

Monthly Forecast

- 1 Overview
- 2 In Hindsight: The Security Council, One Year after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine
- 3 Status Update since our January Forecast
- 5 Ukraine
- 7 Iraq
- 9 Syria
- 10 Sudan
- 12 Children and Armed Conflict
- 14 Sea-Level Rise
- 15 Yemen
- 17 Central African Republic
- 18 Somalia
- 19 DPRK (North Korea)
- 21 EU-UN Cooperation
- 22 Libya

Overview

In February, Malta will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Malta is expected to organise two signature events. One of these is a ministerial-level open debate on [sea-level rise and its implications](#) for international peace and security. Malta's Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg is expected to chair the meeting. Secretary-General António Guterres and Ambassador Csaba Körösi (Hungary), the President of the UN General Assembly, are among the briefers.

There will also be a briefing on [children and armed conflict](#) that will focus on the prevention of violations against children. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba is expected to brief. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, and a civil society representative may also brief.

Aside from these two signature events, Malta will convene a meeting on [EU-UN cooperation](#). Borg is expected to chair the meeting. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell is the anticipated briefier.

To mark the one-year anniversary of the outbreak of the war in [Ukraine](#), Malta intends to convene a debate on 24 February. Borg is expected to chair the meeting.

Middle East issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meetings on the political and humanitarian situation and on the chemical weapons track;
- [Yemen](#), renewal of financial and travel ban sanctions, the monthly meeting on developments, and a briefing by the chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee;
- ["The situation in the Middle East, including](#)

[the Palestinian Question"](#), the monthly meeting on developments; and

- [Iraq](#), meeting on the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property.

African issues on the programme of work in February are:

- [Somalia](#), meeting on the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and briefing by the chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee;
- [Libya](#), meeting on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL);
- [Central African Republic](#), meeting on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA); and
- [Sudan](#), renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

The [Democratic People's Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) is the one Asian issue expected to be on the programme, as the chair of the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee is expected to brief Council members in February.

The Council is also expected to hold a briefing on the Secretary-General's biannual strategic-level report on the threat posed by the [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL\)](#), also known as Da'esh).

Malta has signed on to the [Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#) commitments and intends to highlight this issue during its presidency.

Other issues could be raised in February depending on developments.

1 February 2023

This report is available online at securitycouncilreport.org.

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

In Hindsight: The Security Council, One Year after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was a seismic event with devastating consequences for the people of Ukraine and far-reaching effects on the global economy.

The invasion is widely regarded as a flagrant violation of a fundamental tenet of international law, including the UN Charter: namely, the commitment to refrain from the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of a member state. It laid bare the Security Council's inability to maintain international peace and security when one of its permanent members unilaterally decides to wage war.

Security Council members were able to compartmentalise the difficult dynamics surrounding Ukraine to a greater degree than many observers had predicted. Far from coming to a standstill, the Council continued to renew the mandates of peace operations and established its first sanctions regime in five years.¹ The Council adopted 54 resolutions, only three fewer than in 2021.

However, dynamics around Ukraine contributed to the particularly tense relationship among members, especially some of the Council's five permanent members (P5), who now have fewer informal interactions and have at times forfeited diplomatic civility for political gamesmanship. Divisions among the elected members have had their effect as well. India, an elected member in 2021-2022 on the cusp of surpassing China as the world's most populous country, frustrated many colleagues on the Council by refusing to condemn Russia's invasion. Some other elected members were also not as full-throated in their criticism of Russia as the US and European members. These dynamics often coloured discussions on country-specific and thematic issues, and occasionally affected negotiations on Council products. Presidential statements, for example, fell from 24 in 2021 to just seven in 2022—the lowest number of presidential statements adopted in any of the 29 years since the Council started issuing them in the current format.

The frequent meetings on Ukraine exposed fissures, not just between the West and Russia, but also among other groupings of Council members. Council divisions were reflected in the substance of the discussions, and in disagreements about the organ's working methods and the use of its rules of procedure. One outcome was the Council's use of a "Uniting for Peace" resolution, referring to the General Assembly a situation on which its permanent members are deadlocked for the first time in 40 years. Another has been member states' efforts to promote accountability and transparency in the use of the permanent members' veto power.

Council Efforts to Pronounce Itself on Ukraine

Obtaining agreement on Council products on Ukraine was difficult, given the direct involvement of a permanent member in the conflict, and also reflecting members' sharply diverging positions. Four of the seven draft resolutions that failed to be adopted in 2022 were related to Ukraine. This includes two draft texts tabled by Albania and the US: one deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the other condemning the referendums that Russia held in its occupied territories in Ukraine in late September. Both were vetoed by Russia. Two draft resolutions tabled for a vote by

Russia failed to be adopted because they did not garner the requisite support from Council members: one on the humanitarian situation and the other on military biological activities in Ukraine. Since the start of the war, the Council has issued only one outcome on Ukraine: a presidential statement adopted on 6 May expressing the Council's support for the Secretary-General's efforts in the search for a peaceful solution.

A number of drafts on Ukraine were negotiated, but not tabled for a vote in the Council. In early March 2022, France and Mexico prepared a draft resolution on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine, convening three rounds of negotiations before deciding on 14 March to take their initiative to the General Assembly. The co-authors were apparently unable to bridge divisions over references in the draft to Russia's role in igniting and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis. In late July 2022, several members pursued a Council product welcoming the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI). France circulated a draft presidential statement shortly after the agreement was reached on 22 July. Separately, Norway and Mexico also prepared a draft presidential statement on 22 July, which elected members (E10) discussed, revised, and circulated as an E10 draft the same day. Attempts to merge the two drafts were complicated by Russia's missile strike on the port city of Odesa on 23 July. Despite this setback, Mexico and Norway made further attempts at a presidential statement following the BSGI's extension on 19 November. The co-authors were apparently unable to find compromise language describing the memorandum of understanding on the UN's scope of engagement to facilitate unimpeded exports of Russian food products and fertilisers to global markets.

Council Meetings and Dynamics on Ukraine

Few crises in recent decades have galvanised the Security Council's attention as the current Ukraine conflict. In 2022, the Council held 50 meetings on Ukraine—including 36 open briefings, six adoptions, four Arrria-formula meetings, two discussions under "any other business", one meeting in closed consultations and one private meeting. Ukraine accounted for over 15 percent of the Council's public meetings.² Moreover, 17 of the 22 meetings held in connection with the "Threats to international peace and security" agenda item focused on the war in Ukraine.

The large number of meetings can also be attributed to different members taking advantage of the public stage provided by the Council's open meetings to present competing narratives about various aspects of the conflict. Firmly intent on isolating Russia for what they consider an unprovoked war, the US and the European members convened meetings frequently with the aim of highlighting the deleterious effects of the war on civilians, including vulnerable groups such as women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons. Russia also called for frequent meetings to convey its own perspective on the conflict. As a result, members promoted alternative views in "tit-for-tat" meetings on topics ranging from the protection of civilians and accountability to the safety of nuclear facilities and the conflict's impact on global food security. Often, there were two meetings on Ukraine within a single week, peaking in late October with four Council meetings on Ukraine in a span of seven days.

In Hindsight: The Security Council, One Year after Russia's Invasion of Ukraine

Some members expressed unhappiness with the frequency and short notice of these meetings, finding them a waste of Council time and resources, while the often-contradictory claims conveyed during meetings on Ukraine led other members to suggest that the Council make use of the UN's information-gathering capabilities, such as its fact-finding missions, to contain the proliferation of false narratives.

Council members, including Brazil, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), questioned the value of holding such frequent meetings on Ukraine, particularly when these are not complemented by action or constructively supporting diplomatic efforts. As Russia amassed troops along Ukraine's border prior to its invasion, most members employed Chapter VI language in calling for de-escalation and the pursuit of dialogue and diplomacy. Shortly after the invasion, however, many Council members abandoned calls for diplomacy. These members viewed the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine's internationally-recognised borders as a prerequisite for engaging in negotiations. Over time, divisions among Council members became more pronounced, with some members calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and diplomatic engagement that was not conditioned on Russia's withdrawal. Citing Russia's security concerns, some members of this latter group—including Brazil, China, Ghana, and Kenya—urged a broader discussion between Russia and NATO members on the European security architecture. Countries such as China and India were unwilling to condemn Russia's actions, although they have joined others in emphasising the importance of upholding the UN Charter, which could signal discomfort with the invasion.

The frequency of Security Council meetings on Ukraine in late February and early March 2022 prompted some members to caution that the Council was prioritising Ukraine at the expense of other files on its agenda. The African members (A3) occasionally urged the Security Council not to forget its responsibilities to other humanitarian crises. On one occasion, these members called on European members to treat "Africans fleeing security and climate crises" with the same level of compassion they have shown for Ukrainian refugees. Divisions were also evident in the positions of A3 members. For example, Gabon abstained on the resolution condemning the referendums, while Ghana and Kenya voted in favour. Unlike Gabon, these members also explicitly condemned the invasion.

Moving Beyond the Council

The gridlock over Ukraine brought renewed energy to the debate

over reforming the Security Council, as member states sought avenues for greater cooperation and accountability through the General Assembly. On 27 February, following its own failure to adopt a draft resolution deploring Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Council adopted a resolution referring the situation in Ukraine to the General Assembly through the "Uniting for Peace" procedure. This initiative established the ongoing 11th emergency special session (ESS), during which the General Assembly adopted five resolutions on Ukraine.

Two months later, through an initiative led by Liechtenstein, the General Assembly decided by consensus that it would convene whenever a veto is cast in the Security Council. It has now met three times in accordance with this new procedure: following vetoes by China and Russia on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in May, after a Russian veto on Syria in July, and after the 30 September veto by Russia on Ukraine, in the context of the emergency special session on this issue.

Votes in the General Assembly have sought to isolate Russia, while some resolutions have imposed punitive measures against the country. The General Assembly adopted a resolution on 7 April 2022 suspending Russia from the Human Rights Council (HRC), and on 14 November, establishing a compensation mechanism on reparations for Ukraine. These resolutions passed by significant margins, but also demonstrated divisions within the international community about whether and how to hold Russia accountable for its invasion of Ukraine. Many members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) either abstained or absented themselves from voting. Several members with close economic, historical or military ties to the Kremlin have called on the Security Council to mitigate the spillover effects of the conflict, including on global energy and commodity prices. They have been uncomfortable with sanctions on Russia and have hesitated to condemn Russia at the 11th ESS.

The last 11 months have shown that, despite the Council's impotence, dialogue and diplomacy can still play an important role in brokering solutions to alleviating the consequences of the war, and possibly bring about peace. This is supported by the Secretary-General's success in securing the BSGI in July and the evacuation of civilians from the Azovstal steel plant in the city of Mariupol in April. With hostilities showing no signs of abating and an ever-present risk of escalation, the one-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine may offer an opportunity to reflect on how the United Nations can better support diplomatic efforts towards facilitating an end to the conflict in line with the principles of the UN Charter.

Status Update since our January Forecast

West Africa and the Sahel

On 10 January, the Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on West Africa and the Sahel (S/PV.9238). The briefers were the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General

for West Africa and the Sahel and Officer-in-Charge of the UN Office of West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), Giovane Biha, and the President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Commission, Omar Alieu Touray. Biha presented the

Status Update since our January Forecast

Secretary-General's 3 January report on West Africa and the Sahel (S/2022/1019). At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a presidential statement on the region proposed by Ghana and Switzerland. The Council was also expected to renew the mandate of UNOWAS, through an exchange of letters with the Secretary-General, by 31 January.

Colombia

On 11 January, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9240), followed by closed consultations, on Colombia. Special Representative and head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2022/1004). The Council was also briefed by Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, a representative of the Special High-Level Instance for Ethnic Groups (IEANPE). The IEANPE was created by the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) to monitor the implementation of provisions related to the agreement's ethnic chapter. Vice President Francia Márquez of Colombia represented her country at the meeting.

At the same meeting, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2673, expanding the mandate of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia to monitor the implementation of the chapter on comprehensive rural reform and the ethnic chapter of the 2016 agreement.

On 13 January, Council members issued a press statement on Colombia (SC/15175). In it, they welcomed the renewed momentum for making progress on the implementation of the peace agreement, including advancements made on such issues as rural reform. Members reiterated that tackling violence remains vital for the consolidation of peace in Colombia, adding that the adoption and implementation of a public policy for dismantling criminal organisations and their support networks would be a significant step towards violence reduction.

Rule of Law

On 12 January, the Council held a ministerial-level open debate on the "Promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security: the rule of law among nations" (S/PV.9241). Japanese Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Japan's presidency. The briefers were Secretary-General António Guterres; President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Joan E. Donoghue (via videoconference); and Dapo Akande, professor of public international law at Oxford University. 60 member states participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. The head of the EU delegation to the UN, Ambassador Olof Skoog, and Ambassador Riyad Mansour of the Observer State of Palestine also took part in the meeting.

