

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

Kazakhstan will preside over the Security Council in January. There will be a special focus on the Central Asia region. A ministerial-level debate on building relationships between [Afghanistan](#) and Central Asia, chaired by Foreign Minister Kairat Abdrakhmanov, with Secretary-General António Guterres expected to be among the speakers, is planned. In addition, the regular semi-annual briefing on the [UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia \(UNRCCA\)](#) will be held. Kazakhstan is also planning a high-level briefing on [non-proliferation and confidence building measures](#), chaired by the country's President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, with the Secretary-General briefing.

Following the December adoption of a resolution renewing the authorisation of cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access in [Syria](#), the Council will continue to receive its regular monthly briefing on the humanitarian situation, as well as on the political situation and chemical weapons. The other Middle East meeting will be the quarterly open debate on [Israel/Palestine](#).

Council members will be following closely developments in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) and will receive a briefing from Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre

Lacroix, followed by consultations. Other briefings followed by consultations on African issues in January are: [Darfur](#), with an update on UNAMID; [Somalia](#); [South Sudan](#); [Mali](#); [Libya](#); and the work of the [UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel](#). The Council is also expected to adopt a resolution renewing sanctions in the [Central African Republic](#) and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

The Council will also be updated on situations in South America and Europe in January.

It will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on [Colombia](#), with Special Representative Jean Arnault presenting the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia.

On [Cyprus](#), it will be briefed in consultations on developments and the latest report on UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and is expected to renew the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months.

Over the month, Council members will likely follow closely developments in the [Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#), [Myanmar](#), [Ukraine](#) and [Yemen](#), and other meetings may be scheduled.

In Hindsight: The Demise of the JIM

Six draft resolutions were vetoed in 2017, the most since 1988, and five of them focused on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN was the centerpiece of the Security Council's efforts to determine responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in Syria. It was established through resolution 2235 on 7 August 2015, largely a result of negotiations between the US and Russia. Three consecutive vetoes by Russia led to its termination at the end of 2017, dismantling what had been one of the rare examples of Council action on the Syria file.

The JIM worked on the basis of reports from the OPCW fact-finding mission (FFM), which determined whether chemical weapons had been used in particular incidents. It produced seven reports and assigned responsibility to the Syrian government for four attacks (Khan Shaykhun on 4 April 2017, Qmenas and Sarmin on 16 March 2015, and Talmenes on 21 April 2014) and to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant for two (Um-Hawsh on 15-16 September 2016 and Marea on 21 August 2015). As the JIM began to assign responsibility in its third and fourth reports in 2016, its working methods were questioned by Russia, which criticised what it considered unsubstantiated

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In Hindsight: The Demise of the JIM

conclusions in the reports. Russia also maintained that these findings were not definitive, pending investigations by the Syrian government, and could not be the basis for taking legal decisions regarding accountability.

Since the beginning of the JIM's mandate, Russia and China advocated for an increased focus on the use of chemical weapons by terrorist groups, and they circulated a draft to that effect in April 2016. Even though the draft was never put to a vote, this was one of the issues that featured prominently in the negotiations regarding the renewal of the JIM's mandate in October and November 2016. The negotiation process required a technical rollover resolution to buy time for the negotiations because of the divisions in the Council. In the end, language was added to the draft that became resolution 2319, encouraging the JIM to consult with the 1267/1989/2253 Al-Qaida/ISIL Sanctions Committee, as well as to engage with states in the region to identify how non-state actors and terrorist groups were involved in the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The period of uncertainty regarding the JIM's future in late 2016 created difficulties in the planning and hiring of staff, which disrupted the JIM's work for several months. The negotiation process also reflected the fundamental divergences of Russia and China with the P3 regarding the JIM and the extent of its mandate. This was further demonstrated by a P3 initiative to seek accountability for chemical weapons attacks. On 28 February 2017, China and Russia vetoed a P3-drafted resolution that would have imposed sanctions on perpetrators identified by the JIM reports.

The 4 April attack in Khan Shaykhun resulted in heightened visibility for the Council's consideration of the use of chemical weapons in Syria. A P3 draft resolution condemning the attack and emphasising Syria's obligation to provide the JIM and the FFM with information on air operations, was vetoed by Russia on 12 April. In the following months, through several letters and statements, Russia questioned key aspects of, first, the FFM investigations and, then, the JIM's methodology on Khan Shaykhun.

The US tabled a draft to renew the JIM's mandate, which was due to expire on 17 November 2017, on 24 October, two days before the release of the JIM's final report, in order to delink the JIM's conclusions from its continuation. However, this move was blocked

by a Russian veto. In explaining its vote, Russia stated that it considered the JIM needed to continue. However, when the report was released, Russia made it clear that it would not accept the result of the investigations on the Khan Shaykhun attack. It raised the lack of on-site visits and criticised the non-observance of the chain of custody, the failure to use all available methods and methodologies of investigation, and the questionable credibility of sources.

On 2 November, the US and Russia circulated competing draft resolutions on the renewal of the mandate of the JIM. The initial US draft characterised the information obtained by the JIM as constituting "sufficient, credible and reliable evidence to reach conclusions on those responsible for the use of chemical weapons", while the Russian text expressed its methodological concerns. Even though the head of the JIM's leadership panel, Edmond Mulet, addressed some of the issues raised by Russia in a public briefing on 7 November, Russia made clear its opposition to the working methods of the JIM and refused to engage on the US draft. However, there were several rounds of negotiations on that draft with other members. The US opposed including language from the Russian draft that it considered discredited the previous work of the JIM and questioned the independence and professionalism of its staff. Both drafts were put to a vote on 16 November, but neither was adopted. The US draft was vetoed by Russia, and the Russian draft received only four favourable votes (Bolivia, China, Kazakhstan and Russia).

Immediately after the failed votes on 16 November 2017, Japan circulated a draft that would have extended the JIM's mandate for one month while requesting the UN Secretary-General, in coordination with the OPCW, to submit proposals to the Council for the structure and methodology of the JIM "reflecting views of Security Council members". Twelve members voted for the draft resolution on 17 November, but Russia, which had already signaled that it did not support this draft in a meeting in consultations earlier that day, cast its 11th Syria veto.

Council members met after the veto in an attempt to find a compromise before the expiration of the JIM's mandate by midnight, but no further action was taken that day. In a last-ditch attempt, Italy as President circulated a draft letter to the Secretary-General

requesting that the JIM's organisational and administrative arrangements be maintained until 31 December 2017 pending a final decision on the renewal of its mandate. Sweden and Uruguay circulated a draft resolution to extend the JIM's mandate for a year, adding language on investigation standards and aiming to reach a compromise among the competing perspectives in the Council.

Russia ultimately opposed both initiatives and the JIM's mandate ended; however, the dynamism shown by some elected Council members in the last stretch of the negotiations on a file traditionally monopolised by permanent members is worth noting. An earlier example had been the discussions regarding the Khan Shaykhun attack, when the E10 proposed a compromise draft on 6 April in an effort to bridge the divide between the P3 and Russia. On that occasion, China was the only permanent member to praise the merits of the compromise draft. However, the initiative was soon overtaken by events, with the US striking the Shayrat airbase that evening.

Even though elected members met regularly on the JIM renewal for weeks, divergent views prevented them from forming a unified front. While some felt that the E10 were well-positioned to break the impasse, others thought that tabling a third draft would undermine the then-ongoing negotiations on the US draft. Sweden discussed elements of an alternative draft with the E10 but found most members reluctant to pursue the idea. Eventually, Sweden decided to circulate a draft jointly with Uruguay at the very last minute, even though it would face opposition from both Russia and the US. While acceptance by Russia and the US was a requirement for the JIM's renewal, it is impossible to know whether a draft from an elected member could have bridged the widening gap between the P3 and Russia if there had been solid engagement by all Council members earlier.

This, however, assumes that the permanent members would have acted differently if presented with other options. Russia's rush to put its drafts in blue with no negotiation, even though it was well aware that the drafts would not be acceptable to most Council members, has led some Council members to question whether it was ever serious about retaining the JIM.

Status Update since our December Forecast

Central African Republic

On 4 December, Council members issued a press statement condemning an attack on a MINUSCA detachment in Bria by suspected anti-Balaka elements, which resulted in one Mauritanian peacekeeper killed and two other Mauritanian peacekeepers and one Zambian peacekeeper injured (SC/13102). Also on that day, the CAR Sanctions Committee met with its Panel of Experts to discuss the final report of the panel and hear briefings by the UN Mine Action Service and UN Institute for Disarmament Research on weapons and ammunition management in the country (SC/13123).

Yemen

On 5 December, Council members were briefed on Yemen in consultations by Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock. On 22 December, Council members condemned in a press statement the 19 December ballistic missile attack by the Huthis against Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia (SC/13143).

International Criminal Tribunals

On 6 December, the Council held a debate on the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals in which the presidents and prosecutors of these bodies briefed (S/PV.8120). The meeting focused on the assessment reports of the Residual Mechanism and the ICTY (S/2017/971 and S/2017/1001) and on the ICTY's closure on 31 December 2017.

Subsidiary Bodies

On 8 December, the Council held the annual briefing of subsidiary body chairs from outgoing elected Security Council members, which this year were Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay (S/PV.8127).

Great Lakes Region

On 8 December, the Council adopted resolution 2389, reaffirming that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region remains an essential mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability, and inviting the Secretary-General "to assess the progress, challenges and shortcomings in the implementation of the Framework, and to present his vision, supported by concrete

recommendations, to the Council in his next report", which is due by 31 March 2018.

DPRK

On 11 December, the Council held its fourth meeting on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The briefers were the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (by video teleconference) and Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča (S/PV.8130). The meeting was convened in response to a joint letter from France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, the UK, the US and Uruguay (S/2017/1006). At the beginning of the meeting there was a procedural vote to adopt the agenda at the request of several members, which was subsequently adopted with 10 votes in favour, three against (Bolivia, China and Russia) and two abstentions (Egypt and Ethiopia). On 12 December, the Council was briefed in consultations by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on his visit to the DPRK from 5 to 8 December. It was the first visit by a senior Secretariat official since 2011. While in Pyongyang, Feltman met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Ri Yong Ho and Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Pak Myong Guk. He also met with the UN country team and diplomatic corps and visited UN project sites. On 15 December, the Council held a ministerial-level meeting on the "Threats and Challenges posed by the DPRK to International Peace and Security", with Secretary-General António Guterres as the briefer. Japanese Foreign Minister Tarō Kōno chaired the meeting, and the DPRK and the Republic of Korea participated under Rule 37 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Council. The Secretary-General warned that an accidental escalation could lead to conflict on the Korean peninsula and emphasised that it was time to re-establish and strengthen communications channels, including inter-Korean and military-to-military ones in order to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding (S/PV.8137). On 22 December the Council adopted resolution 2397 tightening sanctions on DPRK (S/PV.8151).

Myanmar

On 12 December, the Council was briefed by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman and Special Representative

on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten on developments in Myanmar (S/PV.8133). Representatives from Bangladesh and Myanmar also participated in the meeting. In the consultations that followed, besides Feltman and Patten, representatives from OCHA, OHCHR, and UNHCR were present. Feltman welcomed the recent Memorandum of Understanding between Myanmar and Bangladesh but noted that although the violence had subsided, the flow of refugees to Bangladesh was continuing, and Myanmar leaders needed to adopt measures to defuse tensions and create an environment for safe and dignified repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons. Patten reported on her visit to Rohingya refugee camps and said the accounts she heard of sexual atrocities against girls and women in Rakhine state indicated a pattern of grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Golan Heights (UNDOF)

On 12 December, Council members met in consultations with troop-contributing countries to UNDOF. On 14 December, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Bintou Keita briefed Council members in consultations on the report on UNDOF for the period from 10 September to 24 November 2017 (S/2017/1024). On 21 December, the Council adopted resolution 2394 renewing the mandate of UNDOF until 30 June 2018 (S/PV.8145).

Lebanon

On 12 December, France initiated a meeting under "any other business" on the situation in Lebanon. Ambassador François Delattre (France) briefed the Council on the 8 December meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon which was held in Paris. On 19 December, the Council adopted a press statement that welcomed Prime Minister Saad Hariri's return to Lebanon and his decision to continue his term (SC/13130). Furthermore, the statement reiterated the need to protect Lebanon from crises that are destabilising the Middle East.

UNOCA/LRA

On 13 December, François Louncény Fall, Special Representative and head of UNOCA, briefed the Security Council on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on UNOCA

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(S/2017/995) and the implementation of the UN regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (S/PV.8134). The meeting was followed by consultations.

