

# Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 1 In Hindsight: The Security Council's Quest for Accountability
- 3 Status Update since our December Forecast
- 5 Yemen
- 7 Climate Change and Security
- 8 Somalia
- 10 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 11 Syria
- 13 West Africa and the Sahel
- 15 Mali
- 16 Western Sahara
- 17 Sudan (Darfur)
- 18 Cyprus
- 20 Colombia
- 21 UNRCCA (Central Asia)
- 22 Libya
- 23 Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

## Overview

The Dominican Republic takes on the presidency of the Security Council in January. As its signature event it has chosen to hold an open debate on the impact of [climate-related disasters on international peace and security](#), which will be chaired by President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic.

The Council will be monitoring the situation in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) closely following the elections in December, with a briefing expected early in the month on the Secretary-General's latest report on MONUSCO and the most recent political developments.

Regarding other African issues, there will be updates on the activities of the UN missions in [Libya](#) (UNSMIL), [Mali](#) (MINUSMA), [Somalia](#) (UNSOM) and [Western Sahara](#) (MINURSO). The chair of the [1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee](#) will brief the Council. An adoption is scheduled at the end of the month to renew the [Central African Republic](#) sanctions regime and the mandate of its Panel of Experts.

On [Syria](#), the Council is expected to receive its monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation and chemical weapons. There may not be a briefing on political developments this month

in order to give the new Special Envoy, Geir O. Pedersen, who takes office in early January, time to meet with key interlocutors before coming to the Council.

Other Middle East issues include the quarterly open debate on [Israel/Palestine](#).

The Council will also meet on situations in South America and Europe in January. It will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on [Colombia](#) on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. On [Cyprus](#), it will be briefed in consultations on developments and the latest report on UNFICYP and is expected to renew the mandate of UNFICYP for six months.

The Council is expecting to receive updates on the activities of two UN regional offices. There will be a briefing followed by consultations on the [UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel](#) and a briefing in consultations on the [UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia](#).

Over the month, Council members will most likely follow closely developments in [Myanmar](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Yemen](#), and meetings may be scheduled.

## In Hindsight: The Security Council's Quest for Accountability

Over time, the Security Council has come to view upholding individual criminal accountability as integral to its responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. In some situations, the Council has approached this accountability as a practical tool that can have impact on the ground, aware, as well, that persistent impunity for gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law may hamper its own ability to maintain or restore international peace and security.

The Council has proven innovative and decisive at several critical moments—establishing two ad hoc criminal tribunals in response to atrocities committed in the Balkans and Rwanda, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in 1994. In resolution 1315 (2000), the Council requested that the Secretary-General negotiate an agreement with Sierra Leone on the establishment of a Special Court to try those bearing the greatest

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## In Hindsight: The Security Council's Quest for Accountability

responsibility for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in the country. A nimble Council sidestepped complex domestic political difficulties when it adopted resolution 1757 (2007) to bring into force the agreement between the UN and Lebanon on the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. It also took advantage of its authority under the ICC Statute to refer the situations in Darfur and Libya to the Court in resolutions 1593 (2005) and 1970 (2011), respectively.

Even as it has grown increasingly difficult for Council members to agree to impose accountability measures in recent years, there have been advances, including headway on the chemical weapons track in Syria when it established the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) in resolution 2235 in 2015, a rare moment of agreement on accountability between Russia and the US. Though the Council has been partially successful in removing Syrian stockpiles of chemical weapons, its actions ultimately fell well short of stopping chemical warfare in Syria and holding perpetrators of these attacks accountable. Russia eventually acted to terminate the JIM, sparing Syria and its officials, for now, from being held accountable for such crimes. Most recently, the broad consensus around the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant permitted the establishment of the UN Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh in 2017 in resolution 2379.

Although the Council's record includes these noteworthy steps, it has at other times ignored accountability issues, whether as a strategic decision in addressing a conflict, or because it was divided or lacking in political resolve. The Council has also been inconsistent in following up on compliance with its accountability decisions. It did not adopt measures to secure member state cooperation with the ICTY, for example, in the face of persistent refusal by the Former Republic of Yugoslavia to cooperate with the Court, described by the ICTY president as "an affront to the Security Council". It shifted the financial burden of its ICC referrals from the UN to the ICC, despite the Rome Statute specifying that the UN should finance any referrals from the Council.

In several recent situations of devastating conflict or acute violation of human rights, the Council has been unable to move beyond general rhetoric on the importance of accountability, mainly due to Council

divisions over the ICC. The Council has not acted on recommendations by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar that the Council refer the situation in the country to the ICC (in July and August 2018, respectively). Despite support from several Council members, discussions on referring the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in April 2014 did not lead to action. Successive HRC resolutions, the HRC's Commission of Inquiry, and several High Commissioners for Human Rights have repeatedly and consistently called on the Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, starting with High Commissioner Navi Pillay in August 2011. The Russian and Chinese veto of a Syrian ICC referral is perhaps the strongest example of the lack of shared Council resolve on accountability.

An area where Council members have in some cases advanced prevention of impunity is targeted sanctions. Though not a punitive measure, targeted sanctions, such as a travel ban or assets freeze, create a cost to perpetrators, possibly deterring them and incentivising a change in behaviour. One advantage for Council members in sanctions, as opposed to lengthy judicial mechanisms, is these measures' potential for immediate impact. During the violent crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010-2011, the Council imposed targeted sanctions on President Laurent Gbagbo in resolution 1975 of March 2011, while the ICC issued a warrant for his arrest eight months later, in November 2011. Sanctions also allow Council members to take a carrot-and-stick approach, as they can relax or tighten the measures as appropriate. The Council began adding serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law to the designation criteria of sanctions regimes over the last 15 years or so, starting with the Côte d'Ivoire sanctions regime in resolution 1572 (2004). In some instances, listing criteria explicitly referred to acts involving sexual and gender-based violence, including, most recently, in resolution 2444 of November 2018 renewing the Somalia sanctions regime.

Consequently, the Council—both in resolutions and through its sanctions committees—has listed individuals for perpetrating crimes, for example in resolution 2428 of July 2018 on South Sudan, when in an Annex to

the resolution it listed two individuals for human rights violations, one of them specifically for sexual and gender-based violence.

Overall, the Council's use of sanctions to tackle impunity for perpetrators in situations on its agenda has been inconsistent, and the use of individual sanctions remains relatively rare: in Mali, for example, despite the fact that resolution 2374 (2017) contains the commission of human rights and international humanitarian law violations as a listing criterion, the list remains unpopulated.

Where the Council has been unable to bring justice to victims or seriously affect the course of conflicts, other actors have responded more assertively. The HRC and the OHCHR continued to be highly active in collecting evidence and seeking accountability, and establishing mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry on Syria and Myanmar. The Council has at times avoided receiving briefings from these commissions in formal meetings. On 19 March 2018, in a procedural motion, only eight Council members—one short of the required nine—voted in favour of receiving a briefing on Syria from the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who eventually briefed interested Council members in an Arria-formula meeting.

The General Assembly and other international actors have also stepped up. In December 2016, the General Assembly established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of crimes committed in Syria for future prosecutions. When the Council was unable to adopt a resolution on the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in Ukraine in July 2014, an international investigative mechanism, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT), put together by interested states, worked to identify the perpetrators of the attack. After the JIT concluded that the Russian military was responsible for downing MH17, several Council members called on Russia to accept its responsibility for the events in a Council meeting in May 2018.

While the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, OHCHR and consortia of concerned states have a significant role to play in fighting impunity, they cannot substitute for the Security Council, which has the power to create binding obligations on the relevant states and on the wider UN membership to cooperate with international criminal mechanisms, and the authority to enforce its decisions.

# In Hindsight: The Security Council's Quest for Accountability

Where the Council has upheld accountability, it has advanced the rights and expectations of victims of human rights violations and their families to see justice done, provide a remedy for past wrongs, and contribute to restoring their dignity. Beyond justice, these elements

are also important for long-term stability and national, individual and historical reconciliation after brutal and divisive conflict. For the Council, continuing to come up with meaningful approaches to accountability could enhance its legitimacy in exercising its responsibilities

under the UN Charter for maintaining international peace and security.

For more analysis and options regarding accountability, please refer to Security Council Report's research report to be published in early 2019.

## Status Update since our December Forecast

### Afghanistan

On 3 December, the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee held informal consultations and was briefed by a representative from UNODC on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. On 10 December, Council members issued a press statement welcoming the outcome of the Geneva Afghanistan Conference that took place on 27-28 November 2018 (SC/13612). On 17 December, the Council held its quarterly debate on UNAMA. Briefers were: Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNAMA Tadamichi Yamamoto; UNODC Executive Director Yuri Fedotov; Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan), chair of the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee; and Ghizaal Haress, member of Afghanistan's Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution (S/PV.8426). On 26 December 2018, Council members issued a press statement condemning, in the strongest terms, the 24 December terrorist attack in Kabul that resulted in at least 43 people killed and 27 injured.

### Iraq

On 4 December, the Council received its first briefing by Karim Asad Ahmad Khan (S/PV.8412), the Special Adviser and head of the UN Investigative Team for Accountability of Da'esh (UNITAD) on the first report on the team's activities (S/2018/1031).

### Children and Armed Conflict

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict met on 4 December to discuss its conclusions on the report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan (S/2018/865). On 7 and 13 December it met to discuss its conclusions on the report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar (S/2018/956), which had been introduced at the end of November. On 18 December, the Working Group met to

adopt its conclusions on Myanmar.

### Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

On 5 December, the Council held a debate on "Post-conflict reconstruction and peace, security and stability", chaired by President Alassane Ouattara of Côte d'Ivoire (S/PV.8413). Secretary-General António Guterres and Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission briefed. On 18 December, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/20) on the Peacebuilding Commission's advisory role to the Council, initiated by Sweden (S/PV.8430).

### Regional Organisations

On 6 December, the Council held a ministerial-level open debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organisations, focusing on the role of states, regional arrangements and the UN in the prevention and resolution of conflicts (S/PV.8414). Secretary-General António Guterres briefed, together with the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. The concept note (S/2018/1064) circulated ahead of the meeting by Côte d'Ivoire, as Council president for December, emphasised the need to consider seeking closer cooperation among the UN, states and sub-regional and regional organisations.

### South Sudan

On 7 December, the Council issued a press statement condemning "the heinous incidents of sexual and gender-based violence against women near Bentiu in northern South Sudan" and calling for accountability (SC/13611). The statement also reiterated the Council's willingness to impose targeted sanctions against individuals or entities responsible and called for the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. On 18 December, the Council received

a briefing (S/PV.8431) from Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on South Sudan (S/2018/1103). Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten also briefed (via video teleconference), as well as Ambassador Joanna Wronecka (Poland), the chair of the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee. On 21 December 2018, Council members issued a press statement that strongly condemned the assault, detention and abuse of the Cease-fire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mechanism team by government officials on 18 December 2018 in Luri, South Sudan and called on the government to investigate the incident immediately and hold those responsible accountable (SC/13647).

### Central African Republic

On 7 December, the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee met to discuss the final report of its Panel of Experts. On 13 December, the Council adopted resolution 2448, extending the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all the means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2019 (S/PV.8422). China and Russia abstained on the vote.

### Peacekeeping

On 7 December, the Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations held a meeting to discuss lessons learned from the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

### Protection of Civilians

On 10 December, an Arria-formula meeting was held on "Raising the effectiveness of atrocity crimes prevention: role of the United Nations Security Council and its Members". The meeting was organised by Poland,

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## Status Update since our December Forecast

in partnership with Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, Germany, Kuwait and Peru, and in cooperation with the UN Office for Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect and the UN Office of Legal Affairs. Briefers included: Miguel de Serpa Soares, Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel; and Samantha Capicotto, Director of Policy and Planning of the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation and Program Director of the Global Edition of the Raphael Lemkin Seminar for Genocide Prevention. On 21 December, Sweden, in partnership with Belgium, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Germany and Peru, organised an Arria-formula meeting on "Protecting medical care in armed conflict—from policy to practice." The briefers were Alice Debarre, Policy Analyst, Humanitarian Affairs, International Peace Institute; Farhad Jawid, Afghanistan Country Director with Marie Stopes International; and Dr. Evan Atar Adaha, Medical Director, Maban hospital, South Sudan.

### Tribunals

On 10 December, the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals met with the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals' (IRMCT) president, Judge Theodor Meron, and prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, ahead of the semi-annual debate on the IRMCT held on 11 December (S/PV.8416). Meron and Brammertz briefed on their respective assessment reports (S/2018/1033) and the IRMCT's annual report (S/2018/569).

### UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 11 December, Council members met with UNDOF troop-contributing countries and were briefed by Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alexandre Zouev who also briefed Council members in consultations on 14 December. On 21 December, the Council adopted resolution 2450, renewing UNDOF's mandate until 30 June 2019.

### Iran

On 12 December, the Council received its semiannual briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231 (S/PV.8418). Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo presented the latest Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (S/2018/1089). The Council's facilitator

for the implementation of resolution 2231, Ambassador Karel van Oosterom (the Netherlands), reported on the work of the Council related to Iran and the Head of the EU delegation, João Pedro Vale de Almeida, briefed on the work of the JCPOA's Joint Commission. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who participated at the meeting, stressed that Iran violated resolution 2231 when it tested medium-range ballistic missile in early December. Most Council members reiterated their support for the JCPOA, while the Western members of the Council expressed concern over Iran's missile ballistic activities. In what was its first address to the Council in semiannual briefings, Iran condemned the US for withdrawing from the JCPOA and reiterated that Iran's missile ballistic activities are exclusively related to defensive and non-nuclear purposes.