Afghanistan

On 13 January, the Council held a private meeting on Afghanistan. Japan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) requested the meeting, citing the Taliban's recent edict banning women from working for NGOs in the country. The briefers were Special Representative of

the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva, Executive Director of UNICEF Catherine Russell, and President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) David Miliband.

Council members also issued a press statement regarding a terrorist attack in Afghanistan on 12 January (SC/15173).

On 27 January, the Council convened for closed consultations on Afghanistan. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed briefed regarding her recent visit to Afghanistan. The meeting was requested by France, Japan, and the UAE.

The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 5 January, the Security Council convened for an open briefing on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.9236). The meeting was requested by China, France, Malta and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) following the 3 January visit to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount site by Israeli National Security Minister and leader of the far-right Otzmah Yehudit party, Itamar Ben-Gvir. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. He said that "[w]hile the visit was not accompanied or followed by violence, it is seen as particularly inflammatory given Mr. Ben-Gvir's past advocacy for changes to the status quo". (Under an agreement reached after the 1967 Six-Day War, only Muslims are allowed to pray at the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount site.)

On 18 January, the Security Council held its quarterly open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question" (S/PV.9246). Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland briefed. He said that, against a backdrop of increased political tension and a stalled peace process, "[t]he violent trends that dominated the last months of 2022 continue to take a devastating human toll". Among other issues, Wennesland stressed the need for courageous political leadership to generate momentum to transform the current dynamics and urged "both sides [to] refrain from provocations and unilateral steps—including at the Holy Sites in Jerusalem—that undermine stability and the ability to achieve a negotiated peace".

On 27 January, Security Council members convened for closed consultations on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question". China, France, and the UAE requested the meeting following the 26 January Israel Defense Forces raid in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank during which nine Palestinians were killed. The meeting also focused on the 27 January terror attack near a synagogue in East Jerusalem during which seven Israelis were killed by a Palestinian shooter. Wennesland briefed.

Haiti

On 24 January, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9247), followed by closed consultations, on Haiti. Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) Helen La Lime briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on BINUH (S/2023/41). Canada, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

Status Update since our January Forecast

Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

On 26 January, the Security Council held an open debate (S/PV.9250) on “Investment in people to enhance resilience against complex challenges” under the Council’s peacebuilding and sustaining peace agenda item. The Council heard briefings from Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed; the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Ambassador Muhammad Abdul Muhith (Bangladesh), and Diago Ndiaye, President of the Network on Peace and Security for Women in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Japan prepared a concept note for the meeting, which was one of its signature events during its January Council presidency (S/2023/19).

Mali

On 27 January, the Security Council held its quarterly briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Mali (S/PV.9251). Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) El-Ghassim Wane and Aminata Cheick Dicko, President of Protection Sahel, briefed. Discussion focused on the UN’s internal review of MINUSMA, submitted to Council members on 16 January (S/2023/36). The review contained options on MINUSMA’s future configuration, force levels and uniformed personnel ceiling. Additionally, the Council considered the Secretary-General’s quarterly report, dated 6 January, on Mali and the activities of MINUSMA (S/2023/21).

Cyprus

On 30 January, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2674 renewing the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another year, until 31 January 2024. The resolution affirms the Council’s readiness to review the implementation of the resolution after six months and “to consider any adjustments or other action as necessary, taking into account the advice of the Secretary-General”. The resolution requests the Secretary-General to submit two reports on two occasions: two on his good offices, on 4 July and 3 January 2024, and two on the implementation of

the resolution extending UNFICYP’s mandate, on the same dates.

UNRCCA (Central Asia)

On 30 January, Special Representative and head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Natalia Gherman briefed Council members regarding the UNRCCA’s activities in closed consultations. Gherman apparently updated Council members on the UNRCCA’s work pertaining to counter-terrorism; the women, peace and security agenda; transboundary water management; and its engagement with regional organisations, among other matters. The situation in Afghanistan and the 2022 border clashes between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were also discussed. This was Gherman’s final briefing on behalf of the UNRCCA, as she was recently appointed Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED).

Working Methods

A note by the president of the Security Council on the chairs and vice-chairs of subsidiary bodies for 2023 was issued on 31 January (S/2023/2). The incoming members began discussing the vacant positions after the elections in June and quickly agreed on a list of preferences for the subsidiary body vacancies. However, the process stalled because permanent members were opposed to a footnote that indicated that Japan, one of the incoming members, would chair the Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Matters (IWG) in 2024, when the current chair leaves. The note that was issued does not include the footnote. At a discussion of this issue during under “any other business” on 27 January, Albania, as the chair of the Working Group, read out a joint statement from the elected members (E10) voicing support for Japan as chair in 2024. Ecuador, as the coordinator of the E10 for January, transmitted a letter from the E10 (S/2023/68) reiterating their unanimous support for Japan as chair in 2024 and conveying the expectation that the Security Council would take note of the positions of the current members and the new members to be elected in 2024.

Ukraine

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to hold a high-level briefing on the situation in Ukraine to mark the one-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of the country. Additional meetings on Ukraine are possible, depending on developments on the ground.

Key Recent Developments

Hostilities remain concentrated in eastern Ukraine as Russian forces continue to conduct ground attacks near the city of Bakhmut in the Donetsk region. After weeks of heavy fighting, Ukraine confirmed on 25 January that its troops had withdrawn from the city of Soledar, a town roughly 15 kilometres north of Bakhmut. Fighting has also been reported in the southern Zaporizhzhia region and near the cities of Svatove and Kremmina in the Luhansk region.

Russia has continued to launch air and missile assaults targeting civilian infrastructure across Ukraine. The attacks have triggered massive blackouts and a reduction in water supplies throughout the country. On 14 January, a Russian missile hit a residential building in the southeastern city of Dnipro, killing at least 45 civilians, including six children. Secretary-General António Guterres condemned the assault in a 16 January statement, emphasising that attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure violate international humanitarian law and “must end immediately”. The latest Russian missile barrage on 26 January, which targeted sites throughout Ukraine and reportedly led to 11 civilian deaths, came one day after the US and Germany agreed to deliver tanks to Ukraine—a development described by Russia’s ambassador to Berlin, Sergey Nechaev, as having “taken the conflict to a new level of confrontation”.

UN DOCUMENTS ON UKRAINE Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9245 (17 January 2023) was an open briefing on Ukraine requested by Russia. S/PV.9243 (13 January 2023) was an open briefing on Ukraine requested by Albania and the US.

Ukraine

In a 5 January press briefing, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric confirmed that the UN was disbanding the fact-finding mission concerning the 29 July 2022 incident at a detention facility near Olenivka—a village in the eastern Donetsk region that is controlled by Russian-backed separatists—in which over 50 Ukrainian prisoners of war were reportedly killed. Dujarric cited “the absence of conditions required for the deployment of the mission to the site” as the main reason for its disbandment. The fact-finding mission had been announced on 3 August 2022, following requests from the governments of Russia and Ukraine.

At a 12 January press stakeout, Ukrainian First Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova said that Kyiv had decided to postpone the tabling of a draft General Assembly resolution on accountability, which member states had been negotiating since December 2022, until later this year. She said that Ukraine would instead prioritise a draft General Assembly resolution that would seek to enshrine the ten-point peace formula that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had proposed during a Group of 20 (G20) summit on 15 November 2022. The peace formula includes calls for nuclear safety, food and energy security, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, restoring Ukraine’s territorial integrity, the release of all prisoners and deportees, and the establishment of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian war crimes.

On 13 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on the situation in Ukraine, which Albania and the US—the co-penholders on political issues in Ukraine—had requested with the aim of receiving a comprehensive update on the political and humanitarian aspects of the war. At that meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo said that the war in Ukraine “has created a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe, traumatized a generation of children and accelerated the global food and energy crises”, warning that the “damage could pale in comparison with the consequences of a prolonged conflict”. DiCarlo acknowledged, however, that the prospects of a peaceful settlement to the war remains elusive, noting that “the logic that prevails is a military one, with very little, if any, room for dialogue”.

On 20 January, Russia convened an Arria-formula meeting titled “The systematic war of Ukraine against the residents of Donbass: 2014 and Onwards”. The briefers included Arnaud Develay, a French attorney; Enrique Refoyo, a Spanish political scientist; and Maya Pirogova, a social activist from the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine. At that meeting, several members—including Albania, France, Switzerland, and the US—accused Russia of spreading false narratives and disinformation, which they view as part of a broader strategy to divert the international community’s attention from Russia’s violations of the UN Charter. In a 21 January tweet, Russian Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Polyanskiy described the meeting as “eye opening” for the wider UN membership and criticised Russia’s “Western ex-partners” for being closed-minded.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 17 January, the Security Council held an open briefing on Ukraine under the “Threats to International Peace and Security” agenda item, requested by Russia. The Council was briefed at that meeting by Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and head of the UN Human Rights Office in New

York Ilze Brands Kehris and Metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony, chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Patriarchate of Moscow. Kehris said that “the armed attack by [Russia] against Ukraine and the ensuing hostilities have brought the most severe forms of human rights and international humanitarian law violations”. As at 17 January, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had recorded more than 7,000 civilians killed and more than 11,000 injured since 24 February 2022, with the actual figures being much higher, she added. During the briefing, Kehris also highlighted concerns over restrictions to freedom of religion and freedom of association across Ukraine.

Key Issues and Options

The overarching priority for the Council is to promote a solution to the conflict and facilitate dialogue among the parties to that end. Meanwhile, a key issue for the Security Council is how to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. Periodic briefings from Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths or other OCHA officials could help keep the Council informed of the humanitarian situation on the ground. Council members may also wish to call on Russia and Ukraine to facilitate the UN’s unimpeded access to areas close to the frontlines where needs are acute. On 18 January, the UN announced plans to increase the number of inter-agency convoys providing aid to areas near the frontlines.

Another key issue for the Council is how to promote the safety and security of nuclear facilities in Ukraine. On 20 January, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed that it was “expanding and intensifying activities” to help prevent a nuclear accident during the ongoing conflict, setting up several permanent expert missions at Ukraine’s nuclear plants. Efforts continue by IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi to establish a nuclear safety and security protection zone around the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Council members may wish to ask for a briefing by Grossi on this topic.

Another important issue for the Council is how to ensure the effective implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI). At the 13 January briefing, US Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield accused Russia of deliberately slowing down the inspection of vessels, creating a backlog of dozens of ships. In an 18 January note to correspondents, the UN urged “all parties to work to remove obstacles for the reduction of the backlog and improve operational efficiencies within the [Joint Coordination Centre]” of the BSGI. The note also confirmed that the shipment of Russian ammonia through Ukraine’s ports—a key aspect of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by Russia and the UN on 22 July 2022—had not yet begun. Negotiations on exporting Russian ammonia through the Togliatti/Yuzhny pipeline in Ukraine are ongoing. Council members may wish to convene a meeting with UN Coordinator for the BSGI Abdullah Abdul Samad Dashti and UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan. They may choose a private, informal format, such as an informal interactive dialogue, to allow for a frank discussion about the challenges of implementing the BSGI and the MoU.

Council Dynamics

The Security Council remains starkly divided on the situation in Ukraine. Russia continues to justify its invasion, which it refers to as a “special military operation”, while several Council

Ukraine

members—including Albania, France, the UK, and the US—condemn Russia for what they consider to be an unprovoked war.

At the 13 and 17 January briefings, four of the five members that started their two-year Council terms in January—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, and Switzerland—explicitly condemned Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, describing it as a violation of international law and the UN Charter. Mozambique, the other new member, did not do so; during the past year, it has consistently abstained on General Assembly votes condemning Russia’s actions in Ukraine.

At the 13 January briefing, Ecuador expressed regret over the partial application of Article 27(3), which says that on decisions under Chapter VI and under paragraph 3 of Article 52 of the UN Charter, “a party to the dispute shall abstain from voting” at the Security Council. Ecuador also announced that it will assume the role of co-penholder on humanitarian issues, together with France—a

role previously held by Council member Mexico, which ended its Council term in 2022.

Japan condemned the transfer of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Iran to Russia, joining the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) in expressing support for a UN investigation into a possible violation by Iran of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran’s nuclear programme.

Switzerland—along with the majority of Council members—emphasised the need for a recommitment to dialogue and diplomacy in search of a peaceful settlement to the war. In this regard, the United Arab Emirates urged the international community to encourage the parties to meet at the negotiating table, including by providing “incentives in the form of a post-war vision that is just and sustainable”.