Liberia

On 13 December, Special Representative for Liberia and head of the UNMIL, Farid Zarif briefed Council members in consultations. As mandated by resolution 2333, Zarif provided an "oral update" following the presidential elections Liberia. In particular, Zarif briefed the Council on the latest developments regarding the organisation of the run-off elections and transition arrangements.

Climate Change

On 15 December, the Security Council held an Arria-formula meeting on the theme "Preparing for security implications of rising temperatures". The meeting was co-organised by a wide array of member states, including Council members France, Italy, Japan, Sweden and the UK; the Netherlands and Peru, which enter the Council in 2018; and Germany, the Maldives and Morocco. Briefers included Halbe Zijlstra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and Caitlin Werrel, the co-founder and President of the Center for Climate and Security, a Washington, D.C.-based policy institute that focuses on climate-related security threats.

Small Arms

On 18 December, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's biennial report (S/2017/1025) on the spread of small arms, light weapons and their ammunition (S/PV.8140).

Iran

On 19 December, the Council held a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231, adopted on 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme (S/PV.8143). Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman briefed on the Secretary-General's 8 December 2017 report (S/2017/1030) on the implementation of the resolution. In addition, Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi (Italy), the Council's 2231 facilitator, reported on the work of the Council related to Iran; and Joanne Adamson of the EU briefed on the work of the JCPOA's Joint Commission. (The EU is the coordinator of the Commission, which is made up of the eight parties to the JCPOA and is responsible for overseeing the agreement's implementation.)

Complex Contemporary Challenges to International Peace and Security

On 20 December, the Council held an open debate on "addressing complex contemporary

challenges to international peace and security" (S/PV.8144). Secretary-General António Guterres briefed, describing various security challenges, including nuclear weapons, climate change, terrorism, drug smuggling, and human trafficking. He underlined the importance of conflict prevention and women's participation in sustaining peace.

Counter-Terrorism

On 21 December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2395, renewing the mandate of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, the Secretariat body that assists the Counter-Terrorism Committee, as a special political mission, until 31 December 2021. On the same day, the Council adopted resolution 2396 on foreign terrorist fighters and returnees. The resolution acknowledges that returning and relocating foreign terrorist fighters have participated in attacks in their countries of origin, or third countries, including against public spaces and civilian targets and aims to address this threat.

Peacekeeping

On 21 December, Council members issued a press statement underscoring the importance that peacekeeping operations endeavour to minimise their impact on the sustainability of the ecosystems where they are deployed, based on sound consideration of the risks, benefits and costs (SC/13134).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Expected Council Action

In January, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix will brief the Council on the latest UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) report and on recent developments in the country.

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 31 March 2018.

Key Recent Developments

The political uncertainty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to be a serious concern. President Joseph Kabila, whose second and last term in office ended in December 2016, remains in power. According to an agreement reached between Kabila and the opposition on 31 December 2016, elections were to be held by the end of 2017. Before the deadline, the DRC Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) and government officials had said that elections

would not be possible by the end of the year, citing logistical difficulties with voter registration and violence in several regions in the country. The opposition is of the view that Kabila is purposely stalling elections to remain in power.

The political tensions have been exacerbated by the DRC government's curbing of political freedoms of the opposition and curtailing the freedom of the press. A report released by the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) on 21

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DRC Security Council Resolution S/RES/2389 (8 December 2017) was on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region. S/RES/2348 (31 March 2017) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 31 March 2018. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/23 (7 November 2017) reiterated the need for the government of the DRC to fully investigate the killing of the two members of the Sanctions Committee Group of Experts and bring the perpetrators to justice. Security Council Meeting S/PV.8127 (8 December 2017) was the briefing by the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies. Security Council Press Statements SC/13114 (8 December 2017) condemned an attack by rebel groups that killed 15 peacekeepers and five Congolese soldiers. SC/13095 (28 November 2017) noted the publication of a new electoral calendar in the DRC and emphasised the critical importance of ensuring the elections are not postponed further.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

November 2017 asserted that between April and October 2017, government forces killed at least 53 protesters during anti-government demonstrations. In what the report called a disproportionate use of force, 52 people were shot dead and one died from tear gas.

Over the last few months, the AU, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Community for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) all took the view that holding elections by December 2017 was unrealistic and that publication of a clear timetable for elections was vital and necessary to avoid further tensions and possible escalation of violence.

On 5 November 2017, the CENI announced a new electoral calendar, with presidential, legislative and provincial elections set for 23 December 2018. The announcement came about a week after Ambassador Nikki Haley (US) visited the DRC and called for elections to take place by the end of 2018. Opposition figures denounced the new calendar and called for protests, while the authorities in major cities have banned protests and have reportedly arrested opposition leaders. On 27 November, CENCO, which brokered the 31 December 2016 agreement, urged President Kabila to pledge that he will not seek a third term in order to ease fears of unrest.

In an 11 December 2017 statement, the EU called for respect for the freedom of assembly and peaceful demonstration, warning that its technical and financial support for the elections depends on such respect. It further extended sanctions against 16 senior members of the Kabila regime for one year.

Representatives of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region—the UN, AU, ICGLR and SADC—met on 22 November 2017 in Addis Ababa to discuss coordinated regional and international support for the electoral process. The Special Representative and head of MONUSCO, Maman Sambo Sidikou, and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, also attended. The guarantors welcomed the publication of the new electoral calendar and called for the DRC to ensure the required political space throughout the country, including freedom of peaceful assembly and equitable access to state media.

Council members issued a press statement on 28 November 2017, taking note of the new electoral calendar and emphasising the critical importance of ensuring the elections are not postponed beyond 23 December 2018. They also called for transparent, credible and inclusive elections. Council members noted the need for the release of political prisoners and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They further called upon all political actors to refrain from violence of any kind.

In parallel to issuing the press statement, Council members were negotiating a draft resolution on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region (PSC Framework). The Council adopted resolution 2389 on 8 December, reaffirming that the PSC Framework remains an essential mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability. The resolution invites the Secretary-General “to assess the progress, challenges and shortcomings in the implementation of the Framework, and to present his vision, supported by concrete recommendations, to the Council in his next report”, which is due by 31 March 2018.

Meanwhile, the violence in the Kasai region has continued. Intercommunal conflict and clashes between militias and government forces in the region began in August 2016 when the leader of the Kamwina Nsapu militia was killed in fighting with the DRC police. Violence has also continued in the east. A 7 December 2017 rebel attack on a MONUSCO base in North Kivu claimed the lives of 15 Tanzanian peacekeepers and wounded dozens of others. Five DRC soldiers were also killed in the attack. Reports suggest that the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an Islamist group originating from Uganda and currently based in eastern DRC, is responsible. “This is the worst attack on UN peacekeepers in the Organization’s recent history” said the Secretary-General in a statement the following day. Council members condemned the attack and reiterated that targeting peacekeepers may constitute a war crime under international law in a press statement on 8 December. Lacroix visited the DRC after the attack and also met with Kabila and visited Goma on 15 December. The Ugandan military announced that more than 100 ADF rebels were killed on 22 December in eastern DRC, in an operation coordinated with the DRC.

On 12 December 2017, the International Organization for Migration reported an alarming deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the DRC as fighting continued to spread throughout the country, with more than 4 million internally displaced people.

In a landmark case, a military court in Bukavu, South Kivu, sentenced 12 militia members to life in prison on 13 December 2017 for events that took place between 2013 and 2016, involving rape and violence against dozens of girls and young children. Ten were convicted of crimes against humanity and two for being members of an armed group.

The Secretary-General announced on 27 December 2017 that Leila Zerrougui (Algeria) will replace Sidikou, who will complete his role as Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO in January 2018.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 15 October statement, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called on the authorities in the DRC to halt their inflammatory rhetoric against protesters and to ensure that demonstrations across the country in response to the announcement of the delayed elections are handled in line with international human rights laws and standards. “The inflammatory comments by police authorities ahead of the protests are deeply alarming,” the High Commissioner said. “I call on the government and security forces to work to defuse tensions instead of creating the conditions for suppression, confrontation and violence”.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The Council adopted a presidential statement on 7 November 2017, reiterating its readiness to sanction individuals who undermine the peace, stability or security of the DRC, including those who attack UN personnel, such as members of the Group of Experts. (Two of the group's experts, Zaida Catalán [Chile/Sweden] and Michael Sharp [US], were murdered in Kasai in March 2017.)

The outgoing Chair of the DRC 1533 Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Amr Abdellatif Aboulatta (Egypt), briefed the Council on 8 December for the last time, along with other outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies.

On 11 December, the committee met with the Group of Experts assisting it to discuss the group's midterm report. The report focuses on the continued illegal exploitation of natural resources in the DRC, such as gold. During the meeting, the group's coordinator, Zobel Behalal (Cameron) cautioned that more information is needed before the ADF can be deemed responsible for the 7 December attack on MONUSCO.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Key Issues and Options

With a new electoral calendar published, a key issue is ensuring the elections are free and fair, are not postponed further, and the electoral process is not accompanied by violence. The Council will likely monitor the developments closely and take action if signs of delay begin to emerge in early 2018. It may opt to visit the DRC during the preparatory period to take stock of the electoral process and deliver messages to stakeholders. It may strengthen and emphasise MONUSCO's existing mandate to provide technical assistance and logistical support for the electoral process. It may also choose to resort to the imposition of targeted sanctions against those identified as interfering with the electoral process, including perpetrators of election-related violence.

Another important issue is addressing the continued violence in the east, as well as the increasing violence in Kasai, and the adequacy of MONUSCO's mandate and posture to address these threats. In the longer term, the Council will need to assess—particularly in light of the electoral and security challenges—MONUSCO's mandate and troop levels, both of which were altered in

resolution 2348 that renewed MONUSCO's mandate in March 2017, along with a request to the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the mission by 30 September. These assessments may lead to discussions on the suitability of the current mandate and possible changes in MONUSCO's mandate during its renewal in March 2018.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain concerned about the ongoing political crisis. The 28 November 2017 press statement reflects a consensus that the publication of a clear timetable for elections should help to avoid further tensions and the possible escalation of violence. Previously, there were divergent views in the Council on the importance of holding elections in 2017, as stipulated by the 31 December 2016 agreement, with some members insisting that the DRC adhere to that timetable and others emphasising the importance of a realistic schedule. The position expressed by Council members in the press statement reflects a compromise, recognising that elections have been postponed by another year but insisting they not be postponed any further. It also

reflects a closer alignment with the position of regional actors. However, it remains to be seen whether Council members will be able to maintain consensus in the event of further delays in the electoral process.

Some Council members are of the view that the new electoral timetable and continuing violence in parts of the country, including direct attacks against MONUSCO, necessitate a new strategic review of MONUSCO's mandate and posture. During negotiations over resolution 2348 in March 2017, several Council members were of the view that plans for downsizing MONUSCO and an eventual exit strategy would be premature prior to the successful implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement. However, the US insisted on a shorter time schedule for the strategic review to advance discussions of the future of MONUSCO. With the new electoral calendar now in place, some members have been signalling their interest in having an updated assessment of the situation and MONUSCO's role in that context.

France is the penholder on the DRC and Kuwait will chair the 1533 Sanctions Committee in 2018.

West Africa and the Sahel

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Special Representative and head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), will brief the Council on recent developments and the semi-annual UNOWAS report.

Key Recent Developments

Terrorist and armed groups, as well as drug- and human-trafficking networks, continued to threaten the region, particularly Sahel countries. Reflecting the spread of such groups from Mali and Libya into neighbouring countries, terrorists attacked a café in Ouagadougou on 13 August 2017, resulting in at least 18 deaths, and increasingly frequent attacks by a group called Ansarul

Islam continued in Burkina Faso's north. On 4 October 2017, an ambush in Niger, near the village of Tongo Tongo in the Tillabéri region near the Malian border, killed five Nigerien and four US soldiers of a mixed Niger-US military patrol. The attack was allegedly carried out by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.

The Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel)—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—made progress in establishing the joint force (FC-G5S) that they committed to creating earlier in 2017 for combating terrorist groups and drug- and human-trafficking networks. In early November, the FC-G5S carried out its first mission in the border zone of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

The Security Council undertook a

visiting mission from 19 to 22 October 2017 to Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania to assess the threats to the region and the challenges of establishing the joint force and to discuss delays in implementing Mali's 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. On 8 December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2391, outlining how the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) should provide operational and logistical support to troops of the FC-G5S deployed on Malian territory.

Secretary-General António Guterres has made the Sahel region a top priority. In early July 2017, the Executive Committee Working Group on the Sahel was established, chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed, to improve implementation of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL Security Council Resolution S/RES/2391 (8 December 2017) was on MINUSMA support to the G5 Sahel joint force. S/RES/2359 (21 June 2017) welcomed the deployment of the G5 Sahel force. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/10 (24 July 2017) was on developments in West Africa and the Sahel. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8080 (30 October 2017) was a ministerial-level briefing on ways in which the international community can support the joint force of the G5 Sahel. S/PV.8047 (13 September 2017) was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman on the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region.

