

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In July, Russia will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Russia plans to organise two signature events. The first is a ministerial-level open debate on “[Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order](#)” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to chair the meeting. No briefers are anticipated.

Russia also plans to convene a debate on the cooperation between the [UN and regional organisations](#) that will focus on the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

In July, Russia intends to hold the quarterly open debate on “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)” at ministerial level. Lavrov is expected to chair the meeting. This month, the Council will also receive a briefing from Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator (SHRC) for Gaza Sigrid Kaag in line with resolution 2720 of 22 December 2023. Additional meetings on this file may be convened depending on developments in [Israel](#) and [Gaza](#).

African issues on the programme of work in July are:

- [West Africa](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS);
- [Central African Republic \(CAR\)](#), renewal of the CAR sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee; and

- [Democratic Republic of the Congo \(DRC\)](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Middle Eastern issues on the programme include:

- [Syria](#), monthly meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments and renewal of the mandate of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA); and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701. (Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.)

Regarding European issues, the Council is expected to hold consultations on the UN Peacekeeping Force in [Cyprus \(UNFICYP\)](#). The Council may also hold one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in July.

The only Asian issue anticipated this month will be the biannual consultations on the [UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia \(UNRCCA\)](#).

On the Americas, the Security Council will hold its quarterly meeting on Colombia. The Council is also expected to hold a meeting on the situation in [Haiti](#) and to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH).

Other issues could be raised in July depending on developments.

### 1 July 2024

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# The Military Staff Committee: Striving for Relevance in a Changing Era

The Military Staff Committee (MSC) is the oldest subsidiary body of the Security Council, with its role explicitly mentioned in the UN Charter. It is to advise and assist the Security Council on all military requirements for maintaining international peace and security. However, for most of its life, the MSC has been dormant and unable to fulfill this responsibility.

Despite being marginalised—and recommended for deletion from the Charter by the 2004 High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change—the MSC continued to meet regularly. Since last year, the MSC has taken several steps to revitalise its work. This article highlights the MSC's recent efforts, including enhanced visibility, better working methods, and engagement with regional counterparts.

## Institutionalising the MSC's relationship with the Security Council

The MSC is a prime example of an under-utilised aspect of the UN Charter. Under Article 47, the MSC is to “advise and assist the Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security, the employment and command of forces placed at its disposal, the regulation of armaments, and possible disarmament”. Moreover, it “shall be responsible under the Security Council for the strategic direction of any armed forces placed at the disposal of the Security Council”. Finally, with appropriate consultations, it may establish “regional sub-committees”.

Despite its Charter mandate, persistent lack of an institutionalised relationship between the MSC and the Security Council hindered the MSC from discharging an effective advisory role. Consequently, its military advice has been conveyed informally through the members' permanent missions in New York.

Lately, the MSC has begun exploring steps to formalise its interaction with the Security Council. One such option is to provide an annual briefing to the Security Council at year-end, covering its activities, assessments, and lessons learned, which it has never done. This is akin to the annual briefing to the Council by outgoing chairs of sanctions committees and working groups, initiated in 2002, which has helped to promote transparency in the work of these entities.

Over the years, the MSC has created working groups as needed. It added a new working group in December 2023 to enhance its visibility and promote the Security Council's recognition of its role. The MSC is also trying to strengthen its engagements with intergovernmental committees of the UN General Assembly, such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) and the Fifth Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Matters. The peacekeeping budget and the effective implementation of mandates are a key focus of discussions in the MSC.

## Improving Working Methods

The MSC's working methods have evolved, always guided by its 1946 provisional Revised Rules of Procedure and Statute. Its Working Methods Handbook was first published in 2012. It is similar to the Security Council's Note 507—a comprehensive compendium of agreed working methods. The most recent edition of the

MSC Working Methods Handbook was published in October 2021 (MS/2021/56).

The MSC consists of the Chiefs of Staff of the Security Council's permanent members, or their representatives, as specified in Article 47(2) of the UN Charter. The Charter makes no provision for the participation of elected members, who have since 2010 attended MSC meetings regularly but always by invitation. Even then, elected members would join only part of the MSC's meetings. This two-tier system created a clear distinction between the roles of permanent and elected members.

MSC meetings typically began with consultations among the permanent members, after which the elected members were invited to join. Towards the end of the meeting, the elected members would be asked to leave, allowing the permanent members to resume their consultations and conclude the meeting.

This practice had apparently been a source of discomfort for the elected members, leading the MSC—under the French chairmanship in February 2024—to adopt a new practice that allows elected members to participate in all meetings from start to finish.

This has been continued by subsequent chairs—which rotate monthly—significantly enhancing elected members' interaction with the MSC. Technically, elected members still attend by invitation, as a formal amendment to the UN Charter would be required to change the MSC membership. It appears that elected members now have access to the same information provided to permanent members. Additionally, newly elected members are allowed to observe MSC meetings from October before taking their seats in January.

The MSC now encourages not only military attachés but also diplomats to participate in its meetings as observers. This initiative—also new since February 2024—responds to the significant challenge in the MSC-Security Council relationship of limited collaboration between military advisors and diplomats. Not all missions engage their advisors in the substantive work of the Council, nor do all elected members have military advisors, such as Albania, which served on the Council in 2022-2023. While it is too soon to assess impact, this initiative is also projected to help improve some members' weak capital-level coordination between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence on foreign policy matters.

While the ten elected members (E10) of the Security Council have developed more coherence as a group in recent years, they seem less inclined to present a unified identity within the MSC. Perhaps this is part of an effort of all MSC members, permanent and elected alike, to unite in strengthening the MSC's advisory role. Nonetheless, the three African members, known as the A3, are apparently enhancing their collaboration within the MSC and occasionally presenting a unified stance in its meetings.

## MSC Meetings

According to its Revised Rules of Procedure, MSC meetings are to be held at least once every 14 days. Accordingly, it is expected to meet at least 26 times annually. Last year, the MSC had 33 meetings and discussed 39 topics, according to its annual report submitted to the Security Council (S/2023/1009). These discussions covered current UN peacekeeping operations, Special Political Missions, and a range of thematic topics.

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Topics discussed in recent years have included cooperation with host states and the implementation of Status of Forces Agreements, the safety and security of peacekeepers, peacekeeping performance and accountability, mis- and disinformation, the drawdown and exit of UN peace operations, and the implementation of the Strategy for the Digital Transformation of UN Peacekeeping. In the February 2024 meeting, the MSC discussed the disengagement process of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), underscoring the need for UN peace operations to develop contingency plans for accelerated drawdown and liquidation of missions.

The MSC sent a 28 February letter to the President of the Security Council offering its advice on peacekeeping transitions, pointing out that “the United Nations Secretariat and its subordinate entities both in New York and in the field should be fully engaged in prioritized, in-depth, integrated, and continuous contingency planning across the United Nations’ 11 peacekeeping operations, focused on the potential requirement for accelerated drawdown and liquidation, but to also consider other foreseeable and high-risk scenarios”.<sup>1</sup> The MSC’s advice aligns with the recommendations of SCR’s December 2023 research report, titled *UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment*.

## Field Missions

The MSC has conducted field missions since 2014, starting with Haiti. There were no such trips between 2018 and 2021, due primarily to host country visa issues complicating Russia’s participation and, later, to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although that complication remains, the field missions have resumed, with MSC members visiting UN peacekeeping operations in Abyei, Cyprus, the Central African Republic, Lebanon, and South Sudan in the past two years.<sup>2</sup> The MSC produces a report on each such visit, but because of the need for concurrence by all Council members it has not formally released these reports since 2018—Russia has withheld support as it did not take part in these visits. (The last official report released by the MSC was on its field mission to UNMOGIP, the UN Military Observer Group to India and Pakistan, in 2018.)

In the past, only the permanent members participated in the field missions, but this too has changed since 2018 with the MSC inviting the elected members to join. According to Clause 69 of the MSC Handbook, a limited number of elected members are so invited, subject to an unwritten rule that the elected members participating not outnumber the permanent members. This seems intended to minimise the logistical footprint of deploying the MSC delegation to remote areas.

The MSC conducted a field mission to the DRC and Uganda in April 2024. Notably, this marked the first involvement in an MSC visiting mission of members of the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) Military Staff Committee, established under Article 13 (8) of the 2002 AUPSC Protocol. This committee, consisting of senior military officers from AUPSC member states, provides advice and support to the AUPSC on military and security

matters to promote and maintain peace and security in Africa.

Informal contacts between some MSC and AUPSC MSC members paved the way for two AUPSC MSC members to join this trip. It appears that the MSC shared the draft mission report with them for comments. Discussions seem to be underway to conduct another MSC field mission in Africa with the involvement of AUPSC counterparts towards the end of the year.

This cooperation between the two committees is particularly noteworthy, given that the Security Council proper and the AUPSC have yet to organise joint field missions, despite an agreement in principle. In the past, invitations were extended to the Chair of the AUPSC to join Security Council field missions in Africa, but this did not materialise, partly as both Councils must agree on the modalities for joint missions.

## Partnership with Other Regional Counterparts

During meetings, the MSC receives briefings from relevant UN Secretariat departments. Its annual briefing on the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is provided by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Seeking more information about the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the MSC officially requested a briefing from the AU last year, setting in motion the MSC’s engagement with its AUPSC counterparts. A virtual joint meeting of the two committees in April 2023 offered an opportunity to discuss the role of ATMIS, with a briefing by Zinurine Alghali, then-Acting Head of the AU Peace Support Operations Division.<sup>3</sup>

This initial engagement was followed by the first in-person informal meeting between the two committees, in Addis Ababa in October 2023, after the annual consultation between the Security Council and the AUPSC. These meetings enabled the committees to develop a mutual understanding of their respective mandates and identify priority areas for potential cooperation. They decided to hold informal interactions twice a year to align their work programs and to conduct joint field missions. In this context, the MSC invited a delegation from the AUPSC MSC to participate in its April field mission to the DRC and Uganda.<sup>4</sup>

Deepened UN-AU partnership is also the context for the informal engagement of the two committees, notably the signing on 19 April 2017 of the Joint UN-AU Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security. Resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led peace support operations from UN assessed contributions has given renewed impetus to this partnership, and its implementation is likely to shape the two organisations’ engagements, particularly in the area of peacekeeping. Both committees now have an opening to offer military advice to their respective Councils on the implementation of the resolution, and the MSC devoted one of its sessions in February to discussing the implementation of resolution 2719. The MSC has had follow-up engagements on this issue with UN departments and AUPSC counterparts in June.

1 Military Staff Committee, “Letter from the Chair of the UN Military Staff Committee addressed to the President of the Security Council” (28 February 2024).

2 Military Staff Committee, “Letter from the Chair of the UN Military Staff Committee addressed to the President of the Security Council” (19 December 2023). Military Staff Committee, “Letter from the Chair of the UN Military Staff Committee addressed to the President of the Security Council” (16 January 2023).

3 Military Staff Committee, “Letter from the Chair of the UN Military Staff Committee addressed to the President of the Security Council” (19 December 2023).

4 Military Staff Committee, “Letter from the Chair of the UN Military Staff Committee addressed to the President of the Security Council” (8 November 2023).

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# The Military Staff Committee: Striving for Relevance in a Changing Era

## Way Ahead

MSC members recognise the difficulties in reactivating their role as envisioned in the UN Charter, aware that pushing boundaries may face resistance. Nonetheless, they remain committed to maintaining the MSC's relevance in this changing era through incremental steps. Amid current challenges to UN peacekeeping and the growing need for collaboration with regional organisations like the AU, MSC members see a crucial role in supporting the Security Council with professional military advice on the planning and deployment of

UN peace operations—as well as on their drawdown, reconfiguration, and exit. They also believe they can contribute to implementing resolution 2719, including discussing potential test cases for the Security Council and providing input on mission concepts for future AUPSOs. Additionally, they are eager to enhance their engagement with AUPSC counterparts, sharing their experiences on UN peacekeeping standards and practices in light of the future role of AUPSOs under resolution 2719. All in all, current developments seem set to prime the MSC for greater influence on the Council's work.

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## Status Update since our June Forecast

### Iraq (UNITAD)

On 5 June, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9645) on the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq (UNITAD). Acting Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Ana Peyró Llopis presented UNITAD's 12th and final biannual report (S/2024/408) before the expiration of the team's final mandate on 17 September.

### Ukraine

On 7 June, the Security Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Ukraine (S/PV.9647). France requested the meeting in light of the intensification of Russian attacks against the north-eastern Kharkiv region. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed the Council.

On 18 June, the Council convened for an open briefing on Ukraine (S/PV.9660). Slovenia and the US, the co-penholders on political issues in Ukraine, requested the meeting to discuss recent developments, including the “Summit on Peace in Ukraine”, which Switzerland hosted on 15 and 16 June at Ukraine's request. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

### UNOCA (Central Africa)

On 10 June, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Secretary-General's semi-annual report on the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the implementation of the UN's regional strategy to combat the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (S/PV.9648). Special Representative and Head of UNOCA Abdou Abarry and the President of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Commission, Gilberto da Piedade Verissimo, briefed.

### Counter-Terrorism

On 10 June, the Council adopted resolution 2734 on the 1267/1989/2253 Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime. Among other matters, the resolution extended the mandates of the 1267/1988 Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team and the Office of the Ombudsperson. It received 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia).