Iraq

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on recent developments in the country and on the Secretary-General’s latest reports on UNAMI and the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-party nationals and missing Kuwaiti property. A representative of civil society may also brief the Council. Both reports were provided to Council members in late January.

UNAMI’s mandate expires on 31 May.

Key Recent Developments

The political deadlock that gripped Iraq following the 10 October 2021 parliamentary election has ended. On 27 October 2022, the Iraqi parliament voted to approve the cabinet nominated by new Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, the preferred candidate of the Shiite Coordination Framework (SCF), a loose coalition of Shiite political parties with ties to Iran. The vote marked the final step in the government-formation process, which lasted for more than 12 months and saw the emergence of a sharp divide between Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr’s movement and the SCF.

Two weeks earlier, on 13 October 2022, the parliament elected Kurdish politician Abdul Rashid as president. In the hours preceding the vote to elect Rashid, the parliament building, which is located in Baghdad’s heavily fortified Green Zone, was targeted by a rocket attack in which at least five people were wounded. Two days after Rashid was elected, al-Sadr’s movement announced that its members would not participate in the new government.

The new government’s ministerial programme, which outlines the priorities it will pursue, was also approved by parliament on 27 October 2022. According to media reports, the ministerial programme notes that al-Sudani’s government will amend the legislation that governs elections in Iraq and hold early parliamentary elections within a year. Several analysts have noted that the pledge to

schedule early elections appears to be an attempt to appease al-Sadr, who reportedly demanded that parliament be dissolved and early elections held while his supporters occupied the Green Zone throughout much of August.

On 14 November 2022, at least two people were killed and another ten wounded when ballistic missiles and drones launched by Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) struck the bases of Kurdish-Iranian opposition groups in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. On 21 November 2022, Tasnim, a semi-official Iranian news agency linked to the IRGC, reported that the IRGC had attacked three areas in the Kurdistan Region with missiles and drones, killing at least 26 members of Kurdish-Iranian opposition parties. The following day, on 22 November 2022, Council members discussed the attacks under “any other business” at the request of France, the UK, and the US. These attacks followed a series of Iranian strikes against Kurdish-Iranian groups in north-eastern Iraq in late September 2022, including a 28 September 2022 attack that killed at least 13 people and wounded 58 more.

On 29 November 2022, al-Sudani met with Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in Tehran. In a joint news conference following the meeting, al-Sudani reportedly said that Iraq will strengthen its security cooperation with Iran and prevent “the use of Iraqi lands to threaten Iran’s security”.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues to pose a threat in Iraq. On 18 December 2022, at least nine federal police officers were killed in a bombing near the village of Safra, approximately 30 kilometres southwest of Kirkuk. In a 20 December 2022 press statement, Council members condemned the attack and expressed their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, among other matters. It appears that negotiations concerning the press statement were uncontentious.

On 20 December 2022, senior leaders from Bahrain, Egypt, France, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) attended the second session of the

Iraq

Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership in Amman. According to media reports, the conference focused on stability in Iraq. In a statement issued at the conclusion of the conference, the participants reaffirmed the continuation of efforts to “step up cooperation with Iraq, in support of its security, stability, and sovereignty” and expressed their support for Iraq’s efforts to “develop its constitutional democratic process”. On 27 January, France and Iraq signed a series of strategic agreements intended to boost cooperation between the two countries, particularly in the energy and public transportation sectors.

In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal* reported on 15 January, al-Sudani expressed support for the ongoing presence of US troops in Iraq, saying that “we think that we need the foreign forces” and that “elimination of ISIL needs some more time”. A week earlier, on 8 January, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was shot down above al-Asad airbase in western Iraq, which currently houses US troops.

On 18 January, 580 residents of the al-Hol camp in north-eastern Syria were repatriated to a rehabilitation camp in northern Iraq. Following a visit to al-Hol in September 2022, General Michael Kurilla, the head of US Central Command (CENTCOM), described the camp as “a humanitarian catastrophe” and “a literal breeding ground for the next generation of [ISIL]”.

Women, Peace and Security

On 10 October 2022, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met to discuss the situation in Iraq. IEG members were briefed by UNAMI Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance Claudio Cordone, accompanied by members of UNAMI, the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), and the UN Country Team. Participants discussed, among other issues, women’s participation in political processes in Iraq; the country’s second national action plan (NAP) on WPS; violence and intimidation against women human rights defenders; accountability for conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV); and the situation of children conceived as a result of rape, and their mothers. UN Women, as the secretariat of the IEG, recommended that the IEG co-chairs and Council members support the implementation and resourcing of Iraq’s second NAP on WPS and urge the government to ensure accountability for attacks against women activists and human rights defenders during protests in 2019 and 2020. Among other recommendations, UN Women also called for encouraging and supporting actors interacting with survivors of CRSV in Iraq to follow a do-no-harm and survivor-centred approach, including by applying the principles contained in the Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (“Murad Code”). The meeting was the sixth time the IEG discussed the situation in Iraq.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is reinforcing the importance of maintaining stability and security in Iraq and respecting the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Depending on how the situation evolves, Council members may wish to consider issuing a product that addresses issues of concern to them, such as the threat posed by ISIL or the need to resolve political disputes through dialogue and within the applicable legal framework without resorting to violence.

If other member states resume carrying out attacks on Iraqi territory, the Council could adopt a product that condemns those attacks and reiterates the Council’s support for Iraq’s sovereignty.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members are generally unanimous in their support for UNAMI and their desire to see positive developments in the Iraqi political process and Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations.

Despite this general consensus, divisions have emerged among Council members in relation to Council products regarding the strikes carried out by Iran in the Kurdish region of Iraq in September and November last year. Following the September attack, it appears that the US circulated a draft press statement condemning the attack and reiterating the Council’s support for the stability, sovereignty, and security of Iraq. Although the draft apparently enjoyed broad support among Council members, it seems that Russia opposed including in the draft any reference to Iran, as well as details regarding the attack and text that described it as a flagrant violation of Iraq’s sovereignty. It appears that Russia also argued that the draft should reflect the arguments raised by all parties and, on that basis, sought to add language noting the IRGC’s claim that the attacks were carried out in response to threats from Iranian-Kurdish groups in the Kurdistan Region. Russia’s proposed amendments were resisted by other Council members, including the US, who apparently contended that echoing self-defence claims made by a party to a dispute in the absence of a formal report to the Council under Article 51 of the UN Charter would undermine the credibility of the Charter. Consensus could not be achieved, and the draft press statement was not issued.

A similar draft press statement was also circulated by the US after the November attack. Russia again opposed including any reference to Iran in the text, and the draft failed to achieve consensus. Russia subsequently put forward a presidential statement regarding the attacks. It seems that Russia’s draft went through several iterations, none of which referenced Iran. Early versions of the draft presidential statement apparently also omitted details regarding the attacks. It appears that these details were added to the draft after concerns were raised by other Council members; however, Russia also proposed including language referring to the January 2020 strike that killed Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the IRGC Quds Force. This proposal was opposed by other Council members, and agreement on the text could not be reached.

Regional dynamics continue to affect Iraq, as demonstrated by Iran’s recent attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan and the influence of countries in the region on domestic politics. The Iraqi government routinely declares that it does not wish to become a theatre for Iran-US tensions, while Türkiye’s military operations in northern Iraq remain ongoing.

The US is the penholder on Iraq issues in general and the UK is the penholder on Iraqi-Kuwaiti issues.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold its monthly meetings on political and humanitarian developments in Syria and on the use of chemical weapons in the country.

Key Recent Developments

On 9 January, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2672, confirming the extension of the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months until 10 July. (Through this mechanism, humanitarian assistance is delivered to Syria from Türkiye via the Bab al-Hawa crossing without requiring the consent of the Syrian government.) The resolution encourages Council members to convene informal interactive dialogues every two months to review and follow up on the implementation of the resolution's provisions, including progress on early recovery projects. It also requests the Secretary-General to produce a special report on humanitarian needs in Syria no later than 10 June, one month prior to the expiration of the authorisation. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 8 January 2023).

On 8 January, a UN inter-agency cross-line delivery (that is, across domestic conflict lines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control) was conducted. It involved a convoy of 18 trucks carrying nearly 600 metric tons of humanitarian supplies—including food, water, sanitation items, health kits, medicines, educational materials, and dignity kits—from Aleppo to Sarmada. This was the fifth cross-line delivery since the adoption of resolution 2642 in 2022 and the tenth since the adoption of resolution 2585 in 2021.

In his 21 December 2022 Council briefing, UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen called upon the parties to hold further dialogue towards identifying and implementing the “step-for-step” initiative. (Through this initiative, Pedersen is asking the Syrian government, the opposition, regional states, and other stakeholders what concessions they might make in exchange for reciprocal actions from others on such matters as abductees, detainees, and missing persons; humanitarian assistance and early recovery projects; conditions for the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees; and the restoration of better socioeconomic conditions). At the media stakeout following the Council briefing, Pedersen indicated that Russia continues to express concerns about Geneva as the venue for the talks, questioning Switzerland's impartiality because of its support for EU sanctions on Ukraine. At the time of writing, no progress had been reported in convening the next meeting of the Constitutional Committee.

On 28 December 2022, the defence ministers of Russia, Türkiye, and Syria held tripartite talks in Moscow. According to media reports, the meeting focused on “ways to resolve the Syrian crisis, the problem of refugees, and joint efforts to combat extremist groups in Syria”. The meeting was the first high-level meeting between Syria and Türkiye since the outbreak of war in Syria in 2011. According to a 12 January Reuters article, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu announced that he could meet with Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal Mekdad in early February.

Russian President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation

with Erdogan on 16 January. The press release subsequently circulated by the Executive Office of the Russian President noted that the presidents “discussed ways to normalise relations between Türkiye and Syria, including Ankara's initiative to launch consultations with the participation of Russian, Turkish and Syrian representatives”. Also on 16 January, Pedersen met Çavuşoğlu. In a Twitter post following the meeting, the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria said that they discussed “regional developments and all aspects related to the crisis in Syria, including the need for a political solution” in line with Council resolution 2254.

On 24 January, Pedersen also met the Syria envoys of the P3 Council members (France, the UK, and the US) and Germany in Geneva. In a joint statement, released after the meeting, the representatives of France, Germany, the UK, and the US expressed their intent to engage with the regional partners and opposition under the framework of resolution 2254, including step-for-step process.

On 24 January, Pedersen met the Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC) President Badr Jamous and Hadi Albahra, an SNC member who serves as co-chair of the Syrian Constitutional Committee, in Geneva. (The SNC represents the political opposition to the government.) According to a tweet by the Special Envoy's office, the meeting focused on the latest developments related to the Syrian crisis and “moving the political process forward” in line with resolution 2254.

The humanitarian and economic situations in Syria continue to deteriorate, and the humanitarian response plan for Syria remains significantly underfunded. According to OCHA, some 15.3 million Syrians (over 69 percent of the population) will require humanitarian assistance in 2023. OCHA reports that at the end of 2022, the humanitarian response plan for Syria was 47.5 percent funded.

An outbreak of cholera has exacerbated the already dire humanitarian situation. According to OCHA's 15 January 2023 situation report, between 25 August 2022 and 7 January, 77,561 suspected cholera cases had been reported, including 100 deaths attributed to the disease. In addition, the report announced that a total of 6,561 suspected cases and seven associated deaths had been reported in camps for the internally displaced in northeast and northwest Syria.

Adedeji Ebo, Director of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs and Deputy to the High Representative, briefed the Council on the Syrian chemical weapons track on 5 January. Adedeji expressed regret that “all efforts by the OPCW [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons] Technical Secretariat to organize the next round of consultations between the DAT [Declaration Assessment Team] and the Syrian National Authority continue to be unsuccessful”. He also apprised the Council that the OPCW Technical Secretariat had shared its intention to send a reduced team “to conduct limited in-country activities” in Syria with the government, which he noted has welcomed this intention.

On 27 January, the Investigation and Identification Team (IIT) of the OPCW released its third report, which provides the findings of the investigations conducted from January 2021 to December 2022 on the 7 April 2018 Douma incident. The report concluded that there are “reasonable grounds to believe that the Syrian Arab Air Forces were the perpetrators of the chemical weapons attack”

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2672](#) (9 January 2023) extended the authorisation for the Syria cross-border aid mechanism for an additional six months until 10 July 2023. [S/RES/2642](#) (12 July 2022) reauthorised the cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism in Syria for six months until 10 January 2023. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/933](#) (12 December 2022) was the special report on the humanitarian needs in Syria. [Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9248](#) (25 January 2023) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. [S/PV.9235](#) (5 January 2023) was a meeting on the chemical weapons track in Syria. [S/PV.9230](#) (21 December 2022) was a briefing on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria.