### Haiti

On 12 December, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Helen La Lime briefed the Council (S/PV.8419) on recent developments and the latest MINUJUTH report (S/2018/1059). While noting slow progress towards achieving benchmarks and the recent political crisis, she pointed out to the positive impact the mission has had on reinforcing rule of law institutions and promotion of human rights. She further noted that the benchmarks for the transition will not be achieved by October 2019 as planned and that there are still options for reconfiguring the UN presence in the country. Council members expressed concern over the recent political instability and violent protests and called on the government to step up its efforts in achieving benchmarks.

### Peacekeeping/Rule of Law

On 13 December, the Council adopted resolution 2447 on the rule of law, justice and corrections in UN peacekeeping operations (S/PV.8420).

### UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 13 December, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNOCA François Louncény Fall, briefed the Council (S/PV.8421) on the latest UNOCA report (S/2018/165). The meeting was followed by consultations.

### Counter-Terrorism

On 13 December, the 1373 Counter-Terrorism Committee met to review the 2015 Madrid Guiding Principles on stemming the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. On 20 December the committee met with representatives from the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate assisting the committee and the International Civil Aviation Organization about terrorist threats to civil aviation. On 21 December, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2018/21), stating that its review of the 1267/1989/2253 sanctions regime, as required by resolution 2368, concluded that there are no adjustments necessary to the regime at this time. Also on 21 December, the 1267/1989/2253 Sanctions Committee met with representatives from the Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre for Combating Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and a team of experts from Saudi Arabia.

### Chairs of Subsidiary Bodies

On 17 December, the outgoing chairs of Council subsidiary bodies briefed the Council about their experience, describing the different challenges encountered in the work of each body, sharing lessons learned and providing advice to their successors (S/PV.8428). The briefers were: Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie Amde (Ethiopia), as chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa; Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan) as chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee, the 1988 Taliban Sanctions Committee and the 1267,1989 and 2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee; Ambassador Karel J. G. van Oosterom (Netherlands) as chair of the Committee on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2231 Concerning Iran and the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea Sanctions Committee; and Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden) as chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee, and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Veronica Cordova Soria, Deputy Permanent Representative of Bolivia, spoke on behalf of the chair of the 1540 Non-Proliferation Committee, Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorenty Soliz.

### Kosovo

On 17 December, the Council held an

## Status Update since our December Forecast

emergency meeting on the situation in Kosovo prompted by a request from Serbia citing the decision of Kosovo authorities to transform the Kosovo Security Forces into a more traditional army (S/PV.8427). In his briefing, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix expressed concern over the rising tensions and called on Serbia and Kosovo to reengage in dialogue. He echoed the Secretary-General's remarks that resolution 1244 provides the legal framework for the international presence. President Aleksandar Vučić of Serbia and Hashim Thaçi of Kosovo participated in the meeting. While Vučić accused Kosovo authorities of destabilising the region and violating resolution 1244, Thaçi stressed that the decision of Kosovo's parliament to expand the competencies of the Kosovo Security Forces is a sovereign right of Kosovo.

### Lebanon

On 19 December, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed the Council on the situation in Lebanon, and specifically on the recently discovered tunnels south of the Blue Line. Lacroix noted that UNIFIL confirmed the

existence of four tunnels, two of which are crossing the Blue Line in violation of resolution 1701 (S/PV.8432). The Israeli ambassador told the Council that the tunnels were dug up by Hezbollah as a part of its plan to attack Israel. He further blamed the Lebanese army for cooperating with Hezbollah. The Lebanese representative accused Israel of continuously violating resolution 1701 but said that Lebanon is willing to engage to resolve the situation peacefully. While expressing concern about the recent developments, Council members called on restraint from both sides.

### Peace and Security in Africa

On 19 December, the Council held a briefing on "Drug trafficking in West Africa as a threat to stability" by Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Yury Fedotov (S/PV.8433). On 20 December, the Council held a meeting on "UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), an integrated response to peacebuilding and sustaining peace in the Sahel" (S/PV.8435). Briefings were given by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Sahel, Ibrahim Thiaw, as well as Ambassador Ion Jinga (Romania), Chair

of the Peacebuilding Commission; Hafez Ghanem, Vice President of the World Bank for Africa; and Remy Rioux, Chief Executive Officer of the French Development Agency.

### Guinea-Bissau

On 21 December, the Council held a briefing and consultations on UNIOGBIS (S/PV.8438). Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Taye-Brooke Zerihoun and the Peacebuilding Commission's chair of its Guinea-Bissau configuration, Ambassador Mauro Vieira (Brazil), spoke during the briefing. Discussion focused on the delayed legislative elections, which the President of Guinea-Bissau José Mário Vaz announced the day before the Council briefing, and ahead of an upcoming ECOWAS summit, would be held on 10 March. Members also considered the Secretary-General's special report (S/2018/1086) on a strategic assessment on UNIOGBIS, which proposes an exit plan for the mission over the next two years. On 27 December, Council members issued a press statement, expressing deep concern regarding the status of preparations for legislative elections, which they stressed should take place prior to the presidential elections foreseen in 2019.

## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council will be following closely developments in Yemen and may be briefed by the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Martin Griffiths. Resolution 2451, which endorsed the 13 December 2018 Stockholm Agreement, requested the Secretary-General to report on the resolution's implementation on a weekly basis, until further notice.

### Key Recent Developments

Recent months have seen increased international attention to the war in Yemen and rare positive news about resuming a political process by the warring Houthi rebel group and the Yemeni government, supported by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition.

The killing of US-based Saudi journalist

Jamal Khashoggi on 2 October 2018 inside Saudi Arabia's consulate in Istanbul triggered fresh international scrutiny of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and greater attention to Saudi Arabia's conduct of the war in Yemen. Around the same time, the UN was sounding new alarms about the threat of a major famine. A free fall in the value of the Yemeni rial risked making food unaffordable for millions of Yemenis, and the coalition offensive against the port city of Hodeidah, which Yemen relies on for imports of most of its food and other critical supplies, had rendered impassable the main road used to distribute imported goods. The fighting also prevented access to the Red Sea mills, which store enough grain to feed 3.7 million people for one month.

At a 23 October 2018 briefing of the Council,

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock said, "There is now a clear and present danger of an imminent and great big famine engulfing Yemen", threatening as many as 14 million people. Lowcock asked for the Council's support around five issues to avoid a major famine:

- a cessation of hostilities around the infrastructure and facilities on which the aid operation and importers rely;
- protection of the supply of food and essential goods, including the lifting of access restrictions on imports and keeping main transport routes open;
- measures to stabilise the economy;
- increased funding to scale up the humanitarian operation; and
- resumption of a UN-led political process to end the conflict.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2451](#) (21 December 2018) endorsed the agreement reached during the UN-led consultations held in Sweden. [S/RES/2216](#) (14 April 2015) demanded that the Houthis withdraw from all seized areas and relinquish all seized arms and established an arms embargo on the Houthis. [Security Council Letter S/2018/1039](#) (20 November 2018) was from Yemen, objecting to the UK draft resolution. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8424](#) (14 December 2018) was a briefing on Yemen by Special Envoy Martin Griffiths and OCHA head Mark Lowcock. [S/PV.8404](#) (16 November 2018) was a briefing on Yemen. [S/PV.8379](#) (23 October 2018) was a briefing by OCHA head Mark Lowcock.

# Yemen

On 30 October 2018, US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called for the parties to resume negotiations within 30 days and for a cessation of hostilities. This was followed by the UK informing Council members on 1 November that it was preparing a new resolution on Yemen. The resolution would seek to respond to OCHA's five "asks", which Lowcock had proposed the previous week. On 2 November, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for a cessation of hostilities, starting with a halt in violence around critical infrastructure and densely populated areas.

At first, the coalition intensified operations in Yemen, including the Hodeidah offensive. By 13 November, a tentative pause in Hodeidah operations appeared to have gone into effect. Following a visit by UK Foreign Minister Jeremy Hunt to the region, the UK announced on 13 November that the coalition had agreed to the UN's overseeing a medical evacuation of up to 50 wounded Houthi fighters to Oman, which had been one of the main stumbling blocks to the UN Geneva consultations planned for September 2018.

Griffiths informed the Council at a 16 November 2018 briefing that he intended to convene the parties shortly for consultations in Sweden. The UK subsequently initiated negotiations on the resolution that it had been preparing, but the resolution's consideration was eventually put on hold as some members raised concerns about its timing just ahead of the consultations in Sweden.

UN-led intra-Yemeni consultations were held in Sweden, from 6 to 13 December 2018. In the lead-up to the consultations, the Houthi wounded were evacuated on 3 December, and the next day, Griffiths flew with the Houthi delegation to Sweden. In Sweden, the parties reached several agreements: an agreement on the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif, and Ras Issa; an executive mechanism to implement the prisoner exchange agreement that had been reached prior to the start of consultations; and a statement of understanding on Taiz. Together, these comprised the Stockholm Agreement.

The agreement over the critical port city of Hodeidah established an immediate ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate and a mutual redeployment of forces from the three ports and Hodeidah city to agreed locations outside the ports and city, to be implemented in phases

over three weeks. A Redeployment Coordination Committee—to be chaired by the UN and composed of, but not limited to, members of the parties—is to oversee the ceasefire and redeployment. The UN is also to take a leading role in supporting Yemen Red Sea Ports Corporation in management and inspections at the three ports, which includes enhanced monitoring by the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism. Security of Hodeidah city and the ports is the responsibility of local security forces in accordance with Yemeni law. Additionally, revenues from the ports are to be channelled to the Central Bank of Yemen through its Hodeidah branch as a contribution to the payment of civil servant salaries. The parties agreed to hold the next round of consultations at the end of January to discuss a framework for negotiations. This framework, once agreed to by the parties, would guide formal negotiations on a political transition and restoring the state monopoly of force.

On 14 December 2018, Griffiths briefed the Council. He stated that a robust and competent monitoring regime of the Hodeidah agreement is essential and urgently required. That appeared to echo Secretary-General António Guterres, who said at the closing ceremony of the consultations in Sweden that he hoped the Council would provide the UN a robust mandate to monitor the agreement. Griffiths reported that General Patrick Cammaert of the UN would lead the monitoring component and would soon deploy to the region. Lowcock provided an update on OCHA's five "asks", stressing the continuing urgency of the humanitarian situation despite the progress made in Sweden.

After fighting occurred around Hodeidah city following the conclusion of the consultations in Sweden, the ceasefire went into effect on 18 December.

On 21 December, the Council adopted resolution 2451, endorsing the agreements reached by the parties during the consultations held in Sweden. The resolution authorised the Secretary-General to establish and deploy, for an initial period of 30 days, an advance team to begin monitoring and facilitate implementation of the Stockholm Agreement. It also called on the Government of Yemen and the Houthis to take several steps to alleviate the humanitarian situation. The Secretary-General is to report to the Council weekly on the resolution's implementation, including on

breaches of commitments, as called for by the agreement on Hodeidah.

In other developments, the US Senate passed resolutions on 13 December 2018 calling for an end to US support for the Saudi coalition and condemning the role of Mohammed bin Salman in the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. For now, the Senate resolution on US military assistance to the coalition is largely symbolic, as a vote on similar measures in the US House of Representatives did not pass. The US decided in November 2018 to stop in-flight refuelling of Saudi aircraft.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 10 November 2018, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet released a statement expressing outrage at the "unconscionable toll" that the escalation of hostilities in Hodeidah was taking on an already "deeply frightened and starving" population in Yemen. Bachelet urged the Saudi-led coalition, the Houthi forces, and all those supplying arms to the parties to the conflict to take immediate steps to end the suffering of civilians in Yemen. According to the statement, the UN Human Rights Office has documented that between 26 March 2015 and 8 November 2018, there have been a total of 17,640 civilian casualties in Yemen, including 6,872 dead and 10,768 injured, and that the majority of these casualties (10,852) resulted from airstrikes carried out by the Saudi-led coalition.

At the end of his visit to Aden and Sana'a, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour released a statement on 30 November, urging the warring parties to do "absolutely everything humanly possible" to prevent renewed fighting in Hodeidah. According to the statement "renewed fighting would plunge millions more Yemenis into an even deeper crisis, and could contribute to what may turn out to be a massive famine". Gilmour also underlined "the utter unacceptability of any party to a conflict deliberately creating massive humanitarian suffering as a tactic of war" and urged the immediate removal of restrictions on delivery of emergency food and medical supplies. A UN Human Rights Office will be established in Aden in early 2019, the statement said.

## Key Issues and Options

Key issues include the implementation of the agreement on the city of Hodeidah and the ports of Hodeidah, Salif, and Ras Issa. This requires establishing the UN monitoring team to oversee compliance. The Council may provide a mandate for a UN monitoring role, with options to do so through a resolution or possibly an exchange of letters with the Secretary-General. If the Council

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## Yemen

provides such a mandate, this would be based on proposals from the Secretary-General on how the UN will support the Stockholm Agreement, which the Council requested he submit before 31 December 2018 in resolution 2451.

Concluding agreements on re-opening the Sana'a airport and to enhance the capacity of Yemen's Central Bank, which were not resolved in Sweden, remain priorities. A key issue is holding the next round of consultations by the end of January to discuss the framework for negotiations. Upon an agreement by the parties of a negotiating framework, the Council may adopt a resolution endorsing this framework, which Griffiths has proposed that the Council should do.

