

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 1 In Hindsight: the UNSC and Climate Change
- 3 Status Update
- 5 Syria
- 6 Democratic Republic of the Congo
- 7 West Africa and the Sahel
- 9 Colombia
- 11 Yemen
- 12 Libya
- 13 Cyprus
- 15 Preserving Humanitarian Space
- 16 Lebanon
- 17 UNRCCA
- 19 Sudan
- 20 The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question
- 21 Central African Republic

Overview

In July, France will have the presidency of the Security Council. Meetings are expected to be held in person this month.

As a signature event of its presidency, France has chosen to convene a ministerial level briefing on preserving [humanitarian space](#) under the protection of civilians agenda item. Jean-Yves Le Drian, France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, will chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres; Robert Mardini, the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross; and Lucile Grosjean, the Delegate Director of Advocacy at Action Against Hunger, are the anticipated briefers.

The Council is planning to vote on a resolution to renew the cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery mechanism in [Syria](#), which expires on 10 July. There will also be the monthly meetings on the political, humanitarian and chemical weapons tracks in Syria.

Several other Middle East issues are scheduled this month:

- [Yemen](#), the monthly meeting on developments, as well as the renewal of the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA);
- [Lebanon](#), a meeting on the implementation of [resolution 1701](#) (2006), which called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a militant group Hezbollah and Israel; and
- "The situation in the [Middle East](#), including the Palestinian question", the quarterly open debate.

African issues anticipated in July include meetings on:

- [DRC](#), on progress towards implementing the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO);
- [West Africa and the Sahel](#), the biannual briefing on the UN Office in West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS);
- [Libya](#), a ministerial-level briefing chaired by the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean Yves Le Drian, on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and recent developments; and
- [Darfur](#), on the drawdown and closure of the UN/AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID).

The Council also expects to vote on a resolution renewing the mandate of the 2127 [CAR](#) sanctions regime and its panel of experts.

A meeting is anticipated on [Colombia](#), focusing on the UN Verification Mission and recent developments.

The mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in [Cyprus](#) (UNFICYP) is expected to be renewed. Earlier in the month, members will meet on UNFICYP and recent developments in Cyprus.

The semi-annual meeting on the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for [Central Asia](#) (UNRCCA) is also anticipated in July.

The Council will also be closely watching developments related to Tigray, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and Myanmar. Meetings on these and other issues are possible.

In Hindsight: The UN Security Council and Climate Change

In recent years, few thematic issues addressed by the Security Council have aroused as much attention, or controversy, as climate change and security. While it is not a formal agenda item, climate change and security has increasingly become a focus of signature events spearheaded by Council presidents. More and more, the Council is also

emphasising the need for risk assessments and risk management strategies for climate change and ecological changes, and other factors, by the UN and host governments in resolutions, particularly in Africa but also in other regions. And there are discussions among members about pursuing a thematic resolution on climate and security,

30 June 2021

This report is available online at [securitycouncilreport.org](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org).

For daily insights by SCR on evolving Security Council actions please subscribe to our "What's In Blue" series at [securitycouncilreport.org](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org) or follow [@SCRtweets](https://twitter.com/SCRtweets) on Twitter.

In Hindsight: The UN Security Council and Climate Change

building on the 2011 presidential statement on this issue, which noted the importance of including conflict analysis and contextual information on the possible security implications of climate change in the Secretary-General's reports in relevant cases.

In June 2021, Security Council Report (SCR) published its first research report on this issue, *The UN Security Council and Climate Change*, which traces the evolution of Council engagement on this topic. From the very first time the Council took up the matter, during an April 2007 open debate, to the present, it has spurred divisions among members. Addressing climate change does not fit into conventional notions of international peace and security; the evidence of direct linkages between climate change and conflict is contested. A number of member states emphasise that climate change is essentially a sustainable development issue that should be dealt with by other UN entities, which have the expertise to address the issue and are more broadly representative of the UN's wider membership. As well, the concern has been expressed, especially by Russia, that climate change is often a distraction from the core work of the Council, as there are other more fundamental drivers of conflict in cases on the agenda.

At the same time, other members have made persuasive arguments in support of Council engagement. These countries often emphasise that factors such as drought, water scarcity, food insecurity, desertification, and displacement that are caused by or exacerbated by climate change are conflict “risk multipliers”. Rather than viewing the Security Council as a usurper of the authority of other UN organs, they believe that the different parts of the UN system, including the Security Council, need to work together to confront the security challenges of climate change. They frequently see this issue as part of the Council's conflict prevention work, and in more recent years, in the context of its peacebuilding agenda. They also tend to view climate change as a “human security” issue, whereby the negative impacts on people's livelihoods and human welfare can heighten the risk of future conflict.

At present, there are 12 members of the Security Council—Estonia, France, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, the UK, the US, and Viet Nam—that support the Council's climate-security work with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Three members—China, India and Russia—have concerns about the Council's engagement on the issue. The major change this year in Council dynamics is that the US is a supporter of a Council role on climate and security matters, whereas it was not during the previous presidential administration (January 2017 to January 2021).

Various institutional arrangements, which have been developed since 2018, support the UN's work on climate change and security; particularly notable among these are the Climate-Security Mechanism (CSM), the Group of Friends on Climate and Security and the Informal Expert Group (IEG) of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security. The Climate-Security Mechanism—which was formed jointly in 2018 by the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)—is designed to harness information and analysis on the linkages between climate change and security, and to integrate this lens into the organisation's prevention, peacebuilding and adaptation work. It is supported through voluntary funds, rather than assessed contributions, reflecting the

political sensitivities around this issue.

In 2020, ten members of the Security Council (Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Tunisia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the United Kingdom, and Viet Nam)—established the IEG of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security, which is designed to help the Council to develop a more systematic approach to climate-related security risks. The current co-chairs of the IEG are Ireland and Niger.

Germany and Nauru are the co-founders and co-chairs of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security. Initially consisting of 27 UN member states, the Group has more than doubled in size since its establishment on 1 August 2018. As at 7 May 2021, it consisted of 57 member states—representing all five UN regional groups (the African Group, the Asia-Pacific Group, the Eastern European Group, the Western European and Others Group, and the Latin American and Caribbean Group)—and the EU. It has two standing agenda items: one on the work of the Climate-Security Mechanism, and a second on the work of and dynamics in the Security Council, including the activities of the Informal Expert Group of Members of the Security Council on Climate and Security.

In light of the Council's significant engagement on climate-security matters, our report outlines ways in which the Council may choose to proceed on this issue in the future.

Efforts are likely to continue by proponents of this issue to integrate climate-security language—for example, calls for risk assessments and risk management strategies on the impacts of climate change and other environmental factors—into Council outcomes (that is, resolutions and presidential statements) on specific countries and regions. This year climate change language has already been included for the first time in cases outside of Africa, including in resolution 2561 on Cyprus and resolution 2576 on Iraq. In negotiating outcomes, efforts to consult host governments regarding climate-related security tasks, as was done in the case of resolution 2576, are helpful in reinforcing the notion that the UN is working cooperatively with them on such matters.

Some members may strive to incorporate climate-security language into the operative part of resolutions on peace operations with greater consistency, as such references are most frequently made in the preambular parts of resolutions. Field presences are likely to execute climate-related tasks if they are referenced in the operative section—that is, where mandates are outlined. In addition, including climate-security language in the operative sections could provide a stronger basis for allocating more resources to such tasks on the ground.

Another option is for the Security Council to make greater use of the advisory role of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) by soliciting its input more frequently, including in country- or region-specific cases where climate change is a security concern. This could include briefings by officials from the Peacebuilding Support Office (or the PBC chair) that focus on how the Security Council can best work with other parts of the UN system to address the security effects of climate change in vulnerable and post-conflict settings. Such briefings, and other input from the UN's peacebuilding architecture, could also include specific advice on how to craft mandates that are sensitive to the security impacts of climate change.

The Informal Expert Group could be used as a forum to follow up on climate change-related provisions in Council outcomes to

In Hindsight: The UN Security Council and Climate Change

gauge how well they are being applied in country- and region-specific cases and to discuss avenues for improved implementation.

The Council could pursue a thematic outcome of climate change and security. This could include the following elements: the request for a periodic Secretary-General's report on climate change and security, the appointment of a Special Representative on Climate and Security, the call for climate advisors in UN peace operations, and the encouragement of UN field presences to consider the security effects of climate change in their assessments, analysis and activities. These were all elements of a 2020 thematic

draft resolution that was never put to the vote due to resistance from the US, China and Russia. In such an outcome, the Security Council could also make a bold call to the international community of states to step up mitigation and adaptation efforts, while recognising the primary role of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) regarding such efforts.

For more information on SCR's work on climate change and security, please see our stories on *Energy, Climate, and Natural Resources*.

Status Update since our June Forecast

West Africa and the Sahel

On 2 June, Security Council members held an Arria-formula meeting on “strengthening an integrated approach to peace and security in the Sahel through a gendered lens”, at which the Group of Friends of Women of the Sahel was launched.

UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 7 June, François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on UNOCA and the situation in the Central African region. Among other issues, he addressed the critical situation in Chad and its relevance to fostering long-lasting peace in the region. He also addressed the situation in Cameroon; the negative effect that various armed groups, including Boko Haram and the Islamic State West Africa Province, are having in the region; and the need to promote cooperation with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

Appointment of the Secretary-General

On 8 June, the Council held a private meeting to discuss its recommendation to the General Assembly on the appointment of the Secretary-General. At the meeting, the Council adopted resolution 2580 by acclamation, recommending Secretary-General António Guterres for a second term from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2026. A communiqué was issued following the meeting.

International Criminal Tribunals

On 8 June, the Council held its semi-annual debate on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) (S/PV.8790). The IRMCT's president, Judge Carmel Agius, and its prosecutor, Serge Brammertz, briefed during the debate and met with the Informal Working Group on International Tribunals prior to this meeting.

EU-UN Cooperation

On 10 June, the Security Council held its annual meeting on “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security” (S/PV.8792). At the meeting, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell briefed Council members on strengthening the partnership with the EU to resolve issues on the Council's agenda. Borrell emphasised the importance of

multilateralism and greater collaboration between the UN and the EU in addressing cross-border threats and challenges.

Mali

On 14 June, the Council held its quarterly briefing (S/PV.8794), followed by consultations, on Mali. The Council heard briefings from the Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), El-Ghassim Wane, and the president of the Coalition des Femmes Leaders Nord, Sud et Centre du Mali (NSC), Fatima Maiga. On 29 June, the Council renewed the mandate of MINUSMA for one year. The resolution requests two Secretary-General's reports that could set in motion initiatives to increase MINUSMA's troop ceiling and to establish a UN office to support the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S). In the first case, it requests a Secretary-General's report by 15 July with recommendations on force levels and MINUSMA uniformed personnel, in light of the growing level of insecurity and physical violence against civilians in central Mali. A second Secretary-General's report is requested by 30 September with detailed and operational options to support the FC-G5S, including through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms and organisations other than through MINUSMA.

Somalia

On 14 June, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), the chair of the 751 sanctions committee on Somalia, briefed the Council on the activities of the committee from 26 February to 14 June (S/PV.8796). Byrne Nason stated that the committee had listed three members of the Al-Shabaab armed group and noted that it was considering action on six recommendations in the Panel of Experts' report. Byrne Nason also highlighted several key areas of attention related to the report: the operations of Al-Shabaab and their use of improvised explosive devices; violations of international humanitarian law; ongoing investigations into Al-Shabaab's finances; the management of weapons and ammunition by the Somali government; and the ban on the export of charcoal from the country. Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman (Somalia), who participated in the meeting, requested the Council to establish practical and achievable benchmarks for lifting the arms embargo, while criticising air strikes by Kenya in 2019. Kenya, using its right to reply during the meeting, disputed the criticism.

Status Update since our June Forecast

Working Methods Open Debate

On 16 June, the Security Council held its annual debate on working methods (S/PV.8798). The meeting was organised jointly by Estonia, the president of the Council in June, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions (IWG). The theme of this year's open debate was "Agility and innovation: lessons for the future from the COVID-19 pandemic". Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the Chair of the IWG; Loraine Sievers, co-author of "The Procedure of the UN Security Council (4th edition)"; and Karin Landgren, the Executive Director of Security Council Report, briefed the Council. The Chair of the IWG is expected to prepare an analytical summary of the statements made during the open debate, including by the briefers and by member states.

