolitical dynamics in a fragmented, multipolar world have made it more difficult for the Security Council to play an effective conflict prevention role. Nonetheless, the Security Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security makes it an important player in international efforts to prevent conflict. As reflected in *A New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P), conflict prevention activities range from operational measures, such as the use of early warning and preventive diplomacy, to longer-term structural interventions and peacebuilding that address underlying causes of conflict, such as socio-economic inequality, ethnic discrimination and fragile state institutions. The Council plays a critical prevention role in its mandating of peace operations that prioritise support to some of these measures and interventions.

Security Council Engagement on Conflict Prevention

The Council is a key part of the constellation of actors supporting prevention at the global, regional, and national levels. Regarding structural prevention, peace operations overseen by the Council help host countries strengthen the rule of law, advance security sector reform, and promote good governance. Peace operations also conduct operational prevention by mediating between conflict parties. Other operational measures, such as providing political support for preventive diplomacy and the good offices of the Secretary-General through Chapter VI tools, have traditionally been a central part of the Council's tool kit.

A variety of factors hinder effective preventive action by the Security Council. Some of these—such as different perspectives on the nature of state sovereignty, the political interests of powerful states, the impact of the veto, and the Council's onerous conflict management responsibilities—reflect geopolitical realities. The lack of trust and cooperation among member states that the Secretary-General alludes to in the NA4P is also a critical challenge.

While the Council itself does not usually play a direct mediation role, it

has provided political support for the mediation efforts of the Secretary-General and his emissaries, regional and sub-regional organisations, and national actors. For example, in late 2016 and early 2017, the Council adopted various outcomes (one resolution, one presidential statement, and one press statement) that gave political backing to the successful efforts of the AU, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), and UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in the Gambia.

UN Regional Offices

The Council receives periodic reports and briefings from the heads of the UN regional offices in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Central Africa (UNOCA), and Central Asia (UNRCCA), which may flag the risk of impending crises, as they have done in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea, and Nigeria. These briefings allow the Council to receive information on potential conflict situations not on the Council's agenda, including diplomatic efforts and responses to structural conflict drivers.

Thematic Meetings

The Security Council tends to focus on conflict prevention through its thematic meetings rather than country-specific discussions. Two open debates in 2024 focused on prevention: one on 13 March on “Promoting conflict prevention—Empowering all actors including women and youth” during Japan's presidency; and another on 21 August on “*A New Agenda for Peace—Addressing Global, Regional and National Aspects of Conflict Prevention*” during Sierra Leone's presidency. Both open debates were held under the “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace” agenda item, demonstrating members' interest in approaching conflict prevention through the peacebuilding framework.

The briefers at the 13 March open debate were: Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo; Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Ambassador Sérgio França Danese (Brazil); Abiodun Williams, Professor of the Practice of International Politics at Tufts University; and Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, Programme Manager at

the Pacific Women Mediators Network. On 13 March, in connection with the open debate, 67 member states issued a joint statement at the press stakeout committing to work together “to effectively incorporate proposals and recommendations made by various countries and regions into the Council’s activities to further promote conflict prevention.” Because of the number of speakers, the debate was continued on 19 March.

The briefers at the 21 August open debate were: Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Elizabeth Spehar; AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye; Executive Secretary of the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion of Sierra Leone Hawa Sally Samai; and Arnoux Descardes, Executive Director, Volontariat pour le développement d’Haïti. The open debate continued on 22 August because of the number of speakers.

On 21 October 2024, the Security Council convened a briefing on “Anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item, which explored the potential of science to promote peace and security, including by preventing conflict. The briefers were: Robin Geiss, Director of the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; Jocelyne Bloch, Faculty of Biology and Medicine, University of Lausanne; Grégoire Courtine, Faculty of Life Sciences, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne; and Amin Awad, President of the Foundation Council of DCAF, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. In a presidential statement adopted in connection with the meeting, the Council recognised that “science, technology and innovation have the potential to accelerate the realization of the aspirations of the United Nations across all three pillars of its work, sustainable development, peace and security and human rights”.⁹⁹ The statement also asserted that “scientific developments can play a role in...enhancing mutual trust and cooperation”.

Proposals from Council Meetings

Council members have expressed views consistent with many of the proposals for prevention that the Secretary-General outlined in the NA4P.

In the 13 March 2024 meeting, recommendations for how the Council could improve its prevention efforts included, among others:

- Making greater use of fact-finding missions at an earlier stage of disputes;
- Requesting the Secretary-General to appoint a group of experts to develop guidelines on what effective national, regional, and global prevention strategies entail;
- Requesting the Secretary-General to develop concrete policy guidance on how the UN can support women mediators’ networks;
- Emphasising the use of the peaceful means of dispute settlement outlined in Chapter VI of the Charter;
- Taking account of the PBC’s advice in a systematic way on situations on the Council’s agenda and supporting national prevention actions;
- Continuing to request advisory opinions from the PBC when considering mandate renewals;
- Working closely with the PBC before the withdrawal of peace operations to help maintain political and financial support beyond the life of the mission; and
- Adopting a resolution that updates resolution 2171, the most recent resolution the Council has adopted on prevention.

The 21 August open debate focused largely on conflict prevention through a peacebuilding lens. There were widespread calls for the development of comprehensive, inclusive, and nationally-owned prevention strategies. The participation of women and youth as a key factor in conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts was underscored, as was the importance of a gendered approach to these efforts. There was a focus on the overarching importance of strengthening judiciaries, reforming security sectors, and promoting inclusive economic development as a means to build lasting peace. Further, it was noted that the UN could enhance its coordination with regional arrangements in mediation processes to take full advantage of their local knowledge and experience in tandem with the world body’s resources.

Among the recommendations relevant to the Council made in the 21 October 2024 briefing were:

- Institutionalising regular “horizon scanning” dialogues on scientific and technological advances to allow for preemptive consideration of measures that can be pursued to promote preventive diplomacy, protect civilians, and inform evidence-based decision-making;
- Considering the effects of technological and scientific advances on peace operations; and
- Developing a strong international framework to govern the use of new technologies and scientific advances.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

The NA4P states that in “order to complement diplomatic action at the international and regional level, a focus on prevention at the national level is essential.” Rather than see prevention as only applying to conflict-affected states, it stresses that a shift in approach is needed whereby all member states commit to achieving prevention and sustaining peace.

Action 16 of the *Pact for the Future* is relevant to operational prevention, as it is focused on promoting cooperation between states, defusing tensions, and the pacific settlement of disputes.

Several options could be explored by the Council in relation to this action point and subsidiary recommendations, taking into consideration past Council history (including recent meetings) and the recommendations made in the NA4P.

Action 16. We will promote cooperation and understanding between member states, defuse tensions, seek the pacific settlement of disputes and resolve conflicts.

Action 16(a): Reaffirm our obligations under international law, including the Charter and its purposes and principles.

Council Action

The Council has traditionally played a key normative role in promoting some of the principles that underpin international law. It calls upon most of the peace operations it authorises “to investigate, monitor, analyze and report on IHL [international humanitarian law] and IHRL [international human rights law] violations and abuses”.¹⁰⁰ In addition, the most common protection of civilians-related listing criteria for Security Council-authorized sanctions “relate to violations of IHL and IHRL abuses”.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, in recent years, the Council has struggled to uphold the

⁹⁹ Statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2024/6) (21 October 2024).

¹⁰⁰ OCHA, ‘Policy Brief on the Security Council’s Consideration of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict’ (2019-2023), <<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/policy-brief-security-councils-consideration-protection-civilians-armed-conflict-2019-2023>>

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

principles and norms underpinning international law, which is blatantly disregarded in many of the conflicts on its agenda. The Council is especially hard-pressed to prevent violations of international law when one of its veto-wielding permanent members is committing such violations or supporting a party to a dispute that is doing so. In August 2024, Switzerland organised an informal visit of Council members to Geneva to mark the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, and to take a closer look at the meaning and purpose of the Conventions, which have been universally ratified.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Council members should continue to underscore the importance of international law, including the UN Charter, as a cornerstone of multilateralism in its outcomes. Accepting deviations from legal norms and standards can set a dangerous precedent;
- The Council could also make better use of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). For example, it could, when appropriate and in keeping with Article 36 (3) of the UN Charter, recommend that states involved in a situation that threatens international peace and security resolve the legal aspects of their dispute through the ICJ. Furthermore, it could, as appropriate, request an advisory opinion from the Court on legal matters that arise within its work. This might assist the Council in resolving a dispute that threatens international peace and security (or part of such a dispute) or might clarify the legal standing of certain Council actions.

Action 16(b): Take effective collective measures, in accordance with the Charter, for the prevention and removal of threats to international peace and security, and revitalize and implement existing tools and mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Council Action

Over the years, different informal briefing formats have been utilised to allow members to learn about and discuss sensitive matters in a discreet fashion. Monthly, between November 2010 and March 2012, the head of the Department of Political Affairs (now DPPA) “scanned the horizon” for the Council in consultations with the aim of providing information that might allow for better conflict prevention, including preventive diplomacy. But by late 2012, these briefings, which had been initiated by the UK, dwindled. Some members felt that they added little to what was in the public domain, while others took issue with the countries being discussed, at times attempting to limit the agenda.

In 2016, New Zealand initiated situational awareness briefings, which were held in the Secretariat and were chaired by a member of the Secretary-General’s Executive Office. These meetings presented a holistic picture of country-specific threats through briefings by senior representatives of UN entities, including DPA, DPKO, OCHA, and OHCHR. Although they largely focused on situations on the Council’s agenda, it was still seen as sensitive, and the meetings became less frequent and disappeared altogether.

In November 2018 the ten elected members and the incoming five members carried out a *démarche* to the Secretary-General to request early warning briefings by the Secretariat. This led to several such briefings in 2019 before they stopped altogether during the COVID-19 pandemic. A subsequent attempt by elected members led to occasional informal early warning briefings among E10 members, starting at the end of 2022 and another in January 2023.

The “sofa talks” were created in 2019 (at a time of Council cleavages over many issues) to bring together Council permanent representatives for an informal discussion. They lapsed with COVID-19, but have shown some signs of revival. Since late 2023, there have been three sofa talks held during the Chinese (November 2023), Russian (July 2024), and Slovenian (September 2024) presidencies, respectively.

Council visiting missions are used for several purposes, including preventive diplomacy, gathering first-hand information, supporting peace processes, and mediation. Three to five such trips were the norm in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Pandemic restrictions affected the Council’s ability to travel; visiting missions resumed in late 2021, but at a much lower rate, with one in 2021, none in 2022, two in 2023 and one in 2024. Difficulty agreeing on the destination, a heavy workload, getting agreement from host governments and the Secretariat’s financial restrictions appear to have contributed to fewer visiting missions.

A new development has been informal visiting missions. Unlike official visiting missions, which require unanimous agreement among Council members and are funded by the UN, informal visits have been initiated by a specific member state, with the organising or participating countries covering all or some of the costs. This appears to be a useful innovation at a time of significant division in the Council. At the invitation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 11 members of the Security Council and four incoming members travelled on 11 December 2023 to the Rafah crossing, which connects Gaza with Egypt. A key objective of the one-day visit was for Council members to receive briefings on the humanitarian situation in Gaza from interlocutors on the ground, providing them with first-hand accounts about current difficulties concerning the delivery of humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza. Switzerland organised the above-mentioned informal visit of 14 Council members to Geneva on 25-26 August 2024 to get a better understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Geneva Conventions, while marking their 75th anniversary.

Recommendations for Council Members

- More regular briefings from the Secretariat on potential and developing crises could be useful. Agreeing on a consistent formula for receiving information on upstream prevention from the Secretariat on a regular basis could help inform Council decision-making. The informal “horizon scanning” and early warning briefings that have been tried intermittently over the years could be revitalised in a format that all members are comfortable with;
- In the NA4P, the Secretary-General posits that the “underutilization of article 33 remains one of our greatest collective shortcomings”.¹⁰² Article 33 names these tools as “negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means” that the parties may choose to pursue. It also says that the Security Council “shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means”. In its outcomes, the Council could encourage greater use by conflict parties of the various tools outlined in Article 33;
- The ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa could be used as a forum for informal dialogue between Council members and parties to a dispute on the continent, focusing on efforts to resolve their differences peacefully;
- In addition, the Informal Interactive Dialogue format, which is a closed,

102 United Nations, Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 11.

informal meeting for which there is no record, could be used to help promote candid discussion between Council members and key political actors, such as conflict parties and representatives of regional and sub-regional organisations;

- The Council could take steps to revitalise its use of visiting missions, returning to the pre-COVID levels. In particular, visiting missions to host countries prior to the deployment or a major change in the mandate of UN peace operations could potentially help to develop trust and understanding between the Council and host countries at an early stage;
- The Council could consider conducting smaller visiting missions, which are more cost-effective and could be quickly deployed. This format was regularly used in the 1990s. Visiting missions are consistent with the Council's investigatory powers under Article 34 of the UN Charter. Smaller missions might be able to engage more easily in face-to-face preventive diplomacy and mediation; and
- More informal visiting missions could also be deployed in cases where Council members cannot achieve consensus on formal visits.

Action 16(c): Develop and implement mechanisms as required for the pacific settlement of disputes, confidence-building, early warning and crisis management, at the subregional, regional and international levels to address new and emerging threats to international peace and security.

Council Action

The ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which is always chaired by one of the African members of the Council, plays a key role in organising the annual meeting of members of the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC). It also provides a forum for UN Security Council members to negotiate the annual joint communiqué that is agreed with members of the AUPSC. This Working Group has the potential to focus on conflict prevention and resolution in country- and region-specific cases, although it generally tends to engage on thematic issues of importance for the Council. In this regard, in 2024, the Working Group facilitated discussions in May and July on the implementation of resolution 2719 on the financing of AU-led peace support operations, and convened a joint meeting with the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations in August to provide Council members with the opportunity to discuss the drawdown, reconfiguration and exit of UN peace operations.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The UN Security Council and AUPSC have agreed in principle to conduct joint field missions but have yet to agree on the modalities for doing so. Such missions would likely be logistically difficult to organise and costly, given that there are 15 members on each Council. An alternative would be to initiate joint visiting missions of sub-groups of members of the two Councils to potential hot spots and ongoing crises. This would enable members of the two Councils to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation on the ground and deliver unified messages to the key political actors;
- Other options with regard to the UN-AU relationship, proposed at the informal annual dialogue of members of the two Councils on 17 October 2024 in Tarrytown, New York, would be to have joint visits at the

subsidiary body level and a follow-up mechanism for the implementation of joint decisions from the annual consultations between members of the two Councils;

- The ad hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa could be used to engage in upstream prevention to discuss potential hotspots on the continent and develop ideas for how the Council can address them; and
- Council members could also consider establishing a subsidiary body (either a working group or an informal expert group) on conflict prevention that focuses on non-African issues.

Action 16(f): Urge the Secretary-General to actively use the good offices of the Secretary-General and ensure that the United Nations is adequately equipped to lead and support mediation and preventive diplomacy and encourage the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Use of Article 99

Of the five articles in the UN Charter assigning functions to the Secretary-General, Article 99 is the most important in the context of international peace and security. It grants the Secretary-General the authority "to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security".¹⁰³ While Article 99 is resorted to infrequently and is invoked explicitly even less often, the Secretary-General invoked this article in relation to Gaza in late 2023, about two months after the start of the Israel-Hamas war.