Averting Yemen's descent into a major famine and responding to the world's largest humanitarian crisis remains a critical issue. This includes advancing measures such as the parties' lifting access restrictions, paying civil servant salaries and pensions, strengthening the Yemeni rial (which began to reverse some of its loss in value by mid-November),

and funding the UN's 2019 humanitarian response plan for Yemen. The Council is likely to seek regular updates on the humanitarian situation to monitor progress on these issues and consider further actions if necessary.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Recent months saw an increasingly engaged Council in dealing with Yemen, with a crescendo of calls for some form of a cessation of hostilities, a position previously taken by only a minority of Council members. At the 23 October 2018 briefing, eight countries made such calls. By the time of the Council's 15 November meeting, almost all members did so, including, for the first time at the Security Council, the US and France. The UK draft resolution in November, calling for a cessation of hostilities in Hodeidah governorate, would have been the first Council product to do so. Saudi Arabia, which has exerted strong influence on the Council's consideration of Yemen, opposed the UK draft resolution and threatened some members that if it were adopted, the Yemeni government and the coalition

would not engage with the Special Envoy. Resolution 2451 was the first Council resolution on Yemen, apart from the annual resolution renewing the Yemen sanctions regime, since resolution 2216 of April 2015, which has often been criticised as one-sided and for creating a restrictive framework for mediation efforts.

A group of five elected members during 2018 pushed for the Council to be more proactive on Yemen. Of these, only Peru and Poland remain in the Council. Belgium and Germany are replacing the Netherlands and Sweden, which—along with Bolivia—were part of this group. The new members may seek to take on a similar role. Kuwait, as a member of the coalition, champions coalition positions. During negotiations on resolution 2451, the US supported the coalition position to exclude elements on the humanitarian situation.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Peru chairs the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

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## Climate Change and Security

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Security Council will hold an open debate addressing the impacts of climate-related disasters on international peace and security. President Danilo Medina of the Dominican Republic is expected to chair the meeting, which will also include the participation of several member states at ministerial level.

### Key Recent Developments

On 2 December 2018, Secretary-General António Guterres opened the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Katowice, Poland. He made four key points: the science on climate change “demands a significantly more ambitious response”; the Paris Agreement must be implemented; a collective responsibility exists “to invest in averting global climate

chaos, to consolidate the financial commitments made in Paris and to assist the most vulnerable communities and nations”; and momentum around climate action must be galvanised through an inclusive approach that mobilises technology and political will. He emphasised the urgency of the situation: “We are in trouble. We are in deep trouble with climate change. Climate change is running faster than we are and we must catch up sooner rather than later before it is too late.”

COP 24 concluded on 14 December 2018. It resulted in an agreement to enhance transparency in sharing information about states' plans to decrease emissions and to increase financial support for developing countries to address climate change. Agreement on “carbon trading”, which permits the exchange of emissions allotments among states, could not be reached and is expected to be discussed again at next year's COP meeting.

A report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released in November 2018 found that global warming is expected to rise by 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels “between 2030 and 2052 if it continues to increase at the current rate” with heightened “risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth”.

Since early 2017, there has been an increase in the Security Council's consideration of climate change-related security issues. Resolution 2349 of 31 March 2017 emphasised the need for adequate risk assessments and management strategies by governments and the UN relating to the adverse security effects of climate and ecological factors in the Lake Chad Basin. Subsequently, outcomes on several other African issues—the UN Office for Central Africa, the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Mali, Somalia, and Sudan (Darfur)—have

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON CLIMATE AND SECURITY** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2349 (31 March 2017) was on the Lake Chad Basin. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2011/15 (20 July 2011) was on climate change. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8307 (11 July 2018) was a debate on climate-related security risks organised by Sweden. S/PV/6587 (20 July 2011) was an open debate on the impact of climate change organised by Germany. S/PV.5663 and Resumption 1 (17 April 2007) was an open debate on energy, security and climate organised by the UK. Security Council Letter S/2018/749 (30 July 2018) summarised the ideas expressed during the 11 July 2018 debate on climate-related security risks.

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## Climate Change and Security

incorporated language on climate and security, largely drawn from resolution 2349.

### Key Issues and Options

Key issues that may be raised by member states during this Security Council debate include:

- the need to enhance understanding about the security implications of climate change-related natural disasters;
- the need for member states to develop improved risk assessment and mitigation strategies for such disasters;
- the importance of developing the analytical capacities of the UN system to assess climate change-related security threats, provide the Security Council with useful information about these threats, and support states in developing and implementing actionable plans to address them;
- the importance of developing synergies among states, regional and sub-regional organisations, and the UN system in managing and mitigating climate change-related security risks; and
- the need to determine how the Security Council, the peace operations it mandates, and UN Country Teams can best collaborate to address such risks.

Options that can be pursued by Council members at the present time include:

- requesting a briefing from representatives of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction on climate change-related security threats resulting from natural disasters, including early

warning measures that can be pursued and strategies to mitigate the potential security impacts of such disasters; and

- calling, in their interventions, on member states to fulfil commitments made in the Paris agreement and at COP 24 in Katowice.

Over the longer term, the Council might consider expanding its efforts to request risk assessment and mitigation strategies by member states and the UN system in outcomes in relevant country- and region-specific cases.

Having taken the initiative to hold this debate, the Dominican Republic could consider preparing a chair's summary to capture the main elements of the discussion.

Perhaps most fundamental over the long term is what the end objective of Council engagement on this issue should be. The Council currently focuses on the symptoms of climate change but does not address its underlying causes. It seems important for members to consider whether the Council could usefully and appropriately take other precise steps in tackling climate-related risks to peace and security, in addition to calling for enhanced reporting and for better risk assessment and mitigation strategies. Some member states—including incoming member Belgium—have advocated for the appointment of a special envoy on climate change. If such a position comes into being, or a focal point were created in the Secretariat on this issue, that person could provide the Secretary-General with ideas for how the Security Council can most effectively deal with climate change within the context of efforts

pursued by the broader UN system, national governments, and regional organisations.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

The question of whether the Council is an appropriate body to discuss climate change has been raised ever since 17 April 2007, when the Council held its first open debate to discuss possible implications of climate change for international peace and security. Russia and some G77 states have expressed concern that the Council's engagement on this matter encroaches on the prerogatives of other UN entities, which they maintain are better equipped to deal with the issue. While not expressing the same level of criticism about Council involvement, China and the US also have shown some ambivalence. Other Council members strongly support Council engagement, including permanent members France and the UK, which spearheaded the original Council debate of April 2007. In this regard, France and the UK co-led with Senegal the Council's March 2017 visit to the Lake Chad Basin, which enhanced members' understanding of the negative impact of climate change on the security situation in the region and led to the adoption of resolution 2349. Elected members, such as incoming Council members Belgium, the Dominican Republic, and Germany, have signalled their deep interest in pursuing in the Council the connection of climate change to international security. Among the wider membership, several small island developing states have noted that for them, the impacts of climate change represent an existential threat.

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## Somalia

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the recently appointed Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Nicholas Haysom, will brief the Council, followed by consultations. The mandate of UNSOM expires on 27 March 2019.

The authorisation of the AU Mission to

Somalia (AMISOM) expires on 31 May 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

The armed group Al-Shabaab remains highly active. At least 22 people were killed in two separate militant attacks in Mogadishu and the town of Galkayo on 26 November 2018. The US carried out four airstrikes on 15 December

2018 and two more the following day south of Mogadishu, killing a total of 62 Al-Shabaab militants, according to the US military. On 16 December, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) claimed it killed 14 Al-Shabaab militants in clashes between the two groups. The US has reportedly carried out at least 46 airstrikes against Al-Shabaab in 2018.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2444](#) (14 November 2018) lifted sanctions on Eritrea and extended various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2019. [S/RES/2442](#) (6 November 2018) concerned piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia. [S/RES/2431](#) (30 July 2018) renewed the authorisation of AMISOM until 31 May 2019. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2018/903](#) (10 October 2018) was on piracy in Somalia. [S/2018/800](#) (30 August 2018) was on UNSOM and UNSOS. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8352](#) (13 September 2018) was a briefing by Special Representative and head of UNSOM Michael Keating on the latest UNSOM report. [Security Council Press Statement SC/13572](#) (10 November 2018) condemned a terrorist attack in Mogadishu on 9 November that resulted in several civilian casualties. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2018/1003](#) (7 November 2018) was the report on Eritrea of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.

# Somalia

A joint UNSOM and OHCHR brief tallied 78 killed and 62 injured civilians in Somalia during October 2018. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 46 percent of the casualties and 109 reported abductions. AMISOM personnel killed four and injured two civilians; the casualties were reportedly linked to poor crowd control and excessive use of force.

On the political front, the presidents of Eritrea and Somalia announced on 30 July 2018 that the two countries would establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors after 15 years of animosity. As part of this rapprochement, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki paid his first-ever visit to Somalia on 13 December 2018 for the tripartite summit of the heads of state of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, held in Mogadishu, where they discussed regional economic cooperation. (Eritrea also signed a peace agreement with Ethiopia on 9 July 2018, ending a 20-year conflict.)

Domestically, the candidacy of former Al-Shabaab leader Muhktar Robow for president of South West State caused political strife between the state and the federal government. Robow, who quit Al-Shabaab in 2013, was arrested by Somali police backed by an AMISOM Ethiopian contingent on 13 December 2018, ahead of the 19 December elections in South West State. While the state accepted the candidature, the federal government demanded that the former militant be barred because of remaining US Treasury Department sanctions, and kept him off the ballot. The arrest prompted several days of demonstrations in Baidoa, South West State, which turned violent. A Somali police officer and 11 civilians, including a local lawmaker, were killed. Somalia's former state minister for trade, Abdiaziz Hassan Mohamed, won the election. The UNSOM, AMISOM, the US, the EU and other international partners issued a joint statement condemning the violence and urging constructive dialogue to resolve political differences and to address other challenges.

On 6 November 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2442, renewing for 12 months authorisations allowing international naval forces to fight piracy in the waters off the coast of Somalia.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

Following the restoration of relations between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, the Council adopted resolution 2444 on 14 November 2018, lifting the arms embargoes, travel bans, and asset freezes on Eritrea and extending various elements of the Somalia sanctions regime until 15 November 2019. Accordingly, the resolution also terminated the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group and established the Panel of Experts on Somalia in its stead, reducing the number of experts from eight to six.

In light of the unresolved border dispute with Djibouti, which prompted sanctions on Eritrea in resolutions 1862 and 1907, the resolution urged Eritrea and Djibouti to continue efforts to settle their border dispute peacefully in a manner consistent with international law by an agreed means of pacific dispute settlement identified in Article 33 of the UN Charter, and called for the parties to engage on the issue of the Djiboutian combatants missing in action. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council by 15 February 2019 and every six months thereafter on this matter and expressed the Council's intention to keep normalisation efforts under review.

In addition to these changes in the sanctions regime, the resolution reaffirmed the arms embargo on Somalia while renewing the partial lifting of the arms embargo on Somali security forces, the authorisation for maritime interdiction to enforce the embargo on illicit arms imports and charcoal exports, and the humanitarian exemptions to the sanctions regime.

## Key Issues and Options

After the lifting of sanctions on Eritrea in resolution 2444, a key issue will be monitoring regional developments—particularly between Eritrea and Djibouti—to assess the impact of the resolution and whether adjustments are necessary.

A continuing issue is maintaining AMISOM's capabilities until the Somali security forces can progressively take the lead in providing security and ensuring that AMISOM has the means to assist Somali security forces to achieve this goal.

After the postponement of troop reductions from 30 October 2018 to 28 February 2019 in resolution 2431—in line with the Secretary-General's recommendation to delay this process, because Somalia's security forces were not ready to take over security responsibilities—a priority for the Council is to continue to monitor the situation and

the readiness of the Somali security forces in order to assess whether the drawdown timeline remains appropriate.

Closely related is the continued need to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM and Somali security institutions throughout this process, as this subject was not addressed in resolution 2431 and remains a contentious issue among Council members.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are united in supporting state-building and in their support for UNSOM and AMISOM. They remain concerned regarding the continuing tensions and lack of communication between the federal government and the states—including the recent events in Baidoa—and their implications for political stability.

Despite the agreement in resolution 2431 to postpone the start of the next drawdown of AMISOM to 28 February 2019, some Council members remain sceptical, as they were during the negotiations over the resolution, that the drawdown will be warranted, as there are no further indications that Somalia is ready to take over more security responsibilities from AMISOM. Nevertheless, to get France and the US to agree to the postponement from 20 October 2018, explicit language was inserted in the resolution stressing that “there should be no further delay in the reduction of the level of uniformed AMISOM personnel beyond 28 February 2019”. Thus, unless the situation on the ground takes a serious turn for the worse, it seems unlikely that any Council member will attempt to alter the current drawdown schedule.

Ethiopia, an AMISOM troop-contributing country (TCC), concluded its Council term in December. Ethiopia consistently represented the views of AMISOM's TCCs, most recently during negotiations over resolution 2431. It was also a strong proponent of lifting sanctions over Eritrea in light of regional developments, an issue the Council will continue to monitor in 2019.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia, and the US is the penholder on piracy. Belgium is expected to chair the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee as of 1 January 2019.

# Democratic Republic of the Congo

## Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council will monitor closely the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) after the elections, at press time scheduled for 30 December 2018.

The Council will also be briefed, most likely by the Special Representative and head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Leila Zerrougui, on the Secretary-General's latest report on MONUSCO and the most recent developments. MONUSCO's mandate expires on 31 March 2019.