### DPRK (North Korea)

On 12 June, the Council convened an open briefing on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) under the agenda item “The situation in the DPRK” (S/PV.9653). The meeting was requested by Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US. The briefers were: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK Elizabeth Salmón, and Gumhyok Kim, a refugee from the DPRK. China and Russia objected to the provisional agenda for the meeting and requested a procedural vote on its adoption. The provisional agenda was subsequently adopted with 12 votes in favour, two against (China and Russia), and one abstention (Mozambique).

On 28 June, the Council convened for a meeting on the DPRK under the “Non-proliferation/DPRK” agenda item (S/PV.9676). France, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US requested the session following a 19 June meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang, where the two leaders signed a comprehensive strategic partnership agreement. High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu and Jonah Leff, Director of Operations at Conflict Armament Research, briefed.

### Arria-formula Meeting on Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

On 12 June, there was an Arria-formula meeting titled “Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: prevent and respond to persons going missing across the globe”. Switzerland convened the meeting together with The Global Alliance for the Missing, a coalition of 13 member states seeking to raise awareness about the issue of missing persons and separated families and to mobilise action to address it. The briefers were Ambassador Tareq Albanai, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN; Dr. Luz Janeth Forero Martínez, Director of the Unit for the Search for Persons Deemed as Missing in Colombia; Florence Anselmo, Head of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency; and Ram Kumar Bhandari, Founder and Director of Network of Families of the Disappeared in Nepal.

### Sudan

On 13 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2736,



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demanding that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary group, halt the siege of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state, and calling for an immediate halt to the fighting and for de-escalation in and around El Fasher. The resolution further demanded that all parties to the conflict ensure the protection of civilians (including by allowing civilians to move within and out of El Fasher to safer areas) and recalled that all civilians must be protected in accordance with international law. The resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favour and one abstention (Russia).

On 18 June, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in Sudan (S/PV.9659), pursuant to resolution 2715 of 1 December 2023, which terminated the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS). Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu, and Senior Programme Director of the Sudan Family Planning Association Limiaa Ahmed briefed in the open chamber. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Sudan Ramtane Lamamra briefed during the closed consultations. Sudan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

### UNDOF (Golan)

Council members held consultations on the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on 13 June. Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix briefed. On 27 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2737, renewing the UNDOF mandate until 31 December 2024.

### Implementation of Resolution 2686 on Tolerance and International Peace and Security

On 14 June, the Security Council received a briefing on the implementation of resolution 2686 of 14 June 2023 on tolerance and international peace and security from Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide Alice Wairimu Nderitu (S/PV.9657). Resolution 2686 requested the Secretary-General to provide an oral briefing to the Council by 14 June 2024 on the resolution's implementation "in the context of situations throughout the peace continuum which are on the agenda of the Council, utilizing information from available United Nations sources, including country teams, peacekeeping operations, and other United Nations personnel".

### Libya

On 19 June, the Security Council held an open briefing (S/PV.9661) followed by closed consultations on Libya. Deputy Special Representative and Political Officer in Charge of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Stephanie Koury briefed the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country. Libya participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Yamazaki Kazuyuki (Japan), was also scheduled to brief the Council on his periodic report on the committee's activities. This briefing was not held, however, because of an apparent lack of consensus on the

chair's report. It seems that one elected member had requested the report to reflect that another member had opposed its request for archived information predating its Council term. The other member had apparently argued that such requests required discussion in the Informal Working Group on Working Methods.

### Cybersecurity

On 20 June, the Republic of Korea (ROK) convened a high-level open debate on cybersecurity as a signature event of its June presidency (S/PV.9662). The ROK's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cho Tae-yul, chaired the meeting. The briefers were: Secretary-General António Guterres; Stéphane Duguin, the CEO of the CyberPeace Institute, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides cybersecurity assistance to non-governmental organisations and other critical sectors; and Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo, Professor of Law and Technology at Leeds Beckett University and Vice Chair of the African Union Cyber Security Experts Group.

### Afghanistan

On 21 June, the Council convened for an open briefing on Afghanistan (S/PV.9663). The briefers were: Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Roza Otunbayeva, OCHA's Director for Financing and Partnerships Lisa Doughten, and Manizha Wafeq, Co-founder of the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Closed consultations followed the open briefing.

### Somalia

On 24 June, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in Somalia (S/PV.9665). The briefers were Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) James Swan and Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) Mohamed El-Amine Souef. Somalia participated under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. On 28 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2741, extending the authorisation of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) until 12 August 2024.

### Iran

On 24 June, the Security Council held its biannual briefing (S/PV.9666) on the implementation of resolution 2231 of 20 July 2015, which endorsed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear programme. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed on the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2024/471) on the implementation of resolution 2231. In addition, the Council's facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231, Ambassador Vanessa Frazier (Malta), reported on the Council's work regarding resolution 2231, and the head of the EU delegation to the UN, Ambassador Stavros Lambrinidis, briefed on the work of the JCPOA's Joint Commission. Germany and Iran participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

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## Status Update since our June Forecast

### Children and Armed Conflict

On 26 June, the Council held its annual open debate on children and armed conflict (S/PV.9669). Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba briefed on the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, dated 3 June (S/2024/384). The Council was also briefed by UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations Ted Chaiban, former UN Secretary-General and Deputy Chair of the Elders Ban Ki-moon, and a

child civil society representative from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

### International Criminal Tribunals

On 27 June, the Council adopted resolution 2740 on the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). The vote was 14 in favour, none against and one abstention (Russia). Among other matters, the resolution reappointed Serge Brammertz as Chief Prosecutor for another two years, until 30 June 2026.

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## Multilateral Cooperation in the Interest of a More Just, Democratic and Sustainable World Order

In July, the Security Council will hold a ministerial-level open debate on "Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order". This is one of the signature events of the Russian presidency. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to chair the meeting. No briefers are anticipated.

### Key Recent Developments

The Security Council convened an open debate at the initiative of Russia during its April 2023 Council presidency on "Effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the UN Charter". Secretary-General António Guterres briefed during the meeting, which was chaired by Lavrov. Guterres called multilateral cooperation "the beating heart of the United Nations". He said that many of the successes of the UN system had resulted from multilateral cooperation, including, for example, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, disarmament and non-proliferation, and a worldwide humanitarian system coordinated by the world body. He warned, however, that the multilateral system was under significant stress, especially given the tensions among the major powers. He argued that global challenges such as climate change, the resistance to human rights and gender equality, terrorism, and others could be "solved only through respect for international law, adherence to global commitments and the adoption of appropriate frameworks of multilateral governance".

The Council has discussed the UN Charter and the multilateral system on several other occasions in recent years. Previous meetings on the same or similar topics have included open debates on:

- "New orientation for reformed multilateralism", organised by India, on 14 December 2022;
- "Upholding multilateralism and the UN-centred international system", convened by China on 7 May 2021; and
- "Upholding the UN Charter", initiated by Viet Nam on 9 January 2020.

During the open debate hosted by Viet Nam, the Council adopted a presidential statement that "reaffirm[ed] its commitment to

multilateralism and the central role of the United Nations" and "recognised the critical importance of the Charter to the maintenance of international peace and security and development of international law".

The Group of Friends in Defense of the Charter of the United Nations released a communiqué in connection with the Security Council's 12 June meeting on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea (DPRK). In the communiqué, the Group of Friends rejected the holding of meetings that address country-specific human rights situations. It maintained that the promotion and protection of human rights are "strengthened on the basis of dialogue and cooperation", declared that human rights "shall not be weaponized or used to either advance political agendas or to meddle into the internal affairs of other States", and expressed concern that the Council is encroaching on "issues that fall beyond its mandate, as clearly defined in the... Charter of the United Nations".

Current members of the Group of Friends include Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia, China, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mali, Nicaragua, the State of Palestine, the Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. Initiated in July 2021, the Group believes that "multilateralism, which is at the core of the Charter, is currently under an unprecedented attack, which, in turn, threatens global peace and security". It further asserts that "the world is seeing a growing resort to unilateralism, marked by isolationist and arbitrary actions, including the imposition of unilateral coercive measures or the withdrawal from landmark agreements and multilateral institutions, as well as by attempts to undermine critical efforts to tackle common and global challenges".

### Key Issues and Options

An overarching issue is how Council members can find common ground in resolving threats to international peace and security and reconciling different views of the world order and interpretations

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON MULTILATERALISM** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2020/1 (9 January 2020) was adopted during the ministerial-level debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter" Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9308 (24 April 2023) was an open debate on "Effective multilateralism through the defence of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations". S/PV.9220 (14 December 2022) was an open debate titled "New orientation for reformed multilateralism". S/PV.9149 (11 October 2022) was a debate on "Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security". S/2021/456 (11 May 2021) was a letter that transmitted the meeting record of the high-level videoconference briefing on "Maintenance of international peace and security: Upholding multilateralism and the United Nations-centred international system", which was held on 7 May 2021. S/PV.8699 (9 January 2020) was a ministerial-level open debate on "Maintenance of international peace and security: upholding the UN Charter", during which member states reflected on and reaffirmed their commitment to upholding Charter principles, particularly in the context of international peace and security.

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# Multilateral Cooperation in the Interest of a More Just, Democratic and Sustainable World Order

of the UN Charter. This is especially challenging given global tensions—which have been exacerbated by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza.

Another key issue is how to strengthen multilateralism to meet current challenges and threats to international peace and security. An important factor in this respect is how the Council can most effectively cooperate with other UN bodies, member states, regional organisations, and civil society to address global challenges such as terrorism, climate change, cybersecurity, and transnational organised crime. Ideally, discussions in the Council meeting could feed into deliberations on the “Pact for the Future” currently being negotiated by member states and expected to be adopted in September.

More strategic use of certain UN Charter articles could enhance the Council’s ability to address issues of peace and security. For example, urging the Secretary-General to make more frequent and explicit use of his Article 99 powers might be a constructive step in the current difficult climate. A deeper and more systematic exploration of the scope of Chapter VIII, on regional arrangements, could also be timely.

In the future, the Council could also consider holding a private meeting with representatives of the General Assembly’s “Special Committee on the Charter of the UN and the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization” to discuss the committee’s activities and to consider potential ideas for strengthening the Council’s work.

## Council Dynamics

Council members recognise the contributions of the multilateral

system to the promotion of international peace and security and appreciate the value of the UN Charter as a cornerstone of international law. There are, however, contrasting views regarding which countries adhere to multilateral norms and the values of the Charter, and these are likely to be on display at this month’s meeting.

China and Russia have maintained that the “rules-based international order” that Western countries refer to is a façade for the selfish pursuit of their strategic interests. They maintain that the US and other Western states adhere to international law only when it is convenient and beneficial for them to do so. US support for the Israeli military operation in Gaza—which has been widely criticised within the UN system for violating international law—has fuelled such criticisms, which have resonated among the wider membership, particularly in the developing world.

At the same time, many member states continue to see Russia’s February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing conflict there as a violation of a core tenet of the UN Charter, the non-use of force against the territorial integrity of states, as outlined in Article 2 (4). In this regard, 82 states and six organisations have supported the communiqué of the 15-16 June “Summit on Peace in Ukraine” in Bürgenstock, Switzerland—including Council members Ecuador, France, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US. The communiqué affirms that the “United Nations Charter, including the principles of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states, can and will serve as a basis in achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine”.

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## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

### Expected Council Action

On 2 July, the Security Council expects to receive a briefing from Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator (SHRC) for Gaza, Sigrid Kaag. Resolution 2720 of 22 December 2023 mandated the SHRC to report to the Security Council within 20 days of her appointment and thereafter every 90 days until 30 September.

In July, the Security Council also expects to hold its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland is the anticipated briefer. It appears that Russia, July’s Council president, has elected to hold the open debate at ministerial level.

Council members may convene additional meetings during the month depending on developments.

### Key Recent Developments

On 10 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2735, which

was authored by the US and welcomes the three-phase ceasefire proposal announced by US President Joe Biden on 31 May in the context of the war between Israel and Hamas. As outlined in the resolution, the first phase includes, among other things, “an immediate, full, and complete ceasefire with the release of hostages including women, the elderly and the wounded”, the exchange of Palestinian prisoners, and the “withdrawal of Israeli forces from the populated areas in Gaza”. The resolution notes that the first phase entails “the safe and effective distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale throughout the Gaza Strip”. The second phase consists of a permanent end to hostilities “in exchange for the release of all other hostages still in Gaza” and “a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza”, while the third phase entails the “start of a major multi-year reconstruction plan for Gaza and the return of the remains of any deceased hostages still in Gaza”. (For background, see our 10 June *What’s in Blue* story.)

In public messages, the US has framed the deal as being an

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON THE MIDDLE EAST, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2735 (10 June 2024) welcomed a ceasefire proposal announced by US President Joe Biden on 31 May 2024. S/RES/2728 (25 March 2024) demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages. S/RES/2720 (22 December 2023) requested the Secretary-General to appoint a SHRC tasked with establishing a UN mechanism for accelerating humanitarian consignments to Gaza. S/RES/2712 (15 November 2023) called for “urgent and extended humanitarian pauses and corridors throughout the Gaza Strip”. S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and called for immediate steps to prevent violence against civilians, including acts of terror.

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## The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Israeli proposal and the text of resolution 2735 says that Israel has “accepted” it. But Israeli authorities have sent contradictory messages regarding their support for the deal. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on 24 June that he was ready to make “a partial deal” to secure the release of some hostages, but that the war would continue “after a pause, in order to complete the goal of eliminating Hamas”. For its part, Hamas suggested several amendments to the proposed deal, which reportedly included the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. Reacting to Hamas’ proposal on 12 June, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that some of Hamas’ requests were “workable”, but others were not. At the time of writing, the fate of the ceasefire deal remains uncertain, with some media outlets reporting on 29 June that the US had recently put forward a revised version of the deal.