The first revised version of the *Pact of the Future* suggested the Secretary-General could "intensify... the good offices of the Secretary-General". It appears that this may have been too strong for some members. However, calling on the Secretary-General to "actively use" his good offices still demonstrates a desire for the Secretary-General to play the type of significant diplomatic role mandated by the UN Charter.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Council members could encourage the Secretary-General to exercise his good offices in Council outcomes on situations where members see a potential role for the Secretary-General. For example, on 6 May 2022, the Council adopted a presidential statement expressing its strong support for the Secretary-General's efforts to search for a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine.¹⁰⁴ While this crisis is particularly intractable given the direct involvement of one of the Council's permanent members, the Secretary-General did manage to play a role in helping to facilitate the July 2022 Black Sea Grain initiative, which created conditions for the export of grain and related foodstuffs and fertilisers from Ukrainian ports;
- Given the positive experience of the UN's regional offices in conflict prevention and mediation, the Council could request a report from the Secretary-General regarding how it can enhance its support for such offices and if it would be feasible to expand the mandate of these offices. The report could include an analysis of the potential implications of establishing additional regional offices, including where they are most needed, what added value they might have and how the Council could best collaborate with them.

¹⁰³ Charter of the United Nations, (June 1945), Article 99.

¹⁰⁴ Statement by the President of the Security Council (S/PRST/2022/3) (May 2022).

Action 16(g): Support the role of regional and subregional organizations in diplomacy, mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes, and strengthen the coordination and cooperation between these organizations and the United Nations in this regard.

Council Action

Strengthening cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations—as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter—has become an increasingly prominent theme for the Security Council. The AU, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are some of the organisations that have developed more institutionalised relations with the Council in recent years. The Council’s most developed relationship is with the AU. It has been holding annual consultations with the AUPSC since 2007, alternating between New York and Addis Ababa. Starting in 2016, these consultations have been preceded by an informal seminar that provides a platform for members of the two Councils to exchange views mostly on thematic topics of shared interest. Additionally, since 2017, the President of the Security Council and the Chair of the AUPSC have been holding informal meetings to coordinate the two councils’ monthly work programmes.

Recommendations for Council Members

- When the Council opts for cooperation between the UN and regional arrangements, it is important for it to have a clear understanding of the role that each organisation will play, its capacity to do so, and the proposed relationship among the different actors. Processes and structures that facilitate exchanges—such as interactive discussions between the Council and its counterparts in regional arrangements, joint assessments, and regular desk-to-desk meetings geared towards outcomes—can contribute to better alignment; and
- Where regional efforts are faltering, the Council could play a more assertive oversight role to facilitate the peaceful settlement of disputes. Regional efforts to peacefully settle disputes can be hampered by constraints such as divisions among countries in a particular region, the organisational culture and structure of a regional organisation, and its decision-making processes. Council unity can play an important role in facilitating effective cooperation between the UN and regional arrangements. Successful collaboration can also be bolstered by coordinated diplomacy involving regional actors that is consistent with the overall strategy being pursued by the Council. Conversely, divisions among Council members can prevent the Council from taking action and communicating clear signals to the parties.

Observations

One would be hard-pressed to find any improvement in the effectiveness of the Security Council’s conflict prevention efforts in recent years. Nor does the Council invest significant time and energy in conflict prevention. Discussions of prevention at the thematic level rarely impact the Council’s work in country-specific contexts. In 2016, one senior diplomat said in private that conflict prevention is “the most important thing we do, but the thing we are worst at.” The same could be said today.

As the NA4P noted, the lack of trust and cooperation among member states, including the major powers, is a key obstacle to a more peaceful international system. In this regard, it would be helpful if the permanent members of the Security Council could try to meet more regularly to build greater trust and reduce tensions among themselves. They could also hold more frequent meetings with the Secretary-General. While the Secretary-General meets monthly with the elected members, the meetings with the permanent members appear to have dwindled in recent years. The elected members have played an increasingly important role in bridging the divide between permanent members on some issues in the Council. However, on others, P5 divisions preempt strong action. As the Secretary-General said in NA4P, “the engagement of the P5 in the day-to-day business of the Council—in close cooperation with the elected members—can be a powerful incentive for dialogue and compromise”.¹⁰⁵ The constraints faced by the Security Council in engaging in, and supporting, conflict prevention and resolution in country-specific settings has also helped shift attention to structural prevention and the need to address the drivers of conflict and violence at the national and local levels, as evidenced in its recent conflict prevention thematic debates. (See the section on peacebuilding and Action 18 of the *Pact* for more details.)

In 2024, the presidency trio for conflict prevention launched by Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and Switzerland during their August, September, and October presidencies is a promising development. Through this initiative, these countries committed to joint action for conflict prevention based on trust, solidarity, and universality—principles that must be reinvigorated for an effective collective security system, according to the NA4P. In the coming months and years, Council members can work to expand the presidency trio for conflict prevention initiatives so that more Council members commit to a more systematic approach to preventive action and work together to implement strategies in this regard.

105 United Nations. Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 12.

UN Peace Operations

Introduction

In the past decade, UN peace operations have declined steadily with the drawdown and exit of several missions. The era of large-scale multidimensional UN peace operations appears to be coming to an end, but the demand for smaller, agile, and more nimble peace operations persists. Discussions on the various models that could be considered in this regard are likely to be informed by the Independent Study commissioned by the Department of Peace Operations, which will be presented at the next Peacekeeping Ministerial to be hosted by Germany in May 2025.¹⁰⁶ However, these models focus solely on peacekeeping and do not address special political missions (SPMs).

Security Council Engagement on Peace Operations

The shifting global geopolitical dynamics and the increasing tension among the major powers means that consensual decision making on peace operations' mandate renewals is no longer routine. The situation is further compounded by the complexities of the operating environment and the crisis of "host state consent",¹⁰⁷ with host governments and local communities calling for UN peace operations to leave.

The Council has not authorised any new UN peacekeeping operation since 2014. Meanwhile, there is growing interest in the role of regional forces to undertake peace enforcement or counter-terrorism operations. In this context, the adoption of resolution 2719 on 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led Peace Support Operations (AUPSOs) was a significant landmark. There are ongoing discussions regarding possible test cases to be authorised by the Council.

While in the past, the Council has had regular discussions on various aspects of peace operations, this has not been the case in recent years. In the last couple of years, the only opportunity for a discussion on peace operations has been the annual meeting on peacekeeping reform pursuant to resolution 2378, which takes place every year in September. This year, the meeting focused on how the Security Council can foster trust and unified support for UN peace operations.

At the subsidiary level, the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations provides a platform for discussion on various aspects of peacekeeping. Nevertheless, the Working Group has not been very active in the last few years. The Republic of Korea (ROK), as the current chair of the Working Group, is trying to reinvigorate its work.¹⁰⁸

Proposals from Council Meetings

At the September 2024 meeting, Council members echoed most of the recommendations contained in *A New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P) and the *Pact for the Future*, including:

- The need for peace operations to evolve and adapt to changing realities;
- The importance of political strategies guiding peace operations;
- The need for more focused, realistic, adaptable and achievable mandates,
- The need for inclusion, including through enhanced participation of women in peace operations;

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Department of Peace Operations, *The Future of Peacekeeping, New Models, and Related Capabilities*, (October 2024). The independent study focused solely on peacekeeping, excluding Special Political Missions, which are considered part of the broader definition of UN peace operations.

¹⁰⁷ Julie Gregory and Lisa Sharland, *Host-country consent in UN Peacekeeping*, Stimson Center, (September 2023).

¹⁰⁸ UN Security Council, open debate on Strengthening United Nations peacekeeping: reflections for the future, S/PV.9719, (September 2024). The chair of the working group, Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea), explained this in his statement at the event. For more, see the link: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/pro/n24/258/61/pdf/n2425861.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ The A4P initiative was launched with the objective of strengthening peacekeeping through collective action involving all the relevant stakeholders, including Member States, the Security Council, the General Assembly, financial contributors, troop and police contributing countries, host countries, intergovernmental and regional organizations and the UN Secretariat.

¹¹⁰ S/PRST/2018/10 (14 May 2018)

¹¹¹ UN Peacekeeping, *Fifth progress report on Action for Peacekeeping+*, Reporting period: 1 Nov 2023 – 30 April 2024, (September 2024). https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p_5th_report_september_2024_final_for_distribution_2.pdf

¹¹² UN Security Council, open debate on "Strengthening UN peacekeeping: reflections for the future", (September 2024). <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/pro/n24/258/61/pdf/n2425861.pdf>

- Strengthening partnerships, including with the AU and its regional mechanisms;
- Fostering better cooperation with host countries and people-centered approaches to meet the needs and expectations of peace operations;
- Ensuring the safety and security of peacekeepers; and
- Better managed transitions with clear exit strategies.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

The *Pact for the Future* recognises the increasingly complex challenges facing UN peace operations and underscores the need to "adapt peace operations to better respond to existing challenges and new realities". In this regard, the *Pact* outlines several recommendations to achieve this objective. An assessment of the recommendations and possible options for the Council are presented below.

Action 21. We will adapt peace operations to better respond to existing challenges and new realities.

Action 21(a): Call on the Security Council to ensure that peace operations are anchored in and guided by political strategies.
Council Action

Council Action

This action is in line with the recommendations of the 2015 report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the Declaration of Shared Commitment signed by member states in 2018 in support of the Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative.¹⁰⁹ In its 14 May 2018 presidential statement, the Security Council also stressed that "political solutions should guide the design and deployment of United Nations peacekeeping operations, are the cornerstone of mandate implementation, and remain key to reach sustainable peace and security".¹¹⁰

Implementation has been a challenge, however. While UN peace operations, including those without a political mandate, are exerting efforts to support political solutions, this is proving increasingly difficult amidst complex and deadly conflicts.¹¹¹ Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix has described the key challenges for peace operations as the evolving peace and security threats and the lack of support from member states.¹¹²

The key issue for Council members is, therefore, how to design clear, realistic, and achievable peacekeeping mandates that can contribute to finding a political solution to conflicts. Council members have generally prioritised core mandated tasks such as the protection of civilians, support for the implementation of peace agreements, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants, and assistance with security sector reform. These priorities not only align with the host countries' needs but also tend to garner broader consensus within the Council.

Other thematic priorities, such as human rights, women, peace and security agenda, and climate, peace and security, among others, remain divisive.

While several elected members emphasise these issues, some permanent members strongly push back against them. As a result, achieving the necessary unity and consensus has become increasingly difficult. The situation is further complicated by geopolitics and the tendency of permanent members to undermine each other during negotiations. Host countries have taken advantage of this situation to enhance their leverage in these negotiations. Consequently, restoring trust and securing unified support for UN peace operations has become a critical challenge.

Another key issue is how to align mandates with resources to ensure peace operations can effectively implement them. Currently, major financial contributors are making significant efforts to cut costs. The US and China together cover more than 40 percent of the peacekeeping budget.¹¹³ With the outcome of the US elections, discussions on the peacekeeping budget are expected to become more complicated. Based on past experience, the Trump administration's return could lead to calls for a drawdown and exit of UN peace operations, forcing them to achieve more with fewer resources.

Recommendations for Council Members

- In the past, informal discussions involving Security Council members, the UN Secretariat, host countries, troop- and police-contributing countries, and other relevant stakeholders have been valuable in fostering greater alignment during peace operations mandate renewals. Elected members with a particular interest in specific peace operations could take the lead in facilitating these informal discussions at their missions; and
- It may be important for UN peace operations to develop contingency plans in response to growing pressures for a drawdown and exit, driven by cost-cutting considerations. UN Security Council members might need to factor this aspect into their decisions when renewing peace operations mandates.

Action 21(b): Request the Secretary-General to undertake a review on the future of all forms of UN peace operations, considering lessons from previous and ongoing reform processes.

Council Action

It has been a decade since the last review of UN peace operations was conducted. Most of the recommendations from the HIPPO report still remain relevant today, including the primacy of politics (political solutions to conflict should guide the design and deployment of UN peace operations), the spectrum of peace operations (referring to a continuum of responses and smoother transitions between different mission phases), prioritising and sequencing of peace operations mandates, a shift in focus from the headquarters to the field to implement people-centered approaches to UN peace operations, and partnerships, particularly with the AU.

However, HIPPO's recommendations for providing a continuum of responses to conflict situations across the spectrum of peace operations do not appear to have gained traction, as UN headquarter departments and field-based operations continue to work in silos despite ongoing institutional reform efforts aimed at system-wide integration. This is seen as a

significant failure in implementing the HIPPO recommendations.¹¹⁴

In the Security Council, there have been efforts to prioritise and sequence mandates in line with the HIPPO recommendations. Council members increasingly seek to identify missions' priority tasks and distinguish between core mission mandates and other tasks. There has also been an effort to move away from "Christmas tree" mandates, a phrase used in the HIPPO report to refer to a peacekeeping mission that is given too many tasks, in favour of greater streamlining to shorten mandates. Nevertheless, challenges remain in terms of a lack of shared understanding of prioritising and sequencing mandates. The siloed approach within the UN bureaucracy and resource constraints also continue to create obstacles in implementation.¹¹⁵ Most importantly, the geopolitical landscape has also shifted since HIPPO with the crisis of "host state consent" and stark divisions in the Council.

There seems to be a lack of clarity regarding how the Secretary-General intends to conduct the review requested by the *Pact*, with relevant departments in the Secretariat holding divergent views on the process. Although some members had pushed for an independent review during the negotiations on the *Pact*, it did not get into the final version of the *Pact* because of opposition from other members. Regardless of how the Secretary-General intends to conduct the review, its recommendations could be considered by the Council, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and other relevant intergovernmental committees of the General Assembly.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Strategising at the start of the year to organise complementary signature events focused on key challenges to peacekeeping that could feed into the review process;
- Requesting the Secretary-General to brief the Council on his approach to the peace operations review in early 2025 to better understand the timeline and scope of the review;
- Actively engaging in the review process, including through the Security Council Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and providing inputs by organising informal meetings to facilitate discussions on the upcoming review with the involvement of key stakeholders, including the relevant UN departments, troop-contributing countries (TCCs), host countries, representatives of regional organisations, and civil society; and
- Utilising the Group of Friends of the Peace Operations to discuss the inputs for the review. During the last review process, the Group of Friends, co-chaired by Norway and Ethiopia and later by the Republic of Korea, provided a useful platform for such informal discussions. The Group of Friends could organise a series of discussions around different pertinent topics.

Action 21(c): Ensure that peace operations engage at the earliest possible stage in planning transitions with host countries, the UN country team, and relevant national stakeholders.

¹¹³ For more, see how UN peacekeeping is funded. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded>

¹¹⁴ Ian Martin, *Lessons From the High-Level Panel's 2015 Review for the Future of Peace Operations*, IPI Global Observatory, (September 2020). Martin, one of the High-level Panel members, reflected on the lessons from HIPPO in his 30 September 2020 piece, describing this as a reversal from the HIPPO recommendations concerning the full spectrum of peace operations.

¹¹⁵ International Peace Institute, the Stimson Center and Security Council Report, *Prioritizing, Sequencing, and Streamlining UN Security Council Mandates: Taking Stock of Lessons Learned and Pathways Forward*, (June 2024). For more, see a summary of the workshop.

Council Action

Transitions have emerged as a major focus of attention in the Security Council with a series of drawdowns, reconfigurations and terminations of UN peace operations.¹¹⁶ The Council has adopted two thematic outcomes on transitions. In a 21 December 2017 presidential statement, facilitated by Egypt, the Security Council noted the importance of adequately resourcing the peacebuilding components of UN peacekeeping missions, including during mission transitions and drawdowns, and emphasised the need to draw upon the advice of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in discussions on mission mandates and transitions.¹¹⁷

Following the September 2021 open debate initiated by Ireland, the Council adopted resolution 2594 on UN peace operations transitions. Pursuant to this landmark resolution, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the Council on 29 June 2022, providing an update on the status of ongoing and recently completed transitions since September 2019.¹¹⁸ There has been no formal Security Council follow-up meeting, however, even as transitions have assumed added importance and urgency. At the subsidiary level, ROK and Mozambique, as chairs of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, respectively, spotlighted transitions in their joint meeting in August 2024.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Dedicate the next annual Security Council briefing on peacekeeping reform pursuant to resolution 2378 to a discussion on peace operations transitions. ROK, as chair of the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations, could consider convening this meeting during its presidency; and
- Convene other meetings focused on issues related to the drawdown and exit of UN peace operations. These meetings could be held at the subsidiary body level, or in informal meeting formats such as the Arria-formula meeting format. Among the possible topics are:
 - The role of international financial institutions in mobilising resources for transitions;
 - Enhancing partnerships with regional and sub-regional organisations in promoting transitions;
 - Protecting civilians in transitions; promoting better engagement with host countries and communities in transitions; and
 - Understanding the peace, humanitarian, and development nexus in transitions.