## Key Recent Developments

The current electoral process in the DRC has been a major issue of concern for the last few years. The presidential, legislative and provincial elections were supposed to take place before the end of 2016, when President Joseph Kabila's second and final term (under the country's constitution) expired. According to an agreement reached between Kabila and the opposition on 31 December 2016, elections were then to be held by the end of 2017, and Kabila was not to run for a third term or initiate amendments to the constitution. Citing logistical difficulties, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) eventually published a new electoral calendar, in November 2017, setting the elections for 23 December 2018.

Political tensions were exacerbated by Kabila's failure to reveal his own intentions until August 2018. On 8 August, the last day to submit presidential candidates, Kabila's party nominated former Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary as its presidential candidate. Shadary, said to be a Kabila loyalist, is on the EU sanctions list for obstructing the DRC's current electoral process and for violent crackdowns against protesters in Kinshasa in 2017. The EU renewed the sanctions on Shadary on 10 December 2018.

On 11 November 2018, a coalition of the seven main opposition parties announced their support for a single candidate, Martin Fayulu of the Commitment for Citizenship and Development Party (ECIDE). The next day,

however, Felix Tshisekedi, head of the largest opposition party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, broke away from the agreement and retained his candidature.

In his report on the electoral process, the Secretary-General said that restrictions on democratic space continued, noting that the authorities banned several public events and that cases of arbitrary arrests and intimidation were reported, as well as restrictions on freedom of expression and the press. On 13 November 2018, Zerrougui briefed the Council along with Joséphine Mbela of the Congolese Association for Access to Justice, a non-governmental human rights and rule of law organisation. Zerrougui noted that much progress had to be made to create an environment conducive to credible elections. She also cautioned that in many parts of the DRC, the vote would take place in a volatile security environment. She expressed particular concern over the situation in Beni, where civilians, MONUSCO and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) are regularly targeted by the Ugandan Islamist rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

Council members issued a press statement on 21 November urging all parties to engage peacefully and constructively in the electoral process in order to ensure transparent, peaceful and credible elections.

Election-related violence continued in different parts of the country. On 12 December 2018, two Fayulu supporters were killed and 43 injured in clashes with police at a rally in Lubumbashi. Three people at a Fayulu rally in eastern DRC were killed the following day when the police fired live rounds, according to witnesses.

On 13 December 2018, a fire at an election commission warehouse in Kinshasa destroyed ballot papers and about 80 percent of the voting machines due to be used in Kinshasa. This first use of machines in the DRC has been a matter of controversy, raising concerns about logistical difficulties and possible manipulation. Zerrougui updated Council members on recent political developments under "any other business" on 17 December. Afterwards Council members issued a press

statement, expressing concern over recent incidents, which have resulted in loss of life and significant damage. They urged all stakeholders to refrain from violence and to ensure that the elections take place with the requisite conditions of transparency and credibility.

On 20 December, the CENI announced the postponement of the elections to 30 December 2018, citing the need to provide for the missing ballot papers destroyed in the fire. Several opposition leaders decried the postponement as another stalling tactic by the government, with both the government and opposition figures accusing each other of setting the fire. Council members were updated on the latest political developments under "any other business" by Zerrougui on 21 December. They issued a press statement the following day, expressing their hope that the delay will allow for "favourable conditions for the Congolese people to express themselves freely on the 30 December".

Eastern DRC continues to be plagued by the activities of rebel groups, with a disastrous effect on the population. According to the recent midterm report of the Group of Experts assisting the DRC Sanctions Committee, 200 civilians and 125 FARDC soldiers were killed by armed groups in North Kivu in 2018. Council members issued a press statement on 15 November 2018, condemning the killing of seven MONUSCO peacekeepers and at least 12 members of the FARDC in North Kivu during anti-ADF operations that day. On 7 December, 17 people were killed in two ADF attacks in Beni, North Kivu. On 24 December, at least four civilians and one FARDC soldier were killed in a suspected ADF attack in Beni.

Conflict in North Kivu has complicated efforts to eradicate Ebola in the DRC. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there had been 512 confirmed and 48 probable cases of Ebola as at 19 December 2018 in the current outbreak in North Kivu, resulting in 336 deaths. Of serious concern is the spread of the virus to Butembo, a city with a population of over one million. On 30 October 2018, the Council adopted resolution 2439, recognising the negative impact of violence in Ebola-affected areas, urging

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2439 (30 October 2018) was on Ebola in the DRC. S/RES/2424 (29 June 2018) renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2019 and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2019. S/RES/2409 (27 March 2018) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 31 March 2019. **Secretary-General's Report** S/2018/977 (29 October 2018) was on the electoral process in the DRC. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8397 (13 November 2018) was a briefing by Special Representative and head of MONUSCO Leila Zerrougui and Joséphine Mbela of the Congolese Association for Access to Justice. **Security Council Press Statements** SC/13648 (22 December 2018) was on the delay of elections in the DRC to 30 December. SC/13632 (18 December 2018) was on the electoral process on the DRC. SC/13599 (21 November 2018) was on the electoral process in the DRC. SC/13583 (15 November 2018) condemned the killing of seven MONUSCO peacekeepers in North Kivu.

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## Democratic Republic of the Congo

all parties in the DRC to ensure immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical personnel, and recalling that their equipment and medical facilities are protected under international law.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

The Coordinator of the Group of Experts presented the group's midterm report to the DRC Sanctions Committee on 6 December 2018. In addition to the violence in North Kivu mentioned above, the report documents continued illicit trade in natural resources, mainly gold and the so-called "three Ts" (tin, tantalum, and tungsten) by armed groups and FARDC elements.

Also on 6 December, FARDC colonel Jean de Dieu Mambweni was arrested in connection with the killing of two members of the Group of Experts, Zaida Catalán (Chile/Sweden) and Michael Sharp (US), in Kasai in March 2017. Mambweni is suspected of conspiring with the main suspect, Jean Bosco Mukanda, a local militia leader. The head of the team deployed by the Secretary-General to assist national authorities in the investigation, Robert Petit, updated Council members' experts informally on the investigation on 17 December 2018.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 December 2018, High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet released a statement expressing deep concern over violence at opposition rallies in at least three provinces ahead of the presidential elections, including reports that security forces used excessive force and live ammunition. The High Commissioner called on the authorities to ensure that these incidents were investigated promptly and that "the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly – essential conditions for credible elections – are fully protected". The High Commissioner also expressed concern over reports of the use of inflammatory speech by political leaders and of armed groups' interference with election campaigning.

On 19 December, 2018, the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC published a report on

the deterioration of the human rights situation in North Kivu between January 2017 and October 2018, including documentation of hundreds of extrajudicial killings and cases of torture and sexual violence committed against civilians. The report states armed groups were responsible for around two-thirds of these violations, while government security forces accounted for the other third. The report also states that high insecurity and continuing violations of human rights could undermine the political rights of the population in the context of the upcoming elections.

### Key Issues and Options

The primary political issue for the Council during this period is to monitor the electoral process and, if the elections take place on 30 December, to assess whether they were free and fair, were held in a safe environment conducive to participation in the political process by all, and yielded credible results. The Council will also need to monitor the impact of the elections on security in the east and stability in the west.

If elections take place on 30 December, the Council may wish to adopt an outcome document on the conduct of the election and remaining challenges, and reacting to any developments on the ground. Additionally, the Council can deploy the sanctions regime, if necessary, against spoilers of the political process both during and after the elections.

Aside from the electoral process, a main issue for the Council will continue to be the security situation in the east and protection of civilians. With the electoral period potentially coming to an end, the Council may ask the Secretary-General to assess if and how MONUSCO should adapt its posture to enhance security.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

During the last year, there was consensus among Council members about the imperative of holding elections on 23 December 2018 without further delays. The delay until 30 December has added to the existing concerns over whether the overdue elections will, in fact, take place and about the credibility of the process. There is also an understanding that, even if elections take place on 30 December as scheduled at press time or soon after, the Council should remain focused on political developments during the post-electoral period to support an orderly transition and avoid regression.

All Council members remain concerned about the security situation, which remains dire notwithstanding the political developments. The elections and transition of power have been identified by some, such as the US, as a watershed moment for the DRC, stressing that resolution 2409 requests the Secretary-General to follow up on this issue after "the successful holding of elections and sustainable progress towards reducing the threat posed by armed groups" with the development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO. Other Council members have stressed that regardless of the electoral process, MONUSCO's main task, the protection of civilians, will continue to be critical and that the mission's closure without improvements in the security situation would be premature. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that after elections are held, and Kabila is no longer in power, there is a need to reassess implications for MONUSCO's mandate.

France is the penholder on the DRC, and Kuwait chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

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## Syria

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council will receive the monthly briefings on the humanitarian situation and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

At press time, no briefing on the political situation was scheduled. Geir O. Pedersen will take office as the new Special Envoy for Syria in early January 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

December 2018 saw the first Council decision on Syria since February. On 13 December, the Council adopted resolution 2449,

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2449 (13 December 2018) renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line aid delivery S/RES/2401 (24 February 2018) demanded that all parties cease hostilities in Syria. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) was on chemical weapons. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/1104** (11 December 2018) was the monthly report on the humanitarian situation. **Security Council Letter S/2018/1071** (29 November 2018) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8434** (20 December 2018) was the last briefing by de Mistura. S/PV.8423 (13 December 2018) was the meeting at which resolution 2449 was adopted. S/PV.8411 (29 November 2018) was a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

# Syria

drafted by Kuwait and Sweden, which renewed for a year the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. Through this authorisation, first established by the Council in resolution 2165 in July 2014, UN actors and implementing partners have been able to deliver cross-border life-saving humanitarian assistance to millions of people, only notifying the Syrian government, rather than awaiting its authorisation. Despite the changes in territorial control within Syria, this authorisation continues to be vital, particularly in northern Syria.

The resolution was adopted with the abstentions of China and Russia. In explaining its vote, Russia highlighted the need to eventually roll back a provision that had been devised originally as a temporary measure. Both countries emphasised the need to increase the monitoring and transparency of the mechanisms used to deliver cross-border aid. Russia proposed decreasing the frequency of the reports that the Council receives on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Resolution 2449 maintains the request for monthly Council briefings on the humanitarian situation, but the written reports will now be received bimonthly.

After welcoming the adoption, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock briefed the Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria. He raised the critical situation in Idlib, where the fate of some 3 million people continues to depend on the restraint exercised by the parties. Recent shelling and fighting in areas in and around the demilitarised zone continue to result in civilian deaths and injuries, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and displacement that now numbers nearly 15,000 people. He described the limitations encountered by the UN and its partners in securing sustained humanitarian access, including to areas under the control of the government, and updated the Council on the situation in places such as Deir ez-Zor where up to 6,000 people remain trapped by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Following up on a successful delivery in November, a convoy was expected to reach 40,000 people stranded in dire conditions in the makeshift camp of Rukban by the end of the year.

At the request of the Secretary-General, Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura focused the last weeks of his tenure on assessing the possibility of establishing a credible, balanced

and inclusive constitutional committee. De Mistura has repeatedly told the Council that the main reason for the delay in convening the first session of a constitutional committee—which is expected to comprise 150 people, one-third each from the government, the opposition, and civil society—was the government’s refusal to accept the UN-prepared list of civil society participants. After several failed attempts, the guarantors of the Astana process—Iran, Russia and Turkey—agreed on a civil society list in mid-December, but this version was not acceptable to de Mistura. Briefing the Council on 20 December, he characterised the list as representing significant joint input, but declared that the UN did not feel comfortable accepting all 50 members of the list as meeting the necessary criteria of credibility and balance. During his briefing, de Mistura identified several elements regarding the constitutional committee that it should be possible to agree on, including having a balanced co-chairmanship arrangement and a 75 percent voting threshold.

A joint statement by the presidents of France, Russia and Turkey and the Chancellor of Germany after a summit held on 27 October 2018 in Istanbul had called for the “establishing and early convening, considering the circumstances, by the end of the year of the constitutional committee in Geneva”. However, an 18 December 2018 statement of the Astana guarantors said that the committee will convene in early 2019.

The situation in north-eastern Syria, particularly between Turkey and the YPG, a Kurdish militia that is part of the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), continues to be tense, despite joint patrolling by the US and Turkey near Manbij. In mid-December, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened to mount a new offensive east of the Euphrates River against the SDF. The announcement on 19 December 2018 by US President Donald J. Trump regarding the withdrawal of US troops from Syria may have negative consequences for the stability of that area.

The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council on 4 December. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons continues to have concerns regarding the limited cooperation of the Syrian government in addressing the gaps, inconsistencies and discrepancies identified in Syria’s initial

declaration of its chemical weapons stockpile.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 28 November, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria issued a paper on death notifications in Syria following information released by the Syrian government on the deaths of numerous detained and/or missing persons. The paper “stresses the need to account for the fate and whereabouts of detained and missing individuals countrywide” and “notes that no progress can be made in reaching a political settlement and a lasting peace in Syria without urgently confronting the justice-based needs of Syrian victims and survivors as well as their families.” The paper, which was presented to Council members that same day in an Arria-formula meeting, contains six recommendations, including that “pro-government forces and primarily the Syrian State should reveal publicly the fates of those detained, disappeared, and/or missing without delay”; that “families must further be able to retrieve the bodies of their relatives who died in detention or by execution or be told where their remains are”; that “the Syrian state must ensure that all custodial deaths are promptly, thoroughly, transparently, and independently investigated in line with international standards”; that “those responsible...must be held accountable...[and] if the Syrian state is unwilling or unable to hold perpetrators accountable, a referral by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court should be made”; and that “a national reparations mechanism should be established”.

## Key Issues and Options

Given the crucial role of Russia, Turkey and Iran on both the political and humanitarian fronts, Council members could seek an informal interactive dialogue with their representatives to have a more action-oriented discussion regarding current and future efforts to avert a full-fledged military offensive in Idlib.