Ethiopia (Tigray)

On 15 June, Security Council members held an in-person informal interactive dialogue (IID) on the humanitarian situation in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock and WFP Executive Director David Beasley briefed on the humanitarian situation and the latest developments on the ground. A representative from the Ethiopian government also participated. Among the topics discussed were the need for a scaled-up humanitarian response, the prevailing crisis levels of food insecurity, the need for cessation of hostilities, and the presence of Eritrean troops.

Haiti

On 17 June, the Security Council convened an open briefing (S/PV.8799), followed by closed consultations, on the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of BINUH Helen La Lime presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in Haiti (S/2021/559), which was issued on 11 June. Acting Prime Minister of Haiti Claude Joseph and Chantal Hudicort Ewald, a lawyer from the Port-au-Prince Bar Association and a former member of the 1986-1987 Haitian Constitutional Assembly, also addressed the Council. Council members emphasised the need for holding free, fair, transparent and credible legislative and presidential elections, according to the electoral calendar, and the need to improve the security situation in the country. At the time of writing, Council members were considering a press statement as a follow-up to the meeting.

Myanmar

On 18 June, the Security Council held an in-person private meeting on Myanmar. The briefers were Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener and Dato Erywan bin Pehin Yusof, Second Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brunei Darussalam in his capacity as Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Burgener asked the Council for timely support and action, warning that the situation on the ground was alarming with a collapsing health care system and food security in danger. Erywan briefed on his recent visit to Myanmar, as well as the implementation of the five-point consensus reached by ASEAN leaders on 24 April. A communiqué was issued following the meeting. (S/PV.8800)

South Sudan

On 21 June, the Security Council was briefed on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Secretary-General's most recent 90-day report on South Sudan (S/2021/566) by Special Representative and head of UNMISS Nicholas Haysom (S/PV.8801). Rajab Mohandis, Executive Director and co-founder of the Organisation for Responsive Governance, briefed as a member of civil society. Consultations followed the briefing.

Afghanistan

On 22 June, the Security Council held its quarterly meeting on Afghanistan via videoconference. Deborah Lyons, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), briefed on the Secretary-General's 15 June UNAMA report (S/2021/570). Ghada Fathi Waly, the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and Mary Akrami, the Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Network, also briefed the Council. Lyons noted that the Taliban's advances in the country are significant and cautioned that the group is seizing areas surrounding provincial capitals in order to position itself to take those centres once foreign forces are fully withdrawn.

Children and Armed Conflict

On 28 June, the Security Council held its annual open debate on children and armed conflict via videoconference. Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid chaired the meeting, and several Council members were represented at ministerial level. Secretary-General António Guterres presented his annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2021/437), which was made public on 21 June. The Council was also briefed by Henrietta Fore, the Executive Director of UNICEF; Forest Whitaker, Advocate for Children Affected by War with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; and Laban Onisimus, an education specialist at Plan International Nigeria.

Cybersecurity

On 29 June, the Council held a high-level VTC open debate on cybersecurity. This was the first formal Council meeting on this topic. Kaja Kallas, the Prime Minister of Estonia, chaired the meeting. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed the Council.

Bosnia & Herzegovina

On 29 June, the Council held a briefing and consultations on Bosnia & Herzegovina, focused on the appointment of a new High Representative for BiH. Officer-in-Charge of the Europe and Central Asia Division of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Hervé Lecoq briefed the Council. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of BiH, Bisera Turković, participated in the meeting.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 29 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2581, renewing the mandate of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) until 31 December.

Status Update since our June Forecast

Iran

On 30 June, the Council held its semi-annual briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo presented the Secretary-General's latest

report on the implementation of resolution 2231 (S/2021/582). The Council's facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason (Ireland), briefed on the work of the Council related to resolution 2231. The head of the EU delegation, Ambassador Olof Skoog, briefed on the work of the JCPOA's Joint Commission.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council expects to hold its monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian situations and the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery mechanism through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing on the Syrian-Turkish border, as mandated by resolution 2533 of 11 July 2020, expires on 10 July. The Council is expected to vote on a draft resolution to renew the delivery of cross-border aid.

Key Recent Developments

With the impending expiration of resolution 2533, Syria's humanitarian crisis has been an important focus of global politics. Key amongst recent developments was the 16 June summit between US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin. While no concrete outcomes from that meeting were announced, a US official confirmed on 17 June that the two presidents discussed humanitarian access in Syria. Noting that there had been no commitments on the issue, the US official assessed that "it was a constructive conversation" and that there was "scope for the US and Russia to work together on a positive outcome so that [a] resolution gets passed". Finally, he suggested that the US and Russia could work together on "other measures to alleviate the suffering of the people of Syria".

In early June, Turkey and Russia also held bilateral talks in Moscow over, amongst other issues, Turkey's role in facilitating cross-line access for humanitarian assistance—namely, aid that traverses a domestic frontline from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control in northwest or northeast Syria. On 22 June, international media reported that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Secretary-General António Guterres that "the situation where Turkey in reality fully controls the provision of humanitarian assistance to Syria is...unacceptable". He further noted that, "with the connivance of Ankara", Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the largest armed group operating in Syria's northwest, has been "obstruct[ing] sustainable deliveries from inside the country". HTS has been designated a terrorist organisation by the Security Council, Russia, Turkey and the US.

On 23 June, the Council met to discuss the humanitarian situation in Syria with a focus on cross-border humanitarian access. Briefing the Council via videoconference (VTC), Guterres appealed to the Council to renew the cross-border mechanism for another year, stating that "a failure to extend the Council's authorisation

would have devastating consequences". He also noted that greater humanitarian access was needed, arguing that it is "important...to maintain and expand access, including cross-border and cross-line operations". Ramesh Rajasingham, the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, described in greater detail the humanitarian crisis in Syria. Addressing the northwest's humanitarian situation, he assessed that "there is simply no substitute for the cross-border operation".

Briefing the Council on 25 June, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen highlighted Syria's difficult economic, security and humanitarian conditions. Calling on the parties to the conflict to implement the nationwide ceasefire, he highlighted the 12 June attack on the largest hospital in Syria's north in Afrin, in which 18 people were killed and critical healthcare infrastructure was damaged. He also called on the Council to renew the cross-border mechanism for a period of 12 months, stating that "your unity on [renewal of the cross-border mechanism] will be critical". "The same unity", Pedersen noted, "is needed for the political process". Pedersen called for a "new constructive international dialogue...to discuss concrete steps—steps that should be reciprocal and mutual, defined with realism and precision, implemented in parallel, and which are verifiable". He announced his intention to undertake "exploratory substantive consultations" to "identify...steps that Syrian and international players could deliver".

Finally, on 3 June, the Council heard a briefing via VTC from Fernando Arias, the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Arias reiterated the view that Syria's declarations to the OPCW on its chemical weapons programmess could not be considered accurate and complete. He also briefed on a wide variety of activities that the OPCW was undertaking regarding the Syria chemical weapons file. He reminded Council members that the OPCW "is never a court or a tribunal" but instead "provides the international community with materials that will assist accountability". The OPCW's work, he added, was done "under extraordinarily difficult conditions", including "numerous and sophisticated cyberattacks..., the massive spread of disinformation about [the OPCW's] work and sometimes even the denigration of some staff members of the organization".

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 47th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to receive an oral update on 6 July from the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2533 (11 July 2020) renewed the authorisation for cross-border humanitarian aid into Syria through one border crossing (Bab al-Hawa) for 12 months. **Secretary-General's Report S/2021/583** (17 June 2021) was the regular 60-day report on the implementation of humanitarian resolutions by all parties to the conflict in Syria. **Security Council Meeting records: S/PV.8785** (3 June 2021) was a public meeting on Syria chemical weapons.

Syria

Key Issues and Options

The main issue for the Council in July will be the renewal of resolution 2533. Given the ongoing and increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Syria's northwest and northeast, as well as the need for equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccinations into areas outside Syrian government control, the Council may wish to re-authorise not only the Bab al-Hawa border crossing but also the Bab al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah crossing points. Another option would be for the Council to re-authorise only two crossings. Finally, in the absence of an agreement amongst Council members to expand access to cross-border humanitarian deliveries, the Council could adopt a technical rollover of 2533, authorising the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for another 12 months.

In addition, despite strong disagreements on the progress achieved by, and the future of, the Constitutional Committee and the broader political track of work, Council members may wish to organise a closed session of the Council on the political situation in order to assess frankly the effect that the cross-border renewal process could have on the wider dynamics of the Syria conflict.

Council Dynamics

Even with a positive outcome on the renewal of the cross-border mechanism, negotiations are likely to expose the deep divisions over Syria that exist on the Council. Last July, dynamics around the re-authorisation of the Syria cross-border humanitarian aid delivery mechanism were tense and extremely difficult. While the Council succeeded in adopting resolution 2533, it came only after a week of

acrimonious negotiations and four failed draft resolutions.

This year, Council members' positions do not appear to have shifted markedly. During recent Council meetings on the humanitarian situation in Syria, most Council members have emphasised the importance of renewing the UN cross-border aid delivery mechanism, arguing that its scope and size cannot be replaced. France, the UK and the US have stressed the need to expand the mechanism by re-authorising the Bab al-Salam crossing on the Turkish-Syrian border and the Al-Yarubiyah crossing on the Syrian-Iraqi border, which the Council failed to re-authorise in 2020.

Along with the dual issues of which border crossings may be re-authorised and the length of the cross-border mechanism's mandate, the status of cross-line deliveries is likely to be amongst the most difficult issues during negotiations. Russia has maintained that cross-line deliveries can adequately provide assistance to those in need, while most other Council members, echoing the position of the Secretary-General, OCHA and other UN bodies, contend that even regular cross-line deliveries would remain insufficient in providing the level of humanitarian assistance offered by the cross-border operation.

While many Council members have assiduously worked to maintain a clear separation of the Syrian political and chemical weapons files from the humanitarian file, it is possible that a positive breakthrough around the renewal of the cross-border mechanism could augur well for future Council dynamics on the other Syria files. Contrariwise, a failure to renew the mechanism could worsen the Council's overall difficult dynamics on Syria.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will convene to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The Special Representative and head of the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita, is expected to brief on the latest report of the Secretary-General detailing the situation in the DRC and on progress by MONUSCO towards implementing its mandate. The report covers the period from 19 March to 18 June. A civil society representative may also be invited to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in the DRC attests to progress on the political side as a result of the installation of the government of the "Union sacrée de la nation" and the adoption on 26 April of its programme of action for 2021-2023. Its key points include the declaration of a state of emergency in the eastern provinces; the establishment of a disarmament, demobilisation, community reintegration and stabilisation (DDCRS) programme; security sector, justice and administrative reforms; constitutional reforms; and the holding of local and national elections in 2023. Falling only

marginally short of the 30 percent target, 27 percent of the newly appointed cabinet members are women, compared to 17 percent under the previous administration. To further pave the way for elections, the DRC Parliament adopted a bill to reform the national electoral commission, to be tabled before its Supreme Court prior to its promulgation.

Despite the gains made towards steadier governance, establishing nation-wide security remains a key challenge for President Félix Tshisekedi's government. The deteriorating security situation in the Ituri and North Kivu provinces prompted Tshisekedi to declare a state of siege in both areas, effective since 6 May. As a result, civilian governance was transferred to a military governor and a police vice-governor, and increased powers of search and arrest were given to the police and military. The Secretary-General's report attributes the deteriorating security situation in both provinces to increased armed group activity. Specifically, in North Kivu, the fragile situation triggered demonstrations and mobilisation against local authorities, humanitarian actors, and the UN amidst perceived shortcomings in protecting the civilian population. An attack on MONUSCO forces in Beni on 10 May resulted in the death of one peacekeeper.

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2582 (29 June 2021) renewed the DRC sanctions regime until 1 July 2022 and the mandate for the Group of Experts until 1 August 2022. **S/RES/2556** (18 December 2020) extended the mandate of MONUSCO until 20 December 2021. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/587** (18 June 2021) covered developments in the DRC from 19 March to 18 June **S/2021/437** (6 May 2021) was the latest Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict. **Security Council Press Statement (SC/14516)** 10 May 2021 strongly condemned the attack on MONUSCO near Beni (North Kivu), which resulted in the death of one Malawian peacekeeper.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

South Kivu and Maniema provinces also saw an increase in armed group violence, but the situation in Tanganyika Province reportedly improved. In the Kasai provinces, the report notes that violence erupted over a territorial dispute, resulting in 14 deaths and some 100 houses looted. MONUSCO documented 1,084 human rights violations and abuses, over 90 percent of which occurred in conflict-affected provinces, with North Kivu and Ituri in the lead. Armed groups were responsible for 54 percent of violations, and 46 percent were attributed to state agents.