Action 21(d): Take concrete steps to ensure the safety and security of the personnel of peace operations and improve their access to health facilities, including mental health services.

Council Action

In 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres commissioned a report on improving the security of UN peacekeepers. The Cruz report, named after its author, Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz (Brazil),

was controversial, however, because of its recommendations for a more proactive and militaristic approach to improve the safety of peacekeepers.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, the issue of safety and security continues to be of paramount interest and concern for troop-contributing countries (TCCs) amidst a surge of attacks against peace operations and an increasing number of fatalities. India, a major TCC for UN peacekeeping, facilitated the adoption of resolution 2589 to address crimes against peacekeepers. Council members also continue to insert safety and security language in peace operations mandates. Despite these efforts, ensuring accountability remains a serious challenge because of the difficulty in securing host state cooperation, limited capacity within host state judicial systems, and constraints in accessing crime scenes, among others.¹²⁰

The UN has a long way to go in ensuring accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. While the Council members broadly support this issue, some members prioritise peacekeeper accountability through performance evaluation. This has led to tensions with the TCCs, who tend to emphasise the safety and security of their peacekeepers.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Enhance the capacity of host countries in ensuring accountability for crimes against peacekeepers in mission mandates;
- Give particular attention to strengthening triangular cooperation between the UN, TCCs, host countries, and other key stakeholders to promote progress in implementing resolution 2589; and
- Request the Secretary-General to provide updates on actions taken in this regard as part of his regular reporting on the activities of UN peace operations.

Action 21(e): Ensure that peacekeeping operations and peace support operations, including peace enforcement, authorised by the Security Council are accompanied by an inclusive political strategy and other non-military approaches and address the root causes of conflict.

Council Action

This action relates to Action 21(a) and highlights the issue of inclusion in implementing political strategies. It underscores the need to ensure that the views and concerns of all segments of society, including women, children, and youth, are taken into account. In principle, there is broad agreement among Council members on advancing this objective. Several members regularly invite women and youth representatives to brief the Council and may highlight these issues during mandate renewal negotiations. However, as noted earlier, there has been pushback against these issues in recent years.

Council members broadly support non-military approaches to conflict resolution. One example of this is the situation in the Great Lakes region, where such an approach is being implemented to address insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.¹²¹ However, Council members have nuanced views about addressing the root causes of conflict, which are

¹¹⁶ Security Council Report, No. 4, UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment, (December 2023).

¹¹⁷ S/PRST/2017/27 (21 December 2017)

¹¹⁸ S/2022/522 (29 June 2022)

¹¹⁹ Richard Gowan, Fighting Words: The Cruz Report Restores a Military Voice to Peacekeeping Debates, IPI Global Observatory, (February 2018). Available at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/02/fighting-words-cruz-report-restores-military-voice/>

¹²⁰ Agathe Sarfati, Accountability for Crimes against Peacekeepers, International Peace Institute, (March 2023). Available at: https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2303_Accountability-for-Crimes-Against-Peacekeepers.pdf

¹²¹ The Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes has been working on non-military measures to address the security situation in the eastern DRC, including through the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants. In this regard, a Contact and Coordination Group was established in May 2021 composed of representatives of regional countries.

addressed more widely in the *Pact* under peacebuilding and sustainable development. China often calls for international support to build the national capacity of post-conflict countries by focusing on key sectors that are vital to their long-term peace and stability.¹²² Russia maintains that “providing States with long-term assistance in the areas of development and human rights through peacekeeping organizations is not appropriate”.¹²³ While acknowledging the links among peace and security, development, and human rights, it maintains that this should not “serve as a pretext for mixing the mandates of United Nations organs and offices of the Secretariat”.¹²⁴

Other members draw attention to the issues of human rights, women’s participation in political processes, the rule of law, and transitional justice as crucial factors for addressing the root causes of conflict. Some members have strongly advocated for the integration of adequate analytical and programmatic capacity in addressing climate-related security risks and strengthening their resilience to these risks.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Focus on tasks in peace operations mandates that could help countries transition from conflict to peace;
- Include transitions planning in the annual UN-AU annual consultations in order to exchange information on best practices on transitions; and
- In order to craft more realistic mandates, members could make greater use of the PBC’s convening role to enhance engagement with UN Country Teams (UNCTs) to better understand the capacities and constraints of UNCTs

Action 21(f): Encourage the Secretary-General to convene regular high-level meetings with relevant regional organizations to discuss matters pertaining to peace operations, peacebuilding, and conflicts.

Council Action

The UN maintains cooperation with various regional organisations across different continents, including the AU, the EU, the League of Arab States, and the Organization of American States, among others. The UN has more extensive cooperation with the AU than with any other regional organisation. UN and AU officials meet regularly at various levels to coordinate their cooperation covering peace and security, development and human rights.

The annual consultation between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) and the Peacebuilding Commission and the AUPSC have also been a regular feature of the UN-AU cooperation. The challenge is how to move from formalities and ritual engagements to hold a frank exchange of views aimed at forging a shared perspective on addressing pressing peace and security challenges on the continent.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Institutionalising the retreat format initiated by Switzerland during the 18th annual consultation in Tarrytown, New York, to encourage less scripted interactions between the two Councils;
- Initiating discussions on the modalities for joint visits agreed in principle by the two Councils; and
- Exploring the possibility of cooperation between the two Councils at the subsidiary level, including closer working relations between Security

122 Security Council Meeting Record. (8 September 2021) (S/PV.8851).

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 African Union Peace and Security Council Communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.1238 (28 October 2024)

126 For more, see our In Hindsight on “UN-AU Cooperation: A Path Toward Networked Multilateralism or Fragmented Responses?” for the November 2024 Monthly Forecast.

Council sanctions committees and the newly established AUPSC Sub-Committee on Sanctions.

Action 21(g) Ensure adequate, predictable and sustainable financing for AUPSOs mandated by the Security Council in line with Security Council resolution 2719 (2023).

Council Action

The adoption of this resolution is considered a major milestone in UN-AU cooperation. However, its implementation appears to be fraught with many challenges. The AU may need to manage the expectations of certain member states advocating for full UN funding of AUPSOs and show a commitment to sharing the financial burden. In the Security Council, navigating the influence of some powerful members who strongly oppose applying resolution 2719 to potential cases such as Somalia and the financing of the AU Support and Stabilization Mission (AUSSOM) to be deployed on 1 January 2025, despite support from the host country and the AU, is likely to be a challenge. The recent decision by the AUPSC “to use part of the interest accrued from the AU Peace Fund investment and the Crisis Reserve Facility (CRF) to substantially contribute to the financing of AUSSOM”¹²⁵ is a step in the right direction. Ultimately, Council decisions are expected to be guided by the relevant provisions of the resolution, which outlines clear parameters for decision-making and authorisation.¹²⁶ However, the implementation of resolution 2719 is likely to be further complicated by the return of the Trump administration, which may be less open to its implementation.

Council members are expected to receive the first report on the implementation of resolution 2719 in December 2024. The UN and the AU have been working to lay down the groundwork for the operationalisation of this resolution. At the 8th UN-AU high-level conference held in Addis Ababa on 21 October, the joint roadmap developed by the UN and the AU was endorsed. This roadmap ensures institutional readiness for the authorisation of a new AUPSO under resolution 2719.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Convening a meeting on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2719 to receive a briefing and exchange views on the challenges ahead;
- Securing US support or abstention in authorising the deployment of AUPSOs under resolution 2719; and
- Holding informal consultations on other possible test cases that could be authorised under resolution 2719 over the next two years. (The Council is expected to review the implementation of the resolution three years after its adoption.)

Observations

Opinions on the future of UN peace operations appear to be divided. Some tend to downplay the ongoing relevance of UN peace operations, given current challenges and the growing emphasis on strengthening the role of regional forces, while others remain nostalgic, reluctant to accept that UN operations can no longer function as they did in the past. The reality, however, is more nuanced than either perspective suggests.

Simultaneously, interest is growing in the role of regional forces to undertake peace enforcement or counter-terrorism operations, but

recent experiences have shown that regional forces, much like UN peace operations, also have limitations and cannot be considered a panacea.¹²⁷ The future of peacekeeping depends on the level of pragmatism shown

by the UN and its regional partners in utilising UN peace operations or regional peace support operations based on their respective comparative advantages, to provide a coherent and effective response to crises.

Peacebuilding

Introduction

The UN's peacebuilding architecture—which includes the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund, and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office—was created in December 2005 to support post-conflict recovery, promote sustainable peace, and enhance coordination and coherence of international peacebuilding efforts. In its early days, the inclusion of a country on the PBC agenda was largely driven by the Security Council and mostly focused on post-conflict recovery, which subsequently contributed to a more linear and narrow perception of peacebuilding over the next decade. Over the years, however, the focus of the PBC agenda widened, particularly following the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture in 2015.

The outcome of the review was reflected in landmark twin resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, namely General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282, which emphasised that a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace requires preventing conflict, addressing its root causes, and strengthening key areas such as the rule of law at both international and national levels. The widening of the geographic and thematic scope in the PBC's programme of work already underway reflected the recognition in the resolutions that peacebuilding is not limited to post-conflict recovery activities, but that it occurs across the conflict cycle, including to prevent conflict in the first place. The PBC has continued to prioritise support for national peacebuilding efforts, including promoting sustainable development, fostering national reconciliation and unity through inclusive dialogue and mediation, ensuring good governance, building accountable institutions and protecting human rights.

At the same time, the PBC's bridging role between the General Assembly, the Security Council, and ECOSOC has also gained increasing recognition as a critical platform for addressing these underlying conflict drivers. Most recently, its advisory role to the Security Council has attracted particular attention and scrutiny, reflecting what many member states perceive as the PBC's untapped potential to address issues at the intersection of peace and security more comprehensively. In this context, the Secretary-General's 2021 *Our Common Agenda* report reiterated the need to bolster and expand the role of the PBC, which was taken up by both the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HLAB) and the *New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P). Recommendations pertaining to the PBC's complementary and advisory role to the Security Council are expected to be further explored during the twenty-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture in 2025.

Security Council Engagement on Peacebuilding

The Security Council's emphasis on peacebuilding predates resolutions 70/262 and 2282, spanning its peacekeeping and special political mandates. During the two decades leading up to the 2015 peacebuilding reform, peacekeeping missions expanded their scope beyond traditional military tasks like ceasefire monitoring to embrace multidimensional mandates

encompassing a wide range of peacebuilding activities. Similarly, Special Political Missions were expected to undertake peacebuilding initiatives that complemented the good offices and preventive diplomacy of the Secretary-General's Special Representatives. Since the adoption of the resolutions, however, the Security Council has attempted to promote and support conflict prevention and peacebuilding more systematically across most of its mandates. In response, the launch by the Secretary-General of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative in March 2018 and the A4P+ in March 2021 placed further emphasis on strengthening peacebuilding aspects of peacekeeping mandates. In addition, the UN system's adoption of a Sustaining Peace approach in 2017—first piloted in Burkina Faso and The Gambia—fostered greater reliance on extra-budgetary resources and strengthened partnerships across the development, humanitarian, peace and security, and human rights pillars. In Burkina Faso, this approach led to the first joint Prevention and Peacebuilding Assessment (PPBA) by the UN, World Bank, EU, and African Development Bank in 2019.

This progress was reinforced in 2020 with the adoption of twin resolutions (General Assembly resolution 75/201 and Security Council resolution 2558), which emphasised the importance of inclusivity in peacebuilding processes, urging the United Nations system to ensure the needs of all societal segments are considered, particularly through increased investments in women and youth-focused peace and security agendas. By requesting the Secretary-General to report biennially on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the General Assembly and the Security Council have established a mechanism for fostering accountability within the UN system for inclusive peacebuilding efforts. The last report was released in January 2022, titled "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace" (A/76/668-S/2022/66), and the next is scheduled for publication by the end of 2024.

The recurring five-year reviews of the peacebuilding architecture offer another opportunity to hold the system accountable by assessing progress and proposing adjustments. Preparations and processes for the 2025 review are underway. According to its terms of reference, the review should be "forward-looking, aiming at further improving the work of the UN on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, with appropriate emphasis on implementation and impact at the field level, encompassing activities aimed at supporting national and regional efforts to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, and supporting the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture".

As the UN enters the formal phase of the 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review (PBAR), there is growing recognition among member states that numerous recommendations have already been proposed regarding what the peacebuilding architecture should prioritise—ranging from operational and policy coherence to leadership, accountability, capacity, financing, and partnerships for sustaining peace. The focus of the 2025 PBAR should now shift to the "how".

The continued emphasis on addressing conflict prevention through the

¹²⁷ The East African Community Regional Force deployed in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo in 2023 faced challenges from the host government and local communities and had to eventually withdraw.

peacebuilding lens is evident from the Council meetings on peacebuilding in 2024.

On 21 August 2024, the Council held an open debate on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, one of the signature events of Sierra Leone's Council presidency.¹²⁸ The meeting aimed to facilitate a broader reflection on the NA4P and how it can help promote conflict prevention at the national, regional, and global levels. In its written submission to the Security Council, the PBC stressed the need to prioritise nationally owned and inclusive peacebuilding efforts. A common thread was the call for comprehensive strategies to address the root causes of conflict, with numerous speakers drawing attention to the intrinsic link between sustainable development and lasting peace. During the meeting, the PBC was repeatedly acknowledged as a vital platform for coordinating and supporting global peacebuilding efforts.

Looking ahead, many speakers highlighted the 2025 PBAR as a pivotal moment to enhance the international community's approach to peace and security. In this respect, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Elizabeth Spehar, emphasised the importance of shifting the PBAR discussions from addressing the 'what' of prevention and peacebuilding to concentrating on the 'how' of concrete implementation. Speakers emphasised the need for this review to strengthen mechanisms for conflict prevention and build resilience against future threats to global peace.

On 13 March 2024, Japan convened an open debate of the Security Council on "Promoting Conflict Prevention – Empowering All Actors Including Women and Youth" under the "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace" agenda item of the Security Council. The Chair of the PBC, H.E. Mr. Sérgio França Danese (Brazil), expressed the Commission's readiness to continue providing member states with the political space to discuss their prevention strategies and to advise the Security Council ahead of its consideration of countries that are undergoing conflict or transitioning from conflict.

On 22 January 2024, Guyana, Japan, and Mozambique convened an Arria-formula meeting titled "Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace through Comprehensive Approaches—Investment in People, including Empowerment of Women". Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed, who briefed at the session, highlighted the central role of "inclusion" in the NA4P, which involves the meaningful participation of "all constituencies and communities, particularly those traditionally underrepresented" in peace and security processes, as well as in a country's social, economic, and political life. In its written submission to the meeting, the PBC called for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all stages of peace processes as well as in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict at local, national, regional and global levels. Speakers stressed the importance of comprehensive approaches in responding to the interlocking transnational risks to peace and security, to which all states are vulnerable, such as poverty, food and energy insecurity, climate change, pandemics, all forms of violence, discrimination, and gender-based inequalities.