According to figures provided by Israeli authorities cited by OCHA, over 1,514 Israelis have been killed since the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks in Israel, the vast majority on 7 October 2023. As at 28 June, an estimated 120 Israelis and foreign nationals remain captive in Gaza. Figures provided by Palestinian officials in Gaza cited by OCHA indicate that, as at 27 June, at least 37,765 Palestinians had been killed during Israel’s retaliatory offensive in Gaza.

Analysts have identified Israel’s offensive in Gaza as one of the deadliest and most destructive military campaigns in recent history. Large areas of Gaza, including critical infrastructure, have been bombed to the ground, with about 55 percent of the total structures in the Gaza Strip estimated to be destroyed, damaged or possibly damaged, according to the UN Satellite Centre (UNOSAT). Up to 1.7 million people are estimated to be displaced across the Gaza Strip, with Save the Children estimating that up to 21,000 children are missing in Gaza, “many trapped beneath rubble, detained, buried in unmarked graves, or lost from their families”, and Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Philippe Lazzarini saying that, on average, every day ten children in Gaza lose one or both legs.

The Secretary-General’s latest annual report on children and armed conflict, dated 3 June, included in its annex—which lists parties that have committed grave violations against children—the Israeli armed and security forces for killing and maiming children as well as for attacks against schools and hospitals, while Hamas’ Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad’s Al-Quds Brigades are listed for killing and maiming children and abduction. The report says that the UN verified grave violations against 4,247 Palestinian children and 113 Israeli children.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza remains abysmal. A 25 June Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report found that a high risk of famine persists in the Gaza Strip, with over 495,000 people facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity known as “IPC Phase 5”, which means that “households experience an extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities”.

In a 21 June statement, Lazzarini said that humanitarian aid delivery continues to be constrained in Gaza. Restrictions he identified included Israeli forces’ military operations and Palestinian armed groups’ activities; the limited number of open crossing points into Gaza; the near total breakdown of law and order leading to regular looting, threats and assaults against truck drivers; and regular

denials and delays by the Israeli forces for coordinated movement and convoys. UN officials have noted that, as the occupying power, it is incumbent on Israel to “restore public order and safety as far as possible and facilitate safe humanitarian access” to Gaza.

Attacks on humanitarian aid workers and health facilities in Gaza have continued; the lack of security for humanitarian workers and installations being another factor identified by Lazzarini as contributing to aid not reaching Palestinians in need. A recent report by Human Rights Watch said that “Israeli forces have carried out at least eight strikes on aid workers’ convoys and premises in Gaza since October 2023, even though aid groups had provided their coordinates to the Israeli authorities to ensure their protection”.

Following the start of Israel’s offensive on Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost governorate, on 7 May and South Africa’s request for provisional measures, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 24 May ordered Israel, among other measures, to “[i]mmediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”. This was the third order issued by the ICJ concerning South Africa’s proceedings against Israel concerning alleged violations in the Gaza Strip of obligations under the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The two previous orders were issued on 26 January and 28 March.

On 20 May, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, filed applications for warrants of arrest for three Hamas leaders, including for the Head of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, and two Israeli officials, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on various counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Regarding the situation in the West Bank, the latest Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 2334 (S/2024/480), which covers the period between 19 March and 10 June, recorded “alarming levels” of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israeli security forces killed 95 Palestinians in the West Bank “during search-and-arrest operations, armed exchanges, airstrikes, demonstrations and other incidents”, while settlers killed one Palestinian and four others died either at the hands of settlers or of Israeli forces. The report notes that, in the same period, Israeli sources said that Palestinians killed six Israelis in Israel and in the West Bank. Among other violent incidents, the report also refers to a 9 May incident during which a group of Israelis set fire to the perimeter of UNRWA’s compound in East Jerusalem as a “crowd accompanied by armed men chanted ‘burn down the United Nations’”.

The report notes that settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem continued, as did demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures. Presenting the report at the 25 June Council meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”, Wennesland referred to the recent transfer of authority to a newly appointed Israeli civilian official for “oversight of many areas of land management and development, planning, and day-to-day life in Area C of the occupied West Bank”. Wennesland noted with concern that this development is expected, among other things, to expedite Israeli settlement expansion and that it undermines the prospects for a two-state solution.



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# The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

## Human-Rights Related Developments

On 27 May, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel, issued a report examining violations of international human rights law (IHL) and international humanitarian law (IHL), as well as possible international crimes committed by all parties between 7 October and 31 December 2023. The report found that during the 7 October 2023 attack, members of Hamas' military wing, members of the military wings of other Palestinian armed groups and Palestinian civilians committed war crimes, as well as violations and abuses of IHL and IHRL. These included intentionally directing attacks against civilians and murder or wilful killing; torture; inhuman or cruel treatment; taking hostages, in most cases together with outrages on personal dignity and inhumane treatment, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The report also found that acts of sexual violence were committed in several locations in Israel.

The report also found that Israeli authorities and members of the Israeli security forces committed war crimes, crimes against humanity, and violations of IHL and IHRL. These included starvation as a method of warfare, collective punishment, murder or wilful killing, intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects, forcible transfer, sexual violence, outrages upon personal dignity, and SGBV amounting to torture or inhuman and cruel treatment. The report also says that while the Commission found it "foreseeable that civilians would be present in the areas targeted", the Israeli security forces "intentionally proceeded" to direct attacks against the civilian population and civilian objects. The report further found that the crimes against humanity of extermination, murder, gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys, forcible transfer, and torture and inhuman and cruel treatment were committed.

## Women, Peace and Security

A 10 June update issued by UN Women on Palestinian Women-Led-Organisations (WLOs) in humanitarian efforts in the OPT said that Palestinian women, and the organisations they lead, were "at the heart of the current humanitarian response". A rapid assessment study conducted by UN Women on 25 WLOs operating in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, of which 18 are headquartered or have a presence in Gaza, showed that 89 percent of WLOs surveyed sustained damage to their offices in Gaza, with 35 percent of these having sustained "complete damage to all their offices". The alert said that most of the responding organisations "have expanded or shifted their priorities towards life-saving assistance and emergency relief, adapting and readjusting their work overnight". It noted, however, that 56 percent of the surveyed WLOs reported a decrease in funding since October 2023, and that 88 percent were facing "significant funding challenges that impact their ability and capacity to deliver life-saving services". Among other measures, UN Women recommended providing access and space for WLOs to participate in humanitarian coordination structures and in humanitarian needs assessments and planning efforts. UN Women also called for the prioritisation of flexible funding for WLOs in Gaza and the West Bank.

## Key Issues and Options

The continuation of the war, the lack of implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, and the Council's inability to more effectively and concertedly act to protect the viability of the two-state solution are key issues for the Security Council. That aid at scale is not reaching Palestinians in Gaza is a further issue of concern for Council members.

Council members could evaluate the space for imposing measures not involving the use of force under Article 41 of the Charter to protect the two-state solution and advance the implementation of the Council's resolutions.

In a 20 June statement, over 30 UN independent experts said that transferring weapons and ammunition to Israel "may constitute serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws", risking state complicity in "international crimes, possibly including genocide". The statement also calls directly on arms manufacturers supplying Israel to stop transfers. Although any agreement on a Council product on this issue is unlikely, given that the US remains the largest arms exporter to Israel, an option could be for Council members to invite some of the experts who issued the statement to brief the Council on the legal consequences of weapons and ammunition transfer when there is a clear risk that such weapons may be used in violation of international law.

A further issue for the Security Council is avoiding the regionalisation of the war in Gaza. The intensification of strikes and bellicose rhetoric by Israeli and Hezbollah officials in June have raised concerns about the possibility of an all-out war in Lebanon, which could lead to an even wider conflagration. (For more on this issue, see our Lebanon brief in the July *Monthly Forecast*.)

## Council Dynamics

Before 7 October 2023, Council dynamics precluded effective action in response to the non-implementation of Security Council resolutions as well as a shared strategy to restart a political process between Palestinians and Israelis, with the US maintaining that the circumstances were not ripe for the reignition of such a process.

Not surprisingly, difficult dynamics have characterised the Council's response to the war, which has been marked by contentious and prolonged negotiations, with multiple failed adoptions. Council negotiations on this file have shown that it is not possible for the Council to adopt an outcome on the crisis that the US, which has provided Israel with political and military backing throughout the war, does not largely support. The position of the US on the war in Gaza has led to accusations of double standards in comparison to its position on the war in Ukraine, further deepening the divide among some members in the Council.

Thus far, the US has vetoed three draft resolutions on the crisis proposed respectively by Brazil, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Algeria. In April, the US also vetoed a draft resolution that would have recommended that the State of Palestine be admitted to membership in the UN. China and Russia vetoed two US-proposed draft resolutions on the war, in both cases being accompanied by the negative vote of the Arab member of the Council, which was the UAE in 2023 and Algeria in 2024.

The adoption of resolution 2735 broadly followed these trends, with Russia abstaining, citing the Arab Group's support for the draft resolution, even while expressing concern with aspects of the text.

# Haiti

## Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) prior to its 15 July expiration.

In addition, the Council will receive its regular quarterly briefing from Special Representative and Head of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) María Isabel Salvador on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH.

## Key Recent Developments

Haiti continues to face a multidimensional security, humanitarian, and human rights crisis as a result of extreme gang violence, which has surged since late February when an alliance of the main gangs in the capital Port-au-Prince conducted a series of coordinated attacks that targeted state institutions and critical infrastructure. Gang leaders said that their goal was to instigate a “civil war” to force the resignation of interim Prime Minister Ariel Henry, who had travelled to Kenya to sign a bilateral agreement facilitating the deployment of a multinational security support (MSS) mission. The Council had authorised the mission under Kenya's leadership through resolution 2699 of 2 October 2023 to help Haiti combat gang activity and restore security.

In response to the surge in violence, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) convened Haitian stakeholders for a high-level meeting on 11 March in Kingston, Jamaica, that resulted in an outcome declaration announcing two key commitments: the parties agreed to establish a Transitional Presidential Council (TPC) that would facilitate a peaceful transition of power by organising free and fair elections, and Henry committed to stepping down upon the formation of the TPC and its appointment of a new interim prime minister.

The TPC was formally installed on 25 April. It comprises seven voting members representing political parties and the private sector as well as two non-voting observers drawn from civil society and the religious community. The council was charged with selecting a new interim prime minister, with whom it appointed a new cabinet; establishing a provisional electoral council and national security council; and collaborating with the international community to accelerate the deployment of the MSS mission. A political agreement signed by members of the council specified key tenets of the transition, emphasising security, constitutional reform, and elections as their main priorities and outlining a 22-month transitional period leading to the swearing-in of a new president in February 2026—nearly a decade after the country's last elections.

On 29 May, following protracted negotiations, the TPC announced the appointment of Garry Conille as interim prime minister. Conille is a former physician and UN official who previously served a brief term as prime minister from 2011 to 2012. Most recently, he served as UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean.

On 12 June, Conille and the TPC presented a new government cabinet. It includes former head of the Port-au-Prince bar association Carlos Hercule as minister of justice, former UNESCO ambassador Dominique Dupuy as minister of foreign affairs, and former

World Bank and International Monetary Fund official Ketleen Florestal as minister of finance and planning. Like Henry before him, Conille will oversee the ministry of interior affairs, which is responsible for organising elections and preparing for the MSS mission.

On 25 June, the MSS mission's first contingent of 200 police officers arrived in Haiti from Kenya. The officers had initially been scheduled to arrive in February, but that timeline had been postponed for several reasons, including a judicial challenge in Kenya, Haiti's political transition, and a lack of funding. Speaking at a press conference in Port-au-Prince after the arrival of the officers, Conille reportedly said that they would actively deploy within the next few days, but he did not provide details on their initial assignment. When asked about recent comments from a prominent gang leader about the need to resolve Haiti's unrest through dialogue, Conille called on the gangs to “put down the guns and recognize the authority of the state, and then we will see where we go from there”.

The MSS mission is expected to comprise up to 2,500 officers, deployed in phases, at an annual cost of approximately \$600 million. According to the latest available information from the UN, eight countries—the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Benin, Chad, Jamaica, and Kenya—have formally notified the Secretary-General of their intention to contribute personnel to the MSS mission, while additional countries have expressed interest in doing so but have not yet provided official notification to that effect. As at late April, the UN-administered trust fund for the mission had received \$18 million in contributions from Canada, France, and the US. The US is the mission's main financial backer and has pledged a total of \$300 million in financial, logistical, and material support, but the release of most of these funds has been held up in the US Congress; on 19 June, media reported that the administration of President Joe Biden would override the congressional hold and release \$109 million for the mission.

While Haiti's gang violence appears to have receded from its peak earlier this year, the country's security situation remains dire. According to the Secretary-General's most recent report on BINUH, which was circulated to Council members on 26 June, the mission recorded 3,252 homicides between January and May, up from 2,453 during the previous reporting period (August-December 2023), mainly perpetrated by gang members operating in metropolitan Port-au-Prince and the Artibonite department. The report also notes that 20 police officers have been killed since the beginning of the year. On 14 June, Conille's office announced the dismissal of HNP chief Frantz Elbé, whom Haiti's police unions had reportedly criticised for an inadequate response to the gang violence. Elbé will be replaced by former police chief Normil Rameau, who held the post from 2019 to 2020.