Some Council members question whether any effort on the political process is likely to yield results, given the Syrian government’s emphasis on regaining territory and consolidating control. As Pedersen assumes his role as Special Envoy in January 2019, Council members could hold an informal and frank discussion to consider how, individually and collectively, they can best support the prospects of a political process based on resolution 2254 which in December 2015 laid out the steps toward a political solution in Syria.

The issue of detainees, abductees and missing persons has not attracted much attention in the Council and is mostly considered under the rubric of confidence-building measures being discussed by the Astana

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## Syria

guarantors. With little progress on this front and the Syrian government's release of thousands of death notices for prisoners, the Council could hold a meeting on this matter.

The Council could request a briefing from the Secretariat to focus on the potential for instability in north-eastern Syria, call on the actors involved to exercise restraint and support good offices efforts to address longstanding grievances.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Ahead of the negotiations on resolution 2449 on humanitarian cross-border access, there were concerns that renewing the authorisation would prove difficult. In the 2017 renewal, China and Russia had abstained, arguing that the measure was always intended to be temporary. Russia's position became more nuanced in the lead-up to the negotiations in 2018, however, and at a 29 November briefing, Russia's Deputy Permanent Representative

Dmitry Polyanskiy merely called for the cross-border mechanism to be adjusted to respond to the concerns he raised about insufficient transparency regarding cross-border deliveries and the need to reflect significant changes in the situation on the ground. The role of Turkey, which had been critical in making the case for renewing the authorisation in 2017, was equally important this time around.

Among the areas Russia focused on in the negotiations on resolution 2249 were the inclusion of a reference welcoming the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and a call for the international community to increase its assistance to Syria by providing additional humanitarian aid and restoring humanitarian infrastructure assets. Elected members Kuwait and Sweden, the penholders on this issue, were able to act as a bridge between the P3 and Russia in exploring possible compromises in their positions. In the end, the final

draft recalled "the need to create conditions throughout the country and facilitate the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and IDPs to their home areas in Syria, in accordance with international law". It also called upon the international community to increase its assistance to Syria by providing additional humanitarian aid.

In the negotiations, Russia proposed that the draft condemn unilateral coercive measures and that it requests the Secretary-General to consider the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights in Syria, but these references were not included in the final text.

Belgium and Germany will succeed Sweden as co-penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria, along with Kuwait.

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## West Africa and the Sahel

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), will brief the Council on developments in the region and the semi-annual UNOWAS report.

### Key Recent Developments

The security situation deteriorated across much of the region, in particular in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, where terrorist and armed groups remain a major threat.

The crisis in Mali continues to spill over into Burkina Faso and Niger. In Burkina Faso, attacks by armed groups against security and civilian targets, previously concentrated in the north, have spread to the east and southwest. On 15 November 2018 the Council was briefed on progress towards making the G5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational. Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger established the Force in 2017 to

combat terrorist and criminal groups in the Sahel; a major setback was the 29 June terrorist attack on the joint force headquarters in Sévaré, Mali, which resulted in the replacement of its force and deputy force commanders and the halting of operations.

Boko Haram and its faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), intensified attacks in the Lake Chad Basin. According to the Nigeria Security Tracker of the US Council on Foreign Relations, the upsurge of violence by the extremist group included a 15 July 2018 attack on a base in Geidam, Yobe state, that killed 62 soldiers; a 17 July attack that killed 27 people in Ngala, Borno state; an 18 August attack that killed 25 in Guzamala, Borno, and a 30 August attack, also in Guzamala, that killed 48 Nigerian soldiers. On 22 November, Boko Haram killed seven employees of a French drilling company at a water well site in Toumour, Niger, and on 23 November it kidnapped 15 girls from two villages in Niger's Diffa region. By October

2018, 2.5 million people had been displaced by the nine-year Boko Haram crisis in the Lake Chad basin. Boko Haram executed two ICRC aid workers (one in September and one in October) who were kidnapped in Rann, Nigeria, in March 2018.

On 18 November 2018, ISWAP overran an army base in Metele, Nigeria. The Nigerian military said 43 soldiers were killed, but according to news reports the number was over 100. Following the incident, Nigerian soldiers released video footage of the attack site, claiming that they were not being adequately equipped. On 25 November, the Secretary-General issued a statement condemning the recurrent attacks by terrorists and other extremist groups in northern Nigeria which have caused heavy casualties among the civilian population and security forces and have disrupted normal life.

On 29 November, an extraordinary summit of heads of state and government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) was

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2349 (31 March 2017) was on the Lake Chad Basin crisis. Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2018/16 (10 August 2018) expressed concern over increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers in West Africa and the Sahel and welcomed collective efforts to recalibrate the UN Sahel Strategy. S/PRST/2018/3 (30 January 2018) recognised the adverse effects of climate change and ecological changes among other factors on the stability of West Africa and the Sahel region. Security Council Meeting Records S.PV.8435 (20 December 2018) was a briefing by the Special Adviser for the Sahel Ibrahim Thiaw on the UN Sahel strategy. S/PV.8433 (19 December 2018) was a briefing on drug trafficking in West Africa. S/PV.8402 (15 November 2018) was a briefing on the G5 Sahel joint force. S/PV.8313 (17 July 2018) was a briefing on West Africa and the Sahel.

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## West Africa and the Sahel

held in N'djamena to discuss Boko Haram's resurgence and proposals to strengthen the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which comprises forces from Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria and which has had an AU mandate since 2014 to combat the terrorist group.

Previously, at a ministerial conference of the LCBC, held in Abuja on 30 August 2018, member states adopted a regional strategy for the stabilisation, recovery and resilience of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad basin. On 4 September, during the High-Level Conference on the Lake Chad Region, donors pledged \$2.17 billion to support humanitarian, peacebuilding and development activities. A donor conference on 6 December 2018 in Nouakchott, Mauritania for the G5 Sahel Priority Investment Programme for 2019-2021 raised 2.4 billion euros for around 40 development programmes. This exceeded the 1.9 billion euros that G5 Sahel countries had targeted.

Inter-communal violence between herders and farmers in Nigeria's Middle Belt resulted in more than 1,300 Nigerians killed during the first half of 2018 and displacing more than 300,000 people, according to the International Crisis Group. In a 10 August 2018 presidential statement on UNOWAS, the Council expressed "concern for increased tensions between pastoralists and farmers in the region, driven by competition for natural resources, rapid population growth, weak governance, pressures related to climate and ecological factors, and the circulation of small arms and light weapons". It encouraged the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member states to address these challenges holistically, with UNOWAS support.

Ahead of Nigeria's presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 16 February 2019, Chambas, who is also the High-Level Representative of the Secretary-General to Nigeria, has been actively engaging authorities and stakeholders. He undertook a joint mission to Nigeria with ECOWAS Commission President Jean-Claude Kassi Brou from 29 to 30 October 2018. He was in Nigeria again for a

pre-election mission from 11 to 23 November, coinciding with the official beginning of campaigning on 18 November.

At the 54th Ordinary Session of ECOWAS heads of state and government on 22 December 2018, West African leaders threatened to sanction individuals that obstruct the electoral process in Guinea-Bissau, where legislative elections have been delayed repeatedly.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue is the deteriorating security situation in West Africa and the Sahel. This includes rising concerns over Burkina Faso, which could have broader spill-over effects on West Africa, and the situation in the Lake Chad Basin.

In addition to security initiatives (the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the MNJTF), efforts to address structural causes of instability in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin are central, including poor governance, underdevelopment and climate change. The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and the UN Support Plan for the Sahel, launched in 2018 to improve implementation of the UNISS, are intended to guide UN and partner approaches to these efforts. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Sahel, Ibrahim Thiaw, briefed the Council on 20 December 2018 on the UNISS and the UN Support Plan.

Among issues of interest, UNOWAS has increasingly sought to support ECOWAS in addressing insecurity due to herder-farmer conflict, and released a study on pastoralism and security in August 2018.

Other key issues are political developments and governance trends across the region. These include upcoming elections in 2019 in Nigeria, Senegal and Guinea-Bissau and the political crisis in Togo. The humanitarian situation, particularly across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, is a further area of continuing focus.

As stipulated in the Council's January 2018 presidential statement, the Secretary-General's upcoming report is expected to provide a risk assessment of the impact of climate change on West Africa.

Depending on the contents of the

Secretary-General's report and the discussion with Chambas, the Council might adopt a presidential statement that would, among other elements, express its support for the conflict prevention and good offices roles of UNOWAS while reiterating support for initiatives to address the threat of terrorism.

In light of worsening Boko Haram-related violence, Council members could organise an informal interactive dialogue with Lake Chad Basin countries in order to be updated on the activities of the MNJTF, discuss the regional stabilisation strategy, and explore ways the Council and UN can provide more support.

### Council Dynamics

Members view UNOWAS as playing a significant conflict prevention role and have valued the good offices activities undertaken by Special Representative Chambas in addressing political crises and electoral tensions. As part of such efforts, Chambas frequently seeks close coordination in the messaging and actions of ECOWAS, the AU and the UN.

Council members often stress the importance of a holistic approach to the challenges facing Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries, in addition to supporting regional military initiatives. The Council's consideration in recent years of some of the region's security challenges stands out because of members' ability to agree on more sensitive, non-traditional security challenges and approaches. Resolution 2349 in March 2017 was the resolution in which the Council first recognised the impact of climate and ecological change, in this case on the stability of the Lake Chad Basin. Then, in its 30 January 2018 presidential statement, it recognised the impact of climate change and ecological changes on the stability of the broader West Africa and Sahel region. The Council's repeated calls for the UN system and international efforts to become more coherent and to focus on tackling root causes of conflicts in the region reflect its approaches to situations where it does not have a mandated, in-country UN operation.

Côte d'Ivoire is the penholder on West Africa and the Sahel. The UK has served as penholder on the Lake Chad Basin.

## Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council expects to receive a briefing from a representative of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on the situation in Mali, followed by consultations.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) expires on 30 June 2019. The sanctions regime expires on 31 August 2019, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts expires on 30 September 2019.

## Key Recent Developments

Council members are growing increasingly frustrated with the limited implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Building on the recommendations from an independent strategic review of MINUSMA, the Secretary-General proposed the development of a pact for peace in Mali in June 2018. The pact was signed on 15 October at a session of the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord, the main follow-up mechanism of the agreement, by the government of Mali and the UN. Briefing the Council on 19 October 2018, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix defined the pact as “an essential tool to spur the efforts of the Malian parties, supported by the international community, to implement the Agreement and give new impetus to the peace process by focusing on inclusiveness.”

In a press statement issued after the meeting, the Council commended the signing of the pact while stressing the absolute urgency for the parties to “take unprecedented steps to fully and expeditiously deliver on their remaining obligations in the agreement”. According to resolution 2423, the Secretary-General is expected to report in March 2019 on progress in the implementation of the agreement. The Council expressed its intent, in the absence of significant progress, to request the Secretary-General to provide options for a potentially significant adaptation of MINUSMA after its current mandate expires. In November–December 2018, efforts towards the disarmament,

demobilisation and reintegration of combatants accelerated, with more than 1,600 individuals agreeing to lay down their weapons in cantonments in northern Mali.

The security situation in the north and centre of Mali continues to be critical. Inter-communal violence among ethnic groups—particularly Fulani, Bambara and Dogon—persists. A unilateral ceasefire announced in October 2018 by the Dogon Dan Nan Ambassagou militia did not hold, and clashes have continued. Terrorist groups often take advantage of these tensions to increase recruitment and enhance their own legitimacy in their communities. During a military operation in Mopti, in the centre of Mali, French forces reportedly killed Amadou Koufa, a Fulani leader of the terrorist Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM). On 27 October, two MINUSMA peacekeepers were killed in central Mali by an improvised explosive device in an attack that was claimed by JNIM. At least 106 peacekeepers have been killed as a result of malicious acts since the establishment of MINUSMA five-and-a-half years ago.

Opposition parties, including former presidential candidate Soumaïla Cissé, have questioned the legitimacy of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who was sworn in on 22 September 2018. On 16 October, the Constitutional Court postponed the legislative elections, which were expected to take place that month, and extended the mandate of members of the parliament until June 2019.

Ambassador Olof Skoog of Sweden, who has chaired the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee since its establishment, led a second committee visit to Mali on 3–5 December 2018 and briefed the Council on 17 December. Ahead of his mission the committee held informal consultations on 21 November to hear from Mali and other states in the region, which highlighted the importance of strengthening cooperation for the implementation of the sanctions regime and the peace agreement. On 20 December, the committee imposed a travel ban on three individuals associated with armed groups for their destabilising activities in Mali. The listings were proposed by France

but were based on statements of case included in a confidential annex to the August 2018 report of the panel of experts.

On 15 November, the Council discussed the challenges in making the G5 Sahel Joint Force fully operational. At the meeting, Lacroix reiterated the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council establish a UN support office for the joint force, funded through assessed contributions and independent of MINUSMA. However, this proposal does not have unanimous support in the Council.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 12 October 2018, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted its concluding observations on Mali's initial report to the Committee (E/C.12/MLI/CO/1). Areas of concern listed in the report include the negative impact of internal armed conflicts and confrontations in the northern and central areas of the country on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights; the situation of human rights defenders; the persistence of corruption; widespread practices that are harmful to women and girls, such as polygamy, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; the use and recruitment of children by armed groups in conflict areas in the northern and central parts of the country; and high poverty and unemployment rates.