Proposals from Council Meetings

The recommendations from Japan's March 2024 open debate included the following ideas:

PBC

- Enhance the PBC's assistance to states with national prevention plans;
- Strengthen the PBC's role and increase its resources;
- PBC to cooperate with regional organisations to identify emerging threats;

- Extend the PBC's mandate to oversee light-footprint civilian missions;
- Utilise the PBC to discuss nationally led prevention; and
- Empower the PBC to act as a space to mobilise political and financial support, and advocate for the Peacebuilding Fund and the United Nations Development Programme-United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention.

National Prevention Strategies

- Develop national prevention strategies with predictable financing; and
- Importance of national ownership and inclusivity in conflict prevention strategies, with particular emphasis on the participation of women and youth.

The Security Council

- Harness the Council's leadership in sharpening norms and practices for the full, equal and meaningful participation of all actors in all aspects of peace and security, as well as encouraging the development of national prevention strategies and effective early warning and early response measures; and
- The Council must systematically take into account the Commission's opinions on the situations on its agenda and lend its support to national preventive actions.

UN Transitions

- Work closely with host governments to ensure that missions have the resources they need to successfully transition and plan for the day after;
- Ensure that the gains made during UN peace operations are safeguarded and that the host country is on a path towards sustainable development;
- Transitions should be planned well in advance of the drawdown in order to formulate plans based on the host country's preparedness and the capacities of UN country teams and agencies; and
- To ensure political and financial support are maintained after a mission draws down, the Council should utilise the PBC's complementary role in transitions by continuing to request advisory opinions in considering mandate renewals and working closely with the PBC before withdrawal.

Networks

- Create a network that links public and private sectors, the humanitarian sector, development cooperation and civil society to catalyse national efforts.

Regional Organisations (Chapter VIII)

- Encourage close collaboration between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations in early warning, in the involvement of national networks and the coordination of regional responses.

The recommendations from Sierra Leone's August 2024 open debate included the following ideas:

PBC

- Continue to collaborate with regional and sub-regional organisations, leveraging local knowledge and capacities to address context-specific challenges effectively;
- Advocate for predictable and sustained funding for peacebuilding initiatives and engage more with international financial institutions;
- Serve as a platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned in peacebuilding, promoting mutual learning among member states;
- Facilitate the inclusion of diverse stakeholders, including women, youth, and civil society organizations, in peacebuilding processes to ensure comprehensive and sustainable outcomes;

128 S.PV.9710 (21 August 2024) and Resumption.

- Support capacity building and national prevention strategies that address the root causes of conflict and work towards improving coordination among UN agencies, member states, and other stakeholders to ensure effective peacebuilding efforts;
- Strengthen PBC's advisory role to the Security Council and General Assembly, drawing on relevant experiences of member states and from across the United Nations system; and
- Ensure that the PBC's efforts complement the Council's priorities, including through more frequent communication with the Security Council about suggested countries and focus areas for consideration, in consultation with concerned member states.

Financing and Partnerships

- Ensure predictable, sustainable, and adequate financing for peacebuilding initiatives, including innovative financing mechanisms and strengthened partnerships with the private sector;
- Develop a more strategic and systematic relationship with international financial institutions and regional development banks for financing instruments to be better aligned with national peacebuilding priorities;
- Expand partnerships between the UN and regional organisations like the African Union to promote locally driven solutions and avoid duplication of efforts; and
- More concrete follow-up to meetings and tracking of interactions would help strengthen the partnership between the Council and the AU PSC and the PBC and the AU Peace and Security Council (AU PSC).

Local Ownership, Inclusion, and Context-Specific Approaches

- Enhance the role of local and regional actors in peacebuilding, ensuring national ownership and context-specific approaches;
- Promote the inclusion of women in peacebuilding efforts, particularly through their involvement in decision-making processes and conflict prevention frameworks; and
- Support education and youth engagement in peacebuilding processes to counteract radicalisation and promote sustainable peace.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Action 18 of the *Pact for the Future* recognises the primary responsibility of member states in preventing conflict and building peace in their countries and that these national efforts contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Action 18. We will build and sustain peace.

Action 18(a): Deliver on our commitment in the 2030 Agenda to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

Council and Wider Action

This sub-point in Action 18 refers to Goal 16.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹²⁹ Relevant areas for the Security Council are violence against girls and women, violent injuries and deaths and the number of refugees. Ongoing and new violent conflicts around the world are derailing

the global path to peace and achievement of Goal 16. Alarming, civilian casualties in armed conflicts surged by 72 per cent in 2023, the steepest rise since 2015.¹³⁰ Additionally, the number of women killed in conflict increased for the first time since 2015. In 2022, 2 in 10 civilians killed in conflicts were women; 1 in 10 were children. By 2023, 4 in 10 were women and 3 in 10 were children. The number of forcibly displaced people due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and events seriously disturbing public order reached an unprecedented 120 million in May 2024.¹³¹ Since 2014, more than 4,000 fatalities have been recorded annually on migratory routes worldwide. 2023 marked the deadliest year with more than 8,000 deaths recorded.¹³²

The escalating violence and its devastating impact on civilians underscore the critical need for accurate data to inform global efforts to address conflict-related harm and prevent conflicts. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has developed SDG indicator 16.1.2, which records conflict-related deaths per 100,000 population by sex, age, and cause. Casualty recorders, including the Casualty Recorders Network (CRN) members, are a vital source of data for global reporting on this indicator.

Despite the availability of data highlighting the human cost of conflict, the Security Council has faced persistent challenges in preventing conflicts, pointing to the urgent need for stronger and more coordinated peacebuilding efforts. Recent thematic debates, such as those led by Japan in March 2024 and Sierra Leone in August 2024, emphasised the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict through peacebuilding initiatives that promote resilience at the national, regional, and international levels, and highlighted the PBC's essential role in supporting nationally led prevention strategies.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Consider organising thematic discussions within the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on the Protection of Civilians (POC) to examine the underlying causes of violence against civilians in conflict and explore strategies to address them; and
- Consider holding informal early warning briefings for UN Security Council members and Peacebuilding Commission chairs, such as the ones co-hosted by the UK and Brazil in 2023 and the UK and Sierra Leone in 2024. These discussions help the UN get further ahead of conflict risk and all its costs and encourage mobilisation of collective action to seize opportunities for sustaining peace.

Action 18(b): Redouble our efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls.

Council and Wider Action

More than five women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their family. Economic crises, conflicts, and climate change wreak havoc across the world, further exacerbating and intensifying violence against women and girls.¹³³ The Council has traditionally focused on conflict-related sexual violence and its disproportionate effects on women and girls. Discussions such as the Council's annual debate on conflict-related sexual violence, last

¹²⁹ Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

¹³⁰ SDG Indicators, 'Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions', (2024)

¹³¹ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition, (10 July 2023) <<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2023.pdf>>

¹³² Data from the Global Migration Data Portal, 'Migrant Deaths and Disappearances', (2014-2023)

¹³³ Report of the Secretary-General on Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (8 October 2024) (A/79/500)

held in April 2024, have highlighted the need for demilitarisation, enforcement of arms embargoes, gender-responsive arms control, and strengthened accountability to reverse the record levels of sexual violence in conflict zones. Women's rights groups have expressed concern regarding the emphasis of such discussions and the overall approach in the implementation of WPS resolutions on women in the security sector and on conflict-related sexual violence as a weapon of war (and later a weapon of terror) at the expense of much-needed attention on the root causes, in particular, the political economy of violence and its role in preventing participation.¹³⁴ They have stressed the need for strengthened engagement with women's groups in appropriate Security Council deliberations, which would ensure a more comprehensive implementation of the WPS agenda and help hold states accountable for progress.

The PBC has valuable experiences and insights to contribute in this regard. It has so far adopted a gender strategy which was reviewed in 2020 and complemented with an action plan that includes four action areas and nine specific indicators, and has been reporting progress on its implementation on an annual basis. This keeps the Commission accountable to promote gender-responsive peacebuilding through its engagements, including meetings and visits, as well as advice to the Security Council.

The latest progress report showed that, in 2023, 94 percent of the Commission's outcome documents promoted the importance of women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in peacebuilding and 80% of its advice to the Council called for the elimination of discriminatory practices against women and/or promoted gender equality and women's empowerment measures. In response to a survey regarding the work of the PBC that was sent to women peacebuilders who briefed the Commission in 2023, respondents stressed the need to include the voices of women and youth—including young women—at all levels of peace dialogues and initiatives. They also highlighted the challenges women peacebuilders often face, including limited financial resources, difficulties in participating in decision-making processes and political participation, and various forms of violence, such as physical, psychological, and cyber violence, which further impede their representation.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The Council could mandate peace operations to report regularly on violence against women and girls, including during mission drawdowns, and to ensure strict enforcement of zero-tolerance policies on sexual exploitation and abuse;
- The Council could impose targeted sanctions on perpetrators of systematic violence against women and girls, where relevant, as these measures are included in some sanctions regimes but not others;
- The Council could urge member states to commit resources to funds allocated for addressing sexual violence in post-conflict situations, in line with the Secretary-General's recommendation for increased WPS funding at national, regional and local levels;
- The Council could ask the PBC to support national governments who seek assistance in implementing laws and policies that criminalise all forms of violence against women and girls; and
- The Council could maintain high levels of participation of women civil society representatives in its meetings and encourage the Commission to continue incorporating input from women peacebuilders in its country and regional engagements and to bring their recommendations to the Council's attention.

134 Christine Chinkin and Madeleine Rees, 'Commentary on Security Council Resolution 2467: Continued State Obligation and Civil Society Action on Sexual Violence in Conflict', LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security (2019), 24

135 S.PV.9437 (14 June 2023)

136 Resolution 2686 (14 July 2023) S/RES/2686.

Action 18(c): Combat racism and eliminate racial discrimination, xenophobia and religious intolerance and all other forms of intolerance and discrimination from our societies and promote inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.

Council Action

On 14 June 2023, the Council held a high-level briefing on "The Values of Human Fraternity in Promoting and Sustaining Peace", which the UAE convened as a signature event of its presidency.¹³⁵ The meeting focused on the role of religious and community leaders in promoting co-existence as well as on religion-based discrimination. The Council also adopted resolution 2686 on 14 June 2023,¹³⁶ co-authored by the UAE and the UK, which recognised that "hate speech, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, related forms of intolerance, gender discrimination, and acts of extremism can contribute to driving the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of conflict". It urged states and international and regional organisations "to publicly condemn violence, hate speech and extremism motivated by discrimination including on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, religion or language, in a manner consistent with applicable international law, including the right to freedom of expression". Member states were also asked to consider inter-religious and intercultural dialogue as an important tool to achieve peace, social stability and internationally agreed development goals.

It requested the Secretary-General to provide an oral briefing to the Council by 14 June 2024 on the resolution's implementation "in the context of situations throughout the peace continuum which are on the agenda of the Council, utilizing information from available United Nations sources, including country teams, peacekeeping operations, and other United Nations personnel". This briefing took place on 7 June 2024.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Encourage member states to uphold international human rights standards and to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Integrate these goals into mandates of peace operations and conflict prevention strategies;
- Request the Secretary-General to provide a briefing in 2025 to update members on the implementation of resolution 2686. Additionally, ensure that ongoing progress related to resolution 2686 is included in these annual reports to facilitate comprehensive tracking and accountability; and
- Hold an open debate focused on the relationship between intolerance and discrimination and conflict to hear about good practices from briefers who have been able to combat racial discrimination, xenophobia and religious intolerance in their societies.

Action 18(d): Strengthen and implement existing national prevention strategies and approaches to sustain peace, and consider developing them where they do not exist, on a voluntary basis and in accordance with national priorities, to address the root causes of violence and armed conflict.

Council and Wider Action

The NA4P had a strong focus on prevention at the national level, which it says can complement enhanced diplomatic action at the international and regional levels to prevent conflict. Prevention at the national level, the NA4P stressed, is primarily the responsibility of nations and governments, which should address the drivers of conflict and violence in their societies.

It recommended that member states and regional organisations develop prevention strategies “to address the different drivers and enablers of violence and conflict in societies”. It further stressed that these strategies should have “cross-regional dimensions to address transboundary threats, collectively harvesting and building on the wealth of knowledge and expertise existing at the national level on effective conflict prevention measures”.

During the Council’s open debate on peacebuilding and sustaining peace on 21 August 2024, it was recognised that the UN is uniquely equipped to support member states in addressing critical barriers to advancing national prevention strategies. However, it remains challenging to discuss, let alone plan or define, the Council’s role in supporting national prevention strategies in non-mission settings, as such efforts are often perceived as encroachments on state sovereignty. Member states are also concerned about the potential for these strategies to introduce additional and onerous templates, or worse, promote one-size-fits-all models by international actors. This does not need to be the case. As discussed during a PBC meeting that was convened on 21 June to showcase the support and accompaniment of the PBC to The Gambia since 2017 in the context of the 2025 PBAR review, success can come by gearing international support towards existing, nationally owned efforts to identify and address risk factors for violence. Examples like these have prompted member states to encourage closer collaboration between the Security Council and the PBC in support of national prevention strategies.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The Council could encourage closer coordination in information sharing and early warning within the UN peacebuilding architecture, the whole UN system, and beyond, while respecting national ownership;
- The Council could encourage the PBC to support national prevention strategies at the request of concerned countries and ask to be kept informed of the PBC’s efforts; and
- In support of a role for the PBC in supporting nationally-led prevention efforts, Council members could strengthen the advisory, bridging and convening role in the Council and General Assembly resolutions anticipated in 2025 on the PBAR.

Action 18(e): Provide assistance to States, upon their request, including through the Peacebuilding Commission and the entire United Nations system, in full conformity with national ownership and needs, to build national capacity to promote, develop and implement their nationally owned prevention efforts and address the root causes of violence and conflict in their countries, including through sharing best practice and lessons learned.

Council and Wider Action

Over the years, Security Council mandates have increasingly prioritised investments in institutional infrastructure and capacity-building initiatives aimed at building lasting peace. This has proven to be an area conducive

for collaboration with the PBC. For example, both the Security Council and the PBC have recently engaged in support of Colombia’s efforts to set up new institutions to administer the peace implementation and address key issues such as transitional justice. The PBC has also leveraged its platform to share best practices and lessons learned from diverse approaches to national prevention and to facilitate, where appropriate, South-South and Triangular cooperation. For example, at a PBC meeting on 22 March 2024, Timor-Leste shared insights into its prevention and sustaining peace initiatives, Norway presented its strategy for countering violent extremism, and Kenya highlighted a comprehensive review of its peacebuilding framework. Such exchanges help address concerns among member states about the imposition of a uniform approach, instead encouraging them to reflect on their own unique strategies and seek assistance when needed. Building on these experiences, the upcoming peacebuilding architecture review offers an opportunity to explore how the UN system, including the PBC, can provide more effective support for national actors, upon their request.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Council members are encouraged to collaborate with the PBC, leveraging its potential to assist in the development and discussion of national prevention strategies. The PBC could facilitate dialogue on the implementation of these strategies and, where relevant, provide the Council with insights and information pertinent to issues on its agenda; and
- The Council could consider adopting the NA4P’s suggestion that the Commission create a mechanism to mobilise political and financial support for prevention strategies of states that are interested in receiving international assistance for developing and implementing their strategies, and could mandate the PBC accordingly during the PBAR review.

Action 18(f): Address the risks associated with illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, their parts and ammunition, or associated ammunition, including through national prevention strategies and approaches.