The eruption on 22 May of the Mount Nyiragongo volcano north of the city of Goma in North Kivu exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation. At least 32 people were killed as a result of the volcanic eruption. UNHCR reported that over 230,000 persons were internally displaced, many of whom sought shelter in surrounding areas, while thousands fled to neighbouring Rwanda. Over 4,000 homes were also destroyed, leaving about 20,000 people without shelter. The Council discussed the situation on 15 June and issued press elements calling on the international community to increase its support and on armed groups “to cease immediately all forms of violence, in order to enable the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance and post-disaster reconstruction”. The humanitarian response plan, which seeks \$1.98 billion to address the needs of 9.6 million people across many areas of the country, is funded at 12 percent. There are some 5 million internally displaced persons and over half a million refugees across the country, with wide-spread high levels of acute food insecurity. Humanitarian access remains challenging amidst a volatile security situation.

Efforts to advance the MONUSCO drawdown are ongoing. Resolution 2556 requested a transition plan that lays out “practical modalities of the transfer of tasks to the Government of the DRC, the UN Country Team (UNCT) and other stakeholders, including a set of detailed, measurable and realistic benchmarks with indicative timelines”. Drawdown activities meanwhile are proceeding, with MONUSCO completely withdrawing from the Kasai provinces by 30 June and preparations underway for a joint mission-UNCT plan for withdrawal from Tanganyika by mid-2022.

Since the Council last met on the DRC on 30 March, there have also been developments regarding the 1533 DRC sanctions regime. The Council renewed the sanctions measures on 29 June for another 12 months and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2022. The 1533 committee convened on 20 May to receive a briefing by the experts on their

final report, issued on 10 June. The report documented armed group activity, including the increased use of improvised explosive devices, against the Congolese armed forces (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo or FARDC) and civilians, and violent activity in resource-rich areas; illicit mining activities implicating FARDC members illegally present at gold mining sites; and the lack of progress towards DDR processes, contributing to arms trafficking and increased use by some armed groups of small arms and light weapons. During the same meeting, committee members also received a briefing by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba. The Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict issued on 6 May lists the DRC among the countries with the highest number (3,470 verified cases) of grave violations against children.

Key Issues and Options

Council members may welcome the government’s programme of action and may wish to hear about progress towards its full implementation, especially in light of the funding that will be necessary. The endeavour is estimated to have an annual cost of \$12 billion, compared to an annual state budget of \$7.1 billion. Of particular interest in this regard may be the implementation of necessary reforms in advance of the 2023 elections. How to curb violence and armed group activity will likely be a key concern, and Council members may inquire about progress towards the full implementation of the DDCRS programme, the status of the siege in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, and government efforts to increase protection of civilians. Council attention will likely also be focussed on the ongoing transition process, and members may seek details regarding the gradual handover of security and programmatic responsibilities to the government and UNCT. Several Council members may echo in their interventions calls from the recent press statement on the DRC for increased humanitarian assistance and unhindered humanitarian access.

Council Dynamics

There appears to be general support among Council members for the work of MONUSCO and the gradual mission drawdown. However, different views regarding timelines and benchmarks may emerge once the Council begins deliberations on how to further advance the drawdown process.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its biannual briefing on West Africa and the Sahel. The Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Mahamat Saleh Annadif, is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate, with terrorist groups operating in the Sahel expanding their presence southward, increasingly threatening coastal West African states. Recent

UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2021/3 (3 February 2021) requested the Secretary-General to explore the feasibility of a civilian joint project involving UNOWAS and regional organisations. Security Council Letter S/2021/43 (13 January 2021) contained the record of briefings and statements from the 11 January videoconference on West Africa and the Sahel. Security Council Press Statement SC/14545 (8 June 2021) condemned the attacks on 4 and 5 June in the administrative region of the Sahel in Burkina Faso that killed over 100 civilians.

West Africa and the Sahel

months also witnessed political instability in Chad, following the death of President Idriss Déby while fighting rebels invading from Libya, and in Mali, when the perpetrators of last year's coup d'état carried out a second coup against Mali's transitional authorities.

President Déby was killed on 19 April about 300 kilometres north of the capital N'Djamena, fighting the Chadian rebel group FACT. The army, which plays a leading role among Sahel countries in combatting terrorist groups in the region, announced the creation of a transitional military council led by Déby's 37-year-old son, General Mahamat Idriss Déby, that will govern for 18 months until elections can be held. Opposition parties denounced the council's creation as a "coup d'état" since it did not follow constitutional rules for succession, under which the speaker of the National Assembly becomes interim president. During demonstrations against the military council on 27 April, at least six people were killed by security forces and 700 arrested. While Déby appointed a transitional government led by civilian Albert Pahimi Padacké as prime minister on 2 May, the military council retains control.

The political transition in Mali, established following last August's coup d'état, was interrupted by a second coup d'état on 24 May. The crisis was precipitated by a government reshuffle earlier that day in which two officers involved in the August 2020 coup were replaced. Mali's transitional president and prime minister resigned while under detention after their arrest by the military. Colonel Assimi Goïta, leader of last year's coup and the transitional vice-president, took control. He was sworn in as president on 7 June. Goïta has promised to keep to the original 18-month transition timeline by holding legislative and presidential elections as scheduled next February.

In response to the coup, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the AU suspended Mali from their organisations. France, which is Mali's main military partner, also suspended joint operations with Mali's military. One week after that decision, France said on 10 June that it would draw down Operation Barkhane, its regional counter-terrorism force. In making the announcement, President Emmanuel Macron said that France would still maintain forces in the Sahel but suggested that Paris aims to see other countries increase their support for regional counter-terrorism efforts.

Terrorist violence continues across the Sahel. On the night of 4-5 June, assailants killed at least 132 civilians—160 according to local authorities—when they attacked the town of Solhan in the Sahel region of Burkina Faso. It was the deadliest attack in Burkina Faso since the start of an insurgency by violent extremist groups in 2016. Niger has experienced several similar deadly attacks this year—at least 137 civilians were killed in a 21 March attack in the western Tahoua region. Despite the insecurity, Niger conducted its first peaceful transfer of power between civilian leaders following the election in February of ruling party candidate Mohamed Bazoum. Days before Bazoum's swearing-in ceremony, presidential guards thwarted an attempted coup when a military unit assaulted the presidential palace on the night of 30-31 March.

There have been several attacks in recent months in Côte d'Ivoire along the border with Burkina Faso that, according to the Institute for Security Studies, have claimed the lives of six Ivorian soldiers and injured five others. On 29 March, three security personnel were killed in twin attacks on military forces in Kafolo and a gendarmerie post in Kolobougou. Improvised explosive devices were used for the first time in Côte d'Ivoire in two incidents in April, and on 7 June,

assailants attacked the town of Tougbo, killing one soldier. Also in Côte d'Ivoire, former president Laurent Gbagbo returned to the country on 17 June, following his acquittal by the ICC of crimes against humanity during post-electoral violence in 2010 that killed 3,000 people.

In northeast Nigeria, the long-time leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, killed himself, detonating a suicide vest during fighting around 18 May with the splinter group the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP). Since then, ISWAP, which was formed in 2016 by Boko Haram members who opposed Shekau's indiscriminate targeting of civilians, has sought to integrate surviving members of Shekau's group.

In addition to Boko Haram/ISWAP, Nigeria faces several other security crises. These include worsening violence in northwestern Nigeria from criminal gangs. The violence in Nigeria's northwest during 2020 resulted in more deaths (1,527) than the number of people killed in the northeast due to the Boko Haram insurgency (1,508), according to the civil society organisation Global Rights. There are also concerns that ISWAP and violent extremist groups in the Sahel are seeking or may attempt to cooperate with these criminal groups.

On 26 March, the Secretary-General announced Annadif's appointment as the new head of UNOWAS. Annadif had served as head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) since December 2015. He officially started his new position on 26 April, succeeding Mohamed Ibn Chambas, who had led UNOWAS since September 2014.

Key Issues and Options

Terrorism threats remain a key issue, as do the good offices activities of UNOWAS around electoral and political tensions. Annadif's counterpart, Special Representative François Louncény Fall of the UN Office on Central Africa, has led UN efforts in responding to the recent crisis in Chad. Chad plays a critical role in contributing to the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), which comprises Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger; to the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) fighting Boko Haram; and to MINUSMA. Drug trafficking, inter-communal violence and piracy are other regional threats that are linked at times with terrorist groups.

In addition to regional security initiatives, addressing structural causes of instability, such as underdevelopment, governance and climate change, remains a key issue, including through the UN's Sahel Strategy, the Group of Five for the Sahel Priority Investment Programme, and the Lake Chad Basin regional stabilisation strategy. UNOWAS is responsible for supporting—through political advocacy and convening of stakeholders in the region—the UN's Sahel Strategy, enhancing UN system collaboration, and promoting coherent international responses to address these challenges. Implementation of Mali's 2015 peace agreement is also frequently cited as key for the stabilisation of the Sahel region.

Another important issue is the humanitarian situation. This includes the UN's continued warnings since September 2020 about the risk of famine in parts of Burkina Faso and Nigeria from the ongoing violence. The Council may adopt a presidential statement, as it often does following its biannual briefings on UNOWAS. The statement could reflect on recent developments and reiterate calls for comprehensive approaches that address security, peacebuilding

West Africa and the Sahel

and development challenges in the region.

Council Dynamics

Members value the good offices activities of UNOWAS and its conflict prevention role. While they share concerns about the worsening security situation, they do not always agree on concrete measures that the Council should take in this regard. France and the “A3 plus 1” (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) have expressed their intention to push forward the Secretary-General’s long-standing proposal to establish a UN support office that could provide a logistical support package and more predictable financing for the FC-G5S. The US and UK object to using UN assessed contributions for non-UN missions and are not convinced

that a support office would be more effective than bilateral military support for the FC-G5S.

At the time of writing, members had just finished negotiating the mandate renewal of MINUSMA. France, the penholder on Mali, proposed an approximate 2,000-person increase in the mission’s troop ceiling, which currently stands at 13,289 military and 1,920 police personnel, to improve its ability to protect civilians from terrorist groups and inter-communal violence in Mali’s central region. While the proposal was not accepted, Council members may take up this issue again in July, as the new MINUSMA resolution requests the Secretary-General to produce a report by 15 July with recommendations on the mission’s force level.

Ireland and Niger are the co-penholders on UNOWAS.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission, which was issued on 25 June.

The verification mission’s mandate expires on 31 October 2021.

Key Recent Developments

In recent months, the political and security situations in Colombia have remained complex. Widespread demonstrations and a national strike that started on 28 April lasted for over 40 days across the country. The protests were sparked by criticism of a tax reform proposed by Colombian President Iván Duque and presented to parliament on 15 April. Some demonstrations turned violent, including in the capital Bogotá and in the western city of Cali. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) received allegations of 56 deaths related to the protests, including that of two police officers. Colombian and international interlocutors have criticised incidents involving excessive use of force and abuse by the police during the protests.

Although the government retracted the proposed tax reform on 2 May, demonstrations continued into mid-June, as protestors called for broader reforms—including economic, health and education reforms—to address longstanding, underlying issues aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Secretary-General’s report, civil society organisations in several regions also included in their demands the implementation of the November 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP).

On 20 May, talks commenced between the government and the strike committee—which represents some 40 labour unions, farmer

organisations and student organisations—to resolve the crisis. The sides invited Ruiz Massieu and representatives of OHCHR and the Catholic Church to serve as facilitators in the discussions. Demands by the strike committee included additional subsidies to address the economic fall-out from the pandemic, amendments to the country’s trade agreements and the admission of culpability for abuses committed by the police during the protests. On 15 June, the strike committee announced that it was suspending the talks—which had hit an impasse after several weeks—while expressing its intention to pursue its demands through other means, including by proposing bills to congress. It further announced that a protest would take place on 20 July.