The acute security situation continues to have severe humanitarian consequences. From March to June, the number of displaced persons in Haiti increased by 60 percent from 362,000 to more than 578,000, according to the International Organization for Migration. In their latest outlook report covering the period from June to October, the World Food Programme, and the Food and Agriculture Organization designated Haiti a “famine hotspot of highest concern”,

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI** [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2700](#) (19 October 2023) renewed the sanctions regime on Haiti imposed by resolution 2653 of 21 October 2022. [S/RES/2699](#) (2 October 2023) authorised member states to form and deploy an MSS mission to Haiti to help re-establish security in the country and build conditions conducive to holding free and fair elections. [S/RES/2692](#) (14 July 2023) renewed BINUH's mandate for one year, until 15 July 2024. [Secretary-General's Report S/2024/310](#) (16 April 2024) was the Secretary-General's 90-day report on Haiti. [Security Council Press Statements SC/15636](#) (21 March 2024) took note of the 11 March agreement facilitated by CARICOM, reiterated Council members' support for a Haitian-led political process, and stressed the importance of swiftly deploying the MSS mission. [SC/15619](#) (11 March 2024) expressed Council members' deep concern about the security and humanitarian situation in Haiti, condemned the continued destabilising criminal activities of armed gangs, and expressed the “expectation and hope” that the MSS mission would deploy as soon as possible.

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## Haiti

with an estimated 1.6 million people facing emergency-level acute food insecurity as a result of gang violence, displacement, restricted humanitarian access, and extreme weather conditions. Additionally, the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, covering developments in 2023, recorded 383 grave violations against 307 children in Haiti. (The six grave violations, as determined by the Security Council, are child recruitment and use; killing and maiming; rape and other forms of sexual violence; attacks on schools and hospitals; abductions; and the denial of humanitarian access.)

### Women, Peace and Security

Distributed on 4 April, the Secretary-General's annual report on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) said that in 2023 armed gangs in Haiti continued to consolidate their territorial control "through the deliberate use of killings, kidnapping and sexual violence, facilitated by ready access to military-grade weapons and ammunition trafficked from abroad". In this context, the report notes that "[b]rutal patterns of gang-related violence, including mass rape", which were previously concentrated in Port-au-Prince, spread in 2023 to other departments, with the Panel of Experts on Haiti observing that "the use of sexual and gender-based violence is a pervasive tactic among most gangs in Haiti". Similarly, the Secretary-General's most recent report on BINUH notes that gang members continue to perpetrate sexual violence against women and girls "as a tactic to spread fear, extort money, gain control of power and to punish the population". In his annual report on CRSV, the Secretary-General urgently called on the international community to strengthen its support for the humanitarian and development responses in Haiti, focusing on protection needs, including of women and girls displaced by gang violence, while also addressing the structural root causes of instability. The Secretary-General also urged the international community to support the Haitian authorities in the provision of "multisectoral assistance to all survivors and to monitor and investigate sexual violence perpetrated by gangs".

### Key Issues and Options

The central task for the Security Council in July is to renew BINUH's mandate. In light of Haiti's political transition, Council members could consider requesting BINUH to develop a strategy on how to support the country's new interim government to organise elections

and restore democratic governance. Additionally, to help Haiti's police, judiciary, and correctional services prepare for the expected impact of the MSS mission, Council members could strengthen the mission's advisory and capacity-building mandate in these sectors. The Secretary-General made this suggestion in his 14 August 2023 report outlining support options the UN could provide to enhance the security situation in Haiti, requested by resolution 2692 of 14 July 2023, which most recently renewed BINUH's mandate.

Another task for the Council is to review recommendations on possible adjustments to the MSS mission's mandate, which resolution 2699 requested the Secretary-General to provide as part of his regular reporting on BINUH no later than nine months after the adoption of that resolution. The MSS mission's current mandate expires on 2 October.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their concern about Haiti's multi-dimensional crisis, including the most recent wave of violence, and generally agree on the need for a Haitian-led political solution that addresses both security and socioeconomic challenges.

Views vary, however, on appropriate actions by the international community to support this process. While most Council members support the 11 March agreement and CARICOM's mediation role that facilitated the deal, Russia has questioned the inclusivity of the process, specifically criticising a provision of the agreement that requires members of the TPC to support the MSS mission as interference in Haiti's domestic affairs. Both China and Russia have also expressed reservations about the lack of operational detail regarding the mission's terms of reference and exit strategy, concerns that complicated negotiations on both resolution 2692 and resolution 2699, although both were ultimately adopted unanimously. (For more information on those negotiations, see our 13 July 2023 and 2 October 2023 *What's in Blue* stories.)

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## Democratic Republic of the Congo

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The anticipated briefer is the Special Representative and Head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita.

MONUSCO's mandate expires on 20 December.

### Key Recent Developments

MONUSCO ceased its operations in South Kivu in April in accordance with the disengagement plan agreed with the Congolese government and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. According to the mission's 30 April press release, "[o]nly uniformed personnel necessary to ensure the security of UN personnel, facilities, convoys, and equipment will be maintained

there until withdrawal activities are completed". MONUSCO also indicated that all uniformed personnel will be repatriated from South Kivu by the end of June, with only a residual team of civilian personnel remaining to work on the transition.

At the time of writing, the Congolese government and the UN were expected to submit an update to the Security Council, due by 30 June, on the implementation of the disengagement plan, including proposals for the next steps in MONUSCO's gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal, pursuant to resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. Council members were also expecting to receive another report by the Secretary-General, also due by 30 June, on possible UN logistical and operational support for regional forces present in the DRC.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed its force, known as the SADC Mission in DRC

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UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO Security Council Resolution S/RES/2717 (19 December 2023) renewed MONUSCO's mandate until 20 December 2024. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9590 (27 March 2024) was on the situation in the DRC. Security Council Press Statement SC/15739 (20 June 2024) was on the situation in the DRC.



# Democratic Republic of the Congo

(SAMIDRC), in eastern DRC in December 2023 and requested logistical and operational support from the UN. In an 8 May letter to the President of the Security Council, the DRC supported SADC's request. Earlier, in its 4 March communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) had endorsed the deployment of the force and asked the Security Council to "provide the required material and financial resources to enable SAMIDRC to effectively discharge its mandate". The Chair of the AUPSC formally communicated its decision to the President of the Security Council in a 13 March letter, expressing the hope that the AUPSC's request would be favourably considered. (For more on possible options that the Council could consider in July following the presentation of the Secretary-General's report, see our "*In Hindsight*" in the April 2024 *Monthly Forecast*.)

The security situation in North Kivu continued to escalate with intensified fighting between the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by allied militias known locally as Wazalendo, and the *Movement du 23 mars* (M23). A confidential note circulated to Council members on 9 June regarding the situation in North Kivu described heavy fighting between FARDC and M23 in Kanyabayonga, 80 kilometres from Goma, the provincial capital of North Kivu. Projectiles and mortars fired from M23-controlled territories landed in or near the MONUSCO Permanent Operating Base (POB) in the area, injuring a peacekeeper from Malawi and forcing humanitarian actors to suspend their operations, the note said. It also mentioned the joint offensive operation by the FARDC and SAMIDRC against the M23 in Sake, 20 kilometres from Goma, and added that the small-arms rounds fired by SAMIDRC impacted the MONUSCO POB in the area, including its surveillance cameras.

In a 20 June press statement, Council members condemned the recent series of attacks by the M23 and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu. Council members expressed their deep concern over the worsening security and humanitarian situation, with the displacement of 350,000 people in the previous week. The members of the Security Council also condemned the threats and pressure by the M23 aimed at MONUSCO and the use of heavy weapons in the vicinity of UN peacekeepers' bases.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 19 June, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, issued a statement expressing alarm at the increasing targeting of human rights defenders in the DRC. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC, from June 2023 to April 2024, incidents of intimidation, threats of physical violence, attacks, and acts of reprisals perpetrated by both State agents and armed groups targeted 387 human rights defenders and 67 journalists. The Special Rapporteur called upon authorities in the DRC "to take all necessary measures to ensure a safe working space and protection for human rights defenders, as well as to guarantee the exercise of their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, in an 18 June statement to the 56th session of the Human Rights Council, said that during his visit to the country in April, he "felt the immense suffering of civilians in the east, including those living in camps for internally displaced people with continued attacks by armed groups." He also called upon the Congolese government and regional and international actors to focus on bringing about peace, security, and trust.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

The Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee submitted its final report (S/2024/432) in late April which, among other things, described the escalating

security situation in eastern DRC and noted that "RDF [Rwandan Defense Forces] military interventions and operations...extended beyond mere support for M23 operations to direct and decisive involvement, allowing RDF and M23 to achieve military dominance" in several areas of North Kivu. It also explained how the deployment of advanced military technology affected the conflict dynamics, forcing all FARDC military air assets to be grounded.

On the other hand, the report noted that the Congolese government "continued to use Wazalendo groups and FDLR [*Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*] as proxies in the fight against M23 and RDF". It added that "[t]he instructions of the FARDC chief of staff to end collaboration with FDLR were not heeded" and that the FDLR remained an important factor in the conflict despite coming under pressure. Additionally, the report described the support provided to FARDC by the Burundi National Defence Forces deployed in eastern DRC as part of a bilateral arrangement, by private military companies, and by SAMIDRC.

On 24 May, the Group of Experts briefed the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee on the report, including its findings and recommendations. However, there does not appear to be a consensus among members on some of these recommendations.

On 27 June, the Security Council adopted resolution 2738 extending the 1533 Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime until 1 July 2025 and the mandate of the Group of Experts assisting the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee until 1 August 2025. (For more, see our 26 July *What's in Blue* story.)

## Women, Peace and Security

The Secretary-General's annual report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), distributed on 4 April, said that MONUSCO documented 733 cases of CRSV in the DRC in 2023, with 88 of these cases having occurred in previous years. Of the total number of incidents, 556 were attributed to non-state armed groups, while state actors were implicated in 177 cases. The report said that sexual violence in the DRC was frequently perpetrated during village raids as retaliation for perceived collaboration with rival armed groups or state forces. The report also referred to a recent visit to the DRC by Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, during which she drew attention to the surge in sexual violence in and around displacement sites in the country.

In a 30 May update, the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) stressed that the escalating conflict in the DRC has not only exacerbated displacement, with women and children constituting the majority of the displaced, but has also led to increasing food insecurity and record rates of gender-based violence (GBV). Limited humanitarian aid and livelihood opportunities have pushed many women and girls into survival sex, with 37 percent of girls estimated to be forcibly married before age 18, according to UN sources. The update also noted that healthcare services for survivors of CRSV, such as sexual and reproductive health care and GBV referral pathways, are severely lacking for communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs). In the update, the NGO Working Group on WPS called on the members of the Security Council to urge the DRC authorities and all armed groups to stop all threats, violence and reprisals against civilians, including IDPs, women human rights defenders, and peacebuilders. The NGO Working Group on WPS also stressed that, in the context of MONUSCO's transition and disengagement plans, "it is imperative that protection of civilians, sustained humanitarian access, increased humanitarian funding" and respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law be prioritised.

## Key Issues and Options

One of the key issues for Council members in July is to assess progress in the MONUSCO disengagement process based on updates provided by the Congolese government and the UN to decide on the next steps for the mission's gradual, responsible, and sustainable withdrawal. At this stage, it does not seem feasible for the mission to withdraw from North Kivu and Ituri, the two remaining provinces in eastern DRC, given the current security situation and the prevailing protection challenges. The Council is likely to address this issue in December when MONUSCO's mandate is up for renewal.

The other key issue for Council members in July is how to support regional forces operating in eastern DRC. Their discussion will



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## Democratic Republic of the Congo

be informed by the Secretary-General's report, including its recommendations. The most feasible option seems to be to authorise MONUSCO to provide logistical and operational support to SAMIDRC within existing resources in line with resolution 2717. France, the penholder on DRC, is likely to propose a Council product to decide the matter.

### Council Dynamics

Council members remain seriously concerned about the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC. They all seem to agree that the solution to this long-standing issue is political, and they continue to support regional efforts. Some Council members continue to call for external actors to stop supporting armed groups in eastern DRC. In particular, the US, France, Switzerland, and Slovenia remain vocal on the issue and continue to mention Rwanda's role in the region.

Council members continue to stress that the MONUSCO disengagement process must be implemented in a gradual, conditions-based, and responsible manner. At the last Council meeting on MONUSCO in March, some Council members underscored the need to avoid leaving a security vacuum and called on the Congolese government to assume its security responsibilities to protect civilians. Several Council members drew attention to the safety and security of peacekeepers, given the increasing number of attacks against MONUSCO.

Council members reiterated the need for regional forces to coordinate their operations with MONUSCO. The A3+1 members (currently Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) supported the AU's call for support to SAMIDRC.

France is the penholder on the DRC. Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 1533 DRC Sanctions Committee.

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## Cyprus

### Expected Council Action

In July, Security Council members are expected to receive a briefing in consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart is expected to brief.

UNFICYP's mandate expires on 31 January 2025.

### Key Recent Developments

Over the past six months, there has been no meaningful progress on the political front and no direct formal engagement between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders in the context of unification talks, which have been stalled since the collapse of negotiations in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, in July 2017. The two sides have maintained alternative positions on the appropriate framework for resolving the Cyprus issue: the Greek Cypriots remain firmly committed to a settlement based on a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation (BBF) with political equality, as stipulated in previous Security Council resolutions, while Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar insists on a two-state solution based on sovereign equality.