Council Action

Over the past decade, the Council has discussed Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) with increasing frequency, although the issue has been controversial at times. In resolution 2220 of 22 May 2015, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to submit biennial reports on SALW, with China and Russia abstaining, apparently because the text did not include language on the transfer of SALW to non-state actors. The next report is due in November 2025. The Fourth United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA) on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), held from 18 to 28 June 2024, resulted in the adoption of a political declaration and an action plan from 2024 to 2030, aiming to combat, prevent, and eradicate the illicit production, trade, and diversion of SALW in all their aspects. The African Union presented a Common African Position during the event.

An early version of the *Pact* included a request for the Secretary-General to provide examples of best practices and effective approaches from “existing national, regional and sub-regional prevention mechanisms or strategies to be presented at the 80th session to facilitate lesson learning between Member States”.¹³⁷ Although not in the final version, some members may be interested in pursuing this issue in Africa through an

137 *Pact for the Future: Rev.2*, (17 July 2024), 12.

exchange of information with the AU PSC. The AU has developed framework guidelines for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants to assist in designing and building institutional capacity for countries transitioning from conflict.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Convene an open debate around the time of publication of the Secretary-General's SALW report to hear the views of the wider membership;
- Request the PBC, in collaboration with relevant parts of the UN system, to support national prevention strategies that aim to address the issue of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons; and
- Continue to include SALW as a topic in UN-AU Informal Consultations and to support efforts to implement the 2024-2030 Action Plan and the Common African Position (CAP) for the Fourth Review Conference of the United Nations Programme of Action (UNPoA) on SALW.

Action 18(g): Address the risks to sustaining peace posed by disinformation, misinformation, hate speech and content inciting harm, including content disseminated through digital platforms, while respecting the right to freedom of expression and to privacy and ensuring unhindered access to the Internet in accordance with international law, domestic legislation and national policies.

Council Action

In the last few years, the Council has been paying more attention to this issue, particularly in the context of new technologies. In December 2023, Albania and the UAE convened an Arria-formula meeting on "Artificial intelligence: its impact on hate speech, disinformation and misinformation".¹³⁸ In July 2023, the UK organised a high-level briefing titled "Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Risks for International Peace and Security", during which several Council members highlighted the potential of AI to exacerbate conflict, particularly through the dissemination of misinformation. Members also emphasised the need to develop an ethical and responsible framework for the international governance of AI. In October 2021, Kenya held a closed Arria-formula meeting via videoconference (VTC) on "Addressing and Countering Hate Speech and Preventing Incitement to Discrimination, Hostility, and Violence on Social Media".

Resolution 2686 on tolerance and peace and security requested UN peacekeeping and special political missions, within their mandates, to monitor hate speech, racism and acts of extremism that negatively affect peace and security, and to include these issues in their regular reporting to the Council. Since its adoption, the Council has addressed¹³⁹ the issue in seven resolutions in connection with the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Libya, Somalia, South Sudan and the Middle East.

Calibrating the language on disinformation, misinformation and hate speech in Council outcomes has, at times, been a challenge. In the negotiations on the UNOCA presidential statement in 2024, for example, there was no consensus on language about hate speech, disinformation, and misinformation in the region. The initial draft text encouraged UNOCA to work with other UN entities to address these issues, suggesting measures such as effective strategic communications and the development of national action plans with implementation strategies but this was ultimately removed.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The Security Council could request briefings on the topic of hate speech by relevant UN bodies, including the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide;
- The Council could convene a Council debate on the effect of disinformation on sustaining peace for an update on how this issue is being addressed in different situations;
- At the subsidiary body level, the chairs of sanctions committees that include language on disinformation, misinformation and hate speech could convene to assess the effectiveness of these measures;
- Council members could hold a closed Arria, as Kenya did in 2021, to discuss these issues with social media companies to improve responses to hate speech and incitement in conflict situations and their impact on sustaining peace; and
- The Council could encourage member states to develop national action plans for countering hate speech.

Action 18(h): Pursue stronger alignment between the United Nations, international and regional financial institutions and the needs of Member States affected by armed conflict and violence and the impacts of regional conflict, to support their economic stability, national prevention and peacebuilding efforts, in line with their respective mandates and in full conformity with national ownership.

Council and Wider Action

The Security Council has frequently emphasised the importance of adequate, predictable, and sustained financing for peacebuilding initiatives, and the need for stronger strategic partnerships with international financial institutions. In December 2020, the Council adopted resolution 2558, underscoring the necessity of such financing to effectively assist countries in sustaining peace and preventing conflict. In December 2023, the General Assembly adopted resolution 78/257, endorsing the Secretary-General's March 2022 proposal to allocate assessed contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund. This decision represents a pivotal step toward implementing a core element of the earlier resolution 76/305, which followed the April 2022 High-Level Meeting on Peacebuilding Financing. Beginning in 2025, \$50 million per year will be designated for the Fund's Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility, specifically targeting certain countries and territories. These developments reflect the ongoing commitment of the United Nations members to address the challenges of peacebuilding financing, recognising its pivotal role in sustaining peace and preventing conflicts.

Resolution 76/305 also highlighted key areas for fostering stronger strategic partnerships between the United Nations, international financial institutions, and multilateral development banks. These include joint initiatives and analysis, shared priority-setting towards collective outcomes, and complementarity and coordination in implementation, which are in line with national priorities.

The *Pact* stresses the need for adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding, welcoming the recent General Assembly decision to increase the resources available to the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. It does not go as far as the NA4P, which recommended that this financing could be provided through "assessed contributions to peacebuilding efforts, in particular the Peacebuilding Fund".¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ "Arria-Formula" Meeting of UN Security Council Members, "Artificial Intelligence: Its Impact on Hate Speech, Disinformation and Misinformation", (19 December 2023).

¹³⁹ Security Council Report, 'Briefing on the Implementation of Resolution 2686 on Tolerance and International Peace and Security', (13 Jun 2024).

¹⁴⁰ Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace, (July 2023), 19.

Recommendations for Security Council Members

- Explicitly request that the Secretary-General, in consultation with relevant regional organisations and partners, to include an assessment of peacebuilding financing gaps and their implications for sustaining peace in mandated reports on conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
- Call for joint initiatives and analyses between UN agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) to identify synergies and align their goals in addressing the root causes of conflict and aligning peacebuilding financing with national priorities; and
- Encourage further exploration of the UN-IFI partnerships by looking at best practices in various conflict and post-conflict settings that could form the basis of a more systematic and strategic partnership, including a more formal relationship between the PBC and IFIs.

Action 44. We will strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission.

We have chosen to include some of the actions under the PBC, although it is in Chapter 5 of the *Pact*, which focuses on transforming global governance, because of the important relationship between the Security Council and the PBC. Action 44 affirms the leaders' commitment to "strengthening the Peacebuilding Commission through the 2025 review of the peacebuilding architecture to bring a more strategic approach and greater coherence and impact to national and international peacebuilding and sustaining peace efforts."¹⁴¹ The Security Council will have an opportunity to shape the future of the PBC when it adopts twin resolutions with the General Assembly in 2025 focused on the outcome of the review.

Action 44(a): Enhance the role of the Commission as a platform for building and sustaining peace including through sharing good practices among Member States and mobilizing political and financial support for national prevention, sustaining peace and peacebuilding efforts, in particular to avoid possible relapse into conflict, in accordance with the mandate of the Commission.

The PBC's extensive mandate allows it to convene a wide array of stakeholders from within and beyond the UN system, offering countries under consideration a platform to raise political awareness and mobilise financial support for their peacebuilding priorities. This includes engaging with the Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), UN development and humanitarian agencies, and international financial institutions. The PBC also plays a critical role in fostering coherence within the UN's peacebuilding efforts by bridging the organisation's three pillars: peace and security, development, and human rights.

These strengths have enabled the PBC to expand its engagements significantly, growing from six country-specific configurations during the 2015 Peacebuilding Architecture Review to addressing 31 country and regional situations by the end of 2023. Notably, in 2023, the PBC broadened its geographical scope by convening meetings for the first time on Canada, Honduras, Mozambique, Nepal, and Norway. This underscored the universal nature of peacebuilding and sustaining peace, highlighting that all countries can both benefit from and contribute to the Commission's work.

Despite its rapid expansion, the Commission faces important challenges.

With no resources of its own, the PBC struggles to pool and raise funds for peacebuilding activities, which to date remain severely underfunded. The PBC even struggles to keep up with the increasing number of engagements that the expansion of the organisational committee entails.

The Commission's attention to countries and regions is often perceived as ad hoc and transient, unable to generate meaningful support. Recent efforts to structure the Commission's programme of work to ensure sustained accountability and long-term support for countries engaged with the PBC are a step in the right direction. To address these challenges, it is vital for PBC and Security Council members to coordinate closely in preparation of the Commission's annual work plan and to share the workload of its activities without fragmenting its unity. The decision to appoint four Vice-Chairs in 2025 marks a step in this direction, though practical arrangements remain to be defined.

Member states have often requested the Council's coordination with the PBC in preparation of its annual programme of work and individual engagements, which should be driven by the imperative to ensure impact on the ground. Past examples offer valuable lessons in that regard. For instance, the PBC's 2020 engagement with Burkina Faso illustrates an important effort to mobilise international support. Following a PBC meeting in March 2020, the Chair sent a letter to Burkina Faso's Minister of Economy, Finance, and Development, summarising over \$400 million in pledges to support the Emergency Programme for the Sahel.¹⁴² While this initiative demonstrated a structured approach to aligning commitments with national priorities and ensuring accountability, Burkina Faso's worsening situation highlights the need for more comprehensive and sustained action.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Acknowledge the PBC's expanding scope and emphasise the importance of further elevating the level of engagement to ensure continued, impactful support for countries under consideration;
- Coordinate closely with the PBC in preparation of its annual program of work and activities, encouraging it to build on previous experiences to strengthen its ability to deliver tailored and impactful support;
- Support the PBC's efforts to address severe peacebuilding funding gaps by calling for increased contributions to UN peacebuilding activities, mandating peacebuilding components within peacekeeping missions where appropriate, prioritising peacebuilding in its resolutions, and working with member states to identify new funding sources for critical peacebuilding initiatives; and
- Call for and negotiate, within the framework of the 2025 peacebuilding review, an upgrade of the status of the PBC so that it can receive full conference services.

Action 44(b): Make greater use of the Commission to support Member States' progress in their nationally owned and nationally-led peacebuilding, sustaining peace and prevention efforts, and strengthen the advisory, bridging and convening role of the Commission, and encourage the Commission to consult with civil society, nongovernmental organizations, including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate, in line with the mandate of the Commission.

¹⁴¹ *Pact for the Future*, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations, (September 2024), 28.

¹⁴² Letter from the PBC Chair to H.E. Mr. Lassané Kaboré, Minister of Economy, Finance and Development of Burkina Faso, (06 November 2020).

The last four annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) have taken significant steps toward enhancing accountability by going beyond simple metrics like the number of PBC meetings and outcome documents and providing data on the participation of civil society actors, including women peacebuilders, as well as international and regional financial institutions, and national and local institutions. Notably, the Commission has made commendable efforts to follow up on input provided by civil society and women peacebuilders, integrating these perspectives into its advice to the Security Council and taking them into account when preparing subsequent engagements. Such initiatives are crucial for ensuring that the Commission remains accountable to the peacebuilding objectives it represents.

In 2023, the Commission provided advice to the Council 16 times, including through letters and formal briefings on peacebuilding efforts in the CAR, Colombia, South Sudan, and the Great Lakes region, as well as on thematic issues such as women, peace and security. Despite efforts to provide focused and concise recommendations, the PBC has not received clear direction from the Council on the specific areas or issues it should prioritise in its advice. Some member states have expressed the need for more detailed insights on specific peacebuilding priorities that fall outside the Council's regular deliberations, but this feedback has not been effectively communicated to the PBC. Other member states have suggested that if the PBC fully realises its mandate—engaging frequently and meaningfully with partner countries through regular meetings, field visits, and coordination with relevant actors to mobilise robust international support—its advice to the Council would naturally reflect the realities on the ground. By concentrating on peacebuilding priorities that complement the Council's agenda, the PBC has the potential to play an indispensable role in strengthening global peacebuilding efforts.

Recommendations for Council Members

- The Council can task the PBC to focus on peacebuilding priorities that complement and fill gaps in the Security Council's mandates, addressing under-served issues critical to sustaining peace;
- The Council can offer constructive feedback on the content and focus of the PBC advice and provide guidance on areas where further analysis or recommendations would enhance its relevance. Establishing a structured feedback mechanism would ensure a continuous dialogue between the Council and the PBC, enabling the Commission to refine its contributions and better support the Council's efforts in addressing peacebuilding and sustaining peace priorities;
- The Council can acknowledge the Commission's efforts to consult with civil society and women peacebuilders and encourage the PBC to actively use data to take corrective action and strengthen the impact of its work; and
- The Council can encourage the PBC to establish a system for regularly assessing its impact, incorporating periodic independent evaluations and strengthening data management capabilities to ensure accurate and meaningful analysis.

Action 44(d): Ensure that the Commission plays a vital support role to countries during and after the transition of a peace operation, in cooperation with the Security Council and supported by United Nations country teams, upon the request of the country concerned.

The Peacebuilding Commission has, over the years, served as a platform for convening diverse stakeholders and partners before, during, and after the drawdown of UN Peacekeeping Operations or Special Political Missions. It has played a key role in ensuring sustained international attention to the long-term needs of countries undergoing transitions, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea-Bissau. However, the PBC's engagement in support of transitions has been inconsistent.

While resolution 2282 underscores the importance of leveraging PBC advice when major agreements related to UN mission mandates and transitions are negotiated between the United Nations, national governments, and other stakeholders, in practice, the Commission's advice has largely been limited to situations where it had established country-specific configurations during its early years. In cases such as Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan (Darfur), the DRC, Haiti, and Mali, the PBC either did not engage or only engaged minimally, often through broader regional or thematic discussions.

This inconsistent engagement can partly be attributed to reluctance by some member states to consent to PBC involvement, fearing it could create a pathway to Security Council oversight. Additionally, the PBC's limited bandwidth and resources have constrained its ability to conduct the necessary consultations and planning to fully explore a meaningful role in supporting transitions.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Encourage the PBC to engage systematically in the early planning stages of transitions from peacekeeping operations or special political missions, in close consultation with and with the consent of the host country;
- Regularly seek the PBC's advice during the formulation and renewal of mission mandates to ensure that peacebuilding priorities are integrated and aligned with on-the-ground realities;
- Collaborate with the PBC to mobilise adequate, predictable, and sustained financial resources for peacebuilding activities, ensuring that funding gaps do not hinder transition efforts;
- Work with the PBC to establish frameworks for monitoring progress in transition settings, holding all stakeholders accountable to commitments and allowing for timely adjustments to strategies as needed;
- Encourage the PBC to facilitate consultations with civil society, women's organisations, and the private sector to incorporate diverse perspectives into peacebuilding strategies, ensuring that transitions are inclusive and locally owned;
- Encourage more predictable and institutionalised interaction between the Security Council and PBC, including in preparation of the PBC's annual programme of work, to ensure complementarity;
- Coordinate focus and timing of PBC's written advice to the Security Council; and
- Consider a PBC-Security Council dialogue ahead of mandate renewals (similar to the TCC meetings).

Observations

The journey of the UN's peacebuilding architecture from its inception in 2005 to today reflects a growing recognition that peace is not merely the absence of conflict but the presence of sustainable, inclusive, and resilient systems. Increasingly, peacebuilding is being recognised as inseparable from conflict prevention, with its emphasis on addressing root causes, strengthening governance, and fostering societal resilience to prevent the resurgence of

violence. The Security Council, as the guardian of international peace and security, has a critical role to play in advancing this vision by leveraging its unique mandates, fostering strategic partnerships, and ensuring that its decisions are informed by the full spectrum of UN peacebuilding expertise.