Meanwhile, the persistent violence against communities (including indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities), former FARC-EP members, human rights defenders, and social leaders continued to complicate the implementation of the 2016 agreement. The verification mission verified the killing of 15 former combatants during the 27 March to 25 June reporting period of the Secretary-General’s report. According to OCHA, the activities of armed groups led to the forced displacement of over 7,400 people in seven departments, 33 percent of whom are from indigenous communities. To date, 29,200 people have been displaced in 2021—more than a 100 percent increase compared to the same period last year.

The Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict, which was made public on 21 June, illustrated the adverse effects of the insecurity on children in Colombia. The report, which contains verified information on violations against children which occurred in 2020 and violations that occurred earlier and were verified in 2020, noted the killing and maiming of 69 children. In addition, 116 children were recruited and used, with dissident groups of the former FARC-EP being responsible for 66 such cases and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) for 22.

The Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition—which comprises the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), the Truth Commission and the Unit for the Search for

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2574](#) (11 May 2021) expanded the verification mission in Colombia’s mandate to include monitoring compliance with the sentences handed down by SJP and extended it until 31 October 2021. [Secretary-General’s Reports S/2021/603](#) (25 June 2021) was the most recent 90-day report. [S/2021/437](#) (6 May 2021) was the Secretary-General’s annual report on children and armed conflict. [Security Council Letter S/2021/401](#) (23 April 2021) contained a meeting record of the Security Council’s latest quarterly meeting on Colombia, held on 21 April 2021.

Colombia

Persons Deemed as Missing—continued to advance its work in the past several months. In late April, members of the former FARC-EP secretariat responded to the SJP's (the judicial component of the transitional justice system) January indictment accusing eight former FARC leaders of perpetrating a kidnapping-for-ransom operation that targeted more than 20,000 people during the conflict. They acknowledged responsibility for the kidnappings, stated that the former guerrilla group's kidnapping policies were unjustifiable, and admitted culpability to mistreatment of kidnapping victims. Ruiz Massieu welcomed the response by the former FARC-EP members, calling it an important advance in fulfilling victims' rights and in the promotion of truth, justice and reconciliation.

The Truth Commission also continued hearing testimonies in preparation for the issuance of its final report in November 2021. In a recent high-profile testimony, former President Juan Manuel Santos testified on 11 June on the issue of the "false positives" phenomenon, whereby civilians killed in military operations during the conflict were presented as combatants in official reports. In February, the SJP issued a report that implicated the Colombian military in the killing of 6,400 civilians from 2002 to 2008, during Álvaro Uribe's presidency. Santos served as defence minister under Uribe between 2006 and 2009. In his testimony, Santos acknowledged that such crimes took place during his tenure and asked for forgiveness.

On 17 June, members of the former FARC-EP secretariat provided information to the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing on 55 people who were kidnapped by the FARC-EP during the conflict. The former FARC-EP further committed to providing information on 136 additional victims.

On 25 June, a helicopter carrying Duque and several other government officials came under attack as it was passing through the Catatumbo region, which is located near the border with Venezuela. No casualties were reported in the attack, which has not been claimed by any group.

On 11 May, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2574, extending the verification mission's mandate to include monitoring compliance with the sentences handed down by the SJP. According to the Secretary-General's 25 June report, following the adoption of the resolution, Ruiz Massieu met with the president of the SJP to discuss the new tasks of the verification mission and articulate the next steps in the process. The SJP is expected to begin handing down its sentences towards the end of the year.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 May, several human rights experts from the UN and Organisation of American States, released a joint statement condemning "the excessive and unlawful use of force by police and members of the ESMAD (Mobile Anti-Riot Squad) against peaceful demonstrators, human rights defenders and journalists across Colombia". According to the statement, the experts received reports of at least 26 killings; 1,876 cases of police violence; 216 cases of injuries, including police officers; approximately

168 disappearances; 963 alleged arbitrary detentions; at least 12 cases of sexual violence, as well as allegations of torture. There were also reports of at least 69 assaults against human rights defenders.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council remains how best to support the implementation of the peace agreement in Colombia. The need to implement the agreement fully, and not only selected aspects, continues to be an important matter for Council members.

Violence in Colombia is a longstanding Council concern. The Secretary-General noted in his report several steps that need to be taken to address the precarious security situation. These include progress towards the implementation of public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups, criminal organisations and their support networks, and the deployment of security forces and an increased presence of civilian institutions to areas affected by conflict. The report further notes the persistent risks faced by women social leaders and calls for further progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Programme for Safeguards for Women Leaders and Human Rights Defenders. Council members may ask Ruiz Massieu about any steps that have been taken to improve the security situation.

Council members will be following the work conducted by the verification mission in preparation for undertaking its new task of monitoring compliance with the sentences handed down by the SJP. One option would be for Council members to invite representatives of the SJP and of victims' organisations to brief them during the quarterly Council meeting on Colombia to hear their views on the mission's new role and on ways in which the Council can further support transitional justice processes in the country. The Council could also consider such a discussion in an informal interactive dialogue, a closed meeting format that could allow for a frank exchange of ideas.

Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the peace process in Colombia. While they have generally been deferential towards the government, some differences in tone have emerged since 2019. Russia, for example, has criticised the government on its heavy-handed handling of protests in late 2020 and for insufficient implementation of the provisions of the 2016 peace agreement.

It appears that the Council is generally united in its support of the verification mission undertaking the additional task of monitoring compliance with the SJP's sentences. However, the negotiations on resolution 2574 took longer than initially expected, including because of concerns expressed by China regarding the possible budgetary implications of the mandate expansion. Eventually, language proposed by China in this regard was not included in the text, as other Council members felt that these issues should be addressed through the General Assembly's Fifth Committee.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

In July, Security Council members are expected to hold closed consultations on Yemen. The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), which expires on 15 July.

Key Recent Developments

Outgoing UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths, who has been appointed Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, made a final push in late May to broker an agreement, based on his four-point plan, for a nationwide ceasefire, opening Sana'a airport, lifting restrictions on shipping through Hodeidah's ports, and restarting a political process.

On 28 May, Griffiths met in Muscat with the Houthi chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdul Salam. The talks came one month after Abdul Salam refused to meet the UN envoy when he travelled to Oman in April. From Muscat, Griffiths conducted his first visit to Sana'a in over a year. There he discussed his ceasefire plan with the Houthi movement's leader, Abdul Malik al-Houthi. Griffiths also visited Iran, the main ally of the Houthis, from 9 to 10 June to discuss developments in Yemen with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif.

In support of UN efforts for a ceasefire, Oman intensified its mediation role. Oman's Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, travelled to Sana'a on 5 June and met with senior Houthi officials, including al-Houthi. Al Busaidi then travelled to Riyadh, meeting with officials from the Yemeni government and Saudi Arabia on 9 June. However, these attempts to reach a ceasefire agreement were unsuccessful.

Despite a month-long lull in the Houthi offensive to take Marib governorate, several Houthi missile and drone attacks on Marib City caused dozens of civilian casualties. On 5 June, a petrol station reserved for military personnel and authorised civilians located within a government military base close to the city was hit by a missile. Twenty-one people, including civilians, were killed. On 10 June, a civilian compound in Marib City that included the governor's office, the local branch of the Ministry of Planning, police headquarters, a mosque, and a women's prison was hit by what were believed to have been missiles. Eight police officers were killed, and 30 civilians, including one woman whose house is near the compound, were injured. A drone explosion damaged three ambulances responding to the attack; two ambulance staff were injured. By the second half of June, reports suggested that ground fighting outside Marib City had once again intensified.

On 15 June, Griffiths delivered his final briefing to the Security Council as the UN special envoy, expressing regret that his efforts to end the war had been "in vain". He set out the parties' positions in recent negotiations. According to Griffiths, the Houthis insist on a stand-alone agreement on Hodeidah's ports and Sana'a airport. Only after such an agreement has been reached would they be willing to discuss a ceasefire. The government, Griffiths said, insists that all of these issues be agreed to and implemented as part of a package. Reflecting on the prospects for a peace process, Griffiths said: "What was possible in terms of conflict resolution years ago is not possible

today. And what is possible today may not be possible in the future. And I believe that possibly an international conversation of process may need to restate the realistic goals for a negotiation process."

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock, whom Griffiths will replace, delivered his final briefing on Yemen at the session. Lowcock reported that there were early signs that relief efforts may prevent a major famine, though the following three months would be crucial. Civil society representative Najiba Al-Najar, a member of the Yemeni Women's Pact for Peace and Security, also briefed, while the head of UNMHA, General Abhijit Guha, addressed Council members in consultations.

Earlier in the month, on 3 June, the Council held a briefing and consultations on the FSO Safer oil tanker, which is moored in the Red Sea off the Houthi-held Ras Isa oil terminal. UN Environmental Programme Executive Director Inger Andersen and Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division Reena Ghelani briefed. In press elements issued following the meeting, Council members expressed "extreme concern at the growing risk that the Safer oil tanker could rupture or explode, causing an environmental, economic, maritime and humanitarian catastrophe for Yemen and the region". Members repeated calls for the Houthis to allow, without further delay, access for UN experts to conduct an assessment and initial repair mission.

Security Council members also received the Secretary-General's annual review of UNMHA in a letter dated 3 June. UNMHA continues to face limitations on its freedom of movement in Houthi-held areas while the main monitoring mechanism of the December 2018 Hodeidah ceasefire agreement, known as the Redeployment Coordination Committee (RCC), has still not been reactivated since the government suspended its participation after the shooting death in March 2020 of a government liaison officer at a joint observation post. Despite these and other challenges, UNMHA's presence has had "a tangible moderating impact on the ground", and the mission "remains critical" for maintaining the relative stability of Hodeidah, which is strategically important for economic and humanitarian purposes, according to the review.

Also in June, the Secretary-General released his annual report on the impact of armed conflict on children. In Yemen, the UN verified the killing (269) and maiming (855) of 1,124 children (816 boys, 308 girls) during 2020. The main causes for child casualties were mortar and artillery shelling (339), gunshots and crossfire (305), explosive remnants of war (212) and air strikes (150). Most casualties occurred in Hodeidah (242), Ta'izz (239), Ma'rib (132) and Jawf (129) governorates.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a press briefing on 18 June, the spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed serious concern over the continuing impact of fighting on civilians and the targeting of civilian objects in Marib Governorate. The spokesperson also referred to hostilities and violence in other parts of Yemen that continue to claim civilian victims and the continuation of cross-border attacks by Houthi forces into the territory of Saudi Arabia.

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2534 (14 July 2020) extended UNMHA's mandate until 15 July 2021. Security Council Letter S/2021/528 (3 June 2021) was a review of UNMHA. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8797 (15 June 2021) was Special Envoy Martin Griffiths' final briefing on Yemen. S/PV.8786 (3 June 2021) was a briefing on the FSO Safer oil tanker. Security Council Press Statement SC/14497 (16 April 2021) called on the Houthis to end their escalation in Marib and condemned the cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia.

Yemen

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is the need for a ceasefire agreement and the resumption of a political process. At the time of writing, the UN had yet to announce Griffiths' successor. In the event of an agreement for a ceasefire, the Council may adopt a resolution endorsing any such deal. Such a resolution could also be an opportunity for the Council to update the framework for political negotiations.

Yemen's humanitarian crisis remains a critical issue. The Houthis' Marib offensive threatens a future peace process and risks worsening the humanitarian crisis, especially if it triggers mass displacement of civilians—more than one million internally displaced persons live in Marib governorate, having already fled other parts of Yemen. Alleviating Yemen's fuel crisis, stabilising the Yemeni rial, and generating more humanitarian funding are important factors to mitigate the crisis and combat famine.

Another significant issue remains the threat posed by the moored FSO Safer oil tanker in the Red Sea. Council members could issue a press statement, as they often do following meetings on Yemen, to collectively call on the Houthis to cooperate with the UN to avert a crisis with the tanker and maintain pressure on the government to allow regular imports of fuel through Hodeidah ports.

Another issue for July is the mandate renewal of UNMHA. The Council may renew UNMHA for another year, maintaining its

mandate. That includes leading and supporting the RCC, which oversees the ceasefire and redeployment of forces set out in the 2018 Hodeidah agreement, and monitoring the compliance of the parties to the accord. The resolution could encourage the parties to reactivate the RCC and call on the Houthis to allow the free movement of UNMHA.