Syria

in Douma on 7 April 2018.

On 25 January, the Council convened a briefing, followed by consultations, on the political and humanitarian situations in Syria. Pedersen and OCHA Acting Director of Operations and Advocacy Ghada Eltahir Mudawi briefed. Pedersen told the Council that in February he is scheduled to hold meetings with Mekdad and the Government nominated Co-Chair of the Constitutional Committee, Ahmad Nabil Kuzbari, in Syria. Mudawi highlighted the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country and called for enhanced donor support, including to respond to cholera and winterization needs.

Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 10 November statement following a 12-day visit to Syria, UN special rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures and human rights Alena Douhan called on sanctioning states to lift all unilateral sanctions against Syria "without authorization of the UN Security Council", warning that their use was not justified under international law. In an 18 November press release, High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk "condemned the heinous killing of two young Egyptian girls" at Al-Hol camp, a displacement camp in northeastern Syria in an area controlled by Kurdish-led forces. According to the press release, the UN Human Rights Office has verified that since the start of 2022, at least 42 people have been killed at the Al-Hol camp, where at least 53,000 people are held, more than half of whom are children. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based human rights monitoring organisation, claims that in December 2022, 133 civilians were killed in Syria, including 22 children and 15 women.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council remains the impasse in the political process. One option for the Council would be to hold a private meeting with Special Envoy Pedersen and other member states with influence over the parties in Syria to discuss recent developments in his "step-for-step" initiative. (A private meeting is a closed, formal meeting format; unlike closed consultations, non-Council member states are allowed to participate in this format.)

The Council could also consider adopting a presidential statement that expresses support for the Special Envoy's efforts to

reinvigorate the political process and encourages donors to enhance their support for the Syria humanitarian response plan.

A related issue is addressing the growing humanitarian needs in Syria. Council members could consider inviting representatives of Syrian humanitarian aid organisations to engage with them to explore avenues for improving aid delivery mechanisms in Syria.

An additional option would be a Council visiting mission to the Bab al-Hawa crossing on the Syria-Türkiye border. During such a visit, Council members could meet with the UN and other officials responsible for implementing and overseeing the cross-border aid delivery mechanism to get a better understanding of its inner workings and its role in addressing the country's humanitarian crisis.

Council Dynamics

Syria remains a divisive file. China and Russia are supportive of the Syrian government, emphasising the need to respect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity and drawing connections between unilateral coercive measures on Syria and the challenging humanitarian situation in the country. In contrast, the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded members criticise the government for violating international humanitarian law and human rights law and not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue.

In his explanation of vote following the Council's unanimous adoption of resolution 2672, Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia (Russia) noted that Russia's affirmative vote should not be considered as support for the Syria cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism in its current form. He argued that the approach to humanitarian assistance had been politicised and that "a new six-month extension in July will be borne out only if the approach of the members of the Security Council towards the provision of humanitarian assistance to Syria changes fundamentally". He also called the unilateral sanctions imposed on Syria by Western countries "criminal".

Brazil and Switzerland are the penholders on humanitarian issues in Syria.

Sudan

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, which is due to expire on 12 March. In accordance with resolution 2620 of 15 February 2022, the Council is supposed to review the Panel's mandate and take appropriate action regarding its extension before 12 February.

The mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) expires on 3 June.

Background and Key Recent Developments

Sudan faces ongoing challenges, including those resulting from the military coup d'état of 25 October 2021. On 5 December 2022, a

broad range of civilian political forces and the military signed the Sudan Political Framework Agreement, intended to pave the way for a two-year, civilian-led transition ahead of elections. The agreement did not contain specific deadlines for the transition process, however, and was opposed by several groups. Its signing was welcomed by Secretary-General António Guterres and the Friends of Sudan (Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US, and the EU). In an 8 December 2022 press statement, Council members also welcomed the agreement.

In a Council briefing on 7 December 2022, Special Representative for Sudan and head of UNITAMS Volker Perthes described the Framework Agreement as an important breakthrough, adding that

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2620 (15 February 2022) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts for one year. **Secretary-General's Reports** S/2022/898 (1 December 2022) was the 90-day report on UNITAMS. S/2021/696 (31 July 2021) was on benchmarks to assess the sanctions measures on Darfur, as requested in resolution 2508. **Security Council Meetings** S/PV.9249 (25 January 2023) was the semi-annual briefing by the ICC prosecutor on the court's work in Darfur. S/PV.9211 (7 December 2022) was a briefing on the Secretary-General's 90-day report on UNITAMS. S/PV.9210 (7 December 2022) was the quarterly briefing on the work of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Sudan

“critical contentious issues” still needed to be addressed, including matters related to security sector reform, transitional justice, and implementation of the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement.

On 8 January, the signatories to the Framework Agreement under the facilitation of the Trilateral Mechanism—the AU, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and UNITAMS—launched the final phase of talks aimed at reaching a political agreement, which at the time of writing was ongoing. The talks are expected to result in roadmaps on issues to be considered in a final political agreement.

Insecurity, including intercommunal clashes, armed conflict, and criminality persist across several areas of the country. At the end of December 2022, violence in South Darfur reportedly claimed dozens of lives and displaced hundreds. Humanitarian needs are at record levels since the military coup, with an estimated 15.8 million people—about one-third of the population—projected to need humanitarian assistance this year, according to OCHA’s Humanitarian Needs Overview for 2023. There are 3.7 million internally displaced people and 926,000 refugees in Sudan, the overview indicated.

On 15 February 2022, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2620, extending the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until 12 March 2023. As in previous years, it expressed the intention to “take appropriate action regarding the further extension of the mandate” by 12 February. In January, the Panel of Experts submitted its final report as requested in resolution 2620. (The report was not yet publicly available at the time of writing.) The resolution also expressed the Council’s intention to consider by 31 August 2022 establishing clear, well-identified, and realistic key benchmarks in respect of the sanctions regime, as well as its readiness to consider adjusting measures to respond to the situation in Darfur given the evolving situation on the ground. (For more, see our *What’s In Blue* story of 14 February 2022.) However, the Council was not able to reach agreement on these benchmarks.

On 25 January, the Council received the semi-annual briefing of ICC Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan on the court’s Darfur-related activities. He informed the Council that the government of Sudan is not meeting the requirements for cooperation set out in resolution 1593, including by restricting access to documentation and witnesses.

Women, Peace and Security

On 16 November 2022, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security held a meeting with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, and the Senior Women Protection Advisers from six UN peacekeeping and special political missions, including the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The Senior Women Protection Adviser from UNITAMS said that conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) continued to be of grave concern in Sudan while remaining “dramatically underreported”. The UNITAMS Senior Women Protection Adviser briefed on situations of concern—such as the ongoing intercommunal violence in Darfur—and measures put in place by the Sudanese institutions and the UN system to monitor and respond to CRSV. She also recommended “the urgent establishment of protection programmes for witnesses, victims and women human rights defenders”.

Human Rights-Related Developments

The newly appointed UN expert on human rights in Sudan, Radhouane Nouicer, conducted his first official visit to Sudan from 28 January to 3 February. At the time of writing, he was expected to hold a press conference in Khartoum

on 2 February. Findings from the visit will contribute to the High Commissioner’s comprehensive report on the situation in Sudan at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council in June. (Nouicer was appointed in December 2022, replacing Adama Dieng who stepped down from the position in October 2022.)

Key Issues and Options

An immediate issue for the Council is renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts. Another issue is whether it is feasible to consider reviewing the sanctions measures on Darfur, as signalled in past resolutions that renewed the mandate of the Panel of Experts. A further issue is whether agreement can be reached on establishing clear, well-identified, and measurable key benchmarks to guide the Council in reviewing the sanctions measures, an intention expressed by the Council in resolutions 2455, 2508, 2562, and 2620.

The most likely option is for the Council to renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts for an additional 13 months, as is the norm.

Council members could also have a frank conversation on possible benchmarks in a closed, informal setting with representatives of the government of Sudan and UN Secretariat officials.

Council Dynamics

Council members’ divergent views over the utility of the Sudan sanctions regime have in turn affected the Council’s ability to agree on benchmarks for adjusting the regime. The decision to establish benchmarks has been contentious for some time, particularly their scope. Resolution 2562 of 11 February 2021 requested a report on the issue from the Secretary-General by 31 July 2021. The report recommended four key benchmarks and related targets, namely progress on political and economic governance issues, transitional security arrangements in Darfur, the National Plan for Civilian Protection, and transitional justice and accountability.

Resolution 2562 expressed the Council’s intention to establish benchmarks by 15 September 2021, the first time the Council had introduced a target date for its action. The US, as penholder on Sudan sanctions, circulated a draft presidential statement in September 2021 that endorsed all the key benchmarks and related targets proposed in the Secretary-General’s 31 July 2021 report. While this was acceptable to some members, other members, such as China and Russia, apparently expressed the view that the benchmarks adopted by the Council should focus only on the situation in Darfur. According to these members, some of the benchmarks contained in the Secretary-General’s report went beyond this scope. Members were, therefore, unable to agree on the proposed draft presidential statement.

Resolution 2620 expressed the Council’s intention to consider establishing benchmarks by 31 August 2022. In August 2022, the US circulated a draft resolution that expressed the Council’s readiness to review the sanctions measures in the light of progress achieved by the government of Sudan on the benchmarks and related targets as outlined in the Secretary-General’s report of 31 July 2021—that is, the four benchmarks that had been recommended, but which the Council had not yet endorsed. During negotiations, it seems members such as China, India, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, and the African members asserted that the Council should only endorse those benchmarks that pertained to Darfur, and not all

Sudan

four benchmarks, as proposed by the penholder. Apparently, some of these members took the view that only the second benchmark, relating to transitional security arrangements in Darfur, was applicable, while others believed that the third benchmark, on the protection of civilians, was also relevant. As in September 2021, members were

unable to reach agreement, and a text was not put to a vote.

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions. Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee until December 2023.

Children and Armed Conflict

Expected Council Action

As Council president in February, Malta will convene a briefing on children and armed conflict that will focus on prevention of grave violations against children. (The six grave violations are child recruitment and use; killing and maiming; abductions; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; and the denial of humanitarian access.) Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba is expected to brief. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, and a civil society representative may also brief.

Malta plans to prepare a summary of the briefing as an outcome of the meeting.

Background and Recent Developments

Over the years, the Council has discussed on several occasions the links between the protection of children and conflict prevention, including by considering how conflict prevention strategies can contribute to the prevention of violations against children. A key product in this regard is resolution 2427, adopted unanimously on 9 July 2018, through which the Security Council provided a framework for the prevention of grave violations against children in armed conflict situations.

Resolution 2427—which was initiated by Sweden, the then-Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict—was adopted during the Council's 2018 annual open debate on children and armed conflict, held under the theme "Protecting Children Today Prevents Conflict Tomorrow". It expressed the Security Council's commitment to consider and use the UN system's tools to "ensure that early warning of potential conflicts translates into early, concrete preventive action, including towards the goal of protecting children... by or in coordination with the most appropriate United Nations or regional actor". The resolution recognised the cross-border effects of violations against children and encouraged regional and subregional organisations to develop and expand initiatives to prevent such violations. Among other matters, resolution 2427 emphasised the need for a strong focus on combatting poverty and inequality to prevent and protect children from violations in the context of armed conflict. The resolution cited several elements that are crucial to preventing recruitment of children, such as ensuring access to education and the strengthening of effective age assessment mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment.

This resolution built on language contained in a 31 October 2017 presidential statement authored by Sweden. In this statement, the

Council acknowledged that its products (such as resolutions and presidential statements), as well as the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, contribute to preventing and responding to violations against children, including through promoting the signing of action plans by parties to armed conflict and encouraging parties to conflict to take necessary steps to be de-listed from the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report. The importance of action plans in preventing violations against children was also highlighted during a 7 May 2018 Arria-formula meeting titled "Ending and Preventing Grave Violations against Children through Action Plans: Best Practices from African States".

In 2022, as the children and armed conflict mandate marked its 25th anniversary, Gamba highlighted on several occasions the need to continue promoting the mandate's preventive aspects. Addressing a 7 October 2022 meeting of the General Assembly's Third Committee, she said: "[n]ow as ever, the best solution to protecting children remains the prevention of violations in the first place".

An 18 January 2022 study issued by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (Office of the SRSG CAAC) to mark the 25th anniversary notes that the adoption of resolution 2427 has increased the office's opportunities to engage with relevant actors on the prevention of violations. Among the office's initiatives is the promotion of prevention plans—a strategy or statement adopted at the highest levels of a government, regional, or subregional organisation that addresses specific trends and patterns, such as cross-border violations, and mobilises resources for preventing violations against children. The Office of the SRSG CAAC has been conducting outreach on prevention with regional organisations such as the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the European Union (EU). In the case of the AU, the office has engaged with the authorities in the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, and Sudan to promote the signing of prevention plans.