On 5 January, the Secretary-General announced the appointment of María Angela Holguín Cuéllar, a former Colombian foreign affairs minister, as his Personal Envoy on Cyprus, responsible for assuming a good offices role "to search for common ground on the way forward and to advise [Guterres] on the Cyprus issue". In a press release issued the same day, Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot side had given their consent to the Personal Envoy's appointment on two conditions: that the envoy's mandate be limited to "exploring whether common ground exists or not between the two sides...for the start of new, formal settlement negotiations" and that it not exceed six months.

According to media reports, Holguín Cuéllar's mandate was expected to be extended by three months. However, in a 7 June

statement, Tatar's office claimed that the reports of Holguín Cuéllar's mandate extension were untrue, adding that Tatar would "continue to work constructively with the Personal Envoy in the remaining 1 month" of her mandate.

Resolution 2723 of 30 January, which renewed UNFICYP's mandate for another year, welcomed the Secretary-General's appointment of a Personal Envoy on Cyprus and urged the sides to seize the opportunity presented by this development. It also encouraged the two sides to engage constructively with the envoy in the search for common ground with the goal of returning to formal negotiations for a lasting settlement in Cyprus.

Holguín Cuéllar has engaged in extensive shuttle diplomacy since taking office in January. She made her inaugural visit to Cyprus in late January, meeting with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders, Nikos Christodoulides and Tatar, respectively. During her stay, she also engaged with local actors and civil society organisations, including women and youth groups. Subsequently, on 6 February, she held meetings in Athens, Greece, followed by engagements in Ankara, Türkiye, on 8 February. On 7 and 8 March, Holguín Cuéllar visited London for meetings with UK officials, thereby concluding her visits to the three guarantor powers (Greece, Türkiye, and the UK) under the 1960 treaty guaranteeing the independence, territorial integrity, and security of Cyprus.

On 11 March, Holguín Cuéllar returned to the island for a second round of meetings with Christodoulides, Tatar, political parties, civil society, and religious representatives from both communities.

On 29 April, she visited Brussels for meetings with high-level EU officials, including European Council President Charles Michel.

She conducted her third trip to Cyprus, in addition to visiting Ankara and Athens, from 7 to 14 May. According to media reports, Holguín Cuéllar proposed a trilateral meeting with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders. However, on 8 May, Tatar announced

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UN DOCUMENTS ON CYPRUS Security Council Resolution S/RES/2723 (30 January 2024) extended the mandate of UNFICYP until 31 January 2025. Secretary-General's Reports S/2024/12 (3 January 2024) was on UNFICYP, covering developments from 13 June to 12 December 2023. S/2024/13 (3 January 2024) was the report on the Secretary-General's mission of good offices in Cyprus.

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## Cyprus

that he had rejected the proposal.

On 5 April, Tatar met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in New York, after which he reiterated his scepticism regarding the Personal Envoy's mandate, saying he did not believe Holguín Cuéllar could find common ground between the two sides. Tatar urged all parties to recognise the existence of “two peoples, two democratic states, two authorities” and also warned against flare-ups of tensions on the island, saying how “little misunderstanding[s]” such as an accidental shooting of Turkish soldiers could “turn the situation [in Cyprus] into a new Gaza”. The following day, Nicosia described Tatar's remarks as incompatible with the future of their “mutual” homeland.

### Key Issues and Options

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

Given the current deadlock, the Council could take several actions to revive the peace process. It could encourage the parties to approach negotiations on the basis of “engagement without recognition” and undertake significant confidence-building measures, which could help facilitate the resumption of negotiations. It could also consider taking a more proactive approach to stimulate the process

by exploring a change in UNFICYP's mandate, including seeking options for downsizing and for a possible exit strategy.

Council members may wish to pursue a presidential statement expressing support for the renewal of Holguín Cuéllar's mandate in search of common ground with the goal of returning to formal negotiations. The Council could also consider holding a private meeting with Holguín Cuéllar to discuss the prospects for progress on the political track.

### Council Dynamics

Cyprus remains a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda. Council members with a vested interest in Cyprus include France, Russia, and the UK, which also serves as the penholder on the issue. Greece, which was elected on 6 June to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council from 2025 to 2026, is a key stakeholder in relation to UNFICYP and one of the three guarantor powers.

While the Council is united in its support for UNFICYP and a political process based on a BBF with political equality, members diverge on the conditions and timeframe for the unification talks. Some members have previously supported a comprehensive strategic review of the mission and timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process. Russia remains adamant that there be no external interference or attempts to impose solutions or timelines that might influence the peace talks.

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## Colombia

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to receive a briefing from Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu on recent developments in Colombia and the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on the mission, which was circulated to Council members on 26 June.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego is expected to represent his country at the meeting for the first time since taking office in August 2022. An ex-combatant from the former rebel group *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo* (FARC-EP) is expected to participate in person at the meeting, also for the first time. This is in line with a request made by Colombian Minister of Foreign Affairs Luis Gilberto Murillo Urrutia at the Council's previous quarterly meeting on Colombia, held on 9 April, that peace signatories be invited to “participate periodically” in Council meetings.

The verification mission's mandate expires on 31 October 2024.

### Key Recent Developments

The past quarter witnessed increased rhetoric from Colombian officials about challenges in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the former rebel group FARC-EP. In a 14 May speech, Petro announced that he would go to the UN to warn that “the State of Colombia does not

want to comply with the peace agreement it signed”. In a subsequent post on X (formerly Twitter), Petro argued that there are three “axes” to the peace agreement that, if left unfulfilled, would spell the state's failure in complying with the peace agreement: agrarian reform, the “transformation of the territories”, and promoting “judicial truth”. On the last point, the president has accused the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP)—the judicial component of the transitional justice system established by the 2016 agreement—of “fragmenting the truth” by not allowing paramilitaries to appear before the court. (In accordance with the 2016 agreement, the SJP does not have jurisdiction over crimes committed by paramilitary groups.)

The Colombian president has previously highlighted these issues, including during Council members' 7-11 February visiting mission to Colombia, while lamenting lack of cooperation from certain state ministries and failure by previous administrations to implement the agreement. Petro and former Minister of Foreign Affairs Álvaro Leyva Durán have criticised the SJP on several occasions, including in quarterly Council meetings and in a 19 October 2023 letter sent to the Council. Signatories to the agreement have also raised concerns about the SJP's work, including the issues of pending amnesties for former combatants and the court's decision to prosecute middle-ranking former guerrillas.

Rhetoric on the implementation of the 2016 agreement has overlapped with discussions of the president's initiative, announced in

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UN DOCUMENTS ON COLOMBIA Secretary-General's Report S/2024/509 (26 June 2024) was the most recent 90-day report on Colombia.

# Colombia

mid-March, to convene a constituent assembly in Colombia, which has been politically contentious. In a 25 May interview, Leyva argued that the 2016 agreement contains provisions allowing the convening of a constituent assembly without requiring Congressional approval and appeared to suggest that denouncing the state's non-compliance with the agreement before the Security Council could set this process in motion. Several Colombian actors, including members of the Comunes party—which is comprised of former FARC-EP members—and constitutional experts have rejected these claims, and some have urged a focus on concrete implementation actions rather than on rhetoric.

On 6 June, Murillo met informally with Security Council members in New York, and reportedly assured them that his government will not request the Council to endorse a constituent assembly in Colombia. The foreign minister also announced that in the upcoming Council session Petro will present a strategic report on the implementation of the peace agreement during the period 2016–2024. It was confirmed on 20 June that the government will present the report jointly with members of the Comunes party.

Recent months have witnessed both progress and setbacks in the government's dialogue efforts with armed groups operating in the country, carried out as part of Petro's "total peace" policy. On 5 February, the government and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) announced the extension of their bilateral ceasefire for another six months, until 3 August, and the guerrilla group committed to cease kidnapping for ransom. Shortly thereafter, however, the government's decision to hold a regional dialogue with one of the ELN's regional fronts led the ELN's central command to suspend the dialogue with the government and, on 6 May, to announce that it had lifted its suspension of ransom kidnappings. This move has been condemned by many, including in a statement by the countries accompanying the negotiations (Germany, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). The Secretary-General's report says that despite these challenges, the parties "have broadly respected the terms of the ceasefire".

Regarding the government's dialogue with the dissident group of the former FARC-EP that identifies itself as the *Estado Mayor Central Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (EMC FARC-EP), Petro suspended the ceasefire with the group from 20 March in the departments of Cauca, Nariño, and Valle del Cauca after the EMC had carried out attacks against indigenous communities in Cauca. Subsequently, several EMC factions announced that they would no longer participate in the dialogue process and have since carried out attacks in Cauca targeting police and military forces, which have also harmed civilians, in an apparent attempt to pressure the government to resume the suspended ceasefires. (The factions that chose to remain in the dialogue process reportedly represent around 40 per cent of the dissident group.) A 17 June statement by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed concern about the heightened levels of violence, as well as reports of child recruitment in several departments.

Between 24–28 June, the government held in Caracas, Venezuela, its first round of dialogue with the armed group *Segunda Marquetalia*, which consists of former FARC-EP dissidents who signed the 2016 agreement but took up arms again. The government reportedly hopes to sign and implement a peace deal with the group within two

years, before Petro's term in office ends.

On 26 June, it was reported that ex-combatants from the former territorial area for training and reintegration (TATR) of Miravalle in the Caquetá department are being displaced due to security threats by an EMC FARC-EP faction, which is still participating in the peace process with the government, against the backdrop of the faction's dispute with the *Segunda Marquetalia*. This development was criticised by many national and international interlocutors, including Ruiz Massieu.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

Following a ten-day visit to Colombia, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent issued a statement on 24 May, urging the Colombian government to address through structural reforms the "systemic and institutional racism people of African descent have endured for centuries". The experts noted that, despite having adopted legal provisions to protect human rights and address violations, the Colombian government still lacks effective action to transform the daily lives of people of African descent by alleviating poverty and ensuring their rights to security, education, housing, employment, and participation in political affairs. Testimony from people of African descent, including women, youth, human rights defenders, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons, revealed violence such as kidnappings, brutal killings by armed groups, forced recruitment of children into armed groups, forced displacement, and sexual violence, among others. The working group urged Colombia to ensure meaningful participation of people of African descent in all relevant processes, including the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. It will also present a report on its visit to the Human Rights Council at its 57th session in September 2025.

In a report published on 20 May, Siobhán Mullally, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, addressed various forms of trafficking in persons in Colombia based on her 22–31 May 2023 visit to the country. Mullally highlighted the potential connections and overlapping activities between criminal organisations engaged in trafficking in persons and non-state armed groups involved in related activities, including potentially illegal mining and deforestation, coca production, sale and supply, sexual exploitation of women and girls, and the recruitment and use of children. In this regard, she called for progress in implementing the public policy to dismantle illegal armed groups and criminal organisations. Among other recommendations, the Special Rapporteur urged the Colombian government to strengthen measures to implement the ethnic chapter of the 2016 peace agreement and to prevent conflict-related trafficking, in particular among Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities; strengthen the civilian authorities in border zones to prevent trafficking in migrants and refugees; strengthen the Colombian Family Welfare Institute to ensure the best interests of all children without discrimination; and take adequate measures to prevent trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, including in the tourism industry.

## Women, Peace and Security

Marcela Sánchez Buitrago, Executive Director of Colombia Diversa, briefed the Security Council during the 9 April meeting on Colombia. This was the first time that a civil society representative provided a briefing on LGBTQ-related issues in a formal country-specific Council meeting. Focusing on the impact of the conflict on LGBTQ persons in Colombia, Sánchez Buitrago said that armed actors "actively targeted, disappeared or killed" LGBTQ persons, particularly Afro-Colombians and adolescents. She noted that, as at March, 6,000 crimes had been recorded against LGBTQ persons during the conflict. The violence has included forced displacement, exile, sexual violence and killings, according to estimates by Colombia's Truth Commission. She added that the full extent of the violations may never be known due to social stigma, lack of documentation, and fear of reprisals.

Sánchez Buitrago said that Colombia is "one of the deadliest countries in the world for human rights defenders" and referenced the killings of eight LGBTQ human rights defenders in 2023, noting that in about half such killings, "evidence suggests that those defenders were attacked for their sexual orientation or gender identity". Sánchez Buitrago urged the Council to demand the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and LGBTQ persons in the implementation of the 2016 agreement, and in negotiations with other actors in Colombia. Among other recommendations,



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## Colombia

she urged the Council to call for an end to attacks against LGBTQ persons and defenders, to call for all perpetrators to be held accountable, and to request the verification mission to regularly report to the Council about the situation of human rights defenders, including LGBTQ activists.

### Key Issues and Options

The overarching priority for the Council is supporting the full implementation of the 2016 peace agreement. Although Council members welcome the government's expression of political will to do so, they have increasingly emphasised, as some members noted at the latest quarterly meeting, that 2024 should be "the year of implementation". The president's participation in the upcoming quarterly session, which comes as Petro reaches the half-way mark of his term, and the expected report on the implementation of the agreement during 2016-2024 provide opportunities to discuss ways to overcome challenges to implementation. Council members apparently expect to interact informally with Murillo a day before the quarterly meeting; this could help clear up confusion about recent rhetoric on failure by "the state" to implement the peace accord and apprehension about attempts to have the Security Council take sides in politically contentious domestic processes such as a constituent assembly.

Supporting transitional justice efforts in the country is a longstanding priority for the Council. Members have regularly emphasised the importance of upholding the SJP's autonomy. They apparently also wish to see addressed concerns by signatories to the peace agreement. Members could reiterate these messages in their statements.