West Africa and the Sahel

UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. The strategy was developed in 2013 to address root causes of the region's instability and to ensure coordination of the broader international support to the Sahel countries. In resolution 2391, the Council welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts "to give renewed impetus" to implementing the Sahel strategy.

Boko Haram has remained a serious threat around the Lake Chad Basin region. After progress in taking territory held by Boko Haram during 2015 and 2016, attacks by the extremist group in north-east Nigeria intensified over the past year. On 21 November 2017, a suicide bomber at a mosque in Mobi in Adamawa State killed 59 people. Other deadly attacks included two suicide bombers who killed at least 13 people on 22 October in the outskirts of Maiduguri in Borno state; a series of attacks on the Dikwa displaced persons camp from 7 to 18 November in which 33 were killed, including 13 suicide bombers; and suicide bombers who killed at least 13 people in the town of Biu and injured 53 others on 2 December 2017. In October, Chad completed the withdrawal of its 2,000 soldiers who had been deployed to fight Boko Haram in Niger's Diffa region, a move that Chadian Defence Minister Bissa Ichara said was meant to reinforce Chad's northern border with Libya as part of the G5 Sahel joint force.

According to OCHA, more than 2.3 million people were displaced by violence related to the Boko Haram insurgency across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria as of 19 November 2017, with 7.2 million people at crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity. From 2 to 4 November 2017, Lake Chad Basin Commission countries held their first regional stabilisation strategy conference in N'Djamena to develop a holistic approach to address the crisis.

Togo has experienced demonstrations since August 2017, often numbering in the tens of thousands of protesters, demanding presidential term limits and the resignation of President Faure Gnassingbe, who has been in office since 2005 after succeeding his father, who had ruled for 38 years. At times, the protests escalated into violence between demonstrators and security forces. An initial protest in Lomé on 19 August 2017 by 100,000 demonstrators resulted in the death of two

protestor. The Togolese parliament passed a draft bill to amend the constitution to limit presidents to two terms. The vote, though, was boycotted by the opposition, which believed that the changes would not apply retroactively, allowing Gnassingbe to run in the 2020 and 2025 elections. The Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the AU and UNOWAS issued a joint statement on 4 October 2017 encouraging the opposition to use a referendum on the bill to advance reforms and calling on all actors to show restraint in order to preserve peace and cohesion.

The ECOWAS heads of state and government summit on 16 December 2017, held in Abuja and chaired by Gnassingbe, covered efforts to combat the terrorism threat, as well as political situations of The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Togo and recent elections in Liberia.

Key Issues and Options

The terrorism threat to West Africa and the Sahel and instability linked to transnational organised criminal activities, such as human smuggling, represent important issues for the Council. This includes challenges facing regional initiatives towards addressing these threats through the G5 Sahel Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force, established by Lake Chad Basin countries to fight Boko Haram.

A related issue is addressing underlying causes of instability across the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, such as poor governance, underdevelopment and climate change. This includes improving implementation of the UN Sahel Strategy and the development by Lake Chad Basin countries of a regional approach to tackle root causes of the Boko Haram insurgency.

Political tensions and upcoming elections across the region, which have been triggers for violence in West Africa, are likely to be closely watched.

Depending on the content of the Secretary-General's report and the discussion with Chambas, the Council may adopt a statement that would, among other elements, express the Council's support for the conflict prevention and good offices role of UNOWAS, while reiterating concern over the increasing threat of terrorism to West Africa and the

Sahel and commending the collective efforts of G5 Sahel and Lake Chad Basin countries to combat this threat.

As an additional option, the Council may request the Secretary-General to provide more regular, separate reports on the Lake Chad Basin, on which it is currently kept informed through the six-month reports of UNOWAS and the UN Office for Central Africa.

Council and Wider Dynamics

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

UNOWAS, which is headquartered in Dakar, has established a liaison office in Nouakchott to ensure information-sharing with the G5 Sahel Secretariat, whose headquarters are in the Mauritanian capital. Council members often stress the importance of a holistic approach to the challenges facing Sahel countries and the Lake Chad Basin, in addition to military action. Following a Council request in January 2017, the Peacebuilding Commission has also become active in attempting to use its convening role to bring together actors involved in the Sahel to focus attention on the UN Sahel Strategy and to find ways to support its implementation. Regarding the FC-G5S, differences have persisted between France and most other members who support using UN-assessed contributions to help address the funding needs of the force, versus the US and the UK who prefer supporting the force bilaterally. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates committed 130 million euros to the FC-G5S at a 13 December 2017 summit that France hosted, also involving G5 countries Belgium, Germany and Italy.

Incoming member Côte d'Ivoire will replace Senegal as the penholder on West Africa and the Sahel. Senegal, which hosts UNOWAS, began a practice of pursuing Council presidential statements following the bi-annual UNOWAS meetings.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council expects to receive the monthly briefings on political and humanitarian developments in Syria and on chemical weapons.

Key Recent Developments

December 2017 saw the first Council decision on Syria in a year. On 19 December, the Council adopted resolution 2393, drafted by Egypt, Japan and Sweden, which renewed for a year the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line humanitarian access to Syria. Through this authorisation, first established by the Council in resolution 2165 in July 2014, UN actors and implementing partners have been able to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance to millions of people in northwest and southern Syria through Turkey and Jordan, respectively.

The resolution was adopted with the abstentions of Bolivia, China and Russia. In explaining their vote, they highlighted the importance of working through the government and eventually rolling back a provision that had been devised originally as a temporary measure. They also highlighted the need to increase monitoring and transparency of the mechanisms used to deliver cross-border aid. In an effort to address the concerns already expressed by these and other countries in the lead-up to the negotiations, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to conduct, within six months of the adoption, an independent written review of the UN humanitarian cross-border operations and provide recommendations for how to further strengthen the existing UN monitoring mechanism.

After welcoming the adoption, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Mark Lowcock briefed the Council on the critical situation in Eastern Ghouta, which remains besieged by government forces and has seen an increase in fighting and a worsening in the living conditions of nearly 400,000 people. He described the extremely limited access allowed to humanitarian actors and the need for more than 500 urgent medical evacuations that are expected to be approved by the government. According to a 15

December 2017 Secretary-General's report, aid delivery to besieged and hard-to-reach areas has been hindered by the removal of medical items, access restrictions as a result of bureaucratic impediments imposed by the government, and insecurity.

At the same meeting, Special Envoy Staffan De Mistura briefed the Council on the eighth round of intra-Syrian talks that were held between 28 November and 14 December 2017 in Geneva. He expressed his disappointment that the parties had not engaged in direct talks as a result of preconditions imposed by the government. In particular, he mentioned the government's refusal to hold discussions with the opposition unless it withdrew a statement issued at the Riyadh II conference in November 2017 that does not foresee any role for President Bashar al-Assad during the political transition. At the talks, the opposition discussed with the envoy's team all four baskets of the agenda (governance, constitutional issues, elections, and counter-terrorism), but the government focused only on counter-terrorism.

Despite the absence of direct talks between the parties, de Mistura elaborated on the ways resolution 2254, which mapped out a political process, could be further implemented. He focused particularly on the process of drafting and deciding on a new constitution and the organisation of UN-supervised elections. He reiterated that any initiative, such as Russia's proposal to hold a Syria Peace Conference in Sochi in early 2018, is to be assessed as to whether it supports the UN-mandated political process and the implementation of resolution 2254. In the context of military victories against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), de Mistura has stressed how winning the war will not translate into winning the peace without a meaningful political process.

On 11 December 2017, Russia announced a partial pullout from Syria, claiming victory against ISIL. While much of ISIL's territory has been seized, counter-terrorism operations continue in eastern Syria, including Deir ez-Zor.

Despite the failure to renew the Joint Investigative Mechanism of the Organisation

for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the UN in November, the Council continues to receive information regarding the chemical weapons dossier on Syria. On 7 December 2017, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu briefed Council members in consultations on the efforts to eliminate Syria's declared arsenal. Nakamitsu reiterated that the Syrian government's cooperation with the OPCW was limited. Among other issues, different perspectives emerged as to whether the JIM could transfer evidence to other UN bodies as it winds down. The Council did not reach any conclusion regarding proper follow-up to the November 2017 finding of the OPCW fact-finding mission that sarin "was more than likely used as a chemical weapon" on 30 March 2017 in Latamineh.

Key Issues and Options

Almost seven years since the start of the war, P5 divisions have limited the options at the disposal of Council members. The adoption of resolution 2393, while not unanimous, constitutes an important Council decision against the backdrop of the demise of the JIM, the lack of direct talks between the government and the opposition, and the initiatives that may provide an alternative platform to Geneva to discuss political matters. On the latter, Council members could ask the sponsors of these initiatives to brief them on their plans and the mechanisms in place to ensure coherence with UN efforts sanctioned by the Council.

Council members could devise a mechanism for adequate follow-up to fact-finding mission reports and for preserving the evidence gathered by the JIM.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Ahead of the negotiations, there were concerns about how difficult it would be to get agreement on resolution 2393. Russia had expressed its preference for rolling back the authorisation for UN cross-border delivery of humanitarian aid, highlighting the establishment of de-escalation areas and the need to work with the Syrian government. Council members were divided about how to

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2393 (19 December 2017) renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-line aid delivery. S/RES/2336 (31 December 2016) welcomed efforts by Russia and Turkey to end the violence in Syria and promote a political process. S/RES/2254 (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. S/RES/2118 (27 September 2013) was on chemical weapons. Secretary-General's Report S/2017/1057 (15 December 2017) was the monthly report on the humanitarian situation. Security Council Letters S/2017/1005 (30 November 2017) was an OPCW report on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. S/2017/931 (3 November 2017) forwarded the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission report concluding that sarin "was more than likely used as a chemical weapon" on 30 March 2017 in Latamineh. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8141 (19 December 2017) included briefings by de Mistura and Lowcock and was the meeting at which resolution 2393 was adopted.

Syria

characterise the security situation in Syria. While Russia and others advocated including language welcoming the creation of de-escalation areas and the improvement of security conditions on the ground, the P3 and others emphasised the continued violence, the ongoing sieges, and the critical humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta. It seems that the penholders' intention was to focus efforts on the operational aspects of the draft and not to be distracted by the divergent narratives put

forward by Council members. In the spirit of compromise, while noting the ongoing work on de-escalation areas, the resolution acknowledges the severity of the devastating humanitarian situation and expresses grave alarm at the dire situation in besieged areas, including Eastern Ghouta.

Overall, Council members were constructive in the negotiations on the resolution, which made possible a compromise. Among the relevant factors were the efforts by the

penholders (which are elected members of the Council) to facilitate and reach a compromise between the P3 and Russian positions. The role played by neighbouring countries in support of the renewal—particularly Turkey, which is a co-guarantor along with Iran and Russia of the ceasefire agreed to in Astana, Kazakhstan in December 2016—was worth noting as well.

Colombia

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council will receive a briefing from Special Representative Jean Arnault on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on the UN Verification Mission in Colombia. Consultations will follow the briefing.

Assuming that the government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) decide to renew their temporary, bilateral ceasefire, the Council will most likely renew the part of the mission's mandate dealing with monitoring and verification of this ceasefire. This aspect of the mission's mandate expires on 9 January 2018.

The overall mandate of the Verification Mission expires on 26 September 2018.

Key Recent Developments

On 29 September 2017, the government of Colombia and the ELN issued a joint communiqué requesting the Council to expand the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to include participation in a monitoring and verification mechanism composed of representatives of the Colombian armed forces, the ELN, the UN, and the Catholic Church. The parties indicated that the mechanism would verify compliance with the 102-day temporary ceasefire they had agreed in Quito, Ecuador, on 4 September 2017. They called for the mechanism to have a presence at the national, regional and local levels. The UN, as the international

component of the mechanism, was asked to coordinate its work, to resolve potential disagreements between the parties, and to make recommendations accordingly.

Special Representative Arnault briefed Council members about the temporary, bilateral ceasefire on 11 September 2017. He informed them that the Secretary-General would make recommendations to the Council in response to the request of the government and the ELN.

On 2 October 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres forwarded a letter to the Council in which he conveyed his "positive assessment of the viability and desirability of the role proposed to the United Nations" (S/2017/830) by the parties. He emphasised that the UN's engagement could "instill further momentum into the positive dynamics that have been emerging in the past few months", both in terms of upholding (and eventually extending) the ceasefire and bringing about humanitarian relief to affected communities.