Council Dynamics

Yemen is a file on which Council members are, for the most part, united. They support UN-led mediation efforts and share concerns about the humanitarian situation and the threat posed by the decrepit Safer oil tanker. The US has lent new momentum to UN efforts since a US Special Envoy for Yemen, Timothy Lenderking, was appointed in February. European Council members and the US tend to be more critical in calling out Houthi obstructionism, while Russia is more cautious in singling out the Houthis, suggesting that this could give the appearance of Council bias—a dynamic that has sometimes played out this year during negotiations on Council products.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. Ambassador I. Rhonda King (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) chairs the 2140 Sanctions Committee.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to convene a ministerial-level meeting to discuss the situation in Libya and the UN Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL). As France is the Security Council President for July, the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, will chair the meeting. Usually during the periodic session on Libya, the Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Ján Kubiš, briefs, but because of the high-level nature of the meeting, Secretary-General António Guterres or Under-Secretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo are the expected briefers. The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, the Permanent Representative of India, may also present the committee's report on its activities during the past 60 days.

Key Recent Developments

Since the Council's last meeting on Libya on 21 May, international attention to the country has remained high in relation to the Libyan peace process. On 23 June, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas and the Secretary-General convened states and regional organisations that participated in the Berlin Process last year, including several Council members, for the second Berlin Conference (Berlin II). Since the first conference in January 2020, Libya has achieved several milestones towards consolidating peace and stability, including the signing of a ceasefire agreement on 23 October 2020 and the

formation on 15 March of the transitional "Government of National Unity" (GNU), which is supposed to steer the country towards universal elections on 24 December. UNSMIL is supporting efforts to clarify the constitutional basis for the elections—a prerequisite paving the way for voting in December—and to that end is hosting another round of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum (LPDF), an assembly consisting of 75 participants representing the main Libyan geographical, social and political constituencies.

On 20 June, the GNU announced the opening of a main coastal road as required by the ceasefire agreement. A series of workshops on national reconciliation that started on 31 May, organised and led by Presidency Council members Musa Al-Koni and Abdullah Al-Lafi as representatives of the executive government, are aimed at healing the country's social fabric. Confidence-building measures, including the release and exchange of prisoners, are still ongoing. In his last briefing to the Council on 21 May, Kubiš attested that the ceasefire also continues to hold.

Despite promising progress, several challenges persist. The last report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Sanctions Committee found the arms embargo on Libya to be completely disregarded, and numerous mercenaries and foreign fighters remain in the country, despite the ceasefire agreement calling for their departure. Migration also remains a serious challenge. On 28 May, UNHCR called for the release of some 5,097 asylum seekers and migrants

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2578 (3 June 2021) renewed for 12 months the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya bound to or from the country that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. S/RES/2571 (16 April 2021) renewed the measures related to the illicit export from Libya of petroleum until 30 July 2022 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee until 15 August 2022. S/RES/2570 (16 April 2021) urged member states to withdraw "all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya without delay". **Secretary-General's Report S/2021/434** (5 May 2021) was on the implementation of resolution 2526.

Libya

detained across Libya, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that this year, 31,862 individuals have so far attempted to cross to Europe through the Central Mediterranean route (compared to 14,106 individuals in 2020).

Against this backdrop, the aim of the second Berlin Conference was to mobilise the continued support of the international community for the Libyan peace initiative through the Berlin Process mechanism. In this regard, Berlin II was focussed on three points: the holding of elections; accelerating the departure of foreign fighters and mercenaries; and the unification of the country's security forces. Unlike last year, Libya participated in this conference following the formation of a unified government. It reaffirmed its commitment to the election date of 24 December. Participants issued a comprehensive communiqué detailing the conference conclusions, which included, among others, the following major points (the outcome document will be submitted to the Security Council):

- request for the immediate departure of foreign fighters and mercenaries—to which Turkey registered reservations;
- the need for the House of Representatives to approve a national budget;
- the call for swift unification of government institutions;
- the need for security sector reform with a credible, verifiable and comprehensive process of demobilisation and disarmament of armed groups and militias in Libya and the integration of suitable personnel into civilian, security and military state institutions;
- a call on the LPDF to take steps to facilitate the elections if necessary and in accordance with the LPDF-agreed Roadmap.

Sustained international attention to Libya and the impact of its peace process on the wider region were also evident during an Arria-formula meeting held on 18 June under the theme “Addressing the Impact on the Sahel Region of the Departure of Foreign Fighters and Mercenaries from Libya”. The meeting was co-hosted by the “A3 plus one” (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and co-sponsored by Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Estonia, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Libya, Norway, Sudan, and the AU. To prevent returning fighters from becoming a destabilising factor in the Sahel, several participants called for a “managed” approach for effective disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) in Libya and for increased regional cooperation paired with international support for tailored national DDR approaches across the Sahel region.

On 3 June, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2578, extending the authorisations for member states, acting nationally or

through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya, bound to or from Libya, that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. Acting under this authorisation, the EU launched operation EUNAVFOR IRINI on 31 March 2020, with the aim of supporting the arms embargo and the Libyan peace process.

Key Issues and Options

Six months ahead of elections, the July Council meeting is likely to focus on steps that need to be taken to maintain the space necessary for electoral preparations to advance, including a constitutional referendum and the full implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Council members will have had the time to digest the outcome documents of Berlin II as well as of the G7 and NATO summits (held on 11-13 June and 14 June, respectively), which both referenced the situation in Libya. Should the Council consider an outcome document, some members may suggest reflecting or reinforcing language from the Berlin II conclusions. The Council endorsed the conclusions of the first Berlin conference in resolution 2510 of 12 February 2020 and may consider referencing the outcome of Berlin II in future Council products. France has reportedly presented a three-phase plan to several member states, including the US, detailing steps towards the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. This plan may, in all likelihood, be part of the discussion.

Several Council members may also use the meeting to voice their expectations for the UNSMIL mandate renewal in September. During the Arria-formula meeting on the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries, several participants, including the A3 plus one, suggested strengthening the DDR capacity of UNSMIL and adding a regional cooperation mechanism. Council members may also wish to hear about progress in implementing a ceasefire monitoring mechanism with UN support.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members have adopted the past three resolutions on Libya unanimously, including resolution 2578 of 3 June, which authorised the enforcement of the arms embargo through vessel inspections off the coast of Libya, and resolution 2570, which reiterated the Council's position on the withdrawal of “all foreign forces and mercenaries from Libya without delay”. Nonetheless, arms embargo violations persist, and mercenaries and foreign fighters from a number of countries, including elements based in a permanent member state of the Council, remain in Libya.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) ahead of its 31 July expiry. Special Representative and head of mission Elizabeth Spehar is expected to brief the Council on the latest UNFICYP report, as

well as recent developments, in closed consultations. A representative from the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs may also brief.

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2561 (29 January 2021) renewed the mandate of UNFICYP until 31 July 2021. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/9** (9 October 2020) reaffirmed the status of Varosha as set out in previous Council resolutions and called on the sides in Cyprus and the guarantor powers to engage in dialogue. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/4** (8 January 2021) was a report on UNFICYP. **S/2021/5** (8 January 2021) was the report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus.

Cyprus

Key Recent Developments

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Cyprus, Jane Holl Lute, engaged in diplomatic efforts in early 2021 to promote conditions conducive to resuming the peace talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sides. Initially planned for early March, the informal five-plus-one meeting took place from 27 to 29 April in Geneva. The meeting convened the leaders of the two Cypriot sides, representatives of the three guarantor powers (Greece, Turkey and the UK) and UN Secretary-General António Guterres. It marked the first direct negotiations between the two parties since the collapse of the previous talks at Crans-Montana in 2017. The objective of the meeting was to find common ground on a general framework from which to commence formal negotiations.

At the meeting, the Greek Cypriot delegation continued from where it had left off in Crans-Montana, asserting its firm commitment to achieving a settlement based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation (BBF) with political equality as stipulated in previous Security Council resolutions, the Joint Declaration of 2014 and the Secretary-General's six-point framework. The Turkish Cypriot delegation unveiled its own proposal that called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution establishing equal international status and sovereign equality for the two sides as a prerequisite for formal negotiations. Arguing that negotiations based on the BBF model had been exhausted, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar claimed that he was seeking to revitalise the peace talks by introducing a novel approach based on a two-state paradigm.

Although no common ground was established to proceed with formal negotiations, Secretary-General Guterres welcomed the commitment of the two Cypriot sides to reconvene the five-plus-one group in the near future. Initially envisioned for June or July, the next informal summit on the Cyprus dispute may materialise in the latter half of 2021.

On 30 May, the Greek Cypriot side held parliamentary elections to elect 56 members of its House of Representatives. President Nicos Anastasiades' Democratic Rally (DYSI) secured 27.8 percent of the vote, followed by the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) with 22.3 percent. Notably, the National Popular Front (ELAM) became the fourth largest political party on the Greek Cypriot side with 6.8 percent of the vote. With a platform that rejects reunification of the island, ELAM's emergence on the political scene may complicate future attempts to secure a solution based on the existing BBF parameters.

Restrictions on free movement between the two sides were lifted in early June. Throughout 2020, policies aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19 rendered the buffer zone impassable. According to the latest report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the question of human rights in Cyprus, closures of the crossing points posed considerable challenges not only to movement across the buffer zone but also to bi-communal relations and trust-building activities. The recent lifting of restrictions may contribute to re-establishing trust and fostering interdependence between the two sides.

There have been positive developments with regard to the work of the 12 bi-communal technical committees, which are responsible for boosting confidence and communication between the two sides and improving the living conditions of Cypriots. During the pandemic, numerous projects and in-person activities were suspended.

While meetings were eventually moved online, they were held far less frequently. The resumption of the committees' in-person meetings fosters effective delivery of vital confidence-building measures.

Key Issues and Options

Since the collapse of the 2017 unification talks in Crans-Montana, a key issue for the Security Council had been the lack of meaningful progress on the political front and the diminishing prospects for reaching a political settlement of the Cyprus problem.

In renewing the UNFICYP mandate in July, the Council may decide to encourage the Secretary-General to continue efforts aimed at laying the groundwork for formal peace negotiations to commence.

Since Council members have received few, if any, substantial details about Special Envoy Lute's engagement with the parties, they may consider holding a closed meeting with her ahead of the mandate renewal. The meeting could focus on the prospects for progress on the political track, particularly in light of the commitment expressed by both Cypriot sides for a subsequent informal five-plus-one gathering.

Another important issue for the Council is how to approach the two-state proposal of the Turkish Cypriot delegation, which runs counter to the parameters set out in previous Security Council resolutions that urge both sides to consider a settlement based on the BBF model. While it is uncertain how the Council will react to this development, Council members will likely retain language on the existing parameters when renewing the UNFICYP mandate.

Tensions over hydrocarbon resources off the coast of Cyprus are likely to continue to be a source of concern for the Council. As was the case in the past, these tensions could affect the political process negatively and carry potential risks for the security situation in the region. Turkey's decision to refrain from resuming its drilling exploration in the eastern Mediterranean—a key factor in its improved relations with the EU—is likely to alleviate concerns for the time being.

Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda. Council members with a vested interest in Cyprus include France, Russia and the UK. In addition to being a guarantor power, the UK also serves as the penholder on this issue.

While the Council is united in its support for the political process, members diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the unification talks. The US has previously supported a comprehensive strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process, but it is unlikely to suggest any changes to the status quo considering the renewed attempts at negotiations by the two Cypriot parties. Furthermore, Russia remains adamant that there be no external interference or attempts to enforce solutions and schedules to influence the peace talks. It views UNFICYP not as an instrument to exert political pressure but as one intended to foster security and monitor compliance with the buffer zone.

Given the renewed efforts by the Cypriot sides to resume direct negotiations, the Council is unlikely to initiate drastic changes to the mission's mandate and size. Council members will most likely encourage the Secretary-General to continue working with the parties to find common ground for formal negotiations to commence.

Preserving Humanitarian Space

Expected Council Action

In July, France is organising a ministerial level briefing on preserving humanitarian space as a signature event of its presidency. The meeting is expected to be held in person. Jean-Yves Le Drian, France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, will chair the meeting.

Secretary-General António Guterres and Robert Mardini, the Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, are expected to brief the Council. Lucile Grosjean, the Delegate Director of Advocacy at Action Against Hunger, is also expected to brief.