The situation of children in Colombia is another matter of concern. According to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict, dated 3 June, 262 children were recruited and used in 2023, nearly double the number in 2022, including by former FARC-EP dissident groups (186) and the ELN (41). Council members could emphasise that measures relating to the protection of children can serve as an early confidence-building measure in peace negotiations and call on parties to include such considerations in their dialogues.

### Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the peace process in Colombia and for the verification mission's work.

Council members have different views, however, about the appropriate level of Council support for the government's dialogue efforts with armed groups operating in the country. Some members, such as the US, apparently feel that a cautious approach is needed in discussing a possible UN role in such dialogue efforts. Many members have often expressed concern about violence perpetrated by these armed groups, calling on them to cease such acts to demonstrate good faith in the negotiations. Other members would apparently like to see a more proactive approach from the Council in support of the dialogue processes. Council member Switzerland is an accompanying country in the dialogue process with the ELN and a guarantor country in the process with the EMC.

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## West Africa and the Sahel

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

The security situation remains dire in parts of the Sahel, particularly the Liptako-Gourma tri-border region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The three countries, led by military juntas that came to power through coups d'état, created the Alliance of Sahel States or l'Alliance des États du Sahel (AES) in September 2023. In November 2023, Burkina Faso and Niger quit the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), which they had formed in 2017 with Chad, Mali, and Mauritania to combat terrorism and organised crime; Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel in June 2022. The three AES countries later announced on 7 March that they were creating a new joint force to fight terrorist groups.

AES countries announced on 28 January that they were withdrawing from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); the decision reflected deteriorating relations between the three countries and ECOWAS in recent years as the regional bloc sought

to pressure military authorities to restore constitutional order. At a 24 February ECOWAS summit, West African leaders lifted economic sanctions that the regional bloc had imposed on Niger after its July 2023 coup d'état and eased sanctions on Mali, saying that it would seek to convince the three countries to remain in the organisation.

At the same time, Russia has continued to increase its military cooperation with AES states. About 100 personnel of Africa Corps—the successor entity to the private Russian security firm the Wagner Group—deployed to Burkina Faso on 24 January. After Niger requested that US forces leave the country on 16 March, Russian forces arrived in Niamey on 10 April.

Burkina Faso is the epicentre of jihadist violence afflicting the region. Roughly half of its territory is outside the authorities' control, and over two million people are displaced. Last year, more than 8,000 people were killed in the fighting, double the number of people killed in 2022, according to the US-based crisis-monitoring group Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. On 11 June, militants attacked an army base in the town of Mansila, killing over 100 soldiers and capturing others. An Al-Qaida affiliate, Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), claimed responsibility. A day after the attack, rumours surfaced of an attempted mutiny following reports of a rocket hitting the parking area of state

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL** Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2024/3 (24 May 2024) welcomed the appointment of Special Representative Leonardo Santos Simão; highlighted the importance of addressing underlying conditions conducive to terrorism; and underscored the importance of timely, nationally-owned transition processes and the restoration of constitutional order in concerned regional countries. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9529** (11 January 2024) was a briefing on West Africa and the Sahel.



## West Africa and the Sahel

TV Radiotélévision Burkinabé in the capital, Ouagadougou. Subsequently, 80 to 120 Malian and Russian soldiers arrived in Burkina Faso from Gao, Mali. Reports suggest that they may have been deployed to protect transition president Captain Ibrahim Traoré from a possible coup attempt. Earlier on 25 May, participants in a national forum—which most political parties boycotted—signed a charter extending Burkina Faso’s transition by an additional five years, starting on 2 July 2024.

On 25 January, Malian authorities announced the “immediate termination” of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. In its place, they established an “inter-Malian dialogue for peace and national reconciliation”. The dialogue, boycotted by much of the country’s opposition, concluded on 10 May. It recommended that Mali’s transition be extended by another three years, until 2027. On the security front, it advised the authorities to consider talks with Islamist armed groups and to engage with all Malian armed movements. Meanwhile, authorities have cracked down further on domestic criticism. This includes the banning in April of political parties and activities, followed by a ban on media coverage of political activities.

Benin and Niger have been in a dispute ever since ECOWAS lifted sanctions on Niger. In retaliation for supporting closed borders, Niger refused to open its borders with Benin, depriving the country of transit revenue. Benin is one of several coastal countries—along with Togo and Côte d’Ivoire—that have come under attack from Sahel-based jihadist groups in their northern border region with Burkina Faso. On 4 June, militants killed seven Beninese soldiers in Pendjari National Park. In response to the terrorism threat to coastal countries, ECOWAS heads of state at the 24 February summit expressed their aspiration to make the Accra Initiative and its multinational joint task force fully operational and reiterated their intention to deploy the ECOWAS Standby Force.

In other developments, Senegal held its presidential election on 24 March. Controversy marred the run-up to the election amid concerns that outgoing President Macky Sall would seek a third term or try to prolong his stay in office. After a backlash against the government’s postponing the race from February until December, authorities moved up the date of the election, which saw Bassirou Diomaye Faye defeat Sall’s ruling party candidate. Faye named Ousmane Sonko prime minister; Sonko’s disqualification from the race had been another source of tension.

On 24 May, the Security Council adopted a presidential statement on West Africa and the Sahel. It was the Council’s first presidential statement on the region since August 2021, as negotiations stalled for more than two years over language on the link between climate change and security. The presidential statement highlighted the importance of addressing the underlying conditions conducive to terrorism; reaffirmed that states must ensure that counter-terrorism measures comply with all their obligations under international law; and underscored the importance of timely, nationally owned transition processes and the restoration of constitutional order in concerned countries. (For more information on the statement, see our 23 May *What’s in Blue* story.)

On 19 June, Sierra Leone convened an Arria-formula meeting on “Combating the Rise of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in

West Africa and the Sahel”, which sought to spotlight the terrorism threat in the Sahel and the increasing risks to coastal West African states. Discussion included focusing on how to intensify efforts to address the root causes that make the region vulnerable to terrorism, such as poverty, the marginalisation of different groups, and poor governance.

### Key Issues and Options

The terrorism threat to West Africa and the Sahel region remains a key issue. This includes the risk that Sahel-based terrorist groups will expand into coastal West African states. How the Council might support other counter-terrorism security mechanisms—such as the AES, the Accra Initiative, and the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad basin—to counter this threat are key issues.

The political transitions and restoration of constitutional order in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger is another key issue, as is the region’s surge in attempted coups.

Addressing structural conflict drivers in the Sahel, such as poor governance, under-development, and climate change, through the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) or other avenues remains a key issue. The humanitarian situation in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin and violations against civilians by Sahel countries’ militaries also remain significant concerns.

An ongoing issue for the Council is how it can maintain sufficient attention on the region following the ending last year of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Mali sanctions regime, and the Secretary-General’s November 2023 recommendation to end the Secretariat’s reporting requirement on the FC-G5S. Despite the volatile security situation, the biannual UNOWAS reports are now the Council’s main opportunity to consider regional developments. Council members could send a letter to the Secretary-General taking note of his recommendation to end his reporting obligation on the FC-G5S and request that UNOWAS provide an additional third annual report with a focus on the Sahel. Another option is for members to request ad hoc briefings when developments in the Sahel warrant Council attention.

### Council Dynamics

Council discussion on West Africa and the Sahel has grown polarised in recent years. The US and European members are concerned about Russia’s growing influence in the region and ties with the military juntas, while Russia supports the views of the AES states in the Council. This has made it difficult for the Council to support ECOWAS positions, of which Sierra Leone is a proponent. As a West African country, Sierra Leone is also among those Council members that believe it is important for the Council to maintain attention to the region, including how it might support regional efforts to prevent terrorist violence from expanding into coastal countries. Elected member Algeria, which brokered the 2015 Mali Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, also known as the Algiers Accord, was seen as a potential bridge between the UN and Mali amid the tensions last year that led Mali’s transitional authorities to demand the end of MINUSMA. Algeria’s relations with Mali have soured, however. Niger’s military authorities also rebuffed Algerian efforts last year to mediate a political transition agreement in that country.

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# West Africa and the Sahel

Sierra Leone and Switzerland are co-penholders on UNOWAS.

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## Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Council is expected to hold a meeting on the cooperation between the UN and regional organisations with a focus on the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

### Background

The CSTO was established in 1992 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Currently, it is composed of six members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. The CSTO was created to ensure national and collective security among its members and to foster military and political cooperation. It has sought to combat regional threats such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration.

Formed in 2001, the SCO currently has nine members: China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In September 2022, Belarus initiated its accession to the organisation. The SCO aims to enhance economic, political, social, transportation, and cultural ties among its members. Lately, it has prioritised peace, stability, and humanitarian cooperation. The SCO's security agenda emphasises countering extremism, terrorism, and separatism.

The CIS was formed in 1991 and currently has nine members: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The CIS promotes political, economic, human rights, cultural, and environmental cooperation. The CIS also coordinates member activities on counter-terrorism.

### Key Recent Developments

Strengthening cooperation with regional and sub-regional organisations—as envisioned in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter—has become an increasingly prominent theme for the Security Council. The AU, the EU, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are some of the organisations that have developed more institutionalised relations with the Council.

Russia has sought to promote greater cooperation between the UN and regional organisations operating in the Eurasian region. During its October 2016 presidency of the Council, Russia organised the first Council meeting on cooperation between the UN and the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS. The objective of that debate was to draw the Council's attention to the contribution these organisations have made in countering threats to peace and security in the region and to encourage their further cooperation with the UN, including the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA).

In September 2019, Russia organised a ministerial-level debate

that centred on the roles played by the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS in countering terrorist threats. During its presidency in February 2022, Russia convened another meeting to discuss cooperation between the UN and these three organisations, focused on enhancing cooperation in the areas of peacekeeping, counter-terrorism, and drug trafficking.

In May 2018, representatives of the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS formalised their cooperation on counter-terrorism by signing a memorandum of understanding committing them to enhancing collaboration and information-sharing. New areas of cooperation, including information and biological security, are also steadily evolving.

Given their shared objectives in the Central Asian region, these organisations maintain regular contact with the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The situation in Afghanistan, in particular, has been a common concern because of its implications for regional security, including terrorism and cross-border drug trafficking.

On 22 March, Russia experienced one of its deadliest terrorist attacks in recent decades when four gunmen conducted a mass shooting at the Crocus City Hall music venue in Moscow. The incident resulted in hundreds of casualties, with over 130 people killed. The Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack, and Western intelligence has suggested the involvement of IS Khorasan Province, a regional branch of IS active in South-Central Asia, including Afghanistan. The suspects were identified as nationals of Tajikistan, a member of the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS. On 18 April, Russia and Tajikistan, which shares a border with Afghanistan, conducted joint military drills aimed at preparing for potential cross-border incursions by militants or illegal armed groups. Additionally, the CSTO is reportedly working on a draft resolution to strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border.

The Secretary-General's latest biennial report on "Cooperation between the UN and regional and other organizations," issued on 8 August 2022, underscored continued strengthening of cooperation between the UN on the one hand and the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS, on the other. This includes regular exchanges of information, visits, conferences, and joint training exercises. The report highlighted their joint efforts on preventive measures in the region, including through UNRCCA, the implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, and initiatives related to sustainable development.

On 22 February, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced that Armenia had frozen its participation in the CSTO and was reviewing its membership in the organisation. Pashinyan has voiced dissatisfaction with Armenia's long-standing alliance with Russia, contending that Armenia can no longer depend on Russia for its defence. Diplomatic tensions between the two countries escalated

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UN AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS** Secretary-General's Report S/2022/606 (8 August 2022) was the biennial report on cooperation between the UN and regional and other organisations. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.8967** (16 February 2022) was a meeting organised by Russia on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations in maintaining international peace and security.

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## Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

following Azerbaijani military actions in the Nagorno-Karabakh region in September 2023. (For more information, see our 20 September 2023 *What's in Blue* story.)

Authorities in Moldova have also expressed dissatisfaction with their country's membership in the CIS. Tensions between Chisinau and Moscow escalated following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, and in early 2023, the ruling Party of Action and Solidarity announced its intention to annul significant agreements related to the CIS. In February 2023, Chisinau recalled its representative from the CIS Interparliamentary Assembly.

Russia has downplayed the significance of these developments. During a 14 December 2023 press conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that "Moldova's CIS membership does not create much added value", clarifying that Russia was not "pushing anyone out" of the organisation. Regarding Armenia and its memberships in the CIS and the CSTO, Putin suggested that "complex processes underway in Armenia's domestic politics" were contributing to its approach, emphasising his belief that withdrawing from the CIS, the Eurasian Economic Union, or the CSTO would not be in Armenia's best interests.

### Council and Wider Dynamics

Russia has maintained that the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS share common objectives with the UN and has advocated for enhanced cooperation between the UN and these organisations. During the October 2016 meeting, Russia said that there was a lack of general understanding of these organisations' activities and that some Council members had tried to downplay their role. The P3 members (France, the UK, and the US) have been generally critical of these organisations,

viewing them as a vehicle for a few of their most dominant members to enhance their influence in the region. The division among Council members in the perception of these organisations has been evident in the context of the Council's considerations of UNRCCA.

Until early 2015, Council members issued a press statement following each briefing on UNRCCA, encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, UNRCCA, and "relevant regional organisations". In recent years, however, Russia, the penholder on UNRCCA, proposed including specific references to the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS in addition to the OSCE and the EU. The P3 has opposed these additions, and a press statement on the UNRCCA has not been issued since January 2018.