The challenges outlined in the *Pact*—financing gaps, inconsistent integration of prevention, and limited engagement with local actors—are not insurmountable. They are opportunities for the international community to

rethink, recalibrate, and renew its commitment to peacebuilding. The 2025 Peacebuilding Architecture Review offers a timely platform to reflect on these issues, with the potential to cement peacebuilding as a truly transformative element of global governance. By embracing this opportunity, the Security Council and its partners can take a decisive step toward fulfilling the UN's promise of lasting peace for all.

Climate Change, Peace and Security

Introduction

Climate change remains one of the more controversial issues dealt with in the Security Council, although many members have worked assiduously in recent years to promote a better understanding of the implications of climate change on peace and security and develop strategies for addressing them. While climate, peace and security featured prominently in *A New Agenda for Peace*, it was omitted from the final version of Chapter 2 of the *Pact for the Future* after difficult negotiations.

From *A New Agenda for Peace* to the *Pact for the Future*

In *A New Agenda for Peace* (NA4P), the Secretary-General discusses climate change under a section entitled “Preventing Conflict and Violence and Sustaining Peace”. The brief recommends that the Council “systematically address the peace and security implications of climate change in the mandates of peace operations and other country or regional situations on its agenda”.

Among other things, outside the Council, the NA4P also recommends the following:

- The establishment of “a dedicated expert group on climate action, resilience and peacebuilding to develop recommendations on integrated approaches to climate, peace and security” under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC);
- The establishment of a new funding mechanism in the Peacebuilding Fund “for more risk tolerant climate finance investments”; and
- The establishment by the UN system and regional and subregional organisations of “joint regional hubs on climate, peace and security to connect national and regional experiences, provide technical advice to Member States and help accelerate progress on this agenda”.

The UN recently created its first regional climate, peace and security hub in eastern Africa, which collaborates with the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) to identify climate-related security challenges, provide technical advice to IGAD member states, and explore opportunities for joint climate programming and investments in eastern Africa.

After heavy lobbying from several member states, action related to climate change, peace and security—which had been in earlier drafts of Chapter 2 of the *Pact*—was omitted from the final version. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that the *Pact* does call for climate action in other sections: Chapter 1 on “Sustainable development and financing for development” and Chapter 5 on “Transforming global governance” where the focus is on areas such as reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, promoting alternative energy sources and new technologies, and enhancing climate

financing, among other measures. This demonstrates that there is widespread concern among member states about the adverse effects of climate change—the *Pact* calls it “one of the greatest challenges of our time”—even though tensions remain over whether climate change is a security issue meriting the Security Council's attention.

The penultimate version of the *Pact* stated in Chapter 2 that member states would agree to account for the “potential implications of the adverse impacts of climate change, water scarcity and other environmental factors [in efforts] to build and sustain peace”. It also proposed that member states “urgently implement agreed commitments on climate change and sustainable development, including financial commitments, to support developing countries, especially those experiencing instability or conflict and are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, to adapt to climate change and build resilience”.

Although removed from the final version of Chapter 2 of the *Pact*, these references reflect a common thread running through much of the Security Council's recent discussion of this issue. In recent years, Council members have emphasised that climate action is an opportunity to promote inclusive peacebuilding and underscored the need for conflict-affected countries to adapt and build resilience to the adverse security effects of climate change. This is in addition to the longstanding argument traditionally made in the Council that climate change is a threat multiplier.

Security Council Engagement on Climate Change, Peace and Security

Political divisions in the UN Security Council have coloured discussion of this issue since 2007. Most members have traditionally supported a role for the Council in addressing the adverse security effects of climate change. A small number of members—such as China and Russia, as well as former elected members Brazil and India—have viewed climate change as essentially a sustainable development issue that is not compatible with the organ's peace and security mandate.

Notwithstanding these difficult dynamics, the Security Council's work on climate, peace and security has gained significant traction during the past several years. Many Council members continue to proactively integrate climate, peace and security concerns into the Council's work, including in the mandates of several UN peace operations.

For the proponents of Council involvement on this issue, notable achievements in 2024 were the adoption of presidential statements on the UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in May and on the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in November that included references to the adverse effects of climate change. These were the first presidential

statements on UNOWAS and UNOCA since 2021 and 2019, respectively. The main issue that had impeded agreement on these statements for years had been a paragraph on the impact of climate change in these two sub-regions.

The Council's work on climate, peace and security is also undergirded by a strong institutional architecture, including the Informal Expert Group (IEG) of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security, the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM), and the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

The IEG of Members of the Security Council on Climate, Peace and Security—which was formed in 2020 and helps Council members to develop a more systematic approach to climate-related security risks—remained active in 2024. Co-chaired by Mozambique and Switzerland, it met on multiple occasions to consider the implications of climate change, peace and security in various contexts, including West Africa and the Sahel (26 January), the protection of civilians in peace operations, with a focus on South Sudan (16 April), the Horn of Africa (13 May), Central Africa (27 August), cooperation between the AU and the UN (4 October), Yemen (25 October), and West and Central Africa (8 November).

The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) consists of a small team from the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the UN Department of Peace Operations (DPO). This joint initiative harnesses information and analysis on the linkages between climate change and security in support of the UN's prevention peacebuilding and adaptation efforts. In 2024, the CSM expanded its efforts to support UN field missions with dedicated capacity in the form of climate, peace and security (CPS) advisors to bolster efforts to address climate-related security risks in line with mandated tasks. Currently, seven missions (UN Assistance Mission for Iraq [UNAMI], UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan [UNAMA], UN Assistance Mission in Somalia [UNSOM], UNOCA, UN Mission in South Sudan [UNMISS], UNOWAS, and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa) have CPS advisors. With support and advice from the CSM, UN peace operations aim to provide timely and continuous analysis of the connections between climate change and peace and security to UN leadership; lead coordination with other UN actors to mainstream climate-related security considerations into policy and programming; and assist the host government and other relevant stakeholders in addressing climate-related security challenges.

Germany and Nauru are the co-founders and co-chairs of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security (GoF), which was established in 2018. Initially consisting of 27 UN member states, the GoF now boasts 77 members (including 76 member states and the EU) from all five UN regional groups. The goal of the Group is to inform policy on climate change's security effects, to heighten public awareness of these effects, and to strengthen the UN system's efforts to counter them. GoF meetings often include a focus on Security Council developments related to climate, peace and security. In 2024, the GoF has convened at permanent representative and expert level to discuss issues such as the implications of the COP28 Declaration on Relief, Recovery and Peace; the relationship among climate change, food security and conflict; and the climate-related security challenges in Iraq.

Another notable development has been the "climate pledges" of Council members who would like to see more systematic integration of climate,

peace and security matters into the Council's work. On 22 March 2023, four members—Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, and the UAE—launched the "Joint Pledges related to climate, peace and security". As at 15 September 2024, the number of joint pledgers has expanded to 11 Council members—France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Switzerland, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sierra Leone, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

As at 15 October 2024, the climate pledgers had held six press stakeouts this year in connection with meetings on relevant country/regional and thematic files. These stakeouts highlighted the connections among climate change, peace and security on West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) (11 January), Food Insecurity (13 February), Yemen (15 April), Afghanistan (21 June), UN peacekeeping (9 September), and UN-AU Cooperation (2 October).

There was one formal Council meeting on climate, peace and security in 2024, a high-level open debate that Guyana convened on "The impact of climate change and food insecurity on the maintenance of international peace and security" in February.¹⁴³ UN Secretary-General António Guterres provided opening remarks at the meeting. The briefers were Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Simon Stiell; Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol; and Jimena Leiva Roesch, the Director of Global Initiatives and Head of Peace, Climate, and Sustainable Development at the International Peace Institute.

Council members also held an Arria-formula meeting at the initiative of Slovenia, Guyana, the Republic of Korea and Sierra Leone in July 2024 on "Stepping up Preventive Action: From Environmental Challenges to Opportunities for Peace". The briefers were Amy Pope, the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh; and Nohora Alejandra Quiguantar, the founder of Tejiendo Pensamiento-Indigenous Women for the Climate in Colombia.

Proposals from Council Meetings

The briefers and member states presented a variety of proposals for addressing climate change and food insecurity during the February meeting. Several of these focused on the need to develop effective financing mechanisms and trade policies, including:

- Meeting the annual goal of \$40 billion for climate financing by 2025, which was set by the World Bank;
- Encouraging climate financing to reach grassroots women's organisations that lead local adaptation and mitigation efforts;
- Contributing to the loss and damage fund established by the Conference of Parties (COP) in 2023;
- Recapitalising the multilateral development banks and changing their business models to allow them to leverage more private financing for developing countries;
- Lifting trade barriers on agricultural products to international markets from the Global South; and
- Encouraging member states to join collective efforts to support the CSM.

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Several proposals at the February meeting were directly relevant to the work of the Security Council. These included calls for the Council to:

- Strengthen collaboration with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to establish a regular stream of data and information on climate security risks;
- Receive regular information on the risks of climate change to security, including detailed information and targeted recommendations on climate action from Special Representatives of the Secretary-General during their briefings to the Council;
- Establish a provisional investigative body under Article 34 of the UN Charter to investigate more substantively the links among climate change, food security, and conflict that would include the involvement of both permanent and elected Council members;
- Authorise peace operations that help host countries develop risk assessments and risk management strategies for the adverse effects of climate change;
- Collaborate with other parts of the UN system to address security challenges related to climate change; and
- Receive the results of joint meetings between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and ECOSOC on climate matters in the form of PBC advice.

Some of the observations and proposals with respect to the development of risk assessments and risk management strategies were quite focused. These included calls to invest in climate-resilient agricultural practices, such as the use of drought-resistant crops, water-efficient irrigation, and agroforestry; to use data on weather events to determine how they can jeopardise the food security of populations; and the employment of early warning systems that incorporate climate and environmental data and socioeconomic factors related to food insecurity and conflict. While such proposals are too specific for the broad strategic oversight provided by the Security Council, they are strong options for host countries and UN peace operations (and UN Country Teams) to explore on a case-by-case basis.

Among key recommendations from the Arria-formula meeting in July 2024 were the following:

- Enabling women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in decision-making and policy processes that amplify prevention measures and peacebuilding initiatives amidst environmental challenges;
- Using early warning mechanisms supported by new technologies, satellite imagery, and artificial intelligence; and
- Appointing a Special Representative for Climate, Peace and Security to integrate climate considerations more widely into the Council's work.

Recommendations for Council Members

Despite political headwinds, the majority of Security Council members continue to express strong support for the body's work on climate, peace and security. They have worked hard in recent years to more systematically integrate this issue into the Council's work. This will likely continue in the future, although some members will resist such efforts.

A number of the climate actions proposed for the Security Council in the NA4P, in early drafts of Chapter 2 of the *Pact*, and by speakers in Council meetings in 2024 have been suggested over the years. There has been progress on some of these and other proposals, which are already being implemented.

In this regard, proponents of this issue in the Council are likely to

continue to:

- Call on host countries and the UN to develop risk assessments and risk management strategies to address the adverse effects of climate change in relevant mandates of peace operations;
- Consult with host countries on climate actions in peace operation mandates to generate increased political support in Council negotiations; and
- Advocate for high quality, consistent information on climate change, peace and security, including in briefings provided in formal and informal Council meetings and in the IEG, and in media stakeouts by the Joint Pledgers.

Many members have highlighted the usefulness of IEG meetings. In the future, the IEG could consider:

- Following up on climate change-related provisions in Council outcomes to gauge how well they are being applied in country- and region-specific cases and discuss avenues for improved implementation;
- Inviting representatives of relevant UN funds, programmes, and agencies to IEG meetings to answer questions, in addition to the primary briefer(s); and
- Undertaking field visits to conflict affected areas adversely impacted by climate change to help inform its work. (The first such IEG visit—one to the Lake Chad Basin—was conducted in early December 2024.)

There is growing interaction between the Council and other UN entities in addressing climate change. The Council has been briefed by UN entities with expertise on the adverse effects of climate change in recent years, including the UNFCCC, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Law Commission (ILC), and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). Synergies between the work of the Council and other UN entities could be further explored. In this regard, Council members could:

- Encourage enhanced funding for Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) projects that support climate resilience and adaptation, although such financing decisions are made outside of the Council; and
- Encourage member states to provide financial support for the Climate Security Mechanism. (Many current and recent Council members have led by example as donor partners to this mechanism.)

There are several potential avenues for enhanced collaboration between the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, which is increasingly focusing on climate, peace and security issues. These include:

- Making climate, peace and security a standing agenda item for their meetings;
- Conducting joint visits of sub-groups of each Council to assess the peace and security challenges and opportunities related to climate change; and
- Overseeing the development of joint strategies to assess climate-related security risks and support the development of local climate adaptation plans, including sustainable agricultural practices and water-sharing agreements to reduce tensions and prevent conflict.

Security Council members could also:

- Raise awareness of the work of CPS advisors in peace operations to demonstrate that the Council's engagement on this issue is having a positive impact on the ground; and
- Revisit the option of adopting a thematic resolution on climate, peace and security.

An effort to adopt a thematic resolution in late 2021 failed due to a Russian veto. Such a step, while still unlikely given current Council dynamics, would advance the UN's work on climate, peace and security and provide a framework to strengthen the Council's hand in addressing this issue. It could, for example, provide a strong foundation for funding climate-related activities in peace operations from UN assessed contributions, rather than through voluntary contributions.

Observations

In the foreseeable future, Council divisions will persist on climate, peace and security. Most members are expected to continue supporting Council engagement on this issue, while the prevailing views of China and Russia are unlikely to change, and the US position is expected to be less open to Council involvement once the second Trump administration begins. As has been the case in recent years, it is anticipated that several elected members will include climate, peace and security among their priorities in the Council.

With the planet continuing to warm, the linkages between climate change and peace and security may become increasingly clear. In this context, several members are likely to reinforce the case for the Council in addressing the risk factors for conflict exacerbated by climate change and in helping countries build resilience and adapt to its adverse effects.

New and Emerging Domains of Conflict

The evolving security landscape is marked by increasing complexity, driven by challenges in new and potential areas of conflict such as cyberspace and outer space, and compounded by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies. The Secretary-General's July 2023 policy brief, *A New Agenda for Peace*, emphasised the need to prevent the weaponisation of these potential domains of conflict, while addressing the ramifications of new and emerging technologies on international peace and security.

Discussions on cybersecurity, outer space security, and new and emerging technologies have largely occurred outside the Security Council. In recent years, however, the Council has progressively increased its engagement on these pressing issues, recognising their growing significance for

international peace and security. Since 2016, the Council has held over 20 meetings addressing matters related to new and emerging technologies, information and communication technologies (ICTs), and outer space security. Additionally, some Council members have demonstrated a clear interest in producing a substantive outcome on cybersecurity and outer space security, although the Council has not succeeded in adopting such a product.

This section of the report focuses on new and emerging technologies, the security and use of ICTs, and outer space security. It examines the Security Council's engagement on these issues and provides recommendations for the Council and its members to effectively address these challenges.

New and Emerging Technologies

Introduction

Advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies—such as quantum computing, autonomous weapons systems (AWS), and biotechnology—have the potential to reshape societies and transform the nature of conflict and warfare. Their rapid pace of innovation has revealed potential threats to international peace and security, highlighting the pressing need for the establishment of robust and comprehensive governance frameworks.

The Security Council has only recently begun exploring the linkages between AI and international peace and security. Recent developments in AI technologies, which are becoming more sophisticated and widely accessible, have heightened the interest of Council members in better understanding AI's dual potential to support peace and create risks to global security.

Security Council Engagement on New and Emerging Technologies

Council members have shown increased interest in discussing the implications of new and emerging technologies on international peace and security. In recent years, they have convened several formal meetings to address various aspects of these developments, including discussions on technology and peacekeeping (18 August 2021); technology and security (23 May 2022); artificial intelligence (18 July 2023); and anticipating scientific developments (21 October 2024). Council members have also organised informal Arria-formula meetings on similar topics, including emerging technologies (17 May 2021); artificial intelligence and hate speech, disinformation and misinformation (19 December 2023), and the potential of science for peace and security (17 May 2024).