The Council adopted resolution 2381 on 5 October 2017, expanding the mandate of the UN Verification Mission—which is responsible for verifying the political, economic and social reintegration of the members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), as well as security guarantees—to also include the activities outlined in the 29 September joint

communiqué agreed by the government and the ELN. Also on 5 October, the Council adopted a presidential statement in which it recognised the work of the UN Mission in Colombia, which expired on 25 September 2017, and welcomed the "remarkable achievements" in Colombia following the 2016 peace agreement.

The UN Verification Mission started its work on 26 September 2017 as the successor mission to the UN Mission in Colombia. Through resolution 2377 of 14 September 2017, the Council authorised the deployment of 120 unarmed, non-uniformed international observers as an appropriate civilian component to carry out the tasks of the verification mission. When the Council expanded the mission's mandate in resolution 2381, it authorised the deployment of no more than 70 additional international observers to help it fulfil its further responsibilities, bringing the total number of international observers to 190.

On 8 December 2017, the Secretary-General submitted a letter to the Council in accordance with resolution 2381, which requested him to provide an update on the additional tasks accorded to the verification mission (i.e. those related to the monitoring and verification of the temporary ceasefire between the Colombian government and the ELN). He highlighted some positive developments since the start of the ceasefire, noting

UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2381 (5 October 2017) authorised the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to participate in and coordinate the work of the monitoring and verification mechanism for the temporary ceasefire between the government of Colombia and the ELN. **S/RES/2366** (10 July 2017) established the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, a successor mission to the UN Mission in Colombia. **Security Council Presidential Statement** S/PRST/2017/18 (5 October 2017) recognised the work of the UN Mission in Colombia and welcomed the "remarkable achievements" in Colombia following the 2016 peace agreement. **Security Council Letters** S/2017/1037 (8 December 2017) provided an update of the tasks provided to the UN Verification Mission in Colombia with regard to the temporary ceasefire between the government of Colombia and the ELN. **S/2017/830** (2 October 2017) conveyed the Secretary-General's positive assessment of the viability and desirability of the role proposed to the UN by the government of Colombia and the ELN. **Security Council Press Statement** SC/13101 (30 November 2017) marked the one-year anniversary of the Colombia peace agreement.

Colombia

that offensive armed clashes had not occurred between the parties, that communities had reported a decrease in violence and improvement in humanitarian conditions, and that a wide array of social organisations had taken part in public hearings designed to determine the methodology for a nationwide dialogue.

However, he also observed that the parties have different interpretations of the Quito agreement, which lacks “such a critical feature as a separation of forces”, and that UN teams have faced challenges in accessing remote areas affected by conflict, where inhabitants are afraid of sharing information for fear of retribution.

Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman visited Colombia from 13 to 15 November 2017. He met with senior government officials, including President Juan Manuel Santos; FARC-EP representatives; civil society groups; and UN officials in Colombia.

In a press conference near the end of his visit, he highlighted three key issues central to the peace process. First, he underscored the importance of providing opportunities for reintegration of former FARC-EP fighters, including female fighters. In particular, he expressed concern “at the lack of an overall strategy for reintegration matched by concrete plans and resources to enable its success”. Second, he emphasised the need for enhanced government authority in former conflict zones, especially in areas vacated by the FARC-EP, where insecurity has led to the killings of community leaders and some former FARC-EP members. Third, he expressed concern about delays in approving legislation regarding the FARC-EP, including in relation to aspects of accountability.

Feltman briefed Council members on his visit in consultations on 29 November 2017. On 30 November, Council members issued a press statement marking the one-year anniversary of the signing of the peace agreement

between the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP. In the statement, members “noted the importance of the international community remaining closely engaged to continue to support and encourage Colombia’s work to implement the peace process”. They emphasised the importance of making progress in reincorporating former FARC-EP combatants into civilian life and in improving security in former conflict zones.

On 17 December 2017, the ELN indicated that it was willing to renew its ceasefire with the Colombian government, saying that it needed more time to assess “the progress, confidence and results of the current one”. On 19 December, President Santos in turn expressed the government’s willingness to extend the ceasefire, announcing the appointment of a new lead negotiator to engage with the ELN. The current ceasefire expires on 9 January 2018.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 9 October 2017 statement following a six-day visit to Colombia, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour expressed concern over continued attacks against human rights defenders and community leaders. According to the statement, the government’s efforts to adopt policies aimed at preventing such attacks had yet to produce significant results. Since the beginning of 2017, there had been more killings of human rights defenders and community leaders, particularly in areas formerly occupied by the FARC, than in previous years, Gilmour said.

Key Issues and Options

An important issue is ensuring that the next steps in the peace process are effectively implemented. In this sense, the government’s ability to develop a well-resourced strategy for reintegrating FARC-EP members into society and to provide safety and security in areas formally occupied by the FARC-EP will be critical issues in ensuring successful implementation. Council members already highlighted the importance

of these issues in their 30 November 2017 press statement, and the Secretary-General’s 90-day report will provide an opportunity for them to assess how much progress has been made. The Council could decide to adopt a statement encouraging further steps toward the reintegration of former fighters and security in certain areas of the country, while recognising any progress achieved.

Another key issue for the Council is the importance of renewing the aspect of the mission’s mandate that focuses on monitoring and verification of the ceasefire agreement between the government and the ELN. Assuming that the parties agree to extend their ceasefire, the Council will need to take action in early January. This could be done through an exchange of letters between the Secretariat and the Council or through a resolution.

Council Dynamics

Members are unified in their support of the peace process in Colombia, including the enhanced role for the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor and verify the ceasefire between the government and the ELN. Several members view engagement in Colombia as a rare bright spot for the Council, which has struggled to play an effective role on several other agenda items in recent years. However, members realise that the challenges of implementing the peace agreement are significant and success cannot be taken for granted. Legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 2018 in Colombia create political uncertainties that could impact the implementation of the agreement. Feltman’s emphasis on the need for an effective plan for reintegrating the FARC-EP and for promoting safety and security in areas vacated by the FARC-EP has been noted by several members in consultations.

The UK is the penholder on Colombia.

Sudan (Darfur)

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Security Council will hold a briefing on the 60-day report of the Secretary-General on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the written assessment from the Secretary-General and the chairperson of the AU Commission on the reconfiguration of UNAMID, as requested in resolution 2363. The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June 2018.

Key Recent Developments

With a reduction in the intensity of the armed conflict and improvements in humanitarian access over the past year, the situation in Darfur provides reasons for some cautious optimism, but it has not yet normalised. Security issues, unlawful killings, and human rights violations make the conditions volatile, along with continued reports of sexual violence. Improvements in the overall security situation have also not led to the voluntary and sustainable return of Darfur's 2.1 million internally displaced persons. While disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration is essential, there are concerns that the government's ongoing disarmament campaign is leading to increased tensions and armed confrontations that threaten to undermine recent improvements in the security situation.

In accordance with resolution 2363, phase one of UNAMID's reconfiguration, to be completed before 1 January 2018, includes the closure of 11 team sites and reductions in military personnel from 15,845 to 11,395 and in police personnel from 3,403 to 2,888. While all 11 team sites were closed in October 2017, the allocation of land by the Sudanese government for a temporary operating base for the Jebel Marra Task Force in Golo, Central Darfur is still pending. The written assessment from the Secretary-General and the chairperson of the AU Commission, requested in resolution 2363, is expected to address progress in implementing phase one of UNAMID's reconfiguration; the impact of the phase one reductions on areas that UNAMID has withdrawn from; the government's cooperation with the mission; the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to the mission; and the question as to whether conditions on the ground are conducive for further

reductions. With the findings of the assessment, the Council can then decide whether to adjust the scope and pace of UNAMID's reduction ahead of phase two of the mission's reconfiguration, to begin on 31 January 2018.

On 12 December 2017, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda provided the semi-annual Council briefing on the ICC's work with regard to Darfur, saying the ICC's entire judicial machinery could be frustrated unless the suspects it had indicted appeared before it. Bensouda noted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's most recent travels to South Africa, Jordan, Uganda, Chad and Russia and requested that the Council take action to respond to ongoing instances of non-compliance or non-cooperation relating to the situation in Darfur and outstanding arrest warrants. Al-Bashir has been indicted by the ICC on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 7 December 2017, the Chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine), briefed the Council on the Committee's work from 25 July to 7 December 2017, including the first joint meeting of the Sudan (1591), Libya (1970) and South Sudan (2206) Sanctions Committees on Darfuri rebel groups' activities in South Sudan and Libya, which took place on 10 November 2017. The informal meeting was held to discuss the spread of Darfuri armed groups into Libya and South Sudan and seek to develop common approaches to addressing the problem. Yelchenko also spoke at an 8 December 2017 briefing by the outgoing chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. He said that a sanctions committee could be paralysed by its politicisation and by what he described as an "abuse of the consensus rule", such as the fact that in recent years the Committee had been unable to present its 90-day report in an open format. He noted that his briefing in the open chamber the previous day broke with this trend. He also expressed hope that this practice of public briefings will continue by default. The Committee met at the end of December 2017 to discuss the recommendations contained in the final report of the Panel of Experts.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 November 2017, UNAMID released a joint report with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The report, covering the period from January 2014 to December 2016, notes that despite a ceasefire between the government

and various armed opposition groups, which has largely held since June 2016, violence against internally displaced people continues to be widespread and impunity for human rights violations persists. It calls on the Sudanese government to pursue effective, transparent and durable policies to enable internally displaced persons to return home voluntarily or to reintegrate into host communities. During the reporting period, UNAMID documented 1,286 allegations of human rights abuses and violations against 3,358 victims, including 2,108 women and 299 children. In a 21 November 2017 statement, the High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein urged the government to address "fundamental issues that are preventing the return of displaced people, such as continued violence, including from armed militias, which raise continuing and justifiable fears for their safety and the lack of basic services that leave them dependent on aid".

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members to consider is whether any adjustments to the scope and pace of UNAMID's reduction are necessary, taking into account the assessment by the Secretary-General and the chairperson of the AU Commission as well as other UN reports from the ground. An option in this context would be to invite the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide an update on the human rights situation.

Another key issue is to support efforts to break the ongoing impasse in the negotiations between the government and Darfuri rebel movements, leading to a durable cessation of hostilities and a final settlement. One option is to invite Thabo Mbeki, chair of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel, to address the Council on his efforts.

The Council may also need to tackle how to promote intercommunal reconciliation, given the high levels of intercommunal fighting in Darfur in recent years. An option for the Council would be to request the Joint Special Representative for Darfur and head of UNAMID, Jeremiah Mamabolo, to brief on the issue. Another option would be to organise an Arria-formula meeting with experts on intercommunal violence to discuss its root causes and ways to bring opposing parties together.

Council Dynamics

Improvements in stability in the region have created an opportunity for a degree of

UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2363 (29 June 2017) renewed UNAMID's mandate for one year. **Secretary-General's Report S/2017/907** (27 October 2017) was the 60-day UNAMID report. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8132** (12 December 2017) was the semi-annual briefing by the ICC Prosecutor. **S/PV.8127** (8 December 2017) was a briefing by the chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. **S/PV.8124** (7 December 2017) was a briefing by the Chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine). **Sanctions Committee Document SC/13075** (17 November 2017) was a press release about the joint meeting of the Sudan (1591), Libya (1970) and South Sudan (2206) Sanctions Committees on Darfuri rebel groups in South Sudan and Libya.

Sudan (Darfur)

unity amongst Council members on several issues, including recognising improvements in the overall security situation and the government's efforts to improve humanitarian access and agreeing on troop reductions. Traditionally, some Council members, notably China and Russia, have tended to emphasise the importance of upholding the sovereignty of Sudan and improvements in the security situation in Darfur. Other members of the Council, such as France, Italy, Sweden, the UK, Ukraine, Uruguay and the US, have been critical of the government for committing human rights violations, restricting

the operations of UNAMID, and fostering a culture of impunity. While concerns remain, a number of these states have expressed the view that the government is making an effort to improve humanitarian access to the region and have welcomed reduced violence in Darfur.

During the 12 December 2017 briefing, the UK welcomed the progress that UNAMID has made in completing the first phase of its reconfiguration and the government's improved cooperation with the mission. However, it urged the government to agree formally to the opening of the temporary operating

base in Golo, without further delay. The UK also added that as UNAMID's reconfiguration continues, it is crucial that the mission and the Security Council closely monitor the impact of the reconfiguration on the situation on the ground, as well as the government's cooperation. Ethiopia, France, Sweden and the UK emphasised the need to address the root causes of the conflict in Darfur in their statements on 12 December 2017.

The UK is the penholder on Darfur; Ukraine chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee. New Council member Poland will succeed Ukraine as chair in January 2018.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salamé, followed by consultations.