The July meeting will be the first on the cooperation between the UN and the CSTO, the SCO, and the CIS since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Since then, tensions between Russia and Western countries have deepened. Discussions in the General Assembly regarding cooperation between the UN and regional organisations, previously non-controversial, have become increasingly contentious. An illustrative example occurred in November 2022 when the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/77/19 on cooperation between the UN and the Central European Initiative (CEI). This resolution included an operative paragraph acknowledging the contribution of the CEI to "alleviate the serious consequences, caused by the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine". Russia voted against the resolution and criticised what it saw as unnecessary politicisation of regional organisations' mandates, cautioning against setting a precedent that could extend to similar resolutions in the future.

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## Syria

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold a meeting on the political process and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

### Key Recent Developments

On 30 May, Special Envoy for Syria Geir O. Pedersen and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Martin Griffiths briefed the Council on the political and humanitarian tracks in Syria, respectively. Griffiths provided an overview of the increasingly dire humanitarian situation in the country and the devastating consequences of the persisting insecurity on civilians. He apprised members of a recent uptick in hostilities in Deir-ez-Zor governorate in eastern Syria, particularly near the UN humanitarian hub, which damaged humanitarian assets and led to the temporary suspension of humanitarian operations. He also spoke about the situation of women and girls in the country, noting that they continue to be exposed to appalling levels of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse. Griffiths called on relevant parties to allow and facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian

relief while taking note of the lack of progress in cross-line delivery of aid—that is, across domestic conflict lines from Syrian government-held areas into areas outside government control. Lack of necessary approvals and security guarantees, among other things, continue to impede the cross-line delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Cross-border humanitarian operations have continued from Türkiye into north-west Syria. The Syrian government's authorisation for the use of the Bab al-Salam and Al Ra'ee border crossings is scheduled to expire on 13 August, while permission for the Bab al-Hawa crossing is set to expire on 13 July. At the time of writing, according to OCHA, a total of 246 trucks carrying humanitarian supplies from seven UN agencies had crossed into north-west Syria from Türkiye since the beginning of this year, through the Bab al-Hawa (214 trucks) and Bab al-Salam (32 trucks) crossings.

Despite the rising humanitarian needs across the country, securing funding has been a challenge for the UN and partner agencies. At the time of writing, Syria's 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan, requiring \$4.07 billion, was only 13.6 percent funded.

In his remarks at the 30 May meeting, Pedersen said that there

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) was the first resolution focused exclusively on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. It was adopted unanimously. [Secretary-General's Report S/2024/384](#) (3 June 2024) was the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9640](#) (30 May 2024) was a briefing on the political process and the humanitarian situation in Syria.

# Syria

was no clear path emerging to implementing resolution 2254 of 18 December 2015, which focused on finding a political solution to the Syrian crisis, including through the reconvening of the Syrian Constitutional Committee. Efforts to resume the Constitutional Committee remain stalled. He underlined the importance of preparing for a new and more comprehensive approach, noting that there must be a political horizon to resolve complex conflicts instead of managing or containing them in perpetuity. Highlighting the lack of trust among the stakeholders, he said that only concrete engagement, coordination and action could bring reciprocal and verifiable progress. The absence of a way forward threatens to cause prolonged division and despair. (For background and more information, see our Syria brief in the June *Monthly Forecast* and 24 June *What's in Blue* story.)

Pedersen also described the ongoing hostilities and persisting security tensions within Syria, including insurgent activities by some tribal elements against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a primarily Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government; the violent crackdown on protestors in Idlib by the Security Council-listed terrorist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham; and ongoing protests in al-Sweida governorate, which started in August 2023 against the backdrop of the deteriorating economic situation in the country. He stressed the need for urgent de-escalation across all the frontlines within Syria and in the region, starting with a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. He also took note of the upcoming parliamentary elections in government-controlled areas, scheduled for July, adding that these elections cannot be a substitute for an inclusive political process, as envisioned in resolution 2254.

Over the past few months, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) has increased its attacks in Syria. According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)—a UK-based monitoring group with a presence in the country—the Syrian government and its allied forces, with support from Russia, launched joint operations in early June against ISIL positions across various locations in the Syrian desert. As at 23 June, the SOHR reported that ISIL attacks and pro-government military operations in the Syrian desert had resulted in 437 fatalities since the beginning of this year, including 365 government-backed forces, 29 ISIL members and 43 civilians.

On 16 June, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that it had conducted an airstrike in Syria in which Usamah Jamal Muhammad Ibrahim al-Janabi, a senior ISIL leader, had been killed.

Airstrikes, allegedly by Israel, continue to target sites in Syria. According to media reports, airstrikes on 3 June hit multiple locations near the city of Aleppo, killing several people, including one Iranian military adviser, Saeed Abiyar. This was reportedly the first attack attributed to Israel that resulted in the death of an Iranian military personnel since the 1 April bombing of the Iranian consulate in Damascus. On 19 June, airstrikes in Quneitra and Daraa provinces resulted in the death of a Syrian soldier. While Israel has not commented on these strikes, it has historically targeted sites associated with Iranian forces and affiliated militants in Syria.

In his annual report on children and armed conflict, dated 3 June, the Secretary-General expressed concern about the high number of grave violations against children in Syria, particularly incidents of recruitment and use and killing and maiming. The Secretary-General reported 1,574 verified grave violations against 1,549 children

in Syria, including 1,385 boys and 118 girls. At the end of 2023, the report said, over 800 children, including foreign children, remained in detention for alleged association with armed groups, mainly Da'esh, and approximately 29,000 children with suspected family ties to Da'esh continued to be deprived of liberty in al-Hol and al-Roj refugee camps in north-eastern Syria.

## Key Issues and Options

A key issue for Council members is the ongoing hostilities in Syria. Continuing violence and the lack of accountability threaten to destabilise the country further. ISIL remains one of the key security threats in Syria. The deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in the country are also of concern. Determining how the Council can address the spillover effects of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and de-escalate rising tensions in the region, including in Syria, is an important issue for the Council.

One option would be for the co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians (Switzerland and the UK) to hold a meeting on the situation in Syria to receive briefings from relevant UN entities about the impact of the conflict on civilians.

Another important issue for the Council is maintaining international attention to the situation in Syria when the focus has largely shifted to other crises, such as those in Gaza and Ukraine.

As well, a key issue is how to alleviate the growing humanitarian needs throughout the country. Council members could consider adopting a press statement calling on the international community to scale up the humanitarian response in Syria.

The need to break the underlying political impasse in the country and support the Special Envoy's work in this regard is another key issue. The Council could consider holding a private meeting with relevant stakeholders to discuss the impediments to the resumption of the Constitutional Committee, including the issue of venue, and support Pedersen's efforts to reinvigorate the political process. (A private meeting is a closed, formal meeting format; unlike closed consultations, non-Council member states are allowed to participate in this format.)

## Council Dynamics

Over the years, Syria has been one of the most divisive files on the Council's agenda. 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 and economic situations 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, arbitrarily detaining people, not engaging meaningfully in political dialogue, and not creating conditions for the safe and voluntary return of refugees.

Russia has consistently criticised the presence of US forces in Syria, accusing them of destabilising the country. The US maintains that its deployment of forces in the country remains focused on fighting Da'esh and has blamed Damascus for allowing Iranian-backed militias to operate in the country.

Council members also have diverging views on normalising ties



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## Syria

with the Syrian government. While the US and like-minded members continue to oppose engagement with the government, China and Russia have voiced support for the normalisation of ties. During the 30 May Council briefing, the US said that “[w]e remain

sceptical that the Arab League’s engagement with the Syrian regime will accomplish its objectives...[and] urge[d] those engaging with the regime to do so in pursuit of the objectives of resolution 2254”. Switzerland is the penholder on the Syria humanitarian file.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council will hold its monthly briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of OCHA are expected to brief during the public session. The Head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Beary, is expected to brief during the consultations.

The Council is also expected to renew the mandate of UNMHA, which expires on 14 July.

### Key Recent Developments

The Houthi rebel group continues to attack commercial shipping in the Red Sea region, which it started in November 2023 to pressure Israel to end the war that it launched in the Gaza Strip after the 7 October 2023 attacks led by the Palestinian armed group Hamas. Combined with US-led strikes against Houthi targets in Yemen in response, the situation has frozen Yemen peace talks. On 30 May, joint UK-US strikes in Hodeidah governorate killed at least 16 people and wounded 42, according to the Houthis. This was the highest publicly announced death toll in the US-led operation since it started in January.

On 7 June, the UN said that the Houthis had detained 11 of its Yemeni national staff, as well as personnel of other aid organisations, in four governorates: Amran, Hodeidah, Saada, and Sana’a. Six of the UN personnel are affiliated with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). They also include one staff member from each of the following: the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP); and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The UN subsequently updated the number, reporting that in total, 13 national staff members had been detained in addition to five Yemeni staff of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and many more from national NGOs and civil society.

On 11 June, the head of the Houthis’ intelligence agency, Major General Abdulhakim al-Khayewani, announced that the staff of the UN and other humanitarian organisations had been arrested for belonging to a US-Israeli spy ring that used the “cover of international and UN organizations”. The Houthis previously detained four other UN staffers from OHCHR and UNESCO—two in 2021 and another two in 2023—whom the rebel group continues to hold, and in October 2021, they arrested dozens of Yemeni national staff employed by the US embassy, 11 of whom are still detained, according to reports.

On 11 June, UN Secretary-General António Guterres demanded the “immediate and unconditional release of all detained UN personnel”. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk made a similar call while categorically rejecting “the outrageous allegations against UN staff”.

At the Council’s 13 June briefing on Yemen, both Grundberg and OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu echoed the Secretary-General’s demand for the immediate release of the UN staff. Grundberg added, “Such arbitrary detentions are not the expected signal of an actor who is seeking a mediated solution to conflict”.

Grundberg and Wosornu also raised concerns about the Houthis’ and the Yemeni government’s intensification of economic measures against one another. Grundberg said it represented the “zero-sum mindset” that the parties had reverted to in recent months instead of respecting their commitments to an inter-Yemeni political process. He noted that the parties had yet to respond to his invitation to mediate talks for resolving the economic tensions. According to Wosornu, the potential that Sana’a-based banks will be excluded from using the SWIFT banking system for their failure to comply with a government directive to relocate their headquarters to Aden could have “catastrophic ramifications”. It risks undermining the private sector’s ability to conduct financial transactions to import food and other essential goods and making it difficult for humanitarian organisations to pay staff salaries and for the services that their operations use.

Ahead of the meeting, UK Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward read a statement at the stakeout on behalf of 11 Council members, Yemen, 27 other member states, and the EU, which condemned the latest detentions and demanded the release of the detainees.

On 17 June, the US announced new sanctions on three individuals and six entities that have facilitated weapons procurement for the Houthis and that have enabled the group to generate revenue, including in China and Oman. A vessel owned by one of the designated entities was also identified as “blocked property”, according to the US announcement.

On 19 June, the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned and -operated bulk carrier, the Tutor, sank in the Red Sea. A Houthi bomb-laden boat had struck the vessel one week earlier, in an attack which killed a Philippine crew member. The Council extended the monthly reporting requirement of the Secretary-General on Houthi attacks against commercial and merchant vessels—first established in resolution 2722 of 10 January—until 15 January 2025, when it adopted resolution 2739 on 27 June.

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** [Security Council Resolution S/RES/2739](#) (27 June 2024) renewed the Secretary-General’s reporting requirement on Houthi attacks against merchant and commercial vessels until 15 January 2025. [S/RES/2722](#) (10 January 2024) demanded that the Houthis immediately cease all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels and took note of the right of member states, in accordance with international law, to defend their vessels from attacks. [Security Council Letter S/2024/460](#) (11 June 2024) was the Secretary-General’s annual review of UNMHA. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9654](#) (13 June 2024) was a briefing by Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and OCHA Director of Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu.

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# Yemen

## Human Rights Developments

According to OHCHR's press briefing notes from 14 June, the six UN Human Rights Office staff members, including two women, have not had contact with their families since their detention. The UN has also been unable to access them or receive individual confirmation of their detention. OHCHR stressed that the targeting of human rights and humanitarian workers must cease immediately, and efforts should instead be stepped up to serve the needs of the 18.2 million people in Yemen who currently require humanitarian aid and protection.

## Key Issues and Options

Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and US-led strikes on Houthi targets in response are a key issue. A related key issue is preserving the progress made prior to the Gaza crisis in the now-stalled Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia to reach a peace agreement and Grundberg's efforts to develop a road map for a ceasefire and an inter-Yemeni political process.

Members are likely to monitor developments in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and encourage the parties to engage with the Special Envoy to protect the gains made to date in peace talks. Members could reiterate the need to resume an inter-Yemeni peace process and encourage the parties to continue engagement with the Special Envoy on his roadmap. They could also encourage the parties to accept the Special Envoy's offer to oversee talks to defuse economic tensions.