The Council convened for its annual open debate on children and armed conflict on 19 July 2022. Gamba presented the main findings of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, dated 23 June 2022. The report recorded 23,982 grave violations against children in 21 country situations and one regional situation (the Lake Chad Basin) and noted an alarming increase in abductions, which increased over 20 percent in 2021, compared to 2020. It added three new situations of concern with immediate effect—Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Ukraine—and called for enhanced monitoring capacity in the Central Sahel region. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 18 July 2022.)

UN DOCUMENTS ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2427](#) (9 July 2018) provided a framework for mainstreaming child protection throughout the conflict cycle. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/493](#) (23 June 2022) was the annual report on children and armed conflict. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9096](#) (19 July 2022) was the annual open debate on children and armed conflict.

Children and Armed Conflict

At the debate, several members highlighted the situation of children in specific countries, with many focusing their remarks on Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Ukraine. Some members welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to add the new situations of concern. In this regard, the UK noted that information gathered by the UN and other organisations operating on the ground attests to the serious protection needs of children in those countries, adding that establishing monitoring and reporting mechanisms could build an even stronger evidence base, which will allow parties to identify actions needed to prevent grave violations against children. Albania highlighted the links between accountability and prevention, arguing that holding perpetrators to account “increases the cost of non-compliance with international law and may deter future violations”. Gabon for its part said that early warning mechanisms in conflict environments can help detect situations in which children are at risk and “prevent opportunistic networks from forming”.

Developments in the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

On 30 January, Malta assumed the chairmanship of the working group, with Ecuador serving as vice-chair. During Norway's term as chair (2021-2022), the working group adopted eight sets of conclusions, on the Secretary-General's reports on the CAR, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Iraq, the Philippines, Sudan, South Sudan, and Yemen. Six sets of conclusions (Afghanistan, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria) remain pending, as Council dynamics complicated negotiations on several of these situations over the past two years.

Key Issues and Options

It seems that in convening February's meeting, Malta aims to facilitate discussion on guidelines for operationalising the preventive provisions of resolution 2427. An option for the Council would be to consider a product outlining steps for the UN system, member states and regional organisations to promote the implementation of resolution 2427 and advance the prevention of violations against children.

A related issue for the Council is how to promote the full use of existing tools—such as the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report—since ensuring accountability for current violations can deter and prevent other violations from occurring. In this regard, the Council needs to have the Secretary-General's annual reports serve as an effective tool in supporting the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda. Members have raised concerns that the credibility of the Secretary-General's reports will diminish if parties that have not stopped committing violations against children are nonetheless taken off the annexes.

Council members could call for the consistent and transparent application of the criteria for listing and de-listing parties, which were set out in the Secretary-General's 2010 annual report. That report said that a party would be de-listed if the UN had verified that it “has ceased commission of all the said grave violations” for which it was listed.

Members may also consider other ways of furthering the implementation of resolution 2427. One proposal outlined in the 18 January 2022 study is to enable the children and armed conflict mandate to strengthen “its proactive engagements with parties to conflict”, including by relying on existing data from the UN country task forces on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children (CTFMR) and early warning systems in situations not on the children and armed conflict agenda. This could facilitate swift addition of new situations of concern to the Secretary-General's annual report and “allow the agenda to play an early warning role”, according to the study. Another option in this regard is for the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to request periodic “horizon scanning” briefings from UNICEF and or civil society organisations to receive information about emerging situations of concern.

Members may also wish to reflect on ways to strengthen cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations to prevent violations against children. Council members can consider requesting briefers at the Council's periodic meetings on cooperation between the UN and regional organisations to describe steps taken by their respective organisations to prevent violations against children, such as the adoption of prevention plans.

Council Dynamics

There is strong support overall for the children and armed conflict agenda among Council members. However, there may be some sensitivities in discussing the prevention of violations. The negotiations on resolution 2427 were difficult, in part because of objections raised by China and Russia regarding language on prevention and sustaining peace. These members, which often highlight the importance of respecting member states' sovereignty, were apparently not convinced that the Council is the most appropriate place for such discussions. It seems that language in resolution 2427 stressing that conflict prevention remains the primary responsibility of states and that UN efforts should support the prevention roles of national government may have helped alleviate these members' concerns. In this vein, China and Russia may also be particularly uncomfortable with discussing early warning in country situations not on the children and armed conflict agenda.

It seems that divisions in the Council over issues such as Myanmar and Syria have filtered down to the subsidiary body level, resulting in protracted negotiations before consensus can be reached on some conclusions in the working group. The direct involvement of some members in conflict situations such as Ukraine has also complicated the working group's activities. It seems that in the past two years, agreement on some of the conclusions on country situations in Africa has been delayed, including because of concerns raised by the African members of the Council (Gabon, Ghana, and former Council member Kenya) about references to the relevant countries' governments. It remains to be seen how the advent of the five new elected Council members—Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland—will affect these dynamics, not least as Mozambique is now included as a situation of concern in the Secretary-General's annual report.

Sea-Level Rise

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will convene a ministerial-level open debate on sea-level rise and its implications for international peace and security, one of the signature events of the Maltese Presidency. Secretary-General António Guterres and Ambassador Csaba Kőrösi (Hungary), the President of the UN General Assembly, are among the briefers. Malta's Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg is expected to chair the meeting. No formal outcome is anticipated.

Background

Since the Security Council first discussed climate change, peace and security at the thematic level in April 2007, Council members, other member states, and Secretariat officials have frequently raised the security threat of rising sea levels in open debates and other public Council meetings. In particular, they often note the existential threat rising sea levels pose to many small island developing states. They have also observed that sea-level rise can cause displacement, destroy infrastructure, and undermine livelihoods.

On 20 July 2011, the Council adopted its only formal outcome on climate change, peace and security, a presidential statement drafted by Germany that said the negative effects of climate change could in the long run exacerbate some existing threats to international peace and security. Among its other elements, the presidential statement expressed concern that “possible security implications of loss of territory of some States caused by sea-level-rise may arise, in particular in small low-lying island States”.

In July 2015, the Security Council held an open debate on “Peace and Security Challenges Facing Small Island Developing States”, convened by New Zealand. The meeting focused on such issues as transnational crime and piracy, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and climate change. Then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Prime Minister Tuila'epa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi of Samoa, Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller of Jamaica, and Jean-Paul Adam, Finance Minister of Seychelles, briefed during the meeting. In his briefing, Ban asserted, “Rising sea levels, dying coral reefs and the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters exacerbate the conditions leading to community displacement and migration. They threaten to increase tensions over resources and affect domestic and regional stability”.

Council members have held two Arria-formula meetings on the adverse effects of sea-level rise, on 10 April 2017 and 18 October 2021. The first, on “Security Implications of Climate Change: Sea-Level Rise”, was organised by Ukraine in cooperation with Germany. The briefers were Ambassador Harald Braun, Germany's Permanent Representative to the UN; former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin; and Major General Munir Muniruzzaman, the President of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies. The briefers noted that rising sea levels place the existence of small island states in jeopardy, risk undermining the livelihoods of populations in low-lying areas, and may adversely affect the stability of states through large-scale transborder migration.

The second Arria-formula meeting, on “Sea-Level Rise and

Implications for International Peace and Security”, was organised by Viet Nam, Ireland, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tunisia and was co-sponsored by several non-Council members, including the Dominican Republic, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Saint Lucia, and Tuvalu. The briefers were Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific Khaled Khiari; Valérie Masson-Delmotte, Co-Chair of Working Group I at the UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which assesses the physical science of climate change; and Coral Pasisi, Senior Adviser to the Director General of the Sustainable Pacific Consultancy. The briefers noted that climate change and sea-level rise are becoming increasingly grave challenges to the physical integrity of states and the security and livelihoods of their people. Pasisi called for enhanced and more easily accessible international financing for climate adaptation and resilience for Pacific Island states, as well as legal protections for people displaced by climate change.

Council members most recently met to discuss climate change at the thematic level on 29 November 2022, convening an Arria-formula meeting on “Climate, Peace and Security: Opportunities for the UN Peace and Security Architecture”. Kenya and Norway (then co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security) co-convened the meeting with Albania, France, Gabon, Ghana, Ireland, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Germany and Nauru (the co-chairs of the Group of Friends on Climate and Security) and then-incoming Council members Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland also co-sponsored the session. Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Miroslav Jenča was the keynote speaker. Also making remarks were three panel discussants: Mely Caballero-Anthony, professor of international relations and president's chair of international relations and security studies at the Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (virtual participation); Hafsa Maalim, associate senior researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI); and Michael Keating, executive director of the European Institute of Peace (EIP) (virtual participation). Several briefers and Council members noted the importance of integrating climate action into efforts to build and sustain peace. Many members also called on donor countries to enhance climate financing for developing countries during the meeting.

Key Issues and Options

One key issue is how to promote a better understanding among members states of sea-level rise as a threat to international peace and security. This could include:

- enhancing awareness of the threat that rising sea levels pose to the physical existence of small island developing states,
- exploring the ways in which coastal erosion and infrastructure damage resulting from rising sea levels undermine livelihoods and create socioeconomic tensions; and
- discussing the potential for rising sea levels to lead to widespread displacement that can adversely affect international peace and security.

Another key issue concerns the practical policy measures that could be employed to address the multi-faceted risks of rising sea

Sea-Level Rise

levels. In this regard, the Council could discuss how coastal communities and small island developing states can most effectively adapt and build resilience to the negative effects of sea level rise.

An additional issue is how the Council can encourage and collaborate with other UN entities, regional and sub-regional organisations, and civil society actors to address security risks resulting from rising sea levels, including by supporting policies that build climate resilience and adaptation.

One possible option would be to invite one or more representatives from the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Peacebuilding Commission, or the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to brief on policies and activities addressing sea-level rise and on ways in which synergies can be created among different parts of the UN system in this regard.

Another possible option after the debate would be for Malta to compile and disseminate a summary of the statements as an official UN document, highlighting the key points of the meeting.

Council Dynamics

Members continue to recognise the severity of the climate crisis and emphasise the need for global action to address this crisis. While united over the need to combat climate change, members continue to be divided over whether the Security Council

should play a role in this respect and under what circumstances. Most Council members—including many of the new members (Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, and Switzerland)—support Council involvement. Nonetheless, differences remain. China, Russia, and Brazil have traditionally had concerns about the Council's approach to climate change, which they view as primarily a sustainable development issue rather than a threat to international peace and security. These members consistently express concerns about Council encroachment on other UN entities and processes—most notably the UNFCCC—that are designed to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.

During this month's open debate, members are likely to emphasise the threat that rising sea levels represent for the survival of small island developing states. They may also discuss the importance of supporting adaptation and resilience measures for small island developing states and other developing countries with low-lying coastal areas. The importance of promoting climate adaptation and resilience through peacebuilding and climate financing—a prevalent theme in Council discussions in 2022—may remain a focus of Council meetings on climate change in 2023. Some members may also discuss the negative effects of rising sea levels on human security in this month's debate.

Mozambique, Switzerland, and the UAE are the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security.

Yemen

Expected Council Action

During February, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution renewing the Yemen financial and travel ban sanctions, which expire on 28 February, and the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts, which expires on 28 March. (The targeted arms embargo established by resolution 2216 in April 2015 on the Houthi rebel group is open-ended.)

The Council will also hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen with UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA. The chair of the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Ferit Hoxha (Albania), may also brief. The head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Beary, is expected to brief during consultations.

Key Recent Developments

Grundberg has continued his mediation efforts to restore the truce agreement between the Yemeni government and the Houthi rebel group, while Omani-facilitated talks since October 2022 between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia on a comprehensive plan to end the war have also reportedly continued. Despite the truce agreement's expiration on 2 October 2022, major fighting has not resumed, and elements of the agreement—the re-opening of the Sana'a airport to civilian flights, and fuel imports through Hodeidah port—have continued. Houthi drone attacks in October and November 2022 targeting Yemeni government oil terminals, however, have halted oil

and gas exports, depriving the government of key revenue sources.

From 16 to 17 January, Grundberg visited Sana'a, where he met with Houthi officials, including the President of the Supreme Political Council, Mahdi al-Mashat. This was Grundberg's first trip to the city since late September 2022 during the unsuccessful negotiations to renew the truce. It also followed visits by Omani delegations to Sana'a in December 2022 and in January, and Grundberg's talks with Yemeni government officials in Riyadh from 4 to 5 January and Omani officials in Muscat from 10 to 11 January.