UNSMIL's mandate expires on 15 September 2018, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee expires on 15 November 2018.

Key Recent Developments

December 2017 marked the two-year anniversary of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), signed on 17 December 2015. Some actors on the ground saw this anniversary as a deadline for the legitimacy of the LPA and the institutions it created. Particularly, Khalifa Haftar, the head of the so-called Libyan National Army (LNA), repeatedly threatened to take action to avoid an institutional vacuum as the perceived deadline approached, and LNA elements attacked offices of the High National Elections Commission in the east.

At a Council briefing and consultations on 16 November 2017, Salamé raised the potential for military escalation in December. On 14 December 2017, the Council adopted a presidential statement emphasising the continuity of the LPA throughout Libya's

transitional period and rejecting incorrect deadlines that undermined the UN-facilitated political process. It also stressed, recalling its resolution 2259, adopted soon after the signing of the LPA, "that any attempt, including by Libyan parties, to undermine the Libyan-led, UN-facilitated political process is unacceptable". Disregarding the statement, in a televised speech on 17 December, Haftar questioned the validity of the LPA and the institutions it established, including the Government of National Accord.

When he previously briefed the Council, Salamé updated Council members on his efforts to facilitate talks among Libyans. In October 2017, he organised for the first time meetings between delegations from the Tobruk-based House of Representatives and the Tripoli-based High Council of State, which constituted a mutual recognition of the two assemblies. Convergence started to emerge on key issues (including the separation of the executive authority into a three-member Presidency Council and a ministerial cabinet), but other questions remained outstanding. Chief among them was agreeing which office would include the responsibility of supreme commander of the armed forces.

Other issues he reported working in parallel on included:

- brokering an agreement on a limited set of amendments to the LPA;
- organising a national conference (scheduled for February 2018);
- encouraging progress toward finalising a new Libyan constitution; and
- preparing for parliamentary and presidential elections, including through UN support to the High National Elections Commission (it launched a voter registration campaign in early December 2017).

Violence in Libya continues, and clashes among armed groups in the east and the west have persisted. Briefing the Council, Salamé highlighted the violations of international humanitarian law and the impunity and lawlessness prevailing in the country. On 17 December 2017, the mayor of Misrata, Mohammed Eshtewi—who was going to participate in talks with rival militias from Zintan—was fatally shot by unknown assailants.

The situation of refugees and migrants in Libya continues to be critical. Following reports of migrants being sold into slavery in Libya, France requested an urgent meeting of the Council on 28 November 2017. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi and Director General of the International Organization for Migration William Lacy Swing briefed the Council. Grandi said that

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA **Security Council Resolutions** S/RES/2380 (5 October 2017) renewed the authorisation for member states to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to suspect are being used for migrant smuggling or human trafficking. S/RES/2376 (14 September 2017) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 15 September 2018. S/RES/2362 (29 June 2017) renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and the measures regarding attempts to illicitly export oil from Libya. **Security Council Presidential Statements** S/PRST/2017/26 (14 December 2017) emphasised that the LPA is the only viable framework to end the Libyan political crisis. S/PRST/2017/24 (7 December 2017) expressed grave concern about reports of migrants being sold into slavery in Libya. S/PRST/2017/19 (10 October 2017) endorsed the UN action plan for the resumption of an inclusive Libyan-owned political process. **Security Council Meeting Records** S/PV.8114 (28 November 2017) was a meeting on slavery and trafficking of migrants in Libya. S/PV.8106 (17 November 2017) was a briefing on the challenges to peace and security in the Mediterranean region. S/PV.8104 (16 November 2017) was a briefing from Salamé and Skoog. S/PV.8091 (8 November 2017) was the most recent briefing by Bensouda on Libya.

Libya

the grave abuses perpetrated against migrants and refugees along the central Mediterranean routes could no longer be ignored. In a presidential statement adopted on 7 December 2017, the Council condemned the “heinous abuses of human rights which may also amount to crimes against humanity”.

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda briefed the Council on 8 November 2017 and presented an update on the arrest warrants outstanding since the ICC referral in 2011 (LNA commander Mahmoud Mustafa Busayf al-Werfalli, former official of the Muammar Gaddafi regime Al-Tuhamy Mohamed Khaled, and Saif al-Islam Gaddafi). Reportedly, the three individuals remain at large. She also described how the ICC continues to monitor what may amount to international crimes, both as part of the ongoing conflict and regarding the situation of migrants and refugees.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 14 November 2017 statement, High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said the suffering of migrants detained in Libya is “an outrage to the conscience of humanity” and that the “dire situation has now turned catastrophic”. According to the statement, UN human rights monitors visited four Department of Combating Illegal Migration facilities in Tripoli from 1 to 6 November and were shocked to see “thousands of emaciated and traumatized men, women and children with no access to the most basic necessities, and stripped of their human dignity”. The statement urged Libyan authorities to take concrete steps to stamp out human rights violations and abuses in centres under their control,

remove those reasonably suspected of carrying out violations, investigate and prosecute those responsible, and publicly signal that such abuses will no longer be tolerated.

A 30 November 2017 joint statement by nine special procedures of the Human Rights Council called on the government of Libya to take urgent action to end the trade of enslaved people in the country and to hold the perpetrators accountable. “It is now clear that slavery is an outrageous reality in Libya”, the statement said.

On 1 December 2017, UNSMIL released a human rights report on civilian casualties for November, which documented 16 civilian casualties (six deaths and ten injuries), a drop from previous months. The majority of civilian casualties were caused by gunfire, explosive remnants of war or other unknown explosives, and shelling.

Key Issues and Options

Generally, Council members could continue to discuss and devise ways to support, collectively and bilaterally, the UN-led mediation efforts in Libya. At the appropriate time and in support of Salamé’s mediation efforts, Council members could undertake a visiting mission to Libya and neighbouring countries to engage with key stakeholders to ensure progress in the implementation of the UN action plan.

The Council could issue a statement condemning any unilateral actions that undermine the political process and question the LPA as the only framework for the political transition. It could also recall that these actions constitute designation criteria in the 1970 sanctions regime.

A long-standing issue for which the Council is responsible, but which continues to be unresolved, is the impact that the freezing of assets resulting from resolution 1970 is having on Libya’s wealth. In his November 2017 briefing, Salamé criticised the mismanagement of frozen assets (by not being reinvested) and urged the Council to revisit this issue. Since 2015, the Panel of Experts has recommended the Sanctions Committee to issue guidance allowing for the reinvestment of frozen assets to prevent economic losses in funds belonging to the Libyan people. The Council has also received several letters from Libya in this regard, but the Sanctions Committee has not taken up this issue. An option in this context would be for the Council to make a point of addressing this issue through its 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council dynamics on Libya have not always been easy. Despite unanimous outcomes, its members have often had different sensitivities over the way forward to achieve a solution. It remains to be seen whether and to what extent recent outcomes, such as the endorsement of the UN Action Plan and the presidential statement ahead of the 17 December 2017 anniversary, signal increased convergence among Council members.

The UK is the penholder on Libya, and Sweden chairs the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Natalia Gherman, will brief Council members in consultations on key regional issues, including the threat of terrorism and extremism, the impact of the situation in Afghanistan, drug trafficking, trans-boundary water management, and tensions linked to border-related disputes.

UNRCCA was established in 2007 for an open-ended time period.

Key Recent Developments

The briefing in January will be the first occasion for Gherman to address Council members in her capacity as Special Representative for UNRCCA, a post she was appointed to on 15 September 2017 (she succeeded Petko Draganov, who had served in the position since May 2015).

On 17 November 2017, the General Assembly adopted a resolution marking the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UNRCCA and emphasising the Centre’s

role in preventive diplomacy in the region. The Secretary-General initiated the process to create the Centre in May 2007, and it was formally established on 10 December in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. On 11 December 2017, UNRCCA organised a meeting of foreign ministers from Central Asian countries to mark the anniversary. The meeting was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan and focused on security developments and regional cooperation. Following the meeting, the participants issued a joint declaration, which

UN DOCUMENTS ON UNRCCA Security Council Press Statement SC/11751 (23 January 2015) was the last statement on UNRCCA. It welcomed the briefing in consultations on 21 January by Miroslav Jenča, the Special Representative and head of UNRCCA, and reiterated support for the Centre as an early-warning and preventive-diplomacy tool. [General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/7](#) (17 November 2017) was on the tenth anniversary of the establishment of UNRCCA and emphasised the Centre’s role in preventive diplomacy in the region.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

among other things, welcomed the General Assembly resolution on UNRCCA adopted in November.

From 10 to 11 November, UNRCCA and the regional office of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime co-organised a conference on security and development in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The participants included high-level officials from Central Asia and the wider region as well as representatives of various international organisations, such as the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The conference provided a forum for the participants to address security and development; political, social and economic cooperation; and the role of international organisations in implementing regional development projects.

In November 2017, UNRCCA participated in the seventh ministerial-level Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, held in Ashgabat. The conference focused on ongoing investment projects and regional cooperation in the areas of energy, transport, communication and trade. On 30 November and 1 December, Gherman participated in the seventh ministerial conference “Heart of Asia”-Istanbul Process held in Baku. This annual conference seeks to address challenges in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

Since assuming the post in September, Gherman has visited several countries in the region, where she has met with high-ranking government officials. This included visits to China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

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 what more the Council could do to support UNRCCA’s role in preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation.

The situation in Afghanistan and its effects on the Central Asian region is another issue for the Council to consider, as well as how to incorporate the regional impact in its regular debates on Afghanistan.

Since the Centre was established ten years ago, the Central Asian region has seen the emergence of a new set of challenges, mainly the rise of terrorism and extremism. An issue for the Council is whether to review the mandate of the Centre to better address these new challenges.

In addressing the aforementioned issues, the Council could consider several options. Regarding the regional impact of the situation in Afghanistan, the Council could invite the UNRCCA Special Representative to participate in the regular debates on Afghanistan. When the Council extends UNAMA’s mandate in March 2018, it could request the Secretary-General to include comprehensive and integrated analysis of the regional impact in the UNAMA report, using contributions from the UNRCCA.

The Council could request a review of UNRCCA’s mandate and activities to assess the effectiveness of the regional office and to determine whether there is a need to modify the scope of its activities.

Another option for the Council would be to change the format of the briefing from a closed to a public meeting, thus allowing Council members to publicly express support for the work of UNRCCA.

Council Dynamics

While Council members are generally supportive of UNRCCA’s work, tensions between Russia and the P3 members have emerged over the past two years regarding the inclusion of language on cooperation with specific regional organisations in a press statement that had been customarily issued following each briefing. This practice of issuing a press statement commending UNRCCA’s conflict-prevention role started in 2008 and was interrupted in 2015. These statements usually encouraged increased cooperation

and coordination between the Central Asian countries, UNRCCA, and “relevant regional organisations” to strengthen the region’s capacity to overcome challenges to peace, stability and sustainable development. In September 2015, however, Russia, the penholder on this issue, sought to add specific references to cooperation between the Central Asian countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), CSTO and the SCO, as well as the OSCE and the EU. The P3 opposed this addition, as they tend to see the CIS, the CSTO and the SCO as vehicles for enhancing Russian influence in the region. Similar differences arose in February 2016.

During a 28 October 2016 debate on cooperation between the UN and the CIS, CSTO, and SCO, the US noted that in the case of Georgia and Ukraine, the CSTO and CIS failed to defend or advocate the principle of territorial integrity. The UK did not single out any of these organisations individually, but noted that cooperation between the UN and regional organisations must be based on adherence to the Charter principles.

In February 2017, while again unable to issue a press statement, Council members succeeded in agreeing on press elements following the 2 February briefing in consultations by the head of the UNRCCA. The comments read out by the Council President welcomed the briefing, reaffirmed the importance of conflict prevention tools, acknowledged the role of UNRCCA, and encouraged greater cooperation between the states in the region, UNRCCA, and relevant regional organisations.

As the only Central Asian country on the Council and a member that is directly involved in UNRCCA’s work, in 2017, Kazakhstan has attempted to find a compromise and suggest possible alternatives to Russia’s proposals. Nonetheless, no compromise was possible because of diverging and entrenched positions of the P3 and Russia, and there were no public comments following the June briefing by the head of UNRCCA.

Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to link Security and Development

Expected Council Action

The January 2018 Council President Kazakhstan will hold a ministerial-level debate on the threats to international peace and security focusing on the topic: “Building Regional Partnership in Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to Link Security and Development”. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Kairat Abdrakhmanov will chair the debate, and Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to brief. Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs Salahuddin Rabbani will address the Council. The Council is expected to adopt a presidential statement.