## Key Issues and Options

The Council has raised the tone of its frustration with the lack of implementation of the agreement. Council members could discuss how they can support the political process bilaterally and multilaterally ahead of the March 2019 deadline to assess progress. To do so, the Secretariat, the mission leadership and Algeria, which chairs the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord, could be invited to participate in an informal interactive dialogue. The Council could also carry out a visiting mission to Mali to convey its messages directly and encourage the engagement of the parties.

Despite the widespread concerns about the slow pace of implementing the agreement, no individuals or entities have been sanctioned under the 2374 Mali sanctions regime. Council members could consider a set of listings that target, in a balanced way, all the parties to the agreement who are hindering its

**UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2432](#) (30 August 2018) renewed the targeted sanctions regime on Mali and the mandate of the Panel of Experts. [S/RES/2423](#) (28 June 2018) renewed MINUSMA's mandate for one year. [S/RES/2391](#) (8 December 2017) outlined the ways in which MINUSMA is expected to support the G5 Sahel joint force and described how the UN will be reimbursed for its assistance. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8402](#) (15 November 2018) was a briefing by Lacroix; Maman Sidikou, the Permanent Secretary of the G5 Sahel; Pierre Buyoya, the AU High Representative for Mali and the Sahel; and Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary-General of the European External Action Service. [S/PV.8376](#) (19 October 2018) was a briefing by Lacroix on the situation in Mali. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13584](#) (15 November 2018) encouraged the G5 Sahel States to take appropriate measures in order for the joint force to conduct new operations and to be fully operational as soon as possible. [SC/13557](#) (27 October 2018) condemned the attacks that same day against a convoy of MINUSMA near the town of Konna, which resulted in two peacekeepers from Burkina Faso killed and several from Burkina Faso and Togo injured. [SC/13547](#) (19 October 2018) commended the 15 October signing of a pact for peace between the government of Mali and the UN.

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## Mali

implementation, while preserving the parties' engagement in the process.

While the focus of the agreement and its implementation remains the north of the country, Council members could prioritise discussing the conflict dynamics in the centre of the country and how they affect instability in Mali and the broader region.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Building on the recommendations of an independent strategic review of MINUSMA, the Secretary-General proposed the development

of a pact for peace in June 2018. The strategic review of MINUSMA had proposed that such a pact, between the government of Mali, the Security Council, the UN and international partners, would associate international assistance with progress on clear benchmarks, including good governance and political reforms. The Council requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to allow for the swift conclusion of the pact in resolution 2423 on 28 June 2018. The pact for peace signed in October 2018 differed from what had been proposed to the Council

a few months earlier, however, in making no reference to the role of the Council or international partners in its creation or implementation. In the end, the pact for peace was agreed between the government of Mali and the UN, although armed groups that are signatory to the peace agreement expressed their commitment to the pact separately.

France is the penholder on Mali. In January 2019, the chairmanship of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee will be assumed by Ambassador Francisco Antonio Cortorreal (Dominican Republic).

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## Western Sahara

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, Council members are expected to hold consultations on Western Sahara in accordance with resolution 2440 that requested the Secretary-General to brief the Council on a regular basis at any time he deems appropriate, including within three months of MINURSO's renewal and again prior to the expiration of its mandate. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler, is expected to brief. There may also be a briefer from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

The mandate of MINURSO expires on 31 March 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

On 31 October 2018, the Security Council adopted resolution 2440, extending the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for six months. The resolution expressed the Council's full support for the intention of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to initiate a renewed negotiations process before the end of 2018. At the adoption, Bolivia, Ethiopia and Russia abstained. In their explanation of vote, Ethiopia and Russia indicated their concerns that the resolution weakened the previously-agreed parameters for resolving the Western Sahara conflict. (The resolution removed one iteration of the habitual Council description of a solution to Western

Sahara, namely that it be based on a "mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara", though it retained this formula in two paragraphs.)

On 5 and 6 December 2018, Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania attended a roundtable meeting in Geneva organised by Köhler. The Geneva roundtable meeting took place after a gap of over ten years since the last formal round of negotiations held between Morocco and the Polisario in March 2008 at Greentree in New York, and six years since the last informal talks were held in 2012, also at Greentree.

A short communiqué stated, "Delegations took stock of recent developments, addressed regional issues, and discussed the next steps in the political process on Western Sahara". It added that "all delegations recognized that cooperation and regional integration, not confrontation, were the best way to address the many important challenges the region is facing". The delegations agreed to hold a second roundtable meeting in the first quarter of 2019. At the press stakeout following the roundtable, Köhler described the meeting as an important first step towards a renewed political process that, according to resolution 2440, is to find a "just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara".

### Key Issues and Options

A key focus of the upcoming consultations is to update Council members on the discussions at the Geneva roundtable meeting, and on next steps that the Personal Envoy is planning, including for a second roundtable meeting, towards resuming negotiations and a political process. A key issue that has kept the political process deadlocked the past ten years is that the parties' respective proposals for the basis of a political solution, as outlined in 2007, are mutually exclusive. The Polisario's position has been that the territory's final status can only be decided in a referendum that includes independence as an option, while Morocco has proposed that Western Sahara should be an autonomous region within Morocco.

Another issue, which played out during negotiations on resolution 2440, is Algeria's role and participation in a political process. Morocco has insisted that Algeria should participate in a forthcoming political process as a party to the conflict. For its part, Algeria has insisted that it is not a party to the conflict and that it cannot take the place of the Polisario in negotiations, but is prepared to step up its role in the political process as a neighbouring state. So far, opting for the format of roundtable meetings appears to have been a way to avoid making this distinction and determination of how Algeria will participate in future negotiations.

Challenges to MINURSO's operations and

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN SAHARA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2440](#) (31 October 2018) extended the mandate of MINURSO for six months and expressed full support for the intention of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to initiate a renewed negotiations process before the end of the year. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8387](#) (31 October 2018) was the meeting record and explanation of vote for the mandate renewal of MINURSO. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/889](#) (3 October 2018) was on MINURSO.

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## Western Sahara

steps taken to address them are another issue. The parties have had significantly divergent interpretations of the mandate of MINURSO.

The Council may issue a statement that welcomes the initial roundtable meeting in Geneva, expressing support for the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, acknowledging the momentum generated by the resumption of direct contacts between the parties and encouraging Morocco, the Polisario, Algeria and Mauritania to engage constructively at the next roundtable meeting.

### Council Dynamics

Since last year, the US has sought to have the Council apply greater pressure on the

parties to break the inertia around the political process. It has done so by pushing for six-month extensions of MINURSO since April 2018, instead of the one-year extensions that had been the practice since 2008, suggesting that it may not support further extensions of MINURSO's mandate without progress on resuming negotiations. During MINURSO's mandate renewal in October, the US contended that maintaining such pressure was necessary until a reliable political process is in place. France was the leading proponent for a 12-month extension this past October, reflecting the staunch support that it provides in the Council to Morocco, which has not been keen to have the more frequent reporting and

Security Council meetings on Western Sahara that result from the shorter mandate extensions. Overall, members have been supportive of the efforts of the Personal Envoy.

Incoming member South Africa is a strong supporter of the Polisario Front. The African Council members do not have a shared position on Western Sahara, with only South Africa among next year's A3 having recognised an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, as proclaimed by Polisario in 1976.

The US is the penholder on Western Sahara. Resolutions are initially discussed among the Group of Friends, comprising France, Russia, the UK, and the US, joined by Spain, the former colonial power.

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## Sudan (Darfur)

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, Ambassador Joanna Wroncka (Poland), chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, is expected to provide the quarterly briefing to the Security Council on the committee's work. Also in January, the Council expects to receive the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as requested in resolution 2429; at press time a briefing on the report was not scheduled to take place and may occur in February.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June 2019.

### Key Recent Developments

According to the Secretary-General's most recent report, the security situation in Darfur has "remained relatively stable" except for intermittent clashes in the Jebel Marra area between government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid, and the persistence of intercommunal conflict and disputes over land and resources. While there was a decrease in human rights incidents, attacks against civilians—particularly internally displaced persons—have continued with impunity, and sexual and gender-based violence remains a serious concern, the report said. The report contained proposed "benchmarks

and indicators of achievement" for the eventual exit of UNAMID with a view towards this exit taking place in 2020, "provided that there is no significant change in the security situation in Darfur and key indicators are fulfilled", as stated in resolution 2429. The resolution reduced UNAMID's troop ceiling from 8,735 to 4,050 military personnel.

On 11 December 2018, the Council adopted a presidential statement that took note of the Secretary-General's report, including the proposed benchmarks and indicators of achievement, and acknowledged that "progress towards achieving the benchmarks and indicators will contribute towards the successful transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding in Darfur". The presidential statement requested the Secretary-General, and invited the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, to provide detailed reporting on the progress made towards achieving the benchmarks and indicators in the regular 90-day reports, and requested UNAMID and the UN Country Team (UNCT) "to ensure robust monitoring of progress against the benchmarks and indicators". It acknowledged that some of the proposed benchmarks and indicators "are of more immediate priority", while others "reflect longer-term peacebuilding objectives in Darfur", and requested the Secretary-General

and invited the Chairperson of the AU Commission to "attach particular priority to progress against the benchmarks and indicators focused on protection of civilians, particularly relating to internally displaced persons and returning refugees, human rights, rule of law, the humanitarian situation, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the 90-day reports and upcoming strategic review to help guide the Security Council's considerations on the future of UNAMID's mandate". (For more details, see our *What's In Blue* story of 10 December 2018.)

In a press conference on 2 December 2018, Joint Special Representative and head of UNAMID Jeremiah Mamabolo said that in line with the mission's drawdown as set out in resolution 2429, UNAMID has handed over eight team sites to the government of Sudan, with two others to be closed before the end of December; three community policing centres were handed over in October, and the closure of three sector-headquarters is underway, to be completed by 30 June 2019. With regard to peacekeeping operations in the Jebel Marra area, he said the mission has significantly reconfigured its military component and would reduce the force by 3,265 uniformed personnel by 31 December 2018 and by another 1,420 by the end of June

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2429 (13 July 2018) renewed UNAMID's mandate until 30 June 2019. S/RES/2400 (8 February 2018) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts on Sudan. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/19 (11 December 2018) was on UNAMID and the Secretary-General's proposed benchmarks and indicators. Secretary-General's Report S/2018/912 (12 October 2018) was the 90-day report on UNAMID. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8425 (14 December 2018) was a semi-annual briefing by ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda. S/PV.8377 (22 October 2018) was a briefing on UNAMID.

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## Sudan (Darfur)

2019, to reach a strength of 4,050 military personnel by end of June 2019.

Some recent gains have been made in advancing the Darfur peace process and the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD). On 22 and 23 November 2018, a meeting took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with two Darfur non-signatory movements, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) and the Gibril Ibrahim faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM-Gibril), focusing on achieving a pre-negotiation framework that would facilitate the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement and the resumption of political negotiations. On 6 December 2018, a pre-negotiation agreement for the resumption of the peace process in Darfur was signed in Berlin, Germany, between the government of Sudan and the SLA-MM and JEM-Gibril, providing for the resumption of negotiations under the DDPD, under the auspices of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel. On 9 December 2018, the 14th meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission of the DDPD was held in Khartoum, Sudan. According to a press release issued after the meeting, the commission discussed progress and challenges in the implementation of the DDPD since its last meeting on 11 July 2018, as well as disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants, arms collection, and the voluntary return of internally displaced persons. The commission also welcomed the signing of the pre-negotiation agreement in Berlin and expressed hope that this would lead to substantive negotiations on cessation of hostilities and to the resumption of negotiations in Doha in January 2019.

On 14 December 2018, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda briefed the Council,

providing the semi-annual briefing on the ICC's work with regard to Darfur. Bensouda noted that while levels of violence in Darfur have decreased, impunity as well as reports of serious crimes persist. Violations of the ICC's Rome Statute, including failure to arrest fugitives as they cross international borders, are unlikely to end if the Security Council remains unwilling to take action against such non-compliance, she said.

### Sanctions-Related Developments

On 3 October 2018, Wroniecka provided Council members with the quarterly briefing on the committee's work. She highlighted aspects of the interim report of the Panel of Experts presented to the committee on 17 August 2018 (which, unlike the final report, is not made public). She said the report noted that the Sudanese government continued to transfer weapons to Darfur without the required approval of the committee, that the panel is investigating instances of potential violations of the arms embargo by rebel groups, and that there is a growing presence of Darfuri armed groups in Libya. On 24 October 2018, the committee was briefed by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, on the current situation regarding sexual violence in Sudan and particularly Darfur. The Special Representative informed the committee of the ongoing patterns of sexual violence in Darfur as well as the progress made by the government of Sudan to address them.

### Key Issues and Options

A key issue that Council members will want to follow closely is the effect of further troop reductions on the security situation as well as implementation of the mission's revised priorities as set out in resolution 2429, including on human rights reporting and intercommunal mediation efforts. An option would be to invite Mamabolo to brief on this as well as on next steps in the implementation of the DDPD, given recent developments.

Another issue is to consider reviewing the sanctions measures on Darfur as resolution 2400 expressed the Council's intention to do so regularly. One option is for such considerations to be further informed by the final report of the Panel of Experts due by 12 January 2019.

### Council Dynamics

Council members continue to differ in their assessment of the situation in Darfur. Some members seem to view more guarded recognition of progress as appropriate, while others are generally more positive in their assessment. These differences were again made apparent during negotiations of the 11 December 2018 presidential statement, which was first circulated by the UK, the penholder on Darfur, on 5 November. Multiple rounds of bilateral negotiations, in particular with Ethiopia, were necessary to achieve a final text, and several compromises were made. For example, the initial draft welcomed the Secretary-General's report and endorsed the benchmarks and indicators it put forward. However, the endorsement was removed from the adopted statement, which only takes note of the report instead of welcoming it. This and other changes were made following input primarily from Ethiopia, supported by Bolivia, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kuwait and Russia.