Grundberg briefed the Council from Sana'a on 16 January. "We are currently seeing an intensification of regional and international diplomatic activity to resolve the conflict in Yemen", he said. He thanked Saudi Arabia and Oman for their efforts, alluding to the parallel Houthi-Saudi talks. Grundberg called this recent diplomatic activity "a potential step change in the trajectory of this eight-year conflict". He emphasised, however, that a sustainable solution to the war would require an inclusive intra-Yemeni dialogue.

Despite the nine-month lull in fighting since the truce agreement in April 2022—the longest sustained decrease in hostilities since the conflict escalated in March 2015—Yemen still faces immense humanitarian needs. The 2023 Yemen Humanitarian Needs Overview, released by OCHA on 20 December 2022, estimates that 21.6 million people will require humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2023, a slight decrease from the 23.4 million people in need in 2022. Of these 21.6 million individuals, 17.3 million are

UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN Security Council Resolution S/RES/2624 (28 February 2022) renewed the Yemen sanctions regime for one year. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9244 (16 January 2023) was a briefing on Yemen.

Yemen

estimated to need food and agricultural assistance (a decrease from 19 million in August 2022), 20.3 million will need access to critical health services, and 15.3 million will require support to access clean water and basic sanitation. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths, briefing at the 16 January Council meeting, reiterated the scale of these projected needs during his statement.

There are concerns that the Houthis and the Yemeni government are preparing for a return to major hostilities. The US announced that it had intercepted a fishing vessel in the Gulf of Oman on 6 January that was smuggling more than 2,100 assault rifles on a maritime route historically used to traffic illicit cargo from Iran to the Houthis. This was the third interdiction of weapons since November 2022 by the US Navy that it said were destined for the Houthis from Iran.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The 2140 Committee had been scheduled to discuss the Yemen Panel of Experts' final report on 27 January. The meeting was cancelled because the Council has yet to agree on its annual letter naming the chairs of its subsidiary bodies. (Ambassador Hoxha, who chaired the 2140 Committee in 2022, is expected to remain as the chair when the Council agrees on the annual letter.)

Last year's resolution 2624, which renewed the Yemen sanctions regime on 28 February 2022, was noteworthy for its reference to the Houthis as a terrorist group and for adding the Houthis as an entity to the Yemen sanctions list, subject to the measures of the targeted arms embargo. (Resolution 2216 already subjected the Houthis to the arms embargo by prohibiting the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms to, or for the benefit of, Houthi officials under Council sanctions, which includes Houthi leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi.) The sanctions regime's renewal followed intensive Council negotiations. Several Council members were concerned that designating the Houthis as an entity subject to the asset freeze measures could cause private sector actors, such as banks and food importers, to cease operations in Yemen to avoid violating the sanctions. This resulted in the Council limiting the scope of the designation to the arms embargo. Another controversial issue was over strengthening the resolution's language on maritime interdictions to enforce the arms embargo. This proposal, made by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), was not included in the final text (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 28 February 2022.)

In 2022, the 2140 Committee added three more Houthi officials to the Yemen sanctions list, bringing the number of individuals and entities sanctioned under the regime to 13. Meanwhile, the current Panel of Experts operated with only four of its five members as Council members failed to approve candidates, proposed by the Secretariat, to serve as the regional expert.

Key Issues and Options

A key issue for the Council is how to support efforts to restore the truce and establish a formal ceasefire and political process. During last year's failed negotiations to renew the truce, the Houthis demanded that their military and security forces be included in Grundberg's proposal to resume state employee salary payments, which prevented an agreement. Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia is a related initiative parallel to Grundberg's efforts. Council members could stress the importance of coordinating these diplomatic activities with the Special Envoy and recall the importance of an inclusive political process under UN mediation for a sustainable resolution to the conflict.

The humanitarian situation continues to be a key issue. In addition to enormous humanitarian needs, relief efforts face significant challenges from increasing interference and access constraints and a dangerous security environment. The Houthis' enforcement of mahram over the past year, requiring women to be accompanied by male guardians, is also negatively affecting aid operations. Land mines and explosive remnants of war have become an increasing issue of concern, emerging as the leading cause of civilian casualties in the truce and post-truce period. Members may call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate the safe, rapid, and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief to all civilians in need, and to protect humanitarian personnel and assets in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law. They could also recall that obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid constitutes a violation of the Yemen sanctions regime.

Key issues regarding the renewal of the Yemen sanctions regime include how to stem the flow of arms to the Houthis and hamper the group's ability to finance its military activities; protect humanitarian space; and make sure the sanctions support the UN-led mediation.

Members are also likely to continue monitoring progress towards starting the salvage operation for the FSO Safer oil tanker, which is moored off Hodeidah port. In September 2022, the UN-facilitated plan to transfer the oil from the decrepit ship to a temporary vessel received the donor commitments required to conduct this phase of the operation. The operation has not started, however, as the UN says that it must now first secure the crude carrier that will permanently replace the FSO Safer.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain supportive of UN-led mediation efforts and want the parties to restore the truce. In their 5 October 2022 press statement, they criticised the Houthis' "maximalist demands", which had prevented the extension and expansion of the truce agreement in October 2022.

Despite the Council's general unity on Yemen, the sanctions renewal has the potential to be complicated. The UAE—an elected Council member that is a member of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition battling the Houthis—may, as during the negotiations on resolution 2624, seek a number of changes that it believes could strengthen the sanctions regime. Last year, China opposed the new maritime interdiction language, while France, the UK, and the US were among those countries worried about the potential effects on the humanitarian situation if the designation of the Houthis included the asset freeze measures. For Russia, a long-standing red line has been identifying Iran as supplying the Houthis with arms in the Council's Yemen products. Brazil is the lone remaining country in the Council among the four members that abstained during the vote on resolution 2624. It did so largely over concerns about the resolution's calling the Houthis a terrorist group in the absence of an agreed legal definition of terrorism.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen.

Central African Republic

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will discuss the Secretary-General's latest report on the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Special Representative for the Central African Republic (CAR) and head of MINUSCA Valentine Rugwabiza is expected to brief.

The mandate of MINUSCA expires on 15 November 2023. The CAR sanctions regime expires on 31 July 2023, and the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee expires on 31 August 2023.

Key Recent Developments

On 14 November 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2659, renewing MINUSCA's mandate for another year until 15 November. Twelve members voted in favour of the resolution, and China, Gabon, and Russia abstained. (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 13 November 2022.)

Following the adoption of resolution 2659, Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix visited the CAR in December 2022 to engage with the government and other stakeholders on the implementation of MINUSCA's mandate. According to the mission, the discussion focused on how to enhance the state's capacity, strengthen state institutions and the rule of law, and support the holding of local elections. Concerns about misinformation and hate speech were also raised in the discussion. Lacroix called for calm, open, and peaceful debates ahead of the local elections, which are expected to take place this year.

The issue of constitutional reform has been contentious in CAR. In October 2022, CAR President Faustin Archange Touadéra removed the president of the CAR Constitutional Court, Danièle Darlan, and appointed Jean-Pierre Wabóé as the new president. This followed a 23 September 2022 decision by the court to invalidate the government's decision to set up a committee to draft a new constitution to remove presidential term limits. The current constitution, adopted in 2016 following popular consultations, does not allow the president to run for a third term, and the CAR court declared the committee's work unconstitutional. Opposition parties and civil society organisations strongly criticised the government's decision to remove Darlan and underscored the need to respect the independence of the judiciary. During his visit, Lacroix emphasised the need to respect institutions and allow political parties and civil society to express themselves freely.

On 27 December 2022, the CAR national assembly extended for five years the mandate of the Special Criminal Court (SCC)—a hybrid court set up in 2015 with the support of the UN to investigate, prosecute and try serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the CAR. The court started its deliberations in August 2022 after having completed hearings for its first trial and issuing a life sentence and two 20-year prison terms for three members of the 3R rebel group who were accused of taking part in a massacre in May 2019 that claimed the lives of 46 people. In a 1 November 2022 statement, UN Secretary-General António Guterres noted that these sentences were “a milestone in the Central African Republic's efforts to bring to justice those responsible for

serious crimes, which is crucial for fighting impunity, breaking cycles of violence, and contributing to transitional justice”.

The growing insecurity in the CAR due to the resumption of military activities by some armed groups has been a major concern. MINUSCA reported that it has enhanced its joint patrols with the CAR armed forces (FACA) to respond to armed groups' threats and enhance civilians' protection. Armed groups operating cross-border have been a particular concern stoking tensions between CAR and its neighbours. The CAR authorities blamed an unnamed neighbouring country for an alleged bombing of Bossangoa, a town near the Chadian border, in November 2022, which reportedly targeted a military base used by FACA and the Wagner group, a Russian private security company. The town was said to be under the control of armed groups until recently. In early January, Sudan announced that it was closing its borders with CAR, reportedly because of concerns over unnamed actors who were operating on the Sudanese side of the border to plan regime change in the CAR.

One of the challenges faced by MINUSCA has been continued violations of the status of forces agreement (SOFA), as acknowledged in Resolution 2659 renewing MINUSCA's mandate in November 2022, which “urges all parties in the CAR to cooperate fully with the deployment and activities of MINUSCA, in particular by ensuring its safety, security, and freedom of movement with unhindered and immediate access throughout the territory of the CAR, including by air and at night, as per MINUSCA's Status of Forces Agreement, to enable MINUSCA to carry out fully its mandate in a complex environment”. On 10 January, two French consultants working for MINUSCA were arrested at the Bangui International Airport. They were released after two days without charges.

Sanctions-Related Developments

Following the renewal of the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the work of the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee on 29 July 2022, the Secretary-General appointed four panel members on 31 August 2022. They are from Tunisia, Congo, Netherlands, and Norway with expertise in arms, armed groups, finance/natural resources, and humanitarian affairs. On 28 December 2022, the Secretary-General appointed the Panel's fifth and final member, from Pakistan, to serve as a regional expert.

Since July 2022, the 2127 Sanctions Committee has met four times to discuss the work plan and progress update of the Panel of Experts and to engage with regional states on the challenges in monitoring and implementation of sanctions measures.

Key Issues and Options

The political and security situation in the CAR will be a key issue for Council members in February. They could be keen to know more about the ongoing preparations for the holding of local elections, which are expected this year for the first time since 1988. Some members may express serious concerns about the removal of the president of the CAR Constitutional Court and call on the government to respect the independence of the judiciary. The growing insecurity in the country could also be another area of concern on which Council members may reiterate their support for MINUSCA's robust mandate in protecting civilians.

The other major issue for Council members is the need to ensure accountability and justice for crimes committed in the CAR. They

UN DOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2659 (14 November 2022) renewed MINUSCA's mandate for one year until 15 November 2023. [Secretary-General's Report S/2022/762](#) (13 October 2022) was the most recent Secretary-General's report on the situation in the CAR. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9190](#) (14 November 2022) was on the situation in the CAR.

Central African Republic

may, therefore, welcome the extension of the mandate of the SCC and express continued support for its work. A possible option is to hold an informal interactive dialogue with the SCC president on the progress and challenges in fighting impunity in the CAR.

The continued violation of the SOFA remains another important issue. Council members may continue to insist on the need for the host country to respect its obligation under the SOFA to enable MINUSCA to effectively discharge its mandate.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council dynamics on the CAR continue to be difficult. This was particularly evident during MINUSCA's mandate renewal in November 2022. The three African members (Gabon, Ghana, and then-Council member Kenya), as well as China and Russia, supported the host country's position on several issues, including its request to

make "promoting the extension of state authority" a priority task of the mission and the differentiated treatment of the government and armed groups in the draft resolution (opposing the use of the phrase "parties to the conflict" in the draft text, which they argued, equates a legitimately elected government with armed groups). Although the penholder tried to accommodate those requests to a certain extent, these members were not satisfied, which resulted in abstentions by China, Gabon, and Russia.

Other members were disappointed that previously agreed language concerning the responsibility to protect was removed from the draft text, and that the resolution did not specifically call out the Wagner group for its alleged violations of human rights in the CAR.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Harold Adlai Agyeman (Ghana) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

Somalia

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in Somalia. Acting Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) Kiki Gbeho, AU Special Representative and head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) Souef Mohamed El-Amine, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

Key Recent Developments

The fight against Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaeda, remains a major focus of the Somali government. With the support of ATMIS, the Somali National Army (SNA) and allied clan militias have taken the lead in a major offensive operation against Al-Shabaab since June 2022. The US Africa Command has also supported the operation with air strikes targeting the group. Furthermore, recent media reports indicate that Türkiye has deployed its Bayraktar TB2 attack drones to provide strike capability and reconnaissance support to the offensive operations.