Background

In preparation for the January debate, Kazakhstan has circulated a concept note to Council members outlining some of the main issues that the debate will seek to address. The note emphasises the strong interlinkages between security and development and the importance of integrating the economies of Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours. The concept note focuses on three aspects that are crucial for achieving progress in Afghanistan. First, there is a need to recognise that security and development are closely interrelated. Second, the solutions to country-specific issues generally require a regional approach. Third, international assistance requires integrated and better coordinated regional development strategies on the part of the UN, considering the vast number of UN agencies operating in the area.

As a prelude to the debate, on 27 November 2017, Kazakhstan, together with Afghanistan and Germany, organised an Arria-formula meeting that addressed issues of security, development and peace in the Central Asian region. Briefers at this meeting included: Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan); Ambassador Christoph Heusgen (Germany); Ambassador Mahmoud Saikal (Afghanistan); Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Miroslav Jenča; Barnett Rubin, Associate Director of the Center on International Cooperation; and Jasmin Jahanshahi, Senior Strategic Partnerships Manager at the Aga Khan Foundation. The participants at the meeting discussed ways to formulate coherent

strategies on stabilisation, peacebuilding and development in Afghanistan and the region. During the meeting, the Council members emphasised the importance of a regional and comprehensive approach to Afghanistan with an aim of achieving long-term stability.

There are various regional platforms that focus on economic cooperation specifically on Afghanistan. The most notable ones are the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and “Heart of Asia”-Istanbul Process. Both of these initiatives are in their seventh year of existence and have so far facilitated the undertaking of various projects in the field of economic development and greater integration of the region.

Key Issues and Options

The Council faces multiple, closely interrelated issues with regard to Afghanistan and the broader region. The deteriorating security situation, the growing number of civilian casualties, and political instability remain the most prominent concerns for the Council regarding Afghanistan. In the context of the debate, the Council could explore ways in which it could promote a more coordinated regional approach toward addressing the regional implication of instability in Afghanistan, while developing more coherent approaches to preventive diplomacy.

The Council is gradually becoming more cognisant of the interlinkages between security and development. In the case of Afghanistan, support for economic development is a crucial part of the effort to build peace in Afghanistan with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandated role to coordinate international assistance. The lack of viable economic opportunities in some areas has pushed the local population towards opium production and trafficking, activities also undertaken by some insurgent elements to finance their efforts to undermine government authority. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, opium production and cultivation reached record high numbers in 2017, while also expanding to more regions in Afghanistan.

There also persists the strong link between the insurgency and illicit drug production

and trafficking. In this regard, the Council could explore ways to increase the efficiency of the existing sanctions regimes and counter-terrorism platforms to address the insurgency, terrorism and drug production problems in Afghanistan. A related issue for the Council is how to facilitate better international and regional security cooperation to counter a threat posed by the terrorist groups and returning foreign terrorist fighters, as the security environment has been severely exacerbated by the presence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Afghanistan in recent years.

A significant number of international and regional organisations, with often overlapping agendas, operate in Afghanistan and the region. The Council could address ways in which these efforts could be better coordinated and made more effective on the ground.

Kazakhstan has announced that it will seek to adopt a presidential statement at the meeting. This statement, among other things, could:

- emphasise the importance of regional development and cooperation for achieving security in the region;
- call for greater coordination between the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), UNAMA, and the relevant UN agencies and regional organisations in strengthening the region’s capacity to overcome its challenges;
- encourage greater international and regional security cooperation, including information-sharing, border control, law enforcement, and criminal justice to counter the threat of terrorism; and
- commend efforts by Central Asian countries in support of peace efforts and development in Afghanistan.

Council Dynamics

The Council’s discussions of Afghanistan have mainly been limited to quarterly debates on UNAMA, which are primarily focused on the political and security situation in the country and the role of the UN mission. Semi-annual briefings in consultations on the UNRCCA have provided another

UN DOCUMENTS ON AFGHANISTAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2344 (17 March 2017) renewed a mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2018. Security Council Meeting S/PV.8055 (25 September 2017) was the debate on the situation in Afghanistan. Security Council Press Statement SC/11751 (23 January 2015) welcomed the 21 January 2015 briefing in consultations and reiterated support for UNRCCA as an early-warning and preventive-diplomacy tool.

Afghanistan and Central Asia as a Model to link Security and Development

opportunity for the Council to address the situation in Afghanistan through a more regional approach, although the UNRCCA meetings have been limited in raising wider awareness of the issues facing the region due to the closed format of the meetings (briefing in consultations).

During its term, Kazakhstan, the first Central Asian country to be elected to the Council, has placed a great emphasis on addressing issues pertinent to its region. In Council deliberations, Kazakhstan has underscored the importance of reviewing the Council's approach to Afghanistan with an aim of strengthening regional partnerships in Central Asia. In particular, Kazakhstan has stressed the importance of devoting more attention to interlinkages between security and development regarding Afghanistan. To that end, Kazakhstan has been a proponent of increased regional interconnectivity and integration of Afghanistan into the Central Asian

region's trade and economic cooperation.

The Council shares the concern about the volatile security situation in Afghanistan and its particular impact on the civilian population. In general, the Council seems to share the view that economic development and greater regional cooperation is an important factor in achieving security in Afghanistan. However, there might be some differences as to what is the Council's role in addressing the nexus between development and security. Some members, most notably Russia, might be wary of the Council taking up issues that they perceive as beyond the Council's mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Similarly, Council members generally support the efforts of regional organisations in Afghanistan, although there are some diverging views on their specific roles. In the previous debates on UNAMA, Kazakhstan and Russia have emphasised the importance,

among others, of regional organisations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). P3 members seem to mistrust the SCO and CSTO as they see them as vehicles for enhancing Russian influence in the region. These diverging views are an important reason why the Council failed to adopt a press statement following the UNRCCA briefings during the past two years.

Among permanent members, Russia has continued to emphasise the urgency of the threat posed by ISIL while also expressing disappointment that some members have, in its view, tried to downplay its significance. Several Council members, most notably France, Russia and Kazakhstan, continue to raise concerns regarding the connection between the insurgency and drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan.

The Netherlands will be the penholder on Afghanistan in 2018.

Mali

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council expects to receive a briefing on Mali from Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, followed by consultations.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) ends on 30 June 2018.

Key Recent Developments

The Council has repeatedly emphasised the need to prevent the gains achieved in Mali from being reversed. Council members visited Mali in late October 2017 and held meetings with the parties in the framework of the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord, the main follow-up mechanism to the 2015 Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. At the meeting, Council members expressed their deep concern over the persistent delays in the full implementation of key provisions of

the agreement and urged the parties to adopt without delay an agreed-upon chronogram (timeline) for its implementation.

Despite the Council's engagement and the facilitation role played by Algeria and MINUSMA, little has happened in this regard. The Comité de Suivi de l'Accord appointed the Carter Center as the independent observer responsible for overseeing the implementation of the peace agreement. In resolution 2391 of 8 December 2017, the Council renewed its urgent call for the parties to take immediate and concrete action to deliver on the operationalisation of the interim administrations in northern Mali, establish the Operational Coordination Mechanism (i.e. mixed patrols) in Kidal and Timbuktu, make progress in the cantonment, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, advance decentralisation, and ensure the participation of women.

The constitution needs to be revised to, among other things, establish an upper legislative chamber and lay out a framework for institutional, security and justice reforms as stipulated in the agreement, but no meaningful actions have been taken in this regard. Given the security situation, regional elections were postponed from December 2017 to April 2018. Hence, Mali is expected to hold district, regional, legislative and presidential elections, as well as municipal by-elections, in 2018.

Terrorist groups continue to carry out attacks against MINUSMA and French and Malian forces in the centre, south and north of Mali. Since the mission was established in 2013, at least 95 peacekeepers have been killed as a result of hostile acts. When the Council renewed MINUSMA's mandate through resolution 2364 on 29 June 2017, it requested the Secretary-General to report to

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2391](#) (8 December 2017) outlined the ways in which MINUSMA is expected to support the joint force and described how the UN will be reimbursed for its assistance. [S/RES/2374](#) (5 September 2017) established a targeted sanctions regime for Mali. [S/RES/2364](#) (29 June 2017) renewed MINUSMA's mandate for an additional year. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8129](#) (8 December 2017) was the meeting at which resolution 2391 was adopted. [Security Council Press Statements SC/13090](#) (24 November 2017) condemned the attack against a MINUSMA convoy in the region of Mopti, which caused the death of at least one Burkinabé peacekeeper and injured others. [SC/13087](#) (24 November 2017) condemned the attack against a MINUSMA detachment in the region of Ménaka, which caused the death of at least three Nigerien peacekeepers and at least one Malian soldier and injured other peacekeepers. [SC/13044](#) (26 October 2017) condemned the attack against a MINUSMA convoy on the road between Tessalit and Aguelhok, which caused the death of three Chadian peacekeepers and injured two others. [SC/13019](#) (6 October 2017) urged the parties to adopt without delay an agreed-upon chronogram for the implementation of the agreement.

the Council on the implementation of measures to improve MINUSMA's effectiveness in carrying out its mandate, including steps to enhance the safety and security of its personnel. In addition to the regular reporting, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit for a January discussion a mission-wide strategic plan that articulates a concrete, phased approach to implementation of MINUSMA's mandate and presents a transition plan for handing over relevant tasks to the UN country team with a view to a possible long-term exit strategy. Furthermore, the Secretariat is expected to conduct an overall strategic review of MINUSMA in 2018.

One of the objectives of the Council's visiting mission to the Sahel in late October 2017 was to assess the G5 Sahel joint force (FC-G5S), which is composed of personnel from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. The force conducted its first operation, "Hawbi", in early November 2017. While initially Council members were divided over the kind of support that the force could receive from the UN, they were able to make a decision following the visiting mission, led by Ethiopia, France and Italy.

On 8 December 2017, the Council adopted resolution 2391, clarifying the ways in which the international community, including MINUSMA, is expected to provide support to the FC-G5S. In particular, the resolution requests the Secretary-General to conclude a technical agreement among the UN, the EU and the G5 Sahel states for the provision of operational and logistical support through MINUSMA to the joint force, including medical and casualty evacuation capabilities, access to life support consumables, and engineering support. The resolution also describes how the UN will be reimbursed for its assistance to the force, which is expected to be a temporary measure applying to G5 Sahel troops deployed on Malian territory. On 13 December, President Emmanuel Macron of France organised a summit in Paris with the G5 heads of state aimed

at accelerating the operationalisation of the force. The heads of government of Germany, Italy and Belgium also participated, in addition to other government representatives. Recent pledges from Saudi Arabia (\$100 million) and the United Arab Emirates (\$30 million) have increased the amount pledged beyond 50 percent of the budget for the first year. The force is expected to be fully operational by March 2018.

Human Rights-Related Developments

Assistant Secretary-General Andrew Gilmour visited Mali from 2 to 5 November 2017 to reinforce the key role of human rights and justice in the peace process and to discuss the establishment of a human rights compliance framework for the FC-G5S. In a 7 November statement following his trip, Gilmour said that respect for human rights is the cornerstone of the fight against terrorism and that "violations committed during anti-terrorism operations and the stigmatization of certain communities greatly contribute to radicalization and the exacerbation of violent extremism".

The Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali, Suliman Baldo visited the country from 27 November to 1 December 2017. In a 24 November statement, he noted that "serious human rights violations are continuing despite the signing of the peace and reconciliation agreement". According to the statement, his visit was intended to focus on the situation of victims, including women who have suffered sexual violence, and the issue of impunity for the perpetrators of human rights abuses. The findings from the visit will form part of Baldo's report to the Human Rights Council in March 2018.

Key Issues and Options

The Council could hold a frank and unscripted discussion, inviting the Secretariat, the mission leadership and Algeria to participate, to garner support around a common political strategy that would pressure the parties to ensure progress and would support Mali in a critical electoral cycle.

The gap between MINUSMA's current mandate and the mission's insufficient capacities and resources continues and could increase, given its new tasks to support the G5-Sahel. The Council could continue

its engagement on strategic force generation in Mali.

To tackle the terrorist threat, the Council could add terrorist groups operating in Mali, such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, to the list of the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) & Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee.

Four of the five experts in the panel of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee were appointed by the Secretary-General on 12 December 2017. Even though committee members have yet to agree on its guidelines, they could prioritise increasing outreach through meetings in New York and a field visit by the chair, in order to explain to the parties the working methods of the committee and the designation criteria.

Council and Wider Dynamics

All Council members have expressed concerns about the slow pace of implementing the agreement. The Council established a targeted sanctions regime on Mali through resolution 2374, which was adopted unanimously on 5 September 2017. Differences, however, have arisen in the context of the Sanctions Committee. Russia has opposed the appointment of the fifth expert of the panel and particular issues in the guidelines have been negotiated now for three months between Russia and the chair.