At the 14 December 2018 briefing, the US and France emphasised the importance of human rights monitoring as UNAMID draws down. The UK expressed hope that Sudan will proceed with plans to establish an OHCHR country office while helping to ensure a smooth transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding.

The UK is the penholder on Darfur; Poland chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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## Cyprus

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) ahead of its 31 January expiry. Special Representative and head of mission Elizabeth Spehar is expected

to brief on the latest UNFICYP report and recent developments. A representative from the Department of Political Affairs might also brief.

### Key Recent Developments

An impasse in the political process in Cyprus

has continued since the breakdown of unification talks in the summer of 2017. Despite the prolonged stalemate on the political front, the Council has so far chosen not to initiate any significant changes to the mission's mandate or its size. In July 2018, the Council adopted

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2430 (26 July 2018) extended the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months until 31 January 2019. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2018/919 (15 October 2018) was on the outcome of Lute's consultations with the parties. S/2018/610 (14 June 2018) was on progress towards a settlement in Cyprus. **Security Council Meeting Record** S/PV.8317 (26 July 2018) was the meeting at which the Council adopted resolution 2430.

resolution 2430, which extended the mandate of UNFICYP in its current configuration for another six months. It also called on all sides to engage constructively with UN consultant Jane Holl Lute. The Secretary-General appointed Lute in July 2018 and directed her to consult with the parties and seek their reflections on the negotiation process.

In its July mandate renewal resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on his good offices in Cyprus, with the aim of getting more information about the outcome of Lute's consultations with the parties. On 30 October 2018, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed Council members in consultations on the 15 October 2018 report. The report lacked substantial information on Lute's talks, however. The Secretary-General expressed his belief that there are still prospects for a comprehensive settlement, noting that an unchanging status quo is not sustainable and that the time of continued support for an open-ended process bearing no results was over, but refrained from imposing any timeframe for a political solution. He emphasised that before restarting negotiations, the sides should agree on the terms of reference to represent a starting point for a negotiated solution.

In December 2018, Lute held another round of consultations with the parties. She has continued to conduct her consultations in a low-key manner and has not made any public statements, but according to media reports, Lute was working with the Cypriot leaders on mutually acceptable terms of reference for the resumption of talks, with the goal of getting agreement on this by the end of 2018. While both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akıncı, respectively, described their meetings with Lute as productive, no agreement had been reached at press time.

In his latest report, the Secretary-General warned that exploratory drilling for the hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus had the potential to raise tensions and have a negative effect on negotiations. In 2014, negotiations between the Cypriot leaders came to a standstill because of disagreement over this issue. The tensions rose again earlier this

year after Turkey deployed naval warships to prevent planned drilling activities by the Italian energy company Eni in Cyprus' exclusive economic zone. Turkey has claimed that it was protecting the rights of Turkish Cypriots, who are excluded from the process given that the internationally-recognised Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus concluded all the agreements on offshore drilling. In November 2018, Exxon Mobil started exploratory drilling offshore. Soon after, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs emphasised in a statement that activities by international companies in Cyprus' waters could have a negative effect on stability in the area.

In other developments, the Secretary-General announced on 8 November 2018 the appointment of Major General Cheryl Pearce (Australia) as the new Force Commander of UNFICYP. Pearce succeeds Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir (Bangladesh), who had served in the position since July 2016.

### Key Issues and Options

The Council's primary concern regarding Cyprus remains the lack of progress in the unification talks and whether the Council should play a role in stimulating the process. Given the protracted impasse in the political process, an issue for the Council is whether to consider further changes to the mission's mandate, including downsizing options and a possible exit strategy.

With Lute's consultations with the parties characterised by a lack of public information around the substantive elements, Council members will be interested in hearing more about their outcome and on prospects for a political settlement, which will play a major role in guiding discussions on UNFICYP's mandate renewal.

So far, the Council has been wary of initiating discussions about the specifics of mandate changes or possible downsizing of the mission, fearing a negative impact on the situation on the ground and on the political process. Council members could, however, be more open to these discussions during the mandate renewal upcoming in January 2019, especially if the current stalemate in unification talks persists.

### Council Dynamics

Similar to other issues of low intensity on the Council's agenda, only a few members with particular interest in the conflict follow the situation in Cyprus closely. These are mainly France, Russia and the UK, the latter also being one of the guarantor powers under the 1960 treaty guaranteeing the independence, territorial integrity, and security of Cyprus.

The US has become more engaged in efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus problem as the island gained prominence because of its hydrocarbon resources and the strategic importance of its location in relation to the fight against terrorism in the Middle East, as well as due to the growing security concerns overall in the eastern Mediterranean region.

The Council is united in its support for negotiations that would lead to a settlement, but members differ somewhat on the conditions and timeframe for the reunification talks. Some members, the UK in particular, seem frustrated by the protracted process. These members appear to share the view that this process cannot be open-ended and that the Council could stimulate the negotiations by putting pressure on both sides. However, Russia has strongly opposed any attempt to exert pressure on both sides and affect negotiations in any way, maintaining that the process must be Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned in order to achieve lasting results.

During the July negotiations on the mandate renewal, the US seemed to have proposed adding to the draft resolution specific references to timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process, as well as a request for a comprehensive strategic review of the mission that would have evaluated every aspect of UNFICYP. These suggestions were not included in the final text of the resolution, however. In the absence of progress on the political front, it is likely that the US position will gain more support from other members who have so far been cautious on this issue. Russia is likely to continue to oppose any drastic changes to the mission's mandate and troop numbers.

The UK is the penholder on Cyprus.

# Colombia

## Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council will receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. Consultations are expected to follow the briefing.

The mandate of the verification mission expires on 25 September 2019.

## Key Recent Developments

In the last few months, the implementation of the November 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace in Colombia has been marked by a period of transition to the new administration of President Iván Duque, who took office in August 2018. Although it has largely maintained the governmental positions on issues that the mission is mandated to verify, several factors continue to have a negative impact on the implementation of the agreement.

The limited access to economic opportunities for former combatants continues to hamper the reintegration process. In a 28 September 2018 report, the Secretary-General reiterated the lessons learned until now about this process, emphasising particularly the need to connect reintegration more directly to local development, to empower local authorities, and to link up more systematically with the private sector, universities and other actors willing and able to assist with long-term reintegration.

A politically divisive issue continues to be the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the justice component of the transitional justice system. Briefing the Council on 10 October 2018, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, Jean Arnault, highlighted the sense of legal uncertainty that remains pervasive among former members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), owing to the controversy surrounding the protracted political, legal and constitutional debates over the establishment of the SJP. Although an August 2018 ruling of the Constitutional Court upheld the powers of the SJP, some sectors continue to question its role. Several former FARC-EP leaders have refused to appear in front of the SJP and are currently at large. Separately, the ICC prosecutor's 2018

report on preliminary examination activities took note of the creation of a special and differentiated procedure for state agents, which has been challenged before the Constitutional Court and which could "call into question the genuineness of the proceedings... [and] may impact on the admissibility [by the ICC] of potential cases pertaining to state agents". The situation in Colombia has been under preliminary examination by the ICC since June 2004, focusing on alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Over the last two years, some former members of the FARC-EP, frustrated with the peace process, have decided to take up arms again. FARC-EP dissidence and other armed groups pose a growing security challenge and have a destabilising impact on rural communities. Human rights defenders and social leaders are increasingly targeted even as overall homicide rates have decreased by 40 percent in Colombia, as reported on 3 December 2018 by Michel Forst, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. Although not incident-free, the security situation of former FARC-EP members in the territories with state-provided security measures is significantly better than that of members in other locations.

The Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) has continued targeting civilians, clashing with security forces, and carrying out attacks against infrastructure in Colombia as well as in Venezuela. Talks held with the administration of then-President Juan Manuel Santos were suspended in August, and the new administration announced that they would not be resumed until the ELN releases kidnap victims and unilaterally ceases to commit verifiable criminal acts.

On 10 December 2018, the Secretary-General appointed Carlos Ruiz Massieu as his Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. He will succeed Arnault, who had worked on the file since 2015, first as delegate of the Secretary-General to the peace talks in Havana and subsequently as head of the UN Mission in Colombia and its successor, the Verification Mission.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

The special rapporteur on the situation of human

rights defenders, Michel Forst, visited the country from 20 November to 3 December 2018 and met with more than 200 human rights defenders, most of them women, from various regions. "Since the adoption of a peace agreement in Colombia two years ago, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of killings, threats and intimidation of human rights defenders in the country", he said in a statement on 3 December, which presented a series of recommendations to the Colombian authorities and other actors to improve the protection of human rights defenders, including to improve their public image and to prioritise the fight against corruption and organised crime, particularly in locations governed, in practice, by armed groups.

## Key Issues and Options

An important issue is ensuring that the peace agreement is implemented in its entirety under the new administration, which has already announced changes regarding agrarian reform, transitional justice mechanisms, and the cultivation of coca. Council members could follow up on the invitation conveyed by Foreign Minister Carlos Holmes Trujillo in September 2018 and organise a visiting mission to Colombia to convey the Council's unanimous support for the agreement and reassure Colombians about the irreversibility of the process.

The government's ability to develop and finance a strategy for reintegrating former FARC-EP members into society and to provide safety and security in areas previously occupied by the FARC-EP remain critical issues in the successful implementation of the agreement. Council members could encourage dialogue between representatives of the government and former FARC-EP to overcome the trust deficit and discuss how outstanding issues can be addressed.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are unified in their support of the peace process in Colombia. Several members have viewed engagement in Colombia as a rare bright spot for the Council as it struggles to play an effective role in several other conflict situations. In 2019, the Dominican Republic will succeed Bolivia in the Council as one of two Council members from Latin America and the Caribbean and will be serving along with Peru.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA** Security Council Resolution S/RES/2435 (13 September 2018) renewed the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. **Secretary-General's Report S/2018/874** (28 September 2018) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8368** (10 October 2018) was a briefing by Arnault on the Secretary-General's latest report on Colombia. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13538** (11 October 2018) reaffirmed the Council members' commitment to working with Colombia, under the new administration, to renew momentum behind implementation of the peace agreement.

# UNRCCA (Central Asia)

## Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, is expected to brief Council members in consultations on UNRCCA's activities.

UNRCCA is a UN special political mission, established by the Secretary-General in 2007 for an open-ended period based upon a proposal by the five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). It is based in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, with office locations in all Central Asian states, and its mandate includes a liaison function, monitoring and analysis of the situation on the ground, maintaining contact with regional organisations, offering a political framework for prevention activities of the entire UN system in the region and additionally maintaining contact with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to ensure a comprehensive overview of the regional situation. Its proposed budget for 2019 from assessed contributions (the regular UN budget) is around \$3 million, and it has a staff of 30 (22 national, 8 international). It is established practice that the Special Representative reports orally to the Council twice a year.

## Key Recent Developments

Gherman last briefed Council members in consultations on 28 June 2018. On 2 July 2018, she spoke during a briefing organised by the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee, open to all UN member states, that focused on Central Asia, providing an update, among other issues, on the Joint Plan of Action for Central Asia (JPoA), which implements the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia.

UNRCCA organised the eighth annual meeting of deputy foreign ministers of Central Asian states, which took place on 16 November 2018 in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan). Since December 2017, this format also includes the deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan. Cross-border challenges discussed at last November's meeting focused on radicalisation, the economy and the environment. The Central Asian states and UNRCCA also discussed their priority areas of cooperation for 2019.

Together with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, UNRCCA organised a workshop titled "Good Practices in Border Security and Management to Strengthen National and Regional Capacities in Countering Terrorism" held from 15 to 19 October 2018 in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan).

## Issues and Options

One issue for the Council is what more it can do to support UNRCCA's work. An option would be to hear Gherman's briefing in an open meeting, followed by closed consultations. This would allow Council members to publicly express support for the work of UNRCCA and to raise awareness of its activities and then have a potentially less formal, more detailed and frank exchange with Gherman in closed consultations.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the work of UNRCCA. Until early 2015, Council members issued a press statement following each briefing, encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, UNRCCA, and "relevant regional organisations". In September 2015, Russia, the penholder on UNRCCA, sought to add specific references

to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), as well as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the EU. The P3 (France, the UK and the US) opposed these additions, seeing the CIS, the CSTO and the SCO as vehicles for enhancing Russian influence in the region. No press statements could be agreed on for more than two years. As a Central Asian state, Kazakhstan has sought to overcome those differences during its 2017-2018 term on the Council. In February 2017, Council members agreed on press elements that welcomed the Special Representative's briefing, reaffirmed the importance of conflict prevention tools, acknowledged the role of UNRCCA, and encouraged greater cooperation between the states in the region, UNRCCA, and relevant regional organisations. Under the Kazakh Council presidency in January 2018, the Council found consensus on a press statement, again referring to "relevant regional organisations" without naming them. In light of the country's close relationship with Kazakhstan, it appears that this was acceptable to Russia, with the addition of "including those organizations of which the Central Asian States are members". In the statement, Council members reaffirmed the importance of preventive diplomacy and acknowledged UNRCCA's role in that regard. They further expressed support for UNRCCA's role in regional counter-terrorism activities, welcomed its engagement related to border management, and commended efforts related to trans-boundary water management and combatting drug trafficking. Following the last meeting on UNRCCA in June 2018, divisions between Council members were not overcome, and no press statement was issued.

**UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA** *Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/2* (19 January 2018) was on Afghanistan and Central Asia, commending the role of UNRCCA, including its support in implementing the JPoA and addressing the region's narcotics problem. *Security Council Letters S/2007/280* (15 May 2007) was from the president of the Security Council, taking note of the Secretary-General's intention to establish UNRCCA. *S/2007/279* (7 May 2007) was from the Secretary-General, informing the Council about his intention to establish the UNRCCA in Ashgabat. *Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8162* (19 January 2018) was an open debate entitled "Building regional partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a model to link security and development". *Security Council Press Statements SC/13179* (25 January 2018) reaffirmed the importance of preventive diplomacy and acknowledged UNRCCA's role in that regard. It also expressed support for UNRCCA's role in regional counter-terrorism activities, welcomed its engagement related to border management, and commended efforts related to trans-boundary water management and combatting drug trafficking. *SC/11751* (23 January 2015) welcomed the briefing on 21 January by Miroslav Jenča, Special Representative and head of UNRCCA, and reiterated support for the Centre as an early-warning and preventive-diplomacy tool. *General Assembly Document A/RES/72/7* (17 November 2017) was a resolution noting the tenth anniversary of UNRCCA's establishment and emphasising its role in preventive diplomacy in the region.

# Libya

## Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Council is expected to receive briefings by the Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salamé. A briefing by the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee is also expected.

The mandate of UNSMIL expires on 15 September 2019, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee expires on 20 February 2020.

## Key Recent Developments

During his most recent briefing to the Council on 8 November 2018, Salamé emphasised that the conditions in Libyan prisons continue to be a key factor in the conflict, describing them as “appalling” and as “incubators” for radicalisation. UNSMIL, together with the internationally-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), has established the Security Arrangements Committee for Greater Tripoli, implementing a plan aimed at the creation of professional security forces. The GNA currently relies on armed groups for its security.

An international conference on Libya took place in Palermo, Italy, from 12 to 13 November 2018. The participants did not release a joint statement, but the Italian government issued a conclusion, reaffirming the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) and the United Nations Action Plan on Libya and detailing commitments made by participants. General Khalifa Haftar, commander of the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) operating in eastern Libya, was invited to the conference and present in Palermo at the time, but the LNA’s spokesperson stated that he was there to hold meetings, not to attend the conference. The Italian government later released pictures of Haftar in Palermo, together with the Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte as well as Libyan Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj, head of the GNA.

On 6 November 2018, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) presented

UNSMIL with its final report as an outcome of the national conference process. Initiated by Salamé, the national conference process is aimed at bringing Libyans together around a common national narrative; Salamé asked HD at the beginning of 2018 to conduct nationwide consultations and prepare an outcome document. This report, which lays out the ideas of Libyans from all parts of the country for their future, will be the basis of a final event in the first quarter of 2019, in the lead-up to elections.

According to the latest annual report of the Secretary-General on trafficking in persons in armed conflict, the political divisions in Libya, together with the proliferation of armed groups and weapons, have caused trafficking networks to multiply. This was accompanied by widespread conflict-related sexual violence against asylum seekers, migrants and refugees.

As at early December 2018, UNHCR reported that over 193,500 people remained internally displaced in Libya. In addition, the UN’s 2018 humanitarian response plan for Libya of \$312.7 million was funded at 24.9 percent, with \$234.8 million outstanding, representing the second-lowest coverage of all UN humanitarian response plans, after Haiti with 12.9 percent.

On 5 November 2018, the Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts and renewing measures related to the illicit export of crude oil from Libya until 20 February 2020. The resolution was adopted with 13 votes in favour; China and Russia abstained. The Netherlands and Sweden jointly proposed adding a new criterion for sanctioning individuals for acts that “include but are not limited to planning, directing or committing acts involving sexual and gender-based violence”: this language was included but as China and Russia did not agree with this, they abstained.

Following a terrorist attack on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 December 2018, Council members issued a press statement condemning the attack in the strongest terms.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

On 16 November 2018, the 1970 Sanctions Committee added Salah Badi, a militia leader who has repeatedly been involved in armed clashes in Tripoli, to its sanctions list for targeted sanctions (asset freeze and travel ban). On 17 December, Swedish Ambassador Olof Skoog briefed the Council in his position as outgoing chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee. He noted the labour-intensity of the committee and the difficulty of reaching consensus because of the divisions in the Council regarding sanctions. Despite that, he pointed out, the committee had been able to agree on individuals for listing for the first time since 2011. The committee had also issued two implementation assistance notices for UN member states to support them in their implementation of the asset freeze. Also, for the first time since the sanctions committee was established in 2011, its chair travelled to Libya in November 2018. Skoog was not able to travel to the eastern part of the country, however, although this had been part of the trip’s terms of reference. He was therefore unable to brief the Council on his travels during the Council’s last meeting on Libya on 8 November in his capacity as chair, and could only share observations in a national capacity. The content of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee’s chair briefings to the Council have to be agreed upon by all members beforehand, and it seems that some Council members argued that the chair had not accomplished the goals of the mission in line with the terms of reference.

## ICC-Related Developments

On 2 November 2018, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda delivered her semi-annual briefing on recent developments concerning cases in Libya. Saif al-Islam Gaddafi, whose extradition has been sought by the ICC, has been at large since he was set free by the Abu-Bakr al-Siddiq Brigade, a Zintan-based militia, in June 2017. According to the final report of the Panel of Experts, his lawyer says that he resides in Zintan. On 5 June 2018, he filed an inadmissibility challenge to his case. Former internal security chief Mohamed Khaled al-Tuhamy, allegedly responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2011 in Libya, also remains at large. On 4 July, Pre-Trial Chamber I of the ICC issued a second arrest warrant for Mahmoud Mustafa

**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2441](#) (5 November 2018) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee as well as the measures related to the illicit export of crude oil from Libya until 20 February 2020. [S/RES/2437](#) (3 October 2018) renewed the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. [S/RES/2434](#) (13 September 2018) extended UNSMIL’s mandate until 15 September 2019. [S/RES/2420](#) (11 June 2018) renewed the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. [S/RES/1970](#) (26 February 2011) referred the situation in Libya to the ICC, imposed an arms embargo and targeted sanctions (asset freeze and travel ban), established a sanctions committee and included individuals and entities for listing in an annex. [Secretary-General’s Reports S/2018/807](#) (31 August 2018) was on the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya. [S/2018/780](#) (24 August 2018) was on UNSMIL. [Security Council Letter S/2018/871](#) (26 September 2018) was from the chargé d’affaires ad interim of Libya to the President of the Security Council on the “Asset-Freezing (Compensation) Bill” being debated in the UK House of Commons. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8428](#) (17 December 2018) was the briefing by the outgoing chairs of Council’s subsidiary bodies. [S/PV.8394](#) (8 November 2018) was the latest briefing by the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ghassan Salamé. [S/PV.8389](#) (5 November 2018) was the meeting during which resolution 2441 was adopted. [S/PV.8388](#) (2 November 2018) was the semi-annual briefing by ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda on recent developments concerning cases in Libya. [Sanctions Committee Document S/2018/812](#) (5 September 2018) was the Panel of Experts’ final report.

## Libya

Busayf Al-Werfalli, a commander participating in General Khalifa Haftar's 2014 Operation Dignity in Benghazi. According to the first arrest warrant, issued on 15 August 2017, Al-Werfalli appears to be directly responsible for the deaths of 33 persons during seven different incidents in Benghazi or surrounding areas between June 2016 and July 2017, either by killing them himself or ordering their executions. The second arrest warrant relates to an eighth incident, on 24 January 2018, in which Al-Werfalli allegedly killed ten persons in Benghazi. To date, Al-Werfalli has not been surrendered to the ICC despite reports that he turned himself in to the military police in eastern Libya after news about the executions became public.

### Key Issues and Options

The existing political momentum for the utilisation of sanctions to target individuals such as militia leaders and key actors involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling could continue to be seized upon by states to recommend further names to the sanctions committee. The Council could issue a press statement in support of UNSMIL's and the GNA's latest efforts to establish professional security forces, also with a view to working towards a conducive environment for peaceful and credible elections in 2019. At the appropriate time and in support of Salamé's work, the Security Council might consider a visiting mission to Libya and neighbouring countries.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Members are generally supportive of UNSMIL's role in the stabilisation of Libya but have divergent views on how best to achieve this goal. Regarding the elections, it seems that Council members are now more united in looking towards a date in spring 2019, as suggested by Salamé and reiterated during the Palermo conference. Council resolutions and presidential statements have called upon UN member states to cease support for and official contact with parallel institutions in Libya, but it seems that some countries, including Council members, have not respected this.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, and Germany will chair the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee during its term as an elected member from 2019 to 2020.

## Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

### Expected Council Action

In January 2019, the Security Council is expected to hold its quarterly open debate on the Middle East, focusing on Israel/Palestine. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov will likely brief.

### Key Recent Developments

On 6 December 2018, the General Assembly voted down a draft resolution titled "Activities of Hamas and other militant groups in Gaza" proposed by the US that would have condemned Hamas "for repeatedly firing rockets into Israel and for inciting violence", demanded that "Hamas and other militant actors, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, cease all provocative actions and violent activity", and encouraged "tangible steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation". The draft received 87 votes in favour, 57 against, and 33 abstentions, failing to garner the two-thirds majority needed for adoption as an "important matter" under article 18 (2) of the UN Charter. Prior to the vote on the text itself, the General Assembly voted that the issue was an "important matter" (75 in favour, 72

against, and 26 abstentions).

Violence and tensions rose on the West Bank in December. On 9 December 2018, a Palestinian opened fire on Israelis near Ofra, a West Bank settlement, wounding seven. One of the victims was a pregnant woman, whose baby was delivered but later died. Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack. On 13 December, an unidentified assailant shot and killed two Israeli soldiers near Ramallah. During the ensuing days, over 130 suspects were arrested in an effort to find the assailant, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on 18 December. Israeli settlers demonstrating on the West Bank vandalised cars belonging to Palestinians.

On 15 December, Australia recognised West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, although it said it would not move its embassy to the city until there was agreement on a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians. In a statement, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs called the decision "a step in the right direction". Saeb Erekat, a senior Palestinian Liberation Organization official, released a statement referring to the "Australian government's decision to recognize Jerusalem as

Israel's capital as one wherein petty domestic politics steer irresponsible policies that contradict world peace and security".

The Council held its monthly meeting on the Middle East (Israel/Palestine) on 18 December 2018. Mladenov said that settlement activity had continued in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, reiterating that this is a major obstacle to peace and a violation of international law. In this regard, he noted that Israel has announced that it will retroactively legalise the construction of 2,000 homes "built on private Palestinian land in settlements" and that measures have been pursued to move forward with the construction of 82 new homes in Ofra settlement and two industrial zones in other settlements. Mladenov further "warn[ed] of the dangerous escalation of terrorist attacks, clashes, and violence in the West Bank".

### Key Issues and Options

Key issues that the Council continues to face regarding the Israel/Palestinian situation include:

- recurring violations of resolution 2334,

**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST (ISRAEL/PALESTINE)** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. [Secretary-General's Report S/2018/614](#) (18 June 2018) was a written report on the implementation of resolution 2334, relating to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. [Security Council Letter S/2018/454](#) (14 May 2018) was from ten members of the Council requesting the Secretary-General's quarterly report on Israel/Palestine to be provided in written form, rather than only orally. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8429](#) (18 December 2018) was a briefing by Mladenov on the implementation of resolution 2334.

## Middle East (Israel/Palestine)

including ongoing settlement activity, violence against civilians (including terrorism), provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric;

- the need to promote intra-Palestinian reconciliation; and
- the humanitarian needs of Gaza.

In the coming months, the Council will also have to consider how it will respond to the US peace plan if it is made public in early 2019.

Given the strongly contrasting views on this issue held by Kuwait and the US—which have unsuccessfully tried to draft outcomes in 2018—one possible option is for other members to take the lead in drafting outcomes, perhaps contributing to a perception that initial versions of drafts may serve as a more balanced, objective basis for negotiation among the members.

### Council Dynamics

There is a stark contrast between the views of the US and other members on Israel/Palestine. Under the Trump administration, the US delegation has often focused its remarks during these monthly meetings on other issues in the Middle East, such as Iran or Syria, rather than addressing Israel/Palestine. It has maintained that the UN is biased against Israel and spends too much time discussing Israel/Palestine. Other members tend to condemn continued Israeli settlement activity, which they maintain is making the prospects of a two-state solution more remote.

At the 18 December meeting, Ambassador

Nikki Haley (US) said that the peace plan that the US was preparing would present “the choice between a hopeful future that sheds the tired, old and unrealistic demands of the past or a darker future that sticks with the proven failed talking points of the past”. This view would seem to be at odds with the 18 December statement of the EU8 (France, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the UK, Belgium, Germany and Italy), which affirmed the “internationally agreed parameters” for peace in the Middle East, including “a two-state solution based on 1967 borders with Jerusalem as the capital of both States”. At the time of the statement, the EU8 consisted of seven current and incoming Council members, as well as Italy, which in 2017 served the first year of a split term with the Netherlands.

Several Council members continue to reiterate their desire to receive written reports in advance of the quarterly briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334. With the exception of the written report produced in June 2018, these reports have only been conveyed orally. The Secretariat’s decision to produce a written report in June was prompted by a letter submitted by ten Council members—Bolivia, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, France, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Peru and Sweden—on 14 May 2018 requesting the quarterly reports to be in writing.

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