The federal government has succeeded in dislodging Al-Shabaab from some of its strongholds in central Somalia. On 17 January, the federal government announced the capture of three towns—Haradhere, Gal'ad, and El Dher—in Galmudug state, which were said to have been under the control of Al-Shabaab for more than a decade. Offensive operations have yet to start in south Somalia, where Al-Shabaab still maintains a strong presence. In addition to the efforts on the security front, the federal government is also targeting Al-Shabaab's finances and ideology.

However, the group is continuing to wage counterattacks against the SNA and allied clan militias in which, in some instances, it has reportedly succeeded in recapturing areas recently taken by the government and perpetrated reprisal attacks against civilians. A 29 October 2022 attack by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu claimed the lives of 100 people and injured more than 300. In a 1 November 2022

press statement, Council members condemned the attack and welcomed the efforts of the Somali federal government to counter the threat posed by the group.

The offensive operations by the SNA and allied clan militias are being carried out against the backdrop of a dire humanitarian situation. According to OCHA, about 5.6 million people face acute food insecurity in Somalia. But relief efforts have hitherto prevented famine, which had been projected to unfold from October to December 2022. OCHA still warns that famine is a strong possibility if ongoing relief efforts are not sustained and the coming rainy season, expected from April to June, produces less precipitation than anticipated.

Although relations between the federal government in Mogadishu and the country's regions had shown signs of improvement after the 2022 Somali elections, new tensions have emerged. The president of South West State, Abdiiaziz Hassan Mohamed "Lafta Gareen", has been accused by the opposition of trying to extend his term, which is expected to end this year. (A precedent was created last year when the Jubaland state parliament extended President Ahmed Islam Madobe's term by one year.) The political tension in Baidoa, the capital of the South West State, turned violent in December 2022, resulting in several deaths and injuries. It seems that Lafta Gareen, a close ally of Somalia's former president, Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmaajo", is not keen to support the offensive operations because of fears that it may affect his ability to remain in office.

There have also been allegations that Puntland's president, Said Abdullahi Deni, may seek to extend his term beyond its constitutional limit in 2024. In a 9 January statement, Puntland declared its intention to act independently until the new Somali constitution is completed because of growing tensions with Mogadishu over the distribution of power between the federal government and the federal member states. Since 2017, Somalia has been undergoing a constitutional review process to adopt a new federal constitution. Although this process was to be completed within two years, it has

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2670 (21 December 2022) extended the deadline for the first phase of the drawdown of ATMIS personnel until 30 June 2023. **S/RES/2657** (31 October 2022) extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 October 2023. **Secretary-General's Report S/2022/665** (1 September 2022) was on the situation in Somalia, covering developments from 7 May to 23 August 2022.

Somalia

been significantly delayed. The Somali federal government has made the finalisation of the constitutional review process one of its priorities.

The situation in Las Anod, a disputed area between Puntland and the breakaway region of Somaliland, was another source of tension recently. The assassination of a local opposition politician led to violent protests against the Somaliland government in December 2022 that resulted in several deaths and injuries and forced the withdrawal of Somaliland troops from the area. Deni reportedly issued a statement expressing Puntland's readiness for a political or military solution to address the Las Anod situation. In addition, the speaker of Somalia's lower house of parliament, the House of Representatives, appointed a 10-member committee to assess the situation. Somaliland's President Musa Bihi has warned the Somali federal government and Puntland against interfering in Somaliland's affairs. In a 1 January statement, UNSOM, ATMIS, and other bilateral and regional partners expressed concern about the violence in Las Anod and called for calm and restraint, encouraging the de-escalation of tensions through dialogue.

Women, Peace and Security

In a 25 November 2022 statement on the occasion of the start of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence global campaign, Gbeho said that the ongoing humanitarian crisis and conflict in the country have displaced large sections of the population and put women and girls at greater risk of violence, including sexual violence. Gbeho called for a more gender-inclusive humanitarian response and for creating a safe environment for women and girls. The statement also says that the UN in Somalia urges the Parliament to adopt the 2018 Sexual Offences Bill, "which will offer greater protection of the victims of sexual violence across the country".

Sanctions-Related Developments

On 17 November 2022, the Security Council adopted resolution 2662, renewing the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime for one year. The Council also renewed the mandate of the Somalia Panel of Experts until 15 December 2023. Eleven members voted in favour of the resolution and four abstained (China, Gabon, Ghana, and Russia). (For more, see our *What's in Blue* story of 16 November 2022.)

In February, the Chair of the 751 Al-Shabaab Sanctions Committee is expected to provide a 120-day briefing to the Security Council. At the time of writing, it was not yet clear who would chair the committee this year, the allocation of subsidiary body chairs has not been finalised.

Key Issues and Options

The offensive operations against Al-Shabaab are a key issue for Council members. They may welcome the progress made in these operations and underscore the need to consolidate the security gains

through the implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan (STP) and the National Security Architecture (NSA), which have been developed to facilitate the gradual handover of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces. In this regard, Council members expect to hold a meeting in March on the transition with the participation of Somalia, the AU, the EU, and ATMIS troop-contributing countries.

The other major issue that could draw the attention of Council members is the growing tension between the Somali federal government and some of the federal member states, which could undermine the recent progress on the security front. Council members may, therefore, encourage Somali political stakeholders to ease tensions and resolve differences through dialogue.

The dire humanitarian situation in Somalia continues to be a major concern. A possible option is to invite a representative from OCHA to brief the Council on the current situation and the ongoing relief efforts.

Council Dynamics

Recent Council negotiations on Somalia, particularly the renewal of UNSOM's mandate and the extension of the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime, were difficult. China has been critical of Somalia, allegedly because of its position at the UN Human Rights Council in support of a discussion about the human rights situation in the Chinese province of Xinjiang. China abstained on the vote when the Security Council renewed UNSOM's mandate for another year on 31 October 2022. The extension of the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime was also divisive, with four members abstaining on the vote on 17 November 2022. Some of these members supported Somalia's request for the lifting of the notification requirement related to the arms embargo imposed under the 751 Al-Shabaab sanctions regime.

When the Security Council considered the AU's request in December 2022 to extend the operational timelines for the draw-down of ATMIS by six months, France was in favour of a shorter extension. In its explanation of vote during the adoption of resolution 2670, France stressed that it had agreed to the six-month extension on an exceptional basis.

The three African members (A3) (Gabon, Ghana, and Mozambique) continue to appeal for adequate, sustainable, and predictable financing for ATMIS, highlighting the funding shortfall the mission is facing. There has not been agreement on this issue among Council members, but it is likely to be raised again in March when Council members meet with Somalia, the AU, the EU, and ATMIS troop-contributing countries.

DPRK (North Korea)

Expected Council Action

In February, the Chair of the 1718 Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Pascale Baeriswyl (Switzerland), is scheduled to brief Council members in closed consultations on the 90-day report on the Committee's work.

Key Recent Developments

The DPRK conducted a record number of missile tests in 2022, leading to a significant escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

This trend appears set to continue in 2023. On 1 January, the Republic of Korea (ROK) military announced that the DPRK had fired a short-range ballistic missile from Pyongyang. The missile

DPRK (North Korea)

travelled approximately 400 kilometres before landing in waters off the DPRK's east coast. The test was the fourth carried out by the DPRK in the space of two weeks.

During the sixth plenary meeting of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), which ran from 26 December to 31 December 2022, DPRK leader Kim Jong-un reportedly called for "a mass production of tactical nuclear weapons", an "exponential increase" in the DPRK's nuclear arsenal, and the development of a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system "whose main mission is quick nuclear counterstrike". In a 1 January statement, the ROK's defence ministry said that the DPRK "will meet its end" if it uses nuclear weapons and that "it must realise that the only way to improve the lives of its people is through denuclearisation".

This exchange of rhetoric came less than a week after five drones from the DPRK crossed into ROK airspace on 26 December 2022. In response to the incursion, the ROK scrambled jets and attack helicopters and unsuccessfully attempted to shoot down the drones. ROK surveillance aircraft also flew over the DPRK and photographed military installations. The ROK military subsequently apologised for failing to bring the drones down, while ROK President Yoon Suk-yeol warned that the ROK could withdraw from a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement if the DPRK violates ROK airspace again. Among other matters, the agreement calls for an end to "all hostile acts" and a no-fly zone around the border between the DPRK and the ROK.

On 11 January, Yoon told officials from the ROK's defence and foreign ministries that the ROK could consider obtaining its own nuclear weapons, reportedly saying "it's possible that the problem gets worse and our country will introduce tactical weapons or build them on our own". On the same day, ROK Defence Minister Lee Jong-sup announced that the ROK is planning tabletop exercises with the US in February and May "on operating means of extended deterrence under the scenario of the DPRK's nuclear attacks". Yoon later appeared to resile from his 11 January comments, telling *The Wall Street Journal* that "the ROK's realistic and rational option is to fully respect the [non-proliferation treaty] regime ... I'm fully confident about the US' extended deterrence".

Increased tensions throughout the region appear to have prompted Japan to increase its defence spending. In late November 2022, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio reportedly instructed Japan's defence and finance ministers to boost spending on defence to two percent of GDP by 2027. On 16 December 2022, Japan adopted a new national security strategy that includes plans to develop a pre-emptive strike capability and obtain cruise missiles. Japan's budget for the 2023/24 fiscal year, which was announced on 23 December 2022, outlined record levels of military expenditure.

At a 21 November 2022 open briefing on the DPRK, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (US) announced that the US intended to pursue a presidential statement on the DPRK's weapons programmes. It seems that a draft of the presidential statement was circulated by the US on 15 December and discussed by all Council members during an informal meeting on 16 December. It appears that China and Russia both raised concerns regarding the consequences of issuing a presidential statement during the 16 December meeting. At the time of writing, no further drafts have been

circulated and no further rounds of negotiation have been scheduled.

On 9 December 2022, after Council members discussed the human rights situation in the DPRK under "any other business", 31 member states issued a joint statement regarding human rights in the DPRK. Among other matters, the statement described several examples of human rights violations in the DPRK and urged all Council members to support an open briefing in 2023 "where we can discuss the human rights violations and abuses committed by the DPRK, the implications for peace and security, and explore ways to incorporate human rights into the peace and security diplomacy in the Korean Peninsula". Among current Council members, Albania, Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, Switzerland, the UK, and the US were signatories to the statement.

On 23 January, the White House announced the appointment of Julie Turner as the US special envoy for human rights in the DPRK. Turner is currently the director of the Office of East Asia and the Pacific in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor at the US Department of State. The appointment marked the first time the post has been filled since 2017.

In a 22 December 2022 statement, Thomas-Greenfield said the US "can confirm that the DPRK has completed an initial arms delivery to the Russian private military company known as Wagner" for use in Ukraine and accused Wagner of "giving the DPRK funds it can use to further develop its prohibited" weapons programmes. On 20 January, John Kirby, a spokesperson for the US National Security Council, announced that the US had provided information regarding Wagner's arms transfers from the DPRK to the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee. On 26 January, the US formally designated the Wagner Group as a transnational criminal organisation.

The DPRK continues to experience high levels of food insecurity. According to the World Food Programme's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World Report 2022, an estimated 10.7 million people—more than 40 percent of the population—are undernourished and require humanitarian assistance.

In remarks delivered during the 12 January open debate on the promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security, Secretary-General António Guterres described the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme as "a clear and present danger" and said that the onus is on the DPRK to return to the negotiating table.

On 30 January, Council members discussed the DPRK under "any other business". The meeting was requested by the US and was called to give Council members an opportunity to take stock of developments on the file over the past year and discuss possible options for the Council. There was no briefer during the meeting.

Key Issues and Options

The record number of missile tests conducted by the DPRK in 2022 has created a significant issue for the Council. Sanctions evasion is another important issue, as is the overall effectiveness of the sanctions regime, particularly given that the DPRK is widely believed to have increased its nuclear arsenal since the regime was introduced in 2006 and has shown little inclination to scale back its weapons programmes. The DPRK's ongoing refusal to engage in denuclearisation dialogue and the humanitarian situation in

DPRK (North Korea)

the country are also problems facing the Council.

In light of these issues, the Council could issue a product that condemns the recent missile tests, urges member states to comply with existing Council resolutions, and calls on the DPRK to return to the negotiating table. Council members may also wish to consider convening a private briefing with humanitarian organisations focusing on the DPRK. Such a meeting could provide an opportunity to better understand the humanitarian problems facing the country and discuss potential strategies for addressing them.

If the DPRK continues to test ballistic missiles or conducts another nuclear test, the Council could consider updating and strengthening the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime to exert further pressure on the DPRK.