Before agreeing on resolution 2391, discussions about whether the UN was able to support the FC-G5S divided the Council. The Secretary-General laid out several options to provide additional support through the UN (including mandating support packages or adjusting MINUSMA's mandate), but the US and others preferred assisting the force bilaterally and warned against increasing the responsibilities of an already overstretched mission.

France is the penholder on Mali. The chair of the 2374 Mali Sanctions Committee is Sweden.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council expects to receive the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Somalia. Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) Michael Keating and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira are expected to brief the Council.

The mandate of UNSOM expires on 31 March 2018.

Key Recent Developments

On 4 December 2017 the President of the Federal Government of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmajo" Mohamed, convened the Somalia Security Conference in Mogadishu with representatives of the Federal Member States of Somalia and the Benadir Regional Administration. The conference was co-convened by the UN and AU and attended by 29 of Somalia's partners.

A communiqué that followed outlined progress made since the May 2017 London Conference and outlined how the Somalia Security Conference offered a pivotal opportunity to reflect on that progress, the result of efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia, the Federal Member States, and the Benadir Regional Administration to reform the security sector with the support of the international community. It stressed that Somalia continues to face a grievous threat from the Al-Shabaab terror group, which continues to perpetrate atrocities across Somalia. The participants agreed that the three priorities for immediate action were implementation of the National Security Architecture; urgent development of a realistic conditions-based transition plan with clear target dates to transfer security responsibility from the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to Somali security forces; and continued international support to build the capacity of Somali security forces and institutions. According to the communiqué, the next security conference will be held alongside the next Somali Partnership Forum in 2018 in order to assess progress and set the priorities for the next phase.

On 6 December 2017, the Council issued a press statement that welcomed the successful conclusion of the 4 December Security Conference.

On 14 December 2017, a suicide bomber killed at least 18 police officers and wounded at least 15 others during a parade at a training centre in the Somali capital, Mogadishu. The bomber, disguised as a policeman, blew himself up at the General Kaahiye Police Academy. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack.

More than 100 Al-Shabaab militants were killed in a US airstrike on a camp in Somalia, US Africa Command said in a statement on 21 November 2017. The strike was carried out by a manned aircraft, 125 miles northwest of Mogadishu. According to the command, the US Defense Department now has 500 personnel in Somalia, including military, civilians and contractors, more than double the 200 personnel that had been reported to be in Somalia in March 2017.

On 14 December 2017, the US announced it would suspend food and fuel aid for most of Somalia's armed forces over corruption concerns. A Reuters report said the US suspension came after the Somali military repeatedly failed to account for food and fuel, according to private correspondence between the US and Somali governments seen by Reuters.

Head of AMISOM Francisco Madeira told a news conference in Mogadishu on 7 November 2017 that AU troops would begin withdrawing from Somalia in December 2017 when 1,000 soldiers from the five troop-contributing countries—Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda—would depart. Madeira said the withdrawal would be conducted with caution to ensure that security was not compromised and that the drawdown would be gradual, responsible and conditions-based.

The US reportedly appealed against the downsizing of the mission. A US State Department official told media sources on 12 November 2017 that the decision called for concern and the US does "not support further drawdown of forces beyond that level at this time, due to ongoing security concerns. The US supports a conditions-based AMISOM drawdown that is tied to the development of capable, professional Somali security forces".

A 10 December 2017 report prepared by UNSOM's Human Rights and Protection Group, titled Protection of Civilians:

Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia, focused on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in the context of Somalia's long-standing armed conflict. The findings and analysis in the report were a first attempt by the UN mission to quantify the toll that the conflict has had on civilians between 1 January 2016 and 14 October 2017. According to the report, UNSOM documented a total of 4,585 civilian casualties (2,078 killed and 2,507 injured) during that period, 60 percent of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab, 13 percent to militia, 11 percent to state actors, four percent to AMISOM, and 12 percent to undetermined or unidentified actors. In addition, Al-Shabaab abducted 729 civilians and was responsible for 86 targeted assassinations and the execution of 46 persons during the reporting period. UNSOM reported that state and non-state actors also carried out extrajudicial executions, sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detention, and abductions.

Key Issues and Options

Ensuring that UNSOM is properly equipped to support the Somali government in the three priority areas—state-building, security strategy, and socio-economic reform—is the key issue. Thus, Council members can take the opportunity of the briefing to discuss how the mission can best help the government in facilitating key political processes—such as the constitutional review; preparations for one-person, one-vote elections; and establishing a functional federal state—as well as advising and assisting the government on security matters and promoting economic development.

Concerning AMISOM, a key issue is ensuring that the mission is equipped to adequately strengthen the Somali forces so they can progressively take the lead in providing security. A premature handover of security responsibilities would risk undermining Somalia's security and political gains.

Closely related is the need to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM and Somali security institutions. Regarding this, the Council may consider the AU's requests for the UN to provide AMISOM with funding through assessed

Somalia

contributions, also suggested by Secretary-General António Guterres during his March 2017 visit to Somalia.

Council Dynamics

On Somalia generally, Council members are united in supporting state-building processes

and in their support for UNSOM, as demonstrated by unified messages conveyed during the Council's visit to Somalia in May 2016 and the uncontentious adoption of several recent Council outcomes on Somalia. Concerning AMISOM, however, some Council members have expressed more caution about

the drawdown of troops than others.

The UK is the penholder on Somalia, and Kazakhstan is the chair of the 751/1907 Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee for 2017.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council is expected to receive a briefing on the Secretary-General's monthly assessment of the deployment and future requirements of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) and impediments to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in carrying out its mandate.

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 15 March 2018.

Key Recent Developments

As the conflict in South Sudan entered its fifth year, the political, security, humanitarian, human rights and economic situations remain dire, with 7.6 million people now in need of aid, four million people displaced both inside South Sudan and in neighbouring countries, and six million people lacking enough food to feed themselves. Violent clashes between government and opposition forces in several areas of the country continue, including in the greater Upper Nile and Equatorias regions, as well as high levels of intercommunal fighting. Displacement and violations against civilians could escalate further with improved mobility in the coming months of the dry season.

On 14 December 2017, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2392, extending until 15 March 2018 the provisions of resolution 2327 which renewed UNMISS's mandate for one year in December 2016. The three-month technical roll-over allows for the completion of the strategic review of UNMISS currently underway and for Council members to consider its recommendations. At the initiative of the

Secretary-General, a strategic review of UNMISS began in mid-November, one of several comprehensive reviews of peacekeeping operations. An integrated review team recently visited South Sudan to consider the security and humanitarian situations and to consult with a wide range of actors, including the government, international and humanitarian communities, and UNMISS, both in Juba and in more remote parts of the country. The team also travelled to Addis Ababa, where it met with some South Sudanese groups, including the opposition and regional actors. The review team will report back to the Secretary-General, who is expected to submit a report to the Security Council in early 2018.

At the most recent briefing on South Sudan on 7 December, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix told the Council that in a challenging environment, UNMISS had endeavoured to be more robust, nimble and proactive; helped to protect humanitarian facilities, facilitate aid delivery, and evacuate humanitarian personnel; and intervened to protect civilians from abduction, illegal recruitment, sexual violence, and harassment. He added that mission patrols had reached areas where they had long been denied access.

Also on 14 December 2017, the Council adopted a presidential statement expressing "strong support" for the High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) organised by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), adding that it "looks forward" to the convening of a fully inclusive forum

and substantive progress on the initiative by the end of December 2017. The presidential statement also "underlines that no party should set pre-conditions to participation, and that there must be cost and consequences for those who undermine the HLRF process". It added that the forum is "a last chance for the parties to achieve sustainable peace and stability". The statement also took note of the 20 September 2017 communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). The communiqué stated that if the parties continue to delay the full implementation of the August 2015 peace agreement, the PSC "will consider the necessary steps, including sanction measures".

IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan Ismail Wais, who briefed the Council for the first time on 7 December 2017, outlined the factors necessary to the forum's success, including:

- inclusivity and political will;
- cessation of hostilities and the establishment of a permanent ceasefire;
- a unified position on the part of the opposition;
- IGAD's leadership and credibility as an impartial arbiter;
- a robust enforcement mechanism agreed to by IGAD, the AU and the Security Council;
- gender parity and participation by women;
- participation of Riek Machar;
- coordination of concurrent political initiatives, such as the national dialogue, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement reunification process, and revitalisation; and
- wider consultations and transparency.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2392](#) (14 December 2017) extended the mandate of UNMISS for three months. [S/RES/2327](#) (16 December 2016) extended the mandate of UNMISS for one year and reauthorised the Regional Protection Force. [Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/25](#) (14 December 2017) was on the situation in South Sudan, focussing on IGAD's efforts to revitalise the peace process. [Secretary-General's Report S/2017/1011](#) (1 December 2017) was the 90-day report on UNMISS. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8127](#) (8 December 2017) was a briefing by the chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council. [S/PV.8124](#) (7 December 2017) was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock and IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan Ismail Wais.

South Sudan

The HLRF officially began with meetings in Addis Ababa from 18 to 22 December 2017, attended by representatives of the parties to the conflict (including all parties to the 2015 peace agreement and “estranged groups” formed after July 2016), the international community, South Sudanese civil society (including youth and women’s groups) as well as representatives from South Sudanese refugee communities. President Salva Kiir reportedly instructed those representing the government not to accept renegotiation of the August 2015 peace agreement. On 21 December, the parties attending the HLRF signed an agreement on cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians, and humanitarian access. The agreement required parties to cease all hostile military actions on 24 December 2017. At press time, it was unclear whether the ceasefire was holding with both sides alleging that violations had occurred. The members of the Troika (the UK, US and Norway) issued a joint statement welcoming the agreement, calling for its immediate implementation and for the parties “to reconvene urgently to address the important security and governance arrangements that are essential for peace in South Sudan”. At press time, IGAD was expected to convene in the first week of February 2018 to begin phase two of the HLRF, at which governance issues are expected to be discussed. The AU PSC is scheduled to discuss South Sudan on 19 January 2018.

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 8 December 2017, there was a briefing by the chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council, at which Ambassador Fodé Seck (Senegal) briefed on the work of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee. He highlighted the Panel of Experts’ recommendations that the Council impose a general arms embargo on South Sudan and that the Committee identify those responsible for actions and policies that threaten peace, security and stability in South Sudan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

From 11 to 22 December, two of the three members of the Commission on Human Rights

in South Sudan, Yasmin Sooka and Andrew Clapham, conducted the Commission’s fourth field mission to South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia. In a 22 December statement, the Commission welcomed the cessation of hostilities agreement concluded at the HLRF, but said it remains gravely concerned over the lack of accountability for serious crimes with widespread and gross human rights violations being committed by all parties to the conflict. According to the statement, Sooka and Clapham met with numerous victims during their mission who shared harrowing accounts of indiscriminate attacks, revenge killings, torture, abduction of women and children, forced displacement, looting and burning of homes and crops, starvation, rape, and other forms of sexual violence. The Commission will submit a report to the Human Rights Council at its 37th session in March 2018.

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is how to support IGAD’s efforts to revitalise the political process in South Sudan and what consequences it should impose on those who undermine the process, including implementation of the recent agreement on cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians, and humanitarian access concluded by the parties at the HLRF. The Council will also need to determine what role it can play in curbing the collapse of South Sudan as the crisis gripping the country has entered its fifth year and in light of the extraordinarily difficult circumstances UNMISS is forced to operate under.

In an effort to reduce the level of violence and exert leverage on the parties, Council members could decide to revisit the proposals for an arms embargo and targeted sanctions.

The Council could also consider holding a briefing on ways to combat hate speech and incitement to ethnic violence in South Sudan, inviting the participation of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, international NGOs with a presence in South Sudan, and key South Sudanese religious figures, among others.

Council Dynamics

Council members share deep concern about the political and humanitarian situation in

South Sudan, as set out in the presidential statement adopted on 14 December 2017, including the need for a permanent ceasefire, continuing obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid and attacks on humanitarian workers, attacks against civilians and the military use of hospitals and schools, and the need for accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights. While Council members expressed strong support for IGAD’s efforts in the presidential statement, differences arose during negotiations over language on potential consequences for undermining the peace process. These differences were in line with the long-standing divide in the Council over whether to impose an arms embargo and further targeted sanctions. While the presidential statement refers to the need for “cost and consequences for those who undermine the HLRF process”, it remains to be seen whether and how Council members will take this forward in 2018.