Background and Key Recent Developments

In recent times, the humanitarian situation in a number of countries on the Council's agenda has become progressively dire. In Afghanistan, as many as 18.4 million people, almost half the population, are expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2021. This is a dramatic increase from the beginning of 2020, when 9.4 million Afghans were in need of humanitarian aid. Food insecurity in Afghanistan has also reached alarmingly high levels. Of the country's 34 provinces, 27 are currently above the emergency threshold of acute malnutrition, and 14.1 million people were expected to be at crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity by the end of May.

Similarly, there are currently an estimated 13.4 million people who need humanitarian support in Syria, while the World Food Programme delivered food to 4.8 million Syrians in March. In Yemen, 20.7 million people currently require humanitarian assistance. Mark Lowcock, the former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, recently informed the Council that five million Yemenis are "just a step away from starving".

Despite the serious and widespread nature of this humanitarian crisis, the space in which humanitarian workers and organisations carry out their work is increasingly circumscribed. Many humanitarian personnel have been subjected to attacks that threaten their lives and endanger their physical well-being. In February and March, at least three staff members of humanitarian organisations were killed in Syria, including a worker who was killed while off duty in a tent at al-Hawl camp in Hasakah Governorate. In Afghanistan, ten employees of a UK NGO that clears war debris and five workers who were part of Afghanistan's national polio vaccination campaign died in separate attacks in June. Other humanitarian workers were injured in each of these attacks, which appear to be part of a broader trend. According to the World Health Organization, total attacks on humanitarian personnel in the period from 2010 to 2019 were 117 percent higher than in the previous decade. Although the international community often responds with outrage when these attacks occur, perpetrators are rarely held to account, and impunity for violations of international humanitarian law remains an ongoing concern.

In addition to facing threats to their physical security, humanitarian workers and the organisations that employ them regularly encounter bureaucratic obstacles that prevent them from doing their work. Sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism measures, including laws designed to prevent the financing of terrorist organisations, can impair the ability of humanitarian staff to access areas where there are people in need of humanitarian assistance. Parties to armed conflict can also hinder access to populations that require aid.

The Council has adopted two resolutions that are related to this issue. In 2003, resolution 1502 urged all those concerned to allow humanitarian personnel unimpeded access and promote their safety, security, and freedom. It also strongly condemned all forms of violence against humanitarian workers. Resolution 2175, which was adopted in 2014, reiterated these points and urged states to ensure that crimes against humanitarian personnel are punished and that perpetrators of attacks committed on their territory are brought to justice.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue is how the meeting can serve as a springboard for enhancing the protection of humanitarian space in conflict situations. In light of the many difficulties encountered by humanitarian workers and organisations, the goal of the meeting is to provide an opportunity for member states to collaborate and share best practices regarding the protection of humanitarian workers, the facilitation of humanitarian access and the fight against impunity for violations of international humanitarian law, with a view to identifying concrete recommendations for preserving humanitarian space.

Council members are likely to discuss the Call for Humanitarian Action, which has been signed by 48 member states since it was introduced by France and Germany in September 2019. This document outlines a number of specific measures that states can implement to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and facilitate principled humanitarian action. These measures include introducing legislation, rules of engagement and military training that comply with the obligations imposed by international humanitarian law; designing flexible counter-terrorism and sanctions regimes that allow for appropriate humanitarian exceptions; and supporting the capacity of national law enforcement agencies to conduct impartial and independent criminal investigations into potential violations of international humanitarian law.

Another option for Council members is to highlight the importance of collecting and preserving accurate data regarding attacks on humanitarian personnel.

France could also consider producing a chair's summary to capture the main themes of the open debate.

Council Dynamics

The P3 are likely to highlight the importance of sanctions and accountability measures, including in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, as mechanisms for leveraging compliance with international humanitarian law. Other Council members are expected to mention that attacks on humanitarian workers can be considered war crimes that could be referred to the ICC under the Rome Statute and may encourage the ICC Prosecutor, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, to be more proactive in relation to these attacks. The need for cooperation between national law enforcement agencies investigating possible violations of international humanitarian law could also be discussed.

In recent years, in various country-specific contexts, Russia has started to emphasise the UN guiding principles for humanitarian assistance adopted by the General Assembly in 1991, which stress state sovereignty and consent of the concerned member state.

The possible appointment of a Special Representative for

UN DOCUMENTS ON PRESERVING HUMANITARIAN SPACE S/RES/2175 (29 August 2014) condemned violence and intimidation against those involved in humanitarian operations. S/RES/1502 (26 August 2003) condemned all violence against humanitarian and UN and associated personnel, recalled obligations to protect such personnel under international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law, and called for unimpeded humanitarian access.

Preserving Humanitarian Space

Preservation of Humanitarian Space may be a topic of discussion. Some Council members hold the view that creating this position would help to sharpen the focus of the international community on the issues faced by humanitarian workers and organisations. Other

members, however, consider a new position unnecessary and believe OCHA and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs are already doing this work.

Lebanon

Expected Council Action

In July, Security Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 1701, due on 12 July. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between the Shi'a militant group Hezbollah and Israel. Briefings are expected from Special Coordinator for Lebanon Joanna Wronecka—who was appointed on 1 April and will provide her first briefing in this position—and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

The mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) expires on 31 August.

Key Recent Developments

Lebanon remains without a government, almost 11 months after former Prime Minister Hassan Diab resigned following widespread anti-government protests in the aftermath of the 4 August 2020 Beirut blast. Diab's government serves in a caretaker position while Saad Hariri—whom Lebanese President Michel Aoun designated as the new prime minister on 22 October 2020—negotiates the formation of a new cabinet. Disagreements between Hariri and Aoun appear to be the main stumbling block in the formation of a new government.

In a 19 May statement, the International Support Group for Lebanon—which is comprised of the UN, China, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the UK, and the US, as well as the EU and the Arab League—called on Lebanese leaders to put aside their differences and to swiftly form a government capable of addressing the country's most pressing needs and carrying out necessary reforms. It referenced the elections for the Lebanese parliament that are scheduled for May 2022 and called for the timely holding of elections in accordance with the electoral calendar to “preserve Lebanon's democracy in the context of the ongoing crisis”. In a 16 June tweet, Wronecka conveyed the UN's readiness to “extend technical assistance to the electoral process”.

The political deadlock hinders progress in addressing Lebanon's multifaceted economic problems. The World Bank noted in a 1 June 31 May report that the country's financial crisis could rank as one of the world's three most severe crises in 150 years. According to the report, Lebanon's gross domestic product (GDP), which stood at 55 billion dollars in 2018, plummeted to 33 billion dollars last year. In addition, unemployment rates are soaring, having increased from 28 percent in February 2020 to 40 percent by the end of 2020.

The economic crisis, which has been gradually worsening since 2019, has reached concerning new levels in recent months. In June, the Lebanese currency fell to a record low of approximately 18,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar. This compounded the difficulties

faced by the civilian population, which had already been struggling to obtain basic staples. Najat Rochdi, the Deputy Special Coordinator for Lebanon and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, noted in a 14 June briefing to member states in Geneva that more than one million Lebanese need assistance to meet their basic needs, including food. Lebanon has also been recently experiencing shortages in fuel and an increase in power outages. The crisis has also stretched the public health system in the country; medicine is in short supply and people are increasingly unable to access healthcare.

Against this backdrop, Lebanon has been experiencing increasing social unrest. On 17 June, a general strike was staged to press the government to address the deteriorating economic conditions. Shops, businesses, banks, and government offices were shut down, and several roadblocks were set up around Beirut and several other cities. On 26 June, protests were held in Beirut and several other cities, including in the northern city of Tripoli—which has witnessed several demonstrations in recent months—leaving several protestors and ten soldiers injured.

The financial crisis has also severely affected the Lebanese army—which is seen by many as the most stable and reliable institution in Lebanon—raising concerns that it may curtail its ability to maintain security. Salaries and food rations for soldiers have steadily decreased, leading some 3,000 soldiers to leave the 80,000-strong military force. On 17 June, France convened a virtual donors conference to mobilise aid (including food, medicine and medical equipment) for the Lebanese army. At the meeting, donor nations pledged tens of millions of dollars for direct support to the army.

Recent months have witnessed some tensions between Israel and Lebanon in UNIFIL's area of operations in the context of the round of hostilities between Israel and Hamas, which took place between 10 and 21 May. During that period, UNIFIL recorded several instances of rocket fire from southern Lebanon towards Israel on 17 and 19 May. No group claimed responsibility for the launches. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) responded by firing artillery rounds towards Lebanon. No injuries or damage were reported as a result of the exchanges. In addition, on 14 May, several Lebanese citizens crossed the Blue Line and entered Israeli territory. The IDF opened fire in response, and one of the Lebanese citizens later died from injuries he had sustained. The militant group Hezbollah later confirmed the deceased was one of its operatives.

The indirect negotiations between Israel and Lebanon on the delineation of the maritime border between the two countries resumed on 4 May. The talks commenced in October 2020 with the mediation of US officials from the Trump administration but

UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2539 (28 August 2020) renewed UNIFIL's mandate until 31 August 2021. S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between the militant group Hezbollah and Israel. Secretary-General's Reports S/2021/240 (9 March 2021) was on the implementation of resolution 1701 during the period from 21 October 2020 to 19 February 2021. S/2020/473 (1 June 2020) was an assessment of the continued relevance of UNIFIL's resources, taking into consideration the troop ceiling and the civilian component of the force, issued in accordance with resolution 2485.

Lebanon

appeared to have stalled by December 2020 after the sides had met four times.

Key Issues and Options

An issue of growing concern for the Council is how to address the political and economic instability in Lebanon and prevent further deterioration of the already fragile security situation in the country. Another issue of increasing concern relates to the ability of the security forces in Lebanon to maintain stability in the country. Council members may consider calling on international donors to swiftly fulfil their pledges from the 17 June donors conference to facilitate the Lebanese army's continued operations.

Looking ahead, Council members will soon initiate discussions on the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate ahead of its 31 August expiry. A key priority for the Council in this regard is to protect the integrity of UNIFIL's mandate and provide the force with the means to carry out its tasks. Council members may be interested to hear from the briefers on progress in the implementation plan for the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's 1 June 2020 assessment report on the continued relevance of UNIFIL's resources. While the Council has not officially endorsed the 1 June assessment report, it appears that many Council members have expressed support for its recommendations.

The Council may consider issuing a press or presidential statement to call for the urgent formation of a new government in

Lebanon, the swift implementation of reforms necessary to avert a humanitarian crisis, and the timely holding of elections in 2022. The Council has not issued a press statement on Lebanon since February 2019.

Council Dynamics

There is a consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. Possible changes to Council dynamics on Lebanon relating to the change in the US administration and the advent of the five elected members in 2021 are likely to become more pronounced during the upcoming negotiations on UNIFIL's mandate renewal.

The previous US administration was of the view that UNIFIL should play a more active role in confronting the threats posed by Iran, Hezbollah and the proliferation of weapons in southern Lebanon. Its advocacy for a reduction in UNIFIL's troop ceiling resulted in the decision, by resolution 2539 of 28 August 2020, to reduce the force's troop ceiling to 13,000 from the 15,000 set out by resolution 1701.

Council members India and Ireland are major troop-contributing countries to UNIFIL. They are likely to closely follow developments related to the implementation of the 1 June 2020 assessment report and may emphasise the need for close consultations with troop-contributing countries throughout the process.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

Expected Council Action

In July, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, is expected to brief Security Council members in closed consultations on UNRCCA's activities. The consultations are expected to be held in person.

Key Recent Developments

Gherman last briefed Council members in videoconference (VTC) closed consultations on 27 January. She provided an update on UNRCCA's activities pertaining to counter-terrorism, transboundary water management, border demarcation, and regional cooperation with Afghanistan. Gherman also described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region and briefed on her October 2020 trip to Kyrgyzstan and the December 2020 launch of the Central Asia Women Leaders' Caucus.

Since Gherman's last Council briefing, there has been significant unrest on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This unrest erupted as a result of a dispute over the water distribution facility Golovnoi, which is located near the disputed Tajik-Kyrgyz border and the Tajik enclave Vorukh. Vorukh is completely enclosed by Kyrgyzstan and has recently been the subject of negotiations to delimit the Tajik-Kyrgyz border, with Kyrgyzstan offering Tajikistan an area of identical size in the Batken region in exchange for Vorukh.

According to media reports, this offer was not well received by officials in Tajikistan.