These meetings have sought to deepen the Council's understanding of emerging technologies and raise awareness of their implications for international peace and security. They have also provided a platform for Council members to reflect on the urgent need for global cooperation in addressing

these evolving threats. Recent discussions have focused predominantly on the rapid evolution of AI and the need to formulate a multilateral response to mitigate the associated risks.

Proposals from Council Meetings

On 18 July 2023, the Council convened its first formal meeting dedicated to AI. The high-level briefing, titled “Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Risks for International Peace and Security”, was one of the signature events of the UK’s July 2023 Council presidency. The meeting was chaired by James Cleverly, then-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom. The briefers were: Secretary-General António Guterres; Co-founder of Anthropic Jack Clark; and Yi Zeng, Professor at the Institute of Automation, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Council members presented contrasting perspectives on AI. Some highlighted its transformative potential in tackling global challenges, such as accelerating progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, while others emphasised the risks, including the potential to intensify conflicts through malicious cyber operations and the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Several members stressed the crucial role of human decision-making in autonomous weapons systems and advocated for the establishment of an ethical framework for global AI governance.

More recently, under Switzerland’s presidency in October 2024, the Council held a briefing on “Anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security”. Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland Ignazio Cassis chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Switzerland’s October Council presidency. The briefers were Robin Geiss, Director of the UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); Jocelyne Bloch, Center for Research in Neuroscience, Faculty of Biology and Medicine at the University of Lausanne; Grégoire Courtine, Professor at the Center for Neuroprosthetics and the Brain Mind Institute at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne (EPFL); and Amin Awad, President of the Foundation Council of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF).

After the briefing, which took place on 21 October, the Security Council adopted a Swiss-authored presidential statement recognising the role that scientific developments can play in supporting the Council’s responsibility to maintain international peace and security, as well as in promoting mutual trust and cooperation.¹⁴⁴ The statement expresses the Council’s commitment to more systematically consider scientific advances, particularly with regard to their impact on international peace and security.

During the July 2023 high-level briefing on AI and the October 2024 briefing on anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security, briefers and Council members proposed several recommendations to address the risks posed by new and emerging technologies, including:

- Convening an annual meeting on the impact of new and emerging technologies on international peace and security;
- Establishing a Security Council expert-level working group on AI to enable more in-depth technical discussions on both near-term and long-term challenges;
- Fostering greater engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and academia;
- Leveraging new and emerging technologies to enhance various aspects

of UN-integrated missions and improve the Security Council’s decision-making process; and

- Supporting efforts to bridge the digital and technological divides that risk widening further due to advancements in science and technology.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Action 27. We will seize the opportunities associated with new and emerging technologies and address the potential risk posed by their misuse.

Action 27(d): Continue to assess the existing and potential risks associated with the military applications of artificial intelligence and the possible opportunities throughout their life cycle, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Council and Wider Action

During recent meetings on new and emerging technologies, Council members have raised concerns about the potential risks associated with the military applications of AI, recognising its capacity to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and introduce new threats to international peace and security. At the July 2023 high-level briefing on AI and the October 2024 briefing on anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security, several members emphasised the potential of AI to facilitate the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS), new cyberweapons, advanced biological weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction. Additionally, several members expressed concern about AI’s role in enhancing the cyber-attack capabilities of both state and non-state actors.

Council members also underscored the importance of addressing the human rights implications of AI. Concerns were raised about AI’s potential to reinforce bias due to inadequate or incomplete data, as well as the broader human rights risks associated with mass surveillance and its misuse in national security contexts, particularly for counter-terrorism and law enforcement purposes. Additionally, some members highlighted that the development of AI systems by a limited group of actors and states could exacerbate economic inequality. In this context, they stressed the need for the Council to prioritise initiatives that support developing countries in bridging the digital and technological divides.

Most members recognised that AI technologies and tools are playing an increasingly critical role in the UN’s work, contributing to conflict prevention by improving early warning and early action, facilitating the coordination of humanitarian assistance, supporting peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians, expanding access to mediation processes, and aiding in reconciliation and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, Council members emphasised the potential of leveraging science and technology to strengthen the Council’s decision-making processes. At the October 2024 briefing, one member highlighted the role of technological innovations in providing a unique set of “horizon-scanning” tools that can equip the Council to better employ preventive diplomacy.

Action 33(a) of the *Pact*, outlined in Chapter 3 on “Science, Technology and Innovation and Digital Cooperation”, commits member states to strengthen the UN’s capacities to leverage science, technology and innovation in its work. The Council has recognised the role of technology in

¹⁴⁴ Statement by the President of the Security Council, (21 October 2024) (S/PRST/2024/6).

supporting the UN's work. Resolution 2518 of 30 March 2020 and the presidential statement¹⁴⁵ of 24 May 2021 reaffirmed the Council's support for integrating new technologies to improve situational awareness and operational capacity.

At the July 2023 high-level Council briefing on AI, one member emphasised the importance of conducting a comprehensive study on the implications of AI in conflict situations. Action 27(e) of the *Pact* calls on the Secretary-General to continue to update member states on new and emerging technologies through the report of the Secretary-General on current developments in science and technology and their potential impact on international security and disarmament efforts. However, member states have recently sought more focused and regular reporting by the Secretary-General on AI, particularly its military applications.

On 6 November 2024, the First Committee of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution titled "Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain and Its Implications for International Peace and Security".¹⁴⁶ This resolution, which sought to promote consensus on the responsible use of AI in military contexts, tasked the Secretary-General with gathering input from member and observer states on the military applications of AI, with a specific emphasis on areas beyond lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS). A report consolidating these views, alongside existing and emerging normative proposals, is expected to be submitted to the General Assembly for further deliberation at its next session.

Another key issue highlighted during the July 2023 high-level briefing on AI was the urgent need to establish robust and comprehensive governance frameworks. *A New Agenda for Peace* proposed the creation of a global entity to address the peace and security risks posed by AI. In this regard, it recommended drawing on the experiences of institutions such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), among others. Similarly, the final report of the High-level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence, established by Secretary-General António Guterres in October 2023 to assist the international community in addressing AI governance, noted that such a global entity could have monitoring, reporting, verification, and enforcement powers to oversee AI systems that have the potential to threaten international peace and security or cause grave breaches of human rights or international humanitarian law.

Annexed to the *Pact*, the Global Digital Compact (GDC), which represents the first comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation and AI governance, decided to establish within the UN a multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on AI to promote scientific understanding. It also decided to initiate within the UN a Global Dialogue on AI Governance involving governments and relevant stakeholders which will take place in the margins of existing relevant UN conferences and meetings.

Although member states did not adopt the proposal from *A New Agenda for Peace* to create a new regulatory body modelled after the IAEA, ICAO, or the IPCC, the establishment of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance marks a significant step. Nevertheless, the potential role of the Security Council in enforcing such a framework for the responsible use of AI remains a pertinent consideration, although Council dynamics make this an unlikely option at present.

Security Council members remain divided over the appropriate role the Council should play in addressing threats posed by new and emerging

technologies. Some members argue that, as the primary organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Council must stay abreast of advancements in technology, science, and innovation to effectively anticipate and prevent threats to peace and security. Some of these members advocate for the Council to take on a normative role, promoting the responsible behaviour of all relevant actors in this domain.

Conversely, other members have cautioned against framing the issue too narrowly within a security context, arguing that discussions on emerging technologies should largely remain within the remit of the General Assembly and specialised forums. These members emphasise the importance of avoiding duplication of efforts or undermining ongoing initiatives. Russia, in particular, has acknowledged the positive contributions of scientific research, technological advances, and innovation to conflict prevention and peacebuilding, but has voiced concerns about the Council preempting outcomes from other UN processes. These include the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the security and use of ICTs, the Ad Hoc Committee on Cybercrime, and the Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties related to emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS).

Recommendations for Council Members

To effectively assess and address the risks associated with the military applications of artificial intelligence, Council members could consider pursuing the following recommendations:

- Convene an annual meeting focused on the impact of new and emerging technologies on international peace and security. This meeting would raise awareness of evolving threats, evaluate the Council's role in addressing them, and explore its potential role in enforcing agreed norms, rules, and principles governing the military use of AI. Such a meeting could be timed to coincide with the release of the Secretary-General's forthcoming report on the military application of AI, which is expected to be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session;
- Engage a wide range of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and academia, to brief the Council. This would ensure the inclusion of diverse and comprehensive perspectives on the issue;
- Organise Arria-formula meetings to facilitate informal yet substantive discussions on specific aspects of AI and other emerging technologies, focusing on their implications for international peace and security;
- Engage with General Assembly processes and the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI to align the Council's activities with broader UN initiatives and ensure complementary efforts across UN bodies. In this respect, the Council could invite the chair of the OEWG on LAWS and a representative of the Independent International Scientific Panel to brief at a Council meeting;
- Establish a working group or an informal expert group to facilitate closed-format, expert-level technical discussions that can inform the Council's work and contribute to annual briefings;
- Promote, in line with the recommendations from *A New Agenda for Peace*, the formulation of national strategies on the responsible design, development and use of AI, consistent with international humanitarian law and human rights law. Council members could also share best practices and lessons learned from their national frameworks;

¹⁴⁵ Statement by the President of the Security Council, (24 May 2021) (S/PRST/2021/11).

¹⁴⁶ General Assembly First Committee Draft Resolution, (16 October 2024) (A/C.1/79/L.43).

- Explore ways of leveraging AI and other emerging technologies to enhance the Council's decision-making and working methods by providing its members with accurate data, predictive analytics, and insights that inform solutions to issues on the Council's agenda. This topic could be explored further within the Informal Working Group (IWG) on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions; and
- Encourage the UN Secretariat to use science and technological innovations to develop horizon-scanning tools that could provide the basis for the Council's response to emerging threats.

Action 27(b): Advance with urgency discussions on lethal autonomous weapons systems through the Group of Governmental Experts on Emerging Technologies in the Area of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems with the aim to develop an instrument, without prejudging its nature, and other possible measures to address emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems, recognising that international humanitarian law continues to apply fully to all weapons systems, including the potential development and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Council and Wider Action

At the July 2023 high-level briefing on AI and the October 2024 briefing on anticipating the impact of scientific developments on international peace and security, several members expressed concern regarding the use of AI-enabled systems in the military domain, particularly emphasising the significant legal, ethical, and security challenges posed by lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS). These members underscored the critical importance of retaining human control over autonomous weapons systems (AWS) to ensure accountability and compliance with international norms. In this regard, members advocated, consistent with the recommendations of *A New Agenda for Peace*, for binding restrictions on LAWS that do not comply with international humanitarian law.

Discussions on the development of regulations and norms governing the use of AWS have primarily taken place within the General Assembly and the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on emerging technologies in the area of LAWS. Established formally in 2016 following earlier expert meetings, the GGE has continued its work annually, and its mandate for 2024 and 2025, derived from the High Contracting Parties to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), includes formulating, by consensus, a set of elements of an instrument and other possible measures to address emerging technologies in the area of LAWS.

On 1 November 2023, the First Committee of the General Assembly adopted its first resolution on LAWS.¹⁴⁷ The resolution affirmed that

international law, including the UN Charter, international humanitarian law, and international human rights law, applies to LAWS. It further requested the Secretary-General to solicit input from a wide range of stakeholders on how to address the humanitarian, legal, security, technological, and ethical challenges posed by LAWS. The findings were subsequently submitted to the General Assembly at its 79th session.¹⁴⁸

On 18 October 2024, the First Committee adopted a new resolution,¹⁴⁹ urging member states to expedite negotiations on a legally binding instrument governing the use of LAWS. The resolution also directed the Secretary-General to facilitate two days of open informal consultations in New York in 2025 to examine the issues highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on LAWS and to advance the international community's understanding of these systems.

While discussions on LAWS have primarily occurred within other forums—and Action 27 (b) is focused on the GGE—there is potential for the Security Council to address aspects of the issue that intersect with its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Recommendations for Council Members

Given the limited engagement by the Security Council on the issue of LAWS, it would be useful to socialise the issue among its members. In this regard, recommendations for the Security Council related to LAWS include:

- Holding an Arria-formula meeting to raise awareness of the humanitarian, legal, security, human rights, and ethical implications of LAWS. This meeting could also explore the potential role of the Council in addressing the broader impact of these systems on international peace and security. Such a meeting could be timed to coincide with or shortly follow the open informal consultations planned for 2025; and
- Once principles and regulations on LAWS are agreed upon in other forums, the Council could adopt a product to support their promotion and implementation. The Council has previously adopted products to support the implementation of principles and agreements established in other international forums. For example, Resolution 2310 of 23 September 2016, which marked the 20th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), reaffirmed the importance of the CTBT and called upon all states that had not yet done so to sign and ratify the treaty. Additionally, in the presidential statement¹⁵⁰ of 19 April 2012, the Council reaffirmed its support for multilateral treaties aimed at eliminating or preventing the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. The statement emphasised the importance of full implementation by all states parties to these treaties to promote international stability.

Security and Use of Information and Communication Technologies

Introduction

In recent years, the Security Council has been more active in addressing issues related to the security and use of information and communication

technologies (ICTs). Besides discussions within its subsidiary bodies, Council members have addressed these issues in both formal and informal settings.

¹⁴⁷ General Assembly First Committee Draft Resolution, (12 October 2023) (A/C.1/78/L.56).

¹⁴⁸ Report of the Secretary-General on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (1 July 2024) (A/79/88).

¹⁴⁹ General Assembly First Committee Draft Resolution, (18 October 2024) (A/C.1/79/L.77).

¹⁵⁰ Statement by the President of the Security Council, (19 April 2012) (S/PRST/2012/14).

Security Council Engagement on the Security and Use of Information and Communication Technologies

The Security Council held its first formal meeting on cybersecurity on 29 June 2021, an open debate organised by Estonia as a signature event of its Council presidency. More recently, on 20 June 2024, the Republic of Korea (ROK) organised a high-level open debate on cybersecurity as a signature event of its June 2024 Council presidency. The briefers were: Secretary-General António Guterres; Stéphane Duguin, the CEO of the CyberPeace Institute, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides cybersecurity assistance to NGOs and other critical sectors; and Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo, Professor of Law and Technology at Leeds Beckett University and Vice Chair of the African Union Cyber Security Experts Group. The objective of this meeting was to foster a common understanding of how to enhance the Security Council's role in addressing cyber threats.

A clear sign of the Council's increased engagement on this issue can be seen in the number of Arria-formula meetings held. Since 2016, Council members have organised ten such meetings, addressing various aspects related to the security and use of ICTs, including cyber-attacks targeting critical infrastructure (26 August 2020), the role of digital technology in facilitating access to education in conflict and post-conflict settings (2 October 2020), initiatives to countering hate speech on social media platforms (28 October 2021), and other topics. Most recently, on 4 April 2024, ROK, together with Japan and the US, organised an Arria-formula meeting titled "Evolving Cyber Threat Landscape and its Implications for the Maintenance of International Peace and Security".

Council members have also discussed cyber threats in country-specific settings. On 5 March 2020, for example, Council members discussed the issue of hybrid warfare in Georgia under "any other business", following a large-scale cyber-attack on Georgia's government and media websites in October 2019.

Although the Council has increased its engagement on cybersecurity, discussions on this matter have primarily taken place in two General Assembly-mandated processes: the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on advancing responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in the context of international security and the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on the security of and in the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs). Since 2004, there have been six GGEs and two OEWGs. The sixth and last GGE concluded its work in 2021, while the ongoing OEWG will meet through 2025. The GGEs have established a set of 11 norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, including a commitment by states to refrain from conducting or knowingly supporting ICT activities contrary to their obligations under international law, such as those that intentionally damage critical infrastructure.