All Council members supported the idea to adopt a technical rollover of UNMISS’s mandate in anticipation of receiving the findings of the strategic review, which will inform their discussions on the mandate early in 2018. Following the 7 December 2017 briefing, Uruguay and Bolivia made statements referring to the mandate renewal. Bolivia voiced its support for a short-term extension in light of the strategic review and hoped that, with the progress in the deployment of the RPF, it will be possible to extend and guarantee a more robust presence for UNMISS patrols in areas of major conflict, such as the Equatorias, the Bahr el-Ghazal region and the Upper Nile, as well as greater flexibility of movement. Outgoing member Uruguay expressed confidence that the conclusions of the strategic review “will enable the Security Council to take a responsible decision on the future of the mission”.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan. New Council member Poland succeeds Senegal as chair of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee in January 2018.

Israel/Palestine

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council is expected to hold its quarterly open debate under the agenda item “the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, which will focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Key Recent Developments

On 18 December 2017, the Council voted on a draft resolution, tabled by Egypt and drafted with the Palestinians, in reaction to the 6 December declaration by US President Donald Trump that the US would recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its embassy there from Tel Aviv. The resolution was drafted following bilateral discussions between the Palestinian delegation and various Council members. The draft obtained 14 affirmative votes but was vetoed by the US.

The text that was presented for a vote affirmed that any decisions and actions that purport to have altered the character, status or demographic composition of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void, and must be rescinded. It called upon all states to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in Jerusalem pursuant to resolution 478 (1980) of the Council and demanded that all states comply with Council resolutions regarding Jerusalem and do not recognise any actions or measures contrary to previous Council resolutions on the legal status of Jerusalem. The resolution reiterated the Council’s call for the reversal of the negative trends on the ground that are imperilling the two-state solution and for the intensification and acceleration of international and regional efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The text also reaffirmed several previous resolutions of the Council, including resolutions 476 and 478 of 1980 and 2334 of 2016. Resolution 476 said that “all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the [Fourth] Geneva Convention”. Resolution

478 was adopted in the wake of Israel’s enactment of its 1980 “basic law”, which declared that Jerusalem, “complete and united”, is the capital of Israel. The resolution decided not to recognise the law, called on all member states to accept this decision, and called on “those states that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City”. Resolution 2334 reaffirmed in December 2016 that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution. All three of these resolutions were adopted with 14 affirmative votes and a US abstention.

Following the US veto, Yemen, which serves as Chair of the Arab Group, and Turkey, Chair of the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, sent a letter to the President of the General Assembly requesting the resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on “Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory” under “Uniting for Peace”. (General Assembly resolution 377 of 3 November 1950, known as the “Uniting for Peace” resolution, states that in any cases where the Security Council fails to act as required to maintain international peace and security because of a lack of unanimity amongst its five permanent members, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately and may issue any recommendations it deems necessary. By a 16 January 2009 resolution, the General Assembly decided to temporarily adjourn the tenth emergency special session, first convened in April 1997 at the request of Qatar, which could later be resumed at the request of a member state. Yemen also presented a draft resolution that was very similar to the draft that was vetoed by the US. The General Assembly adopted the resolution with 128 votes in favour, 9 votes against, 35 abstentions and 21 absences.

The following day, Ukraine and the US co-sponsored an Arria-formula meeting on

“Humanitarian aspects of missing and captive persons in Gaza”. During the 2014 conflict in Gaza, Hamas seized the remains of two Israeli soldiers killed, and on two other occasions, Hamas captured two Israeli civilians who entered Gaza. According to the concept note, the objective of the meeting was to provide an opportunity to discuss the related violations of humanitarian obligations and international law. Leah Goldin, whose son was killed in combat battle with Hamas and whose remains are being held, briefed Council members, along with Irwin Cotler, Founder and Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights.

The Security Council first met to address President Trump’s announcement on 8 December 2017, after eight council members—Bolivia, Egypt, France, Italy, Senegal, Sweden, the UK and Uruguay—called for an emergency meeting when the announcement was made. Briefing the Council, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nikolay Mladenov warned that the move could present a serious risk of sparking “a chain of unilateral actions, which can only undermine the achievement of our shared goal”, and reiterated that the position of the UN on Jerusalem was that the city remained a final-status issue to be determined through a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to be negotiated between the two sides.

At the briefing, US Permanent Representative Nikki Haley defended the decision, asserting that the US had not taken a position on boundaries or borders, and that the decision did not predetermine final-status issues. All 14 other Council members expressed dismay at the decision, with most asserting that it contravened international law and Council resolutions and reiterating that Jerusalem is a final-status issue, with its sovereignty to be determined through negotiations between the parties.

On 18 December, Mladenov briefed the Council on the fourth report on the implementation of resolution 2334 on Israeli settlements. He said housing construction in occupied Palestinian territory has continued, with significantly more units advanced

UN DOCUMENTS ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. S/RES/478 (20 August 1980) censured Israeli enactment of the “basic law” on Jerusalem. S/RES/476 (30 June 1980) reconfirmed the illegality of Israeli actions to change the character and status of Jerusalem. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.8139 (18 December 2017) was the vote on a draft resolution on Jerusalem that was vetoed by the US. S/PV.8138 (18 December 2017) was the fourth report by Mladenov on the implementation of resolution 2334. S/PV.8128 (8 December 2017) was a briefing by Mladenov requested by eight Council members in response to the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and announcement that it would move its embassy there from Tel Aviv. General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/ES-10/19 (21 December 2017) was on the status of Jerusalem. A/RES/ES-10/18 (16 January 2009) decided to temporarily adjourn the tenth emergency special session. Other S/2017/1060 (18 December 2017) was a draft resolution tabled by Egypt on the status of Jerusalem that received 14 affirmative votes but was vetoed by the US.

Israel/Palestine

and approved in 2017. Overall, he said that the conflict has not seen significant positive moves towards peace during the reporting period, 20 September to 18 December 2017. He added that the security situation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory has become more tense in the wake of Trump's announcement recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, citing an increase in incidents, notably rockets fired from Gaza and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 October 2017, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, presented his report to the Third Committee of the General Assembly (A/72/556). The report addresses a number of concerns pertaining to the situation of human rights in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. It finds that "in the 50th year of Israel's occupation, the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory is in a state of severe deterioration". The report also presents a detailed analysis of the international legal framework of the occupation.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching issue is determining how the Council can encourage the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties to achieve a two-state solution, including promoting compliance with resolution 2334 and reversing further negative trends that have emerged in recent weeks. Given the increasingly confrontational Council dynamics on this issue and the objection of the US administration to the Council's engagement on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, any Council outcome is unlikely.

Council Dynamics

The US under its current administration has made it known that it plans to staunchly defend Israel at the UN—including through

its unwavering opposition to resolution 2334, which was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention—but tensions within the Council reached a crescendo in December following Trump's 6 December 2017 proclamation concerning Jerusalem. All other Council members voted in favour of a resolution that reaffirmed that any decisions and actions that purport to have altered the status of Jerusalem have no legal effect, are null and void and must be rescinded. US representative Haley called the matter "an insult" that wouldn't be forgotten. It is likely that tensions over this issue will persist, and that the US will continue to prevent any outcome in the Security Council and elsewhere in the UN system that it feels challenges Israel.

Israel remains staunchly opposed to international initiatives on the issue, including involvement by the Council, while the Palestinian Authority favours international participation.

Cyprus

Expected Council Action

In January 2018, the Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months, ahead of its 31 January expiry. Elizabeth Spehar, Special Representative and head of UNFICYP, is expected to brief on the latest UNFICYP report.

Key Recent Developments

The past year was characterised by several noteworthy developments regarding the reunification talks between Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci. The latest round of talks, which formally started on 15 May 2015 and lasted over two years, concluded without agreement on a final settlement. Nevertheless, during the talks, both Cypriot leaders and their negotiating teams had a notably greater level of engagement with each other than in the previous talks, which resulted in major substantive progress on several issues.

During the meeting in Geneva on 11

January 2017, Anastasiades and Akinci exchanged maps with their respective proposals on territorial adjustments. This was a significant development, as it was the first time the Cypriot leaders presented their proposals regarding territory. A day later, the negotiations moved to a format of a high-level conference on Cyprus involving the Cypriot leaders and guarantor powers Greece, Turkey and the UK, with the EU as an observer. Given that any agreement on the issue of security and guarantees would require their approval, the presence of the guarantor powers was indispensable. Though no settlement was reached during the high-level segment, the participants agreed to reconvene the conference after the newly formed working groups identified the core issues on security and guarantees questions.

After some delays and intense diplomatic efforts by then-Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide, the Cypriot leaders and the guarantor powers resumed the Cyprus conference on 28 June 2017 in Crans-Montana,

Switzerland, but again failed to reach an agreement because of the inability to bridge differences on the issue of security and guarantees. This led Secretary-General António Guterres to announce on 7 July that the conference had been formally closed. Later in July, the Council extended the mandate of the UNFICYP for the customary six months but also requested the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the mission.

In August 2017, Eide formally relinquished the post of Special Adviser on Cyprus after serving more than three years in the position. On 28 September, the Secretary-General issued a comprehensive report on his good-offices activities, led by Eide and covering developments from 15 May 2015 to 11 August 2017. In the report, the Secretary-General noted that the parties had come close to a strategic understanding on the elements of a comprehensive settlement and that "a historic opportunity was missed in Crans-Montana". He called on the leaders to reflect on the talks and decide

UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2369 (27 July 2017) renewed UNFICYP's mandate for another six months and requested the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the mission. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2017/1008** (28 November 2017) was the strategic review of the UN mission in Cyprus. **S/2017/814** (28 September 2017) was on good-offices activities in Cyprus. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8014** (27 July 2017) was the vote on resolution 2369.

if and when the conditions would be met for a resumption of the process. To that end, he reiterated the readiness of the UN to facilitate the negotiations.

Since the collapse of the conference on Cyprus, the leaders have not engaged in direct talks. This is partially due to upcoming presidential elections in Cyprus in January 2018. Because of its political implications, the reunification talks have usually stalled in the period preceding elections. In October 2017, Anastasiades formally announced his candidacy for the presidency. In public comments during the past several months, Anastasiades has expressed confidence that the reunification talks would resume following the elections.

As mandated by resolution 2369, on 28 November 2017, the Secretary-General submitted to the Council his report on the strategic review on UNFICYP. The report emphasised the importance of maintaining the preventive and deterrent role of UNFICYP and recommended a slight reduction in the actual military strength from the current 888 to 802 troops while maintaining the authorised strength at 860 troops to allow for an increase in case it is needed. Furthermore, the Secretary-General noted that UNFICYP plays an important role in resolving military and civilian incidents in the buffer zone and that the mission's liaison and engagement activities should be reinforced quantitatively by allocating more human resources to it and qualitatively by redeploying resources from the headquarters to other sectors.

Issues and Options

There are several interrelated issues for the Council to consider in January 2018, the most immediate being the renewal of UNFICYP's mandate. The Council is also likely to examine what role it could play in encouraging the resumption of talks between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders given the current stalemate. Considering the inability of the Cypriot leaders to achieve a final settlement in the more than 50 years the mission has been present on the island, an issue for the Council is whether to consider significant changes to the mission's mandate and further downsizing options.

Over the years, the Council has been generally cautious in initiating or even discussing any drastic changes to the mandate or the size of the mission, fearing negative impact on the situation on the ground and on the political process. With the recommendations from the strategic review in mind, the most likely option for the Council is to renew UNFICYP's mandate for another six months with only minor adjustments, leaving further decisions regarding UNFICYP's future until after the January elections.

Council Dynamics

The situation in Cyprus is followed closely only by the Council members that have a particular interest in the issue, mainly the UK, France and Russia. Over the past several years, the US has also gradually become more engaged in finding a solution to the Cyprus problem as the island gains more prominence due to its potential hydrocarbon resources and strategic location regarding the

fight against terrorism in the Middle East, as well as security concerns in the eastern Mediterranean region.

The Council remains united in its support for negotiations between the leaders that would head towards the settlement of the Cyprus problem. However, some differences between the members exist in relation to the conditions and time-frame for the reunification talks. These divergences might become more apparent given the collapse of the latest round of reunification talks and no clear prospects for the resumption of dialogue between the leaders. Some members, the UK in particular, seem frustrated by the protracted process. These members seem to share the view that this process cannot be open-ended and that the Council could stimulate the negotiations by putting some pressure on both sides. However, Russia has strongly opposed any attempt to assert pressure on both sides and affect negotiations in any way, since it maintains that the process must be Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned for the results to be effective.

During the negotiations on the latest mandate renewal resolution in July, the Council expressed strong support for the Secretary-General to conduct a strategic review of the mission and submit it to the Council. It seems likely that the Council will be equally supportive of the Secretary-General's recommendations given that implementing them would not significantly change the mandate of the mission at this stage but rather make it more effective in implementing its tasks.

The UK is the penholder on Cyprus.

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