Council Dynamics

The Council remains sharply divided over the DPRK. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded members regularly condemn its ballistic missile tests and argue that they

destabilise the Korean Peninsula and increase tensions throughout the region. These members are generally supportive of using sanctions to manage the threat posed by the DPRK and often urge the country to engage in dialogue and abandon its weapons programmes, while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US for heightening tensions and accuse it of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. China and Russia have also contended that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation and continue to express their support for a draft resolution circulated by China in October 2021 that would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK if adopted. Other Council members, including Brazil and Gabon, have expressed apparent concerns about the overall efficacy of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime.

The US is the penholder on the DPRK.

EU-UN Cooperation

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold its annual meeting on strengthening EU-UN cooperation under the agenda item “Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security”. Malta’s Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade Ian Borg is expected to chair the meeting. Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is expected to brief.

No formal outcome is anticipated.

Background and Key Recent Developments

For at least the past decade, the relationship between the EU and the UN has continued to develop. The Council has maintained the practice of holding annual briefings on cooperation between the EU and the UN since 2010, although these briefings were not held in 2012 and 2018. Since 2013, Council members have also held annual informal meetings with members of the EU Political and Security Committee.

In 2014, the Council adopted a presidential statement on EU-UN cooperation. Among other things, the statement welcomed the EU’s cooperation with the UN and its contributions towards the maintenance of international peace and security, along with its involvement in international negotiations and mediation processes.

In July 2022, emphasising the universality of the principles of the UN Charter, the EU adopted its priorities for 2022-2023, which include, among other things, “upholding the UN Charter and the rule of law, addressing the global consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and promoting sustainable development and human rights”.

During the Council’s 14 December 2022 open debate on “New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism”, EU Ambassador Olof

Skoog noted that the basic principles of the UN Charter remain at the core of renewed multilateralism, which includes “a commitment to maintaining international peace and security, upholding international law, promoting sustainable development, defending and promoting human rights, and respect[ing] obligations arising from mutually agreed commitments and treaties”. He further shared the EU’s commitment to supporting “African-led Peace Support Operations and ongoing discussions to use UN assessed contributions for operations authorized by the UN Security Council”.

In remarks on 7 July 2022, Secretary-General António Guterres noted that the EU and the UN share in-depth cooperation not only on peace and security, sustainable and inclusive development, and human rights, but also on addressing the challenges emerging from COVID-19 and climate change.

During the last Council briefing on EU-UN cooperation on 16 June 2022, Borrell highlighted the EU’s contributions towards complementing the UN’s effort with regard to crisis management, implementing arms embargoes, countering piracy, peacebuilding, and peace-making, among others. In addition, he stressed the need to strengthen multilateralism in respect of climate change and fighting pandemics.

The EU has been heavily involved in efforts to preserve the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran’s nuclear programme. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy serves as the coordinator of the Joint Commission—composed of the parties to the agreement, which at present are China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, and Iran—and oversees the implementation of the JCPOA. In the aftermath of the US withdrawal from the agreement in May 2018, the coordinator has been leading the diplomatic efforts to negotiate the return of the US to the JCPOA and seeking to ensure full implementation of the agreement by all parties.

UN DOCUMENTS ON EU-UN COOPERATION Security Council Presidential Statements S/PRST/2014/4 (14 February 2014) was on cooperation between the UN and the EU, highlighting the EU’s comprehensive approach to the maintenance of international peace and security. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9225 (19 December 2022) was the biannual Council briefing on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015. S/PV.9220 (14 December 2022) was an open debate titled “New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism” under the agenda item “Maintenance of international peace and security”. S/PV.9188 (10 November 2022) was a debate titled “Counter-terrorism in Africa: An imperative for peace, security and development” under the agenda item “Threats to international peace and security”. S/PV.9065 (16 June 2022) was the annual meeting on strengthening EU-UN cooperation.

EU-UN Cooperation

In early August 2022, the EU put forth a compromise text in an attempt to restore the JCPOA. This text laid down the necessary steps for the US to return to the JCPOA and for Iran to resume full implementation of the agreement. In the latest Council briefing on the JCPOA on 19 December 2022, Ambassador Silvio Gonzato, the deputy head of the EU delegation to the UN, noted that since the submission of the compromise text, “developments have added significant new layers of complications that makes it increasingly difficult to reach a deal”. Moreover, he said that the EU Council has decided that “any transfer of certain combat drones and missiles to or from Iran without prior permission by the UN Security Council is in violation of Resolution 2231 [which endorsed the JCPOA]”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 18 December 2022).

In response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the EU has issued a wide range of measures against Russia and Russian officials, including freezing assets, imposing travel bans, disconnecting Russian financial institutions from SWIFT (the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication), and imposing export controls on dual-use goods and technologies that have both civilian and military applications. In the most recent round of sanctions, introduced on 16 December 2022, the EU imposed bans on, among other things, the export of drone engines, transactions with the Russian regional development bank, and investments in the Russian mining sector. At the time of writing, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against a total of 1,386 individuals and 171 entities as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Cooperation between the EU and the UN is especially evident in Africa. The EU considers Africa a “geopolitical priority”. The EU provides training for security forces and assists in security sector reform in the Central African Republic, Mali, and Somalia. On 15 October 2021, the EU launched a new military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM Mozambique) to help address the situation in Cabo Delgado, where violence perpetrated by non-state actors has displaced hundreds of thousands of people. The EU also contributes to the salaries of the personnel of the UN-authorized AU Mission in Somalia.

In a 10 November 2022 Council briefing on counter-terrorism in Africa, Benedikta von Seherr-Thoss, the managing director for common security and defence policy and crisis response at the European External Action Service (the EU’s diplomatic service), emphasised that the EU’s strategic partnership initiatives with the UN in Africa, such as EU-UN Global Terrorism Threat Facility and Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, have created important synergies between the UN and EU missions on the ground.

EU member states provide a significant collective contribution to the UN’s regular budget (38 percent) and more than two-fifths of the budget for UN peacekeeping operations. At the time of writing, the EU has deployed around 4,000 personnel in 18 EU-led CSDP missions, of which seven are military operations. (CSDP refers to the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy.)

Council Dynamics

Presently, two Council members—France and Malta—are EU members. The UK, which has not been a member of the EU since 31 January 2020, has occasionally joined EU members in making joint statements. Albania has been an official candidate for EU accession since June 2014, having applied for EU membership on 28 April 2009. The first intergovernmental conference between the EU and Albania was held in July 2022, which opened the accession negotiations.

At the June 2022 briefing on EU-UN cooperation, Russia said its relations with the EU were “tunneling below rock bottom”. The relationship between the two deteriorated precipitously following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. In response to the joint declaration signed by the EU and NATO on 10 January, which aims to strengthen and expand the strategic partnership between the two organisations, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova noted that “the Joint Declaration...has reaffirmed the EU’s full subordination to the bloc, which is a military instrument being used to ensure US interests”. Russia is expected to criticise the EU’s use of sanctions and its supplying of arms to Ukraine at the annual meeting.

Libya

Expected Council Action

In February, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

The mandate of UNSMIL expires on 31 October 2023.

Key Recent Developments

It has been over one year since the postponement of national elections planned for 24 December 2021 and seven years since the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). The leadership stand-off continues between incumbent Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, elected in February 2021 to head the interim Government of National Unity (GNU), and former Interior Minister

Fathi Bashagha, who was elected interim prime minister by the House of Representatives (the Libyan legislature based in Tobruk) on 10 February 2022. The protracted political stalemate contributes to the country’s political, economic, and security instability.

According to the Secretary-General’s latest UNSMIL report, dated 9 December 2022, only minimal progress has been made towards agreeing on a pathway to elections despite the resumption of talks between Speaker of the House of Representatives Aguila Saleh and President of the High State Council Khaled Mishri. The two met in Cairo on 5 January. In a statement following the meeting, UNSMIL “strongly encourage[d] the two chambers to now swiftly reach a complete and final agreement including on the contentious

UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2656 (28 October 2022) extended UNSMIL’s mandate until 31 October 2023. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9223** (16 December 2022) was a briefing on UNSMIL. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2022/932** (9 December 2022) was a report on UNSMIL. **Security Council Press Statement SC/15156** (20 December 2022) expressed, among other things, deep concern at the persistent political deadlock in Libya.

Libya

issues to finalize the steps required to take the country to inclusive national elections within a specific timeframe”.

On the security track, UNSMIL continues to support the work of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, including to facilitate implementation of the 2020 ceasefire agreement. The Secretary-General’s report said that the agreement continues to hold, although the security situation remained tense throughout the country. UNSMIL also continued to support the establishment of an effective Libyan Ceasefire Monitoring Mechanism. The Joint Military Commission met on 15 and 16 January, during which UN Special Representative for Libya Abdoulaye Bathily announced the launch of joint work between the international ceasefire monitoring team and Libyan monitors in Sirte. On the economic track, the Secretary-General’s December report noted that efforts to implement reform and reunification measures for the Central Bank of Libya, recommended by the UN-facilitated international audit, have remained stalled since May 2022 because of ongoing divisions within the Central Bank.

The humanitarian and human rights situations remain alarming as violations against migrants and refugees continue with impunity, including arbitrary detention “in inhumane and degrading conditions in both official and unofficial centres managed by state and non-state actors”, the report said. The report also states that “Libyan security agencies and affiliated armed groups continued to target civil society actors with hate speech and incitement to violence, while UNSMIL continued to receive reports of threats, hate speech and arbitrary arrests and detentions”.

On 22 January, there was a consultative meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers in Tripoli, which Bathily also attended. According to media reports, the meeting was attended by five of the 22 member states of the Arab League, including neighbouring Algeria and Tunisia.

Bathily last briefed the Council on 16 December 2022. He urged “the Council, its members and all those with convening power to support UNSMIL’s efforts to bring Libyan political leaders back to the negotiating table and prevent a further deterioration of the situation”. (For more, see our *What’s in Blue* story of 15 December 2022.)

On 20 December 2022, Council members issued a press statement that “expressed their deep concern at the persistent political deadlock in Libya and disappointment at the lack of progress”. The statement expressed strong support for Bathily and reiterated calls on all Libyan parties and key stakeholders to engage in dialogue with him. It also highlighted the need for progress in relation to the security, economic and human rights situations, among other things.

Sanctions Committee-Related Developments

At the briefing on 16 December 2022, India made a statement in its capacity as then-chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, covering the period

from 31 August 2022 to 16 December 2022. Among its activities during this period, the committee approved a request for exemption in relation to the arms embargo; extended for a fourth time the six-month exemption request granted for humanitarian purposes to three individuals on the committee’s list; and received an eighth communication from the focal point for delisting, in connection with the delisting request of a listed individual. That process is still ongoing.

Key Issues and Options

Key issues remain the precarious political, economic, and security situations linked to Libya’s uncertain electoral path. A related concern for the Council will be how to foster common political ground between the two rival governments so they can agree on a constitutional framework to pave the way for Libya’s long-delayed elections. Council members could consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with Libyan civil society representatives to help generate ideas for promoting dialogue between the rival political factions in Libya and supporting an inclusive political process leading to elections. Another concern remains the alarming human rights situation.

Council Dynamics

Council members have repeatedly stressed the urgent need for a Libyan-led inclusive political process and the holding of elections. Members have noted the precarious security situation, including that the protracted political stalemate continues to generate security threats, and continued to call for progress not only on the political track but also on the security and economic tracks. Many members have also highlighted the deteriorating living conditions across the country and the humanitarian and human rights conditions, including the situation of migrants and refugees. As well, some members remain concerned about the situation of women and girls, including survivors of gender-based and conflict-related violence.

At the briefing on 16 December 2022, the UK (penholder on Libya) highlighted reports of increased restrictions and decreased operating space for civil society organisations. Then-Council member Kenya (speaking on behalf of the three African members) emphasised that the peace process “must be truly Libyan-led and -owned” adding that “the international community should refrain from dictating solutions”. In its statement, Russia expressed the view that “Libyan politicians themselves are not very interested in finding a compromise” and that “the role of the United Nations is more relevant today than ever before”. In this regard, Russia called on UNSMIL to “step up its activity as an impartial and neutral mediator in moving forward” while expressing its readiness for “close cooperation and a substantive exchange of views” with Bathily.

Security Council Report Staff

Karin Landgren
Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Chief Operating Officer

Paul Romita
Managing Editor

Alina Entelis
Deputy Managing Editor

Dawit Yirga Woldegerima
Deputy Managing Editor

Vladimir Sesar
Development and Outreach Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Sara Bertotti
Policy Analyst

Matthew Blainey
Policy Analyst

Lindiwe Knutson
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Rodrigo Saad
Policy Analyst

Anna Haven
Communications Officer

Gaurav Redhal
Research Assistant

Ben Peterfreund
Research Intern

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

Design Point Five, NY

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

Telephone +1 212 759 6394

Fax +1 212 759 4038

Web securitycouncilreport.org

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