Golovnoi ordinarily channels water from the Ak-Suu/Isfara river to the Tortkul reservoir, from which water is distributed to subsistence farmers in Kyrgyzstan. During April and May, however, Golovnoi pumps water from the Ak-Suu/Isfara river towards Tajikistan, where it provides irrigation for export crops of apricots, apples, cherries, rice, and wheat in the Isfara region. The facility is part of a broader water-sharing agreement, by which 55 percent of water flow from the Ak-Suu/Isfara river goes to Tajikistan, 37 percent to Kyrgyzstan, and the remaining 8 percent to Uzbekistan. Ownership of the facility is hotly contested. Kyrgyzstan claims that it owns Golovnoi because it was built by the Kyrgyz Soviet Socialist Republic in 1973 and because the country pays to maintain it. Tajikistan disputes these claims, contending that maintenance work has not been carried out at Golovnoi for many years.

The unrest began after Tajiks tried to install surveillance cameras near Golovnoi on 28 April in response to maintenance undertaken by Kyrgyz workers at the facility earlier in the month. According to media reports, the head of water and land resources management in Tajikistan's Isfara district, Rustam Shomirsaidov, indicated that Tajikistan did not want Kyrgyzstan to repair Golovnoi, as doing so would allow Kyrgyzstan to claim ownership of the facility. Stone throwing between local communities quickly escalated into more

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA Security Council Letter S/2007/279 (7 May 2007) was a letter from the Secretary-General on the establishment of a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat. **Security Council Press Statement SC/13179** (25 January 2018) was a press statement welcoming further cooperation and coordination between UNRCCA, the Central Asian States, and relevant regional organisations, including those organisations of which the Central Asian States are members.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

serious violence, with border troops from both countries engaging in a pitched battle that involved machine guns and mortars. More than 50 people were killed and hundreds more were injured before a ceasefire was agreed on 29 April. There was also significant loss of property, particularly in villages on the Kyrgyz side of the border. Media reports indicate that many villagers lost their homes and that a number of schools were destroyed. Over 58,000 people in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were displaced as a result of the fighting. Overall, the violence is considered to be the worst cross-border military conflict in Central Asia in recent years.

On 30 April, Gherman had separate telephone conversations with the two countries' foreign affairs ministers—Ruslan Kazakbaev of Kyrgyzstan and Sirojiddin Muhiddin of Tajikistan—to discuss the situation at the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. Both ministers described their attempts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, which included the ceasefire and the establishment of a joint working group to develop measures to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. Kazakbaev reportedly noted that there were casualties on both sides and referred to the destruction of infrastructure in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. He indicated that he was hopeful that the UN would provide assistance to internally displaced persons returning to their homes and help them restore property that they lost during the fighting. Kazakbaev also stressed that these restoration works would be a key pillar in efforts to build a sustainable peace in the region.

In both calls, Gherman expressed deep regret regarding the loss of life and injuries sustained during the conflict. She also welcomed the dialogue between the two countries and the decision to continue the work of the intergovernmental commission on delimitation and demarcation of the border before expressing her support for the measures intended to deescalate the situation and urging both states to intensify efforts to find a long-term solution to border disputes. Gherman concluded her calls by noting that the UN stands ready to provide any necessary support, including technical assistance with the implementation of agreements reached between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, within the framework of existing regional and bilateral programs.

Despite the positive developments mentioned in these conversations, tensions have escalated again in recent weeks. On 4 June, Tajik military personnel placed a container in a disputed area. In a statement, the Kyrgyz State Committee for National Security accused Tajikistan of violating border agreements. Tajikistan rejected this accusation, and its border service claimed in a press release that its unit had been operating in Tajik territory. Although this incident did not result in further violence, officials in the region have reportedly indicated that the situation remains tense.

In a separate development, on 13 November 2020, UNRCCA announced a Joint Statement of Intent between Kyrgyzstan and the UN following a period of political unrest in the country. The Kyrgyz government pledged, among other things, to maintain the rule of law, follow principles of good governance, and protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech. On 30 March, Gherman met with Kyrgyzstan's president, Sadyr Japarov. Gherman underlined the importance of implementing reforms in accordance with the Joint Statement of Intent and indicated that the UN will assist judicial and administrative reforms

in Kyrgyzstan by providing expertise and technical assistance. She also proposed the establishment of a UN-Kyrgyzstan Human Rights Dialogue, with a view to enabling the timely provision of expert support and information exchange. Japarov outlined his intention to protect and uphold the rights and freedoms of the Kyrgyz people, including freedom of speech. Despite these assurances, Kyrgyzstan's caretaker parliament approved a draft law on 21 April that amended the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code and which, according to Human Rights Watch, undermines the rights to freedom of association and expression in Kyrgyzstan. Approval by the caretaker parliament was the first step in a three-stage legislative process for enactment of the draft law.

Because of restrictions on travel related to COVID-19, UNRCCA has largely moved its preventive diplomacy activities online since the onset of the pandemic, holding several meetings via VTC, including a session aimed at encouraging cooperation to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. On 16 March, UNRCCA held a three-day workshop on preventing and combatting the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their supply to terrorists in collaboration with the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre within the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT-UNCCT), the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). Addressing the meeting, Gherman said that Central Asian states have made significant efforts to prevent and combat the trafficking of small arms and light weapons. She also highlighted the threat that militarisation of terrorist groups poses to all countries.

Key Issues and Options

One of the main issues for the Council is how to make better use of UNRCCA's experience in conflict prevention and whether there is anything else the Council could do to support UNRCCA's role in facilitating preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation.

Council members will be monitoring the situation on the Tajik-Kyrgyz border and may be particularly interested in its potential impact on stability in the region. With this in mind, Council members could consider issuing a press statement welcoming both countries' efforts to resolve the dispute peacefully. Council members may also wish to discuss developments in Kyrgyzstan and the importance of the Joint Statement of Intent between Kyrgyzstan and the UN. They are likely to highlight and commend the work UNRCCA is doing to encourage states in Central Asia to respond collectively to COVID-19, climate change, resource management, and other issues. UNRCCA's efforts to include the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Afghan government in regional cooperation measures may also be discussed, particularly in light of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan.

An ongoing issue for the Council is mitigation of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic that could affect international peace and security, including the secondary impacts on the socioeconomic wellbeing of the people of Central Asia, counter-terrorism measures, and the human rights situation. Some members might emphasise the importance of ensuring equitable access to vaccines and respecting the rule of law and human rights when formulating responses to the pandemic.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the work of UNRCCA and view it as an important tool in promoting cooperation in Central Asia. Council members have been unable to agree on a press statement on UNRCCA since January 2018, owing to disagreements about including references to cooperation with the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

In addition, it appears that several Council members have raised

issues relating to human rights during the consultations, with Germany and the US referring in previous meetings to the situation of Uighur minorities in the region. Other members, including China and Russia, have opposed discussion of this matter, arguing that it is not related to UNRCCA's mandate. This has led some Council members to mention the need to uphold human rights without referencing Uighur minorities. In addition, disagreements regarding references to foreign terrorist fighters in Central Asia arose following the last round of consultations earlier in the year.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will receive an oral briefing on the drawdown and closure of the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), as requested in resolution 2559.

Background and Key Recent Developments

On 22 December 2020, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2559 on the exit of UNAMID. The resolution decided to terminate the mandate of UNAMID as of 31 December 2020 and requested the Secretary-General to complete the withdrawal of all uniformed and civilian UNAMID personnel by 30 June, other than those required for the mission's liquidation. It also requested the Secretary-General to provide the Security Council with an assessment of lessons learned from the experience of UNAMID no later than 31 October. Ahead of the adoption of resolution 2559, the government of Sudan made clear its position that the mandate of UNAMID should terminate on 31 December 2020 and asserted that it would assume full responsibility for the protection of civilians, in line with its National Plan for Civilian Protection transmitted to the Council on 21 May. Additionally, the 13 November 2020 joint AU/UN special report on UNAMID, requested in resolution 2525, recommended that the mandate of UNAMID terminate on 31 December 2020.

The latest Secretary-General's report on the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), dated 17 May, included information in an annex about the drawdown and withdrawal of UNAMID, as requested in resolutions 2524 and 2559. The report noted that UNAMID remained on schedule for the closure of its 14 team sites and will enter its liquidation phase on 1 July, which is expected to be completed within 12 months. It provided details on the liquidation procedure, including that such activities will be conducted from the El Fasher logistics hub, with the mission maintaining a presence in Khartoum within the UNITAMS complex to liaise with government officials on operational matters and in Port Sudan for export logistical operations.

The security situation in parts of Darfur remains precarious, with intercommunal violence, human rights violations and abuses, violations of international humanitarian law, and large-scale displacement. Intercommunal clashes in El Geneina, West Darfur, in January resulted in 162 people being killed, 300 injured and the displacement

of over 100,000 people. In early April, violent clashes occurred again in El Geneina, resulting in 144 people being killed, 232 injured and an estimated 65,000 newly displaced. The Secretary-General's report noted how UNAMID was able to assist following these clashes, adding "it is apparent that with the uniformed personnel repatriations and closure of team sites scheduled in the near term, the Operation will very soon no longer be in a position to offer such support".

The Secretary-General's report referred to incidents of looting of former UNAMID sites. It also noted the conclusion of the framework agreement on the civilian end-use of team sites and assets. In most cases, the Sudanese government has committed to ensuring that facilities and assets will be used for social and community services, the report says. It added that the mission is in the process of finalising the establishment of a guard unit consisting of 363 former police unit personnel, as authorised in resolution 2559, to protect UNAMID's personnel, facilities and assets. According to the report, UNAMID has handed over to other partners residual activities that it had initiated in 2020 but could not complete prior to the end of its mandate, including core programmatic activities in the areas of rule of law, community policing, gender-based violence, and community stabilization.

On 20 May, the Council received a briefing on UNITAMS from Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes. In relation to the recent intercommunal clashes in Darfur, he said that "while armed movements have named representatives to the ceasefire committees and identified personnel for joint security forces, deployments have yet to commence". He added that "with the rapid establishment of such forces and the implementation of Sudan's National Plan for Civilian Protection, incidents similar to the recent violence in El Geneina may occur".

Council Dynamics

Negotiations on resolution 2525, which was adopted on 3 June 2020 and extended the mandate of UNAMID for the final time until 31 December 2020, were contentious. The initial draft circulated by the penholders would have extended the mandate of UNAMID for a longer period, until 31 May. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 3 June 2020.)

Although resolution 2559 on the termination of UNAMID's mandate was adopted unanimously in December 2020, the penholders (then the UK and Germany) would have preferred to pursue

Sudan

a substantively different outcome. They had apparently considered proposing an extension of UNAMID's mandate until June but with the termination of its Chapter VII elements at the end of 2020. This approach was driven by several concerns, including that UNAMID-initiated programmatic activities would not be completed by the end of 2020 and that UNITAMS would not yet be fully operational. However, it appears that some permanent members and the three African members, as well as the Sudanese government, were not supportive of this approach. (For more, see our What's In Blue story of 21 December 2020.)

In its explanation of vote on resolution 2559, the UK said: “[W]e do not believe that it should set a precedent for future peacekeeping withdrawals. The UK hopes, where possible, the Council—and the UN—can return to the former best practice of providing

peacekeeping missions with mandates until the completion of their withdrawals as a means to ensuring safe and sustainable transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding”.

Divisions persist in assessing the situation in Darfur. Several members remain concerned that the security situation in some regions is still precarious and underscore the need to avoid a relapse into conflict. While a number of these members believed that UNITAMS should have a mandate to protect civilians, others (Russia, China and the three African members among them) opposed the inclusion of such tasks in the mandate during negotiations in June 2020.

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions. Ambassador Sven Jürgenson (Estonia) chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question”. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland is expected to brief.

Key Recent Developments

On 29 April, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas indefinitely postponed Palestinian parliamentary and presidential elections, originally scheduled for 22 May and 31 July. He cited as his rationale concerns that Israel would not allow Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate in the poll. Several sources, however, have speculated that he was worried that his party, Fatah, would not fare well in the vote.

On 9 May, hostilities erupted between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza following weeks of mounting tensions and violent incidents between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem, including at the holy sites, and at the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood over the threatened eviction of Palestinians from their homes.

Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire on 20 May, following intensive diplomatic efforts by Egypt, Qatar, the US, and the UN. Palestinian armed groups launched some 4,000 rockets at Israel while Israel conducted roughly 1,500 strikes in Gaza. The fighting claimed the lives of 253 Palestinians, including at least 66 children, and 12 people in Israel, including two children. The round of hostilities was also marked by violent altercations between Jewish and Palestinian communities within Israel.

On 22 May, Council members issued a press statement calling for “full adherence to the ceasefire”. The members of the Council also mourned the loss of civilian lives from the fighting and “stressed the immediate need for humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian civilian population, particularly in Gaza”. They further “reiterated the importance of achieving a comprehensive

peace based on the vision of a region where two democratic States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace with secure and recognized borders”.

On 27 May, Special Coordinator Wennesland, Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini, and Columbia University Professor Rashid Khalidi briefed the Council via videoconference. Wennesland emphasised the importance of addressing the humanitarian situation in Gaza, highlighting the \$95 million flash appeal that had been initiated earlier that day. He also spoke of the need to “create a political horizon that allows the parties to return to the path of meaningful negotiations”. Lazzarini emphasised that recovery from the hostilities and humanitarian assistance for Gaza would not prevent another round of fighting, adding that the “recovery phase [in Gaza] needs to be accompanied by a genuine political track aimed at lifting the blockade on people, goods and trade”. Khalidi called “for the world community to accept...the principle that, in any projected solution in Palestine-Israel, all citizens of both the Palestinian and Israeli peoples and both collectivities must enjoy rights and security on a basis of complete equality”.

Naftali Bennett became Israel's prime minister on 13 June after assembling an ideologically diverse coalition that narrowly succeeded in securing a vote of confidence in the Knesset, obtaining 60 votes, one more than the 59-vote threshold required to assume office. Bennett, who supports settlement construction and has voiced opposition to a Palestinian state, replaces former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who had been prime minister for 12 consecutive years.

Tensions began to rise again in mid-June, following the uneasy ceasefire declared on 20 May. On 15 June, incendiary balloons were released from Gaza that Israel said caused 20 fires in Israeli areas near the Gaza Strip. On the same day, Israeli nationalists

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334](#) (23 December 2016) reaffirmed that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, had no legal validity and constituted a flagrant violation under international law. It also called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8804](#) (24 June 2021) was the monthly meeting on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. [S/PV.8782](#) (27 May 2021) was a briefing on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. [Security Council Press Statement SC/14527](#) (22 May 2021) was a press statement on the Gaza ceasefire.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

waving Israeli flags marched through east Jerusalem in a parade that many Palestinians perceived as inflammatory, with reports that some of the marchers chanted “death to the Arabs”. The parade was held in lieu of the Jerusalem Day parade in May, which was cancelled amidst the hostilities between Israelis and Palestinians. In a 16 June letter to UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the Palestinian Observer Mission to the UN decried the event as “an anti-Palestinian march by extremist and far-right politicians”. On 16 June, the Israeli military announced that it had launched airstrikes on “military compounds belonging to the Hamas terror organization”. There were no reported casualties.

On 21 June, Wennesland met with Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar; following the meeting, Sinwar expressed displeasure with Israel’s withholding of the transfer of financial aid from Qatar. He also complained of restrictions on the delivery of fuel to Gaza and the diminution of the Gaza fishing zone. Israel continues to demand the release of two Israeli civilians and the remains of two Israeli soldiers from Gaza as a condition for completely ending restrictions. The Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip announced following a 22 June meeting that if their demands for the restrictions’ easing are not met, they will resume launching incendiary balloons into Gaza and will organise rallies along the border fence with Israel. In the aftermath of this announcement, Israel announced that as of 25 June it would expand the fishing zone and allow raw materials for key civilian factories to enter Gaza. At the same time, Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz announced that while Israel would commit to improving the “situation for the benefit of the people...we will not tolerate terrorism of any kind”.

Wennesland again briefed the Council on 24 June. He expressed concern about the approval by Israeli officials of plans to expand the Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem, noting: “If implemented, this plan would further consolidate the continuum of illegal settlements separating East Jerusalem from Bethlehem and other Palestinian communities in the southern part of the West Bank.” He further emphasised that the Israel-Hamas ceasefire remains “very fragile” and said that the UN is “working closely with all concerned parties and partners, including Egypt, to solidify a ceasefire, allow the entry of urgent humanitarian assistance and stabilize the situation in Gaza”.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues that the Council is considering include the importance of:

- maintaining and solidifying the ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinians;
- reinvigorating intra-Palestinian reconciliation, especially following the delay in the Palestinian elections planned for this year; and
- addressing the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Council members could consider a statement emphasising the importance of maintaining the ceasefire and providing humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Gaza. As this may be politically difficult given the challenges in issuing the May press statement, different groupings of Council members could consider delivering their own statements to this effect.

Council Dynamics

Council members continue to emphasise the need for a two-state solution, an end to settlement activities and demolitions of Palestinian civilian structures, and a return by Israel and the Palestinians to the negotiating table. Following the May hostilities, several members have emphasised the need for the ceasefire to hold and the urgency of providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Gaza. In the 27 May meeting, members such as the US and Kenya underscored that assistance to Gaza should not be exploited by militants there.

During the 11-day crisis, Council members made numerous attempts to issue a press statement and, in one instance, press elements, in response to the hostilities. It appears that nearly all members felt that the Council should pronounce itself and speak with one voice on the crisis. However, while indicating that it was engaging in intensive diplomacy to end the crisis, the US did not support a Council product. Ultimately, on 21 May, a day after the ceasefire was declared, China, Norway, and Tunisia proposed another draft press statement and was joined by France in spearheading the initiative. At this point, the US engaged in the negotiations, and Council members were able to issue a press statement.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to renew the sanctions measures imposed on the Central African Republic (CAR) pursuant to resolution 2127, which expires at the end of the month. The mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, which expires on 31 August, is also expected to be renewed in July.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) expires on 15 November 2021.

Key Recent Developments

On 23 June, the Security Council met to discuss the Secretary-General’s latest report on MINUSCA. Mankeur Ndiaye, the Special Representative for the CAR and head of MINUSCA, and Bankole Adeoye, the AU’s Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security briefed the Council. They were joined by Angolan President and Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço; the European

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2566 (12 March 2021) raised the MINUSCA troop ceiling. S/RES/2552 (12 November 2020) extended the mandate of MINUSCA and the authorisation to use all means to provide operational support to MINUSCA until 15 November 2021. S/RES/2536 (28 July 2020) renewed the CAR sanctions regime until 31 July 2021 and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2021. **Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/3** (9 April 2019) established benchmarks for suspending or progressively lifting arms embargo measures on the government of the CAR. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2021/571** (16 June 2021) was the most recent report on MINUSCA.

Central African Republic

External Action Service (EEAS) Managing Director for Africa, Rita Laranjinha; and a representative of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Speaking to the Council on recent developments in CAR, Ndiaye highlighted the fragile security situation and the worsening human rights conditions in the country. According to the Secretary-General's 16 June report, there has been an "unacceptable and unprecedented increase in hostile threats and incidents by the national security force and bilaterally deployed other security personnel targeting MINUSCA" as well as disinformation campaigns that "seek to incite hatred and violence", including against international organisations.

The 23 June meeting followed the Council's 7 June discussion on the CAR under "any other business" at the request of France, the penholder, and the "A3 plus one" (Kenya, Niger, Tunisia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). That meeting was requested against the backdrop of what the Secretary-General called in his 16 June report a "surge in the number and gravity" of violations of the status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) between the UN and the CAR government. During the meeting, Ndiaye outlined a series of violations such as threats against UN personnel and hindering the freedom of movement of MINUSCA patrols and UN personnel. These violations included a 30 May incident during which a delegation led by MINUSCA's Deputy Special Representative was prevented from accessing an area near the CAR border with Chad and Cameroon, where people displaced by fighting were staying and where 20 civilians were reportedly arrested and tortured by the Central African armed forces (FACA) two days earlier. Apparently, Ndiaye's briefing suggested that the SOFA violations have been committed by both the FACA and external military forces supporting the FACA. Some Council members apparently alleged that Russian military instructors were involved in the SOFA violations. Russia maintains that its instructors have been invited by the CAR government to work with the CAR armed forces and denied their involvement in any violations.

The accusations echoed a statement made by the US during the Council's separate discussion on 7 June about the activities of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), during which it expressed "outrage" at reports that "Russian instructors led military offensives characterized by confrontations with UN peacekeepers, threats against UN personnel, violations of international humanitarian law, extensive sexual violence and widespread looting, including of humanitarian organizations". Russia denied those charges, saying that the US "continues to make the same unfounded accusations" in an effort to "give Russia a bad name and, in particular, to undermine [its] effective efforts aimed at stabilizing the situation".

Despite the acrimony, the Council agreed on press elements on 7 June, noting "the importance of ensuring the full and effective implementation of, and compliance with, the status of forces agreement" and that "attacks against UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes". The issue of the SOFA violations was also raised with President Faustin-Archange Touadéra during a 2-6 June visit to the CAR by Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix and senior officials from the AU, the EU and ECCAS.

As highlighted at the 23 June Council session, the overall situation in the CAR remains tenuous. Reports suggest that the operational capabilities of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC)—a coalition of armed groups that perpetrated the country's elections-related

violence in late 2020 and early 2021—has been weakened, but it continues to create instability in several regions of the CAR. One high-profile security incident occurred on 30 May on the border between the CAR and Chad, where Chadian troops clashed with FACA and Russian military instructors. According to international media reports, six Chadian soldiers and three Russian military instructors were killed in the incident. An independent international commission, which includes members from the UN, the AU and ECCAS, was established on 1 June to investigate the incident.

Meanwhile, the country's ongoing humanitarian crisis continues unabated. Nearly 2.8 million people need humanitarian assistance and protection, and an 11 June OCHA report stated the country's health system "is barely functioning". It further noted that only one-third of Central Africans have access to clean water. These difficulties have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as persistent violence, which has created approximately 729,000 internally displaced persons and driven an additional 695,000 people to flee the country.

Finally, the CAR's political environment remains tense despite President Touadéra's inauguration. The 2-6 June joint high-level visit to the CAR attempted to reinvigorate the country's peace process, which remains stalled despite Touadéra's stated commitment to it. On 8 June, citing an apparent disinformation campaign against French officials by the CAR government, the French government announced that it was suspending military cooperation and its support to the CAR government's budget.

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 47th session, the Human Rights Council is expected to receive an oral update on 9 July from the independent expert on the human rights situation in the CAR, Yao Agbetse.

Key Issues and Options

Possible amendments to the arms embargo, including its further easing, and the length of the sanctions regime renewal and that of the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, will be the key issues for the Council in July. Council members may want to take account of the Secretary-General's report on the benchmarks of the arms embargo to assess progress. The Council may also wish to consider the rising number of SOFA violations against MINUSCA, especially given that many of these violations have been committed by elements of the FACA.

Council and Wider Dynamics

The arms embargo remains a highly contentious issue. China and Russia have argued that the Council should ease the arms embargo, with the aim of lifting it completely. During a Council meeting on the CAR on 21 January, CAR's foreign minister called for the "total lifting" of the arms embargo to allow the "democratically elected authorities to ensure the protection of the population and to defend [the country's] territorial integrity". This position was supported by China and Russia, with China arguing that lifting the arms embargo "at an early date" would help improve the country's security capacities. During the 23 June Council briefing, the ICGLR and ECCAS briefers also reiterated their support for lifting the arms embargo. Other Council members, including the P3, believe that the government is able to procure adequate arms given numerous exemptions in the arms embargo. Further, they argue that the CAR government

Central African Republic

has made only limited progress on achieving the benchmarks for progressively lifting or suspending the arms embargo, outlined in a presidential statement in April 2019. Moreover, they contend that lifting the embargo would allow arms to flow to various armed groups, creating further instability.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Abdou Abarry (Niger) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Tiffany Jenkins
Policy Analyst

Lindiwe Knutson
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Robert Schupp
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Publications Assistant

Rodrigo Saad
Research Assistant

Sami Salloum
Intern

Security Council Report is a non-profit organisation supported by the Governments of Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Carnegie Corporation and the International Development Research Centre.

Design Point Five, NY

Security Council Report
711 Third Avenue, Suite 1501
New York NY 10017

Telephone +1 212 759 6394

Fax +1 212 759 4038

Web securitycouncilreport.org

Follow [@SCRtweets](https://twitter.com/SCRtweets) on Twitter