At previous Council meetings on cybersecurity, including the open debate in June 2024, Council members have expressed agreement on the importance of implementing the existing norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and undertaking confidence- and capacity-building measures to reduce mistrust among member states and promote stability in cyberspace. However, members have conveyed diverging views on the applicability of international law in cyberspace and the need for developing additional legally binding obligations.

Consensus reports from previous GGE meetings have acknowledged the applicability of the UN Charter in its entirety, including the principles of state sovereignty, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and non-intervention. Nonetheless, the applicability of the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter has been more contentious. Within previous

GGEs, member states, including China and Russia, have expressed concerns that recognition of the right to self-defence may lead to the "securitisation" of cyberspace, legitimising military intervention and unilateral sanctions in the context of ICTs.

Russia has also voiced a preference for a legally binding instrument to regulate states' relations concerning the security and use of ICTs. In March 2023, Russia—along with Belarus, the DPRK, Nicaragua, Syria, and Venezuela—submitted an updated concept note¹⁵¹ to the OEWG for a UN Convention on Ensuring International Information Security.

At the open debate on cybersecurity in June 2024, Russia maintained that the Security Council is not the appropriate forum for discussing cybersecurity, arguing that the Council should defer to more inclusive and specialised forums where there is relevant expertise, such as the OEWG on the security of and in the use of ICTs. It warned against duplicating efforts and has opposed convening regular briefings on cybersecurity at the Council. However, most Council members stressed that while the Council's activities should complement those of other bodies, the issue of cybersecurity falls squarely within the Council's purview.

Proposals from Council Meetings

At the Security Council's open debate on cybersecurity on 20 June 2024, briefers and Council members advanced several recommendations to address cyber threats to international peace and security, including:

- Convening regular or annual briefings by the UN Secretariat to update the Council on the evolving cyber threat landscape;
- Requesting the Secretary-General to publish regular cybersecurity reports addressing the intersection of cyber threats with the Council's mandate and their broader implications for international peace and security;
- Mainstreaming cybersecurity into the Security Council's agenda, similar to cross-cutting issues such as women, peace and security; youth, peace and security; and climate change;
- Incorporating cybersecurity into Chapter VIII discussions, with a focus on the role of regional and subregional organisations in developing policies and collaborating with states to enhance cyber stability;
- Increasing engagement with relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and academia;
- Calling for the investigation of specific cyber-attack incidents under Article 34, which allows the Council to examine situations that may lead to international friction or disputes;
- Leveraging the Council's dispute resolution tools under Chapter VI, which focuses on the pacific settlement of disputes, to address cyber-related incidents that threaten global peace and security;
- Promoting the implementation of existing norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and confidence- and capacity-building measures;
- Supporting consideration of a legally binding instrument to regulate state relations concerning the security and use of ICTs; and
- Establishing a global accountability mechanism for cyberspace.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Action 27(c): Enhance international cooperation and capacity-building efforts in order to bridge the digital divides and ensure that all States can safely and securely seize the benefits of digital technologies.

¹⁵¹ Updated Concept of the Convention of the United Nations on Ensuring International Information Security, (Proposal of the Russian Federation) <https://docs-library.unoda.org/Open-Ended_Working_Group_on_Information_and_Communication_Technologies_-_2021/ENG_Concept_of_convention_on_ensuring_international_information_security.pdf>

Council Action

At the 20 June 2024 open debate, Council members emphasised that capacity-building is essential for ensuring cybersecurity for all countries. In regions such as Africa, priority areas for capacity-building to address cyber-related threats include governance, policymaking, technical tools and infrastructure, and research. Members also urged states to support developing nations in strengthening their defences against cyber threats by working to bridge the digital divide.

One briefer highlighted the importance of establishing functional regional cybersecurity centres to enhance cross-border cooperation and information-sharing. The briefer also advocated for the creation of regional Cybersecurity Incident Response Teams and the designation of 24/7 points of contact at the regional level. Additionally, a Council member proposed the establishment of a global fund dedicated to training and capacity-building, as well as the development of essential software and hardware.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Encourage the prioritisation of technology transfer and capacity-building for developing countries;
- Encourage capacity-building initiatives at the regional level;
- Encourage multi-stakeholder collaboration to provide cyber capacity-building to bridge digital divides. This could include training, knowledge, and best practices for creating national cybersecurity strategies in developing countries; and
- Promote the creation of a global fund dedicated to building the capacity of developing countries.

Key Cybersecurity Issues Excluded from the *Pact for the Future*

Earlier drafts of the *Pact* included an action under Chapter 2, committing member states to address the risks associated with the misuse of digital technologies, including ICTs and AI. However, this action was removed from the final draft that was adopted by member states on 22 September. In the penultimate draft, dated 13 September, the action outlined the following commitments:

- (a) Reaffirm that international law, and in particular the UN Charter, is applicable and essential to maintaining peace, security and stability and promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment and continue discussions on how international law applies in the use of ICTs;
- (b) Reaffirm that voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behaviour in the use of ICTs can reduce risks to international peace, security and stability and play an important role in increasing predictability and reducing risks of misperceptions, thus contributing to the prevention of conflict;
- (c) Reaffirm, given the unique attributes of ICTs, additional norms could continue to be developed over time and that the further development of norms, and the implementation of existing norms are not mutually exclusive but could take place in parallel;
- (d) Refrain from conducting or knowingly supporting information and communications technology activity contrary to our obligations under international law that intentionally damages critical infrastructure or otherwise impairs the use and operation of critical infrastructure that provides services to the public;
- (e) Enhance international cooperation and assistance to address

potential threats arising from misuse of digital technologies through capacity building with a view to closing the digital divide between developed and developing countries; and

- (f) Identify and address the existing and potential risks associated with the military applications of artificial intelligence and the possible opportunities throughout their lifecycle, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Commitments (e) and (f) were incorporated into the final version of Chapter 2 of the *Pact* as Action 27(c) and (a), respectively. Although the other commitments were excluded, they highlight a recurring theme evident in much of the Security Council's recent discussions on the security and use of ICTs.

Council members interested in advancing initiatives on these emerging issues may consider the following recommendations:

- Convene an annual meeting to address the evolving cyber threat landscape. An open debate would allow the broader UN membership to express their views on this issue;
- Request the Secretary-General to produce a regular cybersecurity report, addressing the intersection of cyber threats with the Council's mandate and their broader implications for international peace and security. Council members could also invite the Secretary-General to incorporate relevant cyber considerations into the Secretary-General's reports submitted to the Council;
- Request relevant sanctions committees to provide information on the use of ICTs to allow the Council to more closely monitor the role of cybercrime in circumventing sanctions;
- Make an effort to refer to the security and use of ICTs in their statements on country-specific issues and thematic discussions, where relevant;
- Convene a meeting on the role of regional organisations in developing policies and collaborating with states to enhance cyber stability;
- Consider the establishment of an informal working group on the security and use of ICTs to facilitate expert-level technical discussions that can inform the Council's work;
- Increase engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and academia;
- Promote, in line with the recommendations from *A New Agenda for Peace*, the establishment of an independent multilateral accountability mechanism for malicious use of cyberspace by states;
- Consider a Council product prohibiting cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure;
- Encourage the investigation of specific cyber-attack incidents under Article 34 of the UN Charter, including through the establishment of commissions of inquiry;
- Promote the use of the Council's dispute resolution tools in Chapter VI of the Charter for cyber-related incidents that threaten global peace and security;
- Promote the implementation of existing norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and confidence- and capacity-building measures; and
- Continue discussions on the need for a legally binding instrument to regulate state relations concerning the security and use of ICTs and a global accountability mechanism for cyberspace.

Outer Space Security

Introduction

A New Agenda for Peace highlights the significant threat to the security of outer space, emphasising its growing potential as a new domain for military confrontation. This risk is heightened by the increasing number of actors in the space sector, the proliferation of space objects, the dual-use nature of many space-based services covering both civilian and military purposes, and the increasing reliance of armed forces on space systems. In recognition of these risks, the Security Council began addressing this emerging domain of conflict in 2024. While some Council members have shown an appetite for a resolution on outer space security, consensus has yet to be achieved.

Security Council Engagement on Outer Space Security

Discussions on preventing an arms race in outer space (PAROS) have primarily taken place within the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which was established in 1979 as the sole forum for multilateral disarmament negotiations. This year, however, the Security Council voted on two separate draft resolutions and amendments related to the militarisation of outer space.

On 24 April 2024, the Council voted on a draft resolution on weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in outer space, which was co-authored by Japan and the US and co-sponsored by 65 member states. The draft resolution affirmed the obligations of states parties under the 1967 Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty), not to place in orbit around the Earth any objects carrying nuclear weapons or any other kinds of WMDs, install such weapons on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space in any other manner. It also called on states not to develop nuclear weapons or any other kind of WMDs specifically designed to be placed in orbit around the Earth.

The Japan-US draft text called on states to refrain from actions contrary to the prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS) and emphasised the need for further measures—including political commitments and legally binding instruments, with appropriate and effective provisions for verification—to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects. It urged the exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter.

Council members also voted on an amendment to the draft resolution, which was proposed by China and Russia. This amendment called on all states to take urgent measures to prevent the placement of weapons of any kind in outer space, as well as the threat or use of force in outer space, from space against Earth, and from Earth against objects in outer space. Additionally, it urged member states to seek through negotiations the early elaboration of appropriate, reliably verifiable, legally binding multilateral agreements. (Since 2008, China and Russia have been advocating for negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament on a draft treaty known as the Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and of the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects.)

The draft amendment failed to be adopted because it did not garner the requisite support. It received seven votes in favour (Algeria, China, Ecuador, Guyana, Mozambique, Russia, and Sierra Leone), seven votes against (France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, the UK, and the US), and one abstention (Switzerland). The draft resolution failed to be adopted owing to a veto cast by Russia. All other members—except China, which abstained—voted in favour of the text.

On 20 May 2024, the Council voted on a draft resolution on PAROS and outer space security, which was prepared by Russia and co-sponsored

by five member states, including China. The draft resolution was largely comprised of the draft Security Council resolution co-authored by Japan and the US, with the amendment proposed by China and Russia. The draft text also featured a new operative paragraph calling on member states to promptly conclude negotiations on an international legally binding agreement or agreements on PAROS in all its aspects, including the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space. The draft resolution failed to be adopted because it did not garner the requisite support. It received seven votes in favour (Algeria, China, Ecuador, Guyana, Mozambique, Russia, and Sierra Leone), seven votes against (France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, the UK, and the US), and one abstention (Switzerland).

Proposals from Council Meetings

Council members, during their explanation of votes on 24 April and 20 May 2024, made the following recommendations:

- Promote the elaboration of norms, rules and principles of responsible space behaviours in outer space; and
- Support efforts to adopt further measures, including political commitments and legally binding instruments, to prevent outer space from becoming another domain of confrontation.

Implementing the *Pact for the Future*: Council Activity and Recommendations

Action 27(a): Advance further measures and appropriate international negotiations to prevent an arms race in outer space in all its aspects, which engage all relevant stakeholders, consistent with the provisions of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies.

Council and Wider Action

While some Council members are open to advancing negotiations on a legally binding agreement aimed at preserving the peaceful use of outer space and PAROS, other members have emphasised the importance of prioritising the development of norms, rules, and principles of responsible state behaviour in outer space.

Discussions on outer space security have taken place primarily outside the Security Council, under frameworks such as the Conference on Disarmament (CD), the UN Disarmament Commission, the First Committee of the General Assembly, the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), the Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-ended Working Group on Outer Space Security, among others.

In recent years, diverging opinions on the need for legally binding instruments to prevent an arms race in outer space have continued to be a point of contention in the General Assembly. In 2023, the General Assembly adopted separate resolutions establishing two open-ended working groups related to PAROS. Resolution A/RES/78/20, sponsored by the UK, created a new OEWG to continue previous deliberations on reducing space threats through norms, rules and principles of responsible behaviours, while resolution A/RES/78/238, tabled by Russia, decided to establish an OEWG to resume the work of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) upon its termination. The GGE was established in 2017 to “consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of an international legally binding instrument on [PAROS], including, inter alia, on the prevention of the placement of weapons in outer space”. Several delegations in the First Committee expressed concern that these parallel processes might lead to increased polarisation

and fragmentation of efforts to maintain space security.

Furthermore, the CD has remained in a state of deadlock. Since 1996, apart from 1998 and 2009, the CD has been unable to agree on a programme of work, effectively halting substantive deliberations. Addressing the conference on 26 February 2024, Secretary-General António Guterres called for the body to be reformed, stressing that “the paralysis and deadlock that have come to define it is something that is not acceptable”. In *A New Agenda for Peace*, Guterres recommended a reform of the disarmament machinery, including the CD. He also urged member states to establish universally accepted international norms, rules, and principles to address threats to space systems, including by initiating negotiations on a treaty aimed at ensuring peace, security, and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

While discussions on outer space security have largely taken place within other forums, there is potential for the Security Council to address aspects of the issue that intersect with its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Recommendations for Council Members

- Convene a meeting focused on the risks posed by the potential militarisation of outer space and its implications for international peace and security;

- Promote the establishment of norms, rules, and principles of responsible state behaviour;
- Encourage consideration of a legally binding instrument on PAROS; and
- Support initiatives to enhance the efficiency of the CD.

Observations

The Security Council has only recently begun to address new and emerging areas of conflict. While discussions on these issues are advancing and will likely continue in specialised forums of the General Assembly and other UN bodies, the Security Council is uniquely positioned to address them within the context of its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Divisions among member states regarding the most effective approaches to these challenges and the Council’s role in mitigating their risks are expected to persist. Nevertheless, the Council must remain alert to the implications of new and emerging technologies for global security. Moreover, it should strive to leverage the potential of these technologies to enhance its own tools and capacities for maintaining peace.

Conclusion

More and more, UN member states are questioning the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Council in a world beset by multiple crises. The fractured geopolitical environment is reflected in a divided Council, which struggles to address the rising number of conflicts and their adverse humanitarian consequences.

There are high expectations of the UN Security Council in these turbulent times, given its grave responsibilities under the UN Charter. If the Council is to rise to the occasion, its 15 members would do well to heed the messages of the Secretary-General’s *A New Agenda for Peace*, by building trust among themselves, sharing burdens more equitably, and embracing universal norms in a non-selective manner. In many ways, in recent years, the elected members of the Security Council have demonstrated the value of overcoming differences and collaborating to make the Council work better; they have shown that they are well-positioned to play a role in building bridges between the permanent members and to help to revitalise the Council at a time of great power competition.

The adoption of the *Pact for the Future* was a significant achievement in the current difficult geopolitical environment. It provides a framework to tackle the most pressing issues of the day. It is now up to UN member states to give life to this vision of the future by implementing the action points proposed in the *Pact*.

This policy paper is an attempt to contribute to that effort by building upon, and, in some cases, refining key action points proposed in the *Pact* on international peace and security matters. It is our hope that the analysis provided in this report will enhance understanding of the Council’s work and that the concrete recommendations will provide Council members with ideas to create a more peaceful and secure world.

In late 2017, during an informal workshop, a Council member offered sage advice to the incoming members: “no one at the workshop ha[s] said anything about aiming lower, doing less or saying less. All of the advice ha[s] been quite the opposite: aim higher, do more and be bold and visible”.¹⁵² We hope that the recommendations in this policy paper will allow future elected members to do exactly that.

¹⁵² Letter dated 30 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/404). This was the report of the fifteenth annual workshop for the newly elected members of the Security Council, 27.

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