The mandate renewal of UNMHA is a key issue. The Council is likely to renew its mandate, which includes monitoring the ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate that the December 2018 Stockholm Agreement established. The Secretary-General's annual review of the mission, dated 11 June, noted the persistence of hindrances to UNMHA's freedom of movement, including independent patrols of Houthi-held ports, and an increase in rhetoric from government officials, blaming the 2018 Stockholm Agreement for the current Red Sea crisis. In renewing the mandate, the Council could reiterate that the parties are to ensure UNMHA's unhindered access, including unimpeded patrols of Hodeidah ports and frontlines under government control.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen, where 18.2 million people require assistance and protection services, remains a key issue. The main drivers of humanitarian need remain Yemen's deteriorated economy, lack of public services, and protracted conflict-induced displacement. Insecurity and access restraints have been long-standing

impediments to relief efforts. The detention of humanitarian staff could further undermine the ability of the UN and other partners to provide assistance. The Yemen sanctions designation criteria include the obstruction or impediment of humanitarian assistance. Council members could consider expanding sanctions designations on Houthi officials if they do not release the detained personnel.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are united in their support for the various mediation efforts. They have welcomed the Houthi-Saudi talks and stress the ultimate need for an inclusive Yemeni political process under UN auspices to achieve a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Members have also condemned the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and are concerned about their consequences on maritime security, freedom of navigation, and Yemen's peace process.

Nonetheless, there have been some notable divisions on the Yemen file as a result of the Red Sea crisis. Recently, this manifested itself in the inability of Council members to issue a proposed press statement on the detention of UN staff. China and Russia, in objecting to a UK-proposed text, apparently contended that there was a need for additional information, while Russia also objected to "condemning" the detentions and proposed replacing calls for the immediate release of the detained personnel with calls to provide access to them. Traditionally, Russia seeks to streamline references to the Houthis and is reluctant to single them out in Council products. The UK organised the 13 June stakeout on the detentions because members could not agree on the press statement.

Algeria, China, and Russia abstained in the vote adopting resolution 2739. In their explanations of votes, they indicated that this decision was consistent with their abstentions on resolution 2722 because of their concerns over that resolution's language, particularly wording on the right of states to defend their merchant vessels from attacks, which was not drawn from existing international law, and how resolution 2722 was subsequently interpreted by some member states and implemented. They also reiterated, as they often do, the need to end the war in Gaza for resolving the crisis in the Red Sea.

The UK is the penholder on Yemen. The US and Japan have served as co-penholders on the Red Sea crisis. Ambassador Joonkook Hwang (Republic of Korea) chairs the 2140 Yemen Sanctions Committee.

# UNRCCA (Central Asia)

## Expected Council Action

In July, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA), Kaha Inmadze, is expected to brief Security Council members on the UNRCCA's work in closed consultations.

## Key Recent Developments

Inmadze last briefed Council members in closed consultations on 30 January. Among other matters, he provided an update on the UNRCCA's activities pertaining to counter-terrorism, transboundary water management, and the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas. Inmadze also discussed the border negotiations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia, and the effects of climate change in the region.

Since Inmadze's last briefing, officials from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have continued negotiations regarding the demarcation of their border. Kyrgyz and Tajik officials have now preliminarily resolved more than 90 percent of the disputed parts of the border, with Tajik state media reporting in early February that the two countries had reached agreement regarding a further 3.71 kilometres of the contested boundary. The most recent round of negotiations took place in Bishkek from 19 to 25 May. On 8 May, the Kyrgyz and Tajik government agencies responsible for the border reportedly issued a joint statement after Tajik shepherds and Kyrgyz border guards exchanged gunfire.

China, Russia, and the US have continued to jostle for influence in Central Asia, with several analysts noting that the war in Ukraine may have sparked increased diplomatic competition in the region. From 23 to 25 January, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited Beijing, where he met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang. During the visit, China and Uzbekistan announced that they had elevated diplomatic ties and formed an "all-weather comprehensive strategic partnership". On 8 February, the US hosted the inaugural meeting of the "C5+1" critical minerals dialogue, which was attended by officials from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. According to a statement issued by the US Department of State following the meeting, attendees discussed investment opportunities in critical minerals and underscored the benefit of working together. On 27 May, Russia and Uzbekistan signed an agreement while Russian President Vladimir Putin was in Tashkent to meet with Mirziyoyev. Under the terms of the agreement, Russia will reportedly assist Uzbekistan with the construction of a nuclear power plant and increase gas deliveries to the country. China and Tajikistan also pledged to expand bilateral cooperation during an 18 May meeting between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon.

Several Central Asian states also appear to be preparing to develop closer trade and economic relations with the Taliban administration in Afghanistan. During a 3 June meeting of parliamentary speakers from the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) member states, Kazakh President Qasym-Zhomart Toqaev explained that Kazakhstan had removed the Taliban from its list of terrorist organisations "based on the importance of developing trade and economic

cooperation with modern Afghanistan and the understanding that this regime is a long-term factor". While visiting Kabul in March, an Uzbek delegation led by Minister of Foreign Affairs Bakhtiyor Saidov met with Taliban officials to discuss boosting economic ties. Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi also travelled to Turkmenistan in February to discuss business and economic relations and possible investment in Afghanistan.

In early April, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov signed a law targeting non-governmental organisations that receive foreign funding. The bill had been criticised by human rights groups on the basis that it would curb the work of civil society organisations in the country. Analysts have expressed concern about the erosion of democracy in Kyrgyzstan since Japarov became president in late 2020. Human rights groups have also raised concerns regarding new mass media legislation in Kazakhstan.

From 9 to 10 April, the UNRCCA organised a regional workshop on fostering cooperation and information-sharing on preventing and combatting the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and their supply to terrorists. The workshop was organised in partnership with the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the Regional Anti-Terrorist structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). On 27 February, the UNRCCA participated in the "Regional Meeting on Enhancing Women's Participation in the Peacebuilding Processes in the Ferghana Valley". The UNRCCA's briefing focused on its activities relating to women, peace and security and the work of the Central Asian Women Leaders' Caucus. Inmadze has also travelled throughout the region and abroad during the first half of the year, including visits to each Central Asian country, Washington, DC, and Moscow.

Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to travel to the region in early July when he will attend an SCO summit in Astana and visit each Central Asian state.

## Key Issues and Options

One of the main issues for the Council is how to make the best use of the UNRCCA's expertise and whether there is anything the Council can do to support the UNRCCA's efforts to facilitate preventive diplomacy and regional cooperation. The Council could choose to hold an open briefing on the UNRCCA, which would allow members to express support for its work and raise awareness of its activities. This open briefing could be followed by closed consultations to allow for a more frank and detailed exchange with Inmadze. The Council could also choose to hold a debate to give the Central Asian states an opportunity to discuss the work of the UNRCCA in public.

The situation in Afghanistan and its impact on Central Asia is another issue for the Council. The Council could consider inviting a representative of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to participate in the meeting and provide information regarding developments in the country that might affect the wider region.

## Council Dynamics

Council members are generally supportive of the UNRCCA and view it as an important tool in promoting cooperation in Central Asia. Prior to mid-2018, Council members often issued press statements

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

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## UNRCCA (Central Asia)

expressing support for the UNRCCA and its work and encouraging increased cooperation and coordination among the Central Asian countries, the UNRCCA, and “relevant regional organisations”. However, Council members have been unable to agree on a press statement on the UNRCCA since then, owing to disagreements among the permanent members about including references to specific regional

organisations, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, and the SCO.

Press elements commending then-Special Representative and Head of the UNRCCA Natalia Gherman for her efforts and expressing support for UNRCCA’s work were read out following the UNRCCA consultations in January 2023.

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## Lebanon

### Expected Council Action

In July, Council members expect to receive a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701. Adopted in 2006, resolution 1701 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. The Secretary-General’s report, which is due on 10 July, will cover the period from 21 February to 20 June. Special Coordinator for Lebanon Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert—whose appointment was announced on 20 May and who succeeds Joanna Wronecka—and Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix are the expected briefers.

### Key Recent Developments

Near-daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line between Israel and Hezbollah and other armed groups in Lebanon have continued since the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas on 7 October 2023. (Established by the UN in 2000 to confirm Israel’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the Blue Line does not represent an international border but acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed border between the two states. For background on the war in Gaza, see the brief “The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” in our July *Monthly Forecast*.)

The exchanges of fire have resulted in casualties among combatants and civilians on both sides of the Blue Line. According to figures cited on 18 June by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, the hostilities have resulted in 25 Israeli fatalities and the reported killing in Lebanon of 401 people, including paramedics and journalists. The exchanges of fire have displaced over 90,000 people in Lebanon and over 60,000 in Israel. The violence has also caused destruction of property and fires on both sides of the Blue Line, with a 5 June Human Rights Watch report warning that “Israel’s widespread use of white phosphorus in south Lebanon is putting civilians at grave risk and contributing to civilian displacement”.

The intensification of strikes and bellicose rhetoric by Israeli and Hezbollah officials in June have raised serious concerns about the possibility of an all-out war. On 11 June, Taleb Abdallah, a senior Hezbollah commander, was killed together with three other Hezbollah members in an Israeli strike in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah retaliated on 12 and 13 June, launching a large number of rockets and weaponised drones across the border, with Hezbollah official Hashem Safieddine reportedly saying at Abdallah’s funeral on 12 June that Hezbollah would “increase the intensity, strength, quantity

and quality” of its attacks. Abdallah has been identified in media reports as Hezbollah’s most senior member to have been killed since the current round of hostilities began in October 2023, and Hezbollah’s 12 June attack was reportedly one of the heaviest during the war.

On 18 June, Hezbollah released a drone video showing military and civilian locations in and around the Israeli city of Haifa. Responding to the video, Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs Israel Katz said on X, formerly Twitter, that “[i]n an all-out war, Hezbollah will be destroyed and Lebanon will be severely hit”. On the same day, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that “operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon” had been “approved and validated”. In a 19 June speech, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah reportedly said that, in the event of a broader war, “there will be no place safe from our missiles and our drones” in Israel, and claimed to be in possession of “a bank of targets” in the country. In an unusual development, Nasrallah also addressed Cyprus, saying that “opening Cypriot airports and bases” to Israel to attack Lebanon will result in Cyprus becoming “part of the war”. (Located about 200 kilometers from Lebanon, Cyprus has held joint military exercises with Israel since 2014, according to media reports). In a 28 June post on X, formerly Twitter, the Permanent Mission of Iran to the UN in New York said that should Israel attack Lebanon with a “full scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue”.

On 15 June, Hennis-Plasschaert and UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Head of Mission and Force Commander Lieutenant General Aroldo Lázaro issued a joint statement warning about the risk of “miscalculation leading to a sudden and wider conflict” and urging all actors along the Blue Line to lay down their weapons and commit to peace. Similarly, on 21 June, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that miscalculation “could trigger a catastrophe that goes far beyond the border”, adding that “the people of the region and the people of the world cannot afford Lebanon to become another Gaza”.

Against this backdrop, UNIFIL has continued to implement its mandate, including through armed vehicle patrols along the Blue Line and counter-rocket-launching patrols, and working to de-escalate tensions, prevent miscalculation and support communities in southern Lebanon.

Diplomatic initiatives by France and the US focusing on de-escalation and on bringing the parties to a negotiation process have continued. Proposals have reportedly revolved around re-establishing a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, having

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LEBANON** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2695 (31 August 2023) extended UNIFIL’s mandate until 31 August. It was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). S/RES/1701 (11 August 2006) called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. S/RES/1559 (2 September 2004) urged withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon, disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, extension of the Lebanese government’s control over all Lebanese territory, and free and fair presidential elections. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2024/222** (8 March 2024) was the most recent Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of resolution 1701.



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## Lebanon

Hezbollah and other armed groups withdraw several kilometres north of the Blue Line with a simultaneous scaled-up presence in the border area of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), and launching a negotiation process over disputed areas along the Blue Line.

On 13 June, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a trilateral contact group composed of the US, France, and Israel to advance a French proposal for de-escalation, adding that there would be a similar engagement with the Lebanese authorities. The following day, however, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant rejected the French proposal, stating that Israel would not participate in the “trilateral framework”.

Hezbollah has said on several occasions that until the war in Gaza ends, it will not take part in any negotiations, and the Lebanese front “will remain active”. But in a 24 June interview discussing a recent visit to Israel and Lebanon by Deputy Assistant to the US President Amos Hochstein, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who is also the President of the Amal Movement, an ally of Hezbollah, said that, in the context of a US proposal that Hezbollah withdraws 8 kilometres north of the Blue Line, the IDF should withdraw by the same distance. He added that he had not received a response to his proposal during Hochstein’s visit, however.

Lebanon has been without a president for almost two years since Michel Aoun’s term ended on 31 October 2022, with opposing politico-sectarian blocks unable to agree on a candidate. National and international initiatives to overcome the impasse on the election of the next Lebanese President have yet to generate any tangible result. The presidential vacuum is compounded by the fact that, over two years since the 15 May 2022 legislative elections, Lebanon’s government remains in caretaker status.

Anti-refugee sentiment, measures, and incidents continue to be a source of concern in Lebanon, which hosts the largest number of refugees per capita in the world. In a 16 May letter, seven non-governmental organisations, including Amnesty International, urged Lebanon to “immediately halt forced deportations of Syrian refugees and reverse a set of unprecedented and draconian measures” recently adopted. The letter notes that about a fifth of the one billion Euro financial assistance package to Lebanon announced on 2 May by the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, “is designated to support the Lebanese army and security services’ border management and migration control” and that, since the announcement, Lebanese authorities have adopted new policies that would “push even more refugees to flee the country”.

### Key issues and options

The escalating exchanges of fire across the Blue Line in clear

violation of resolution 1701, the risk of a full-scale war in Lebanon, and a possible connected regional conflagration are key issues for the Security Council.

An option for Council members is to issue a presidential statement calling on all relevant parties immediately to cease fire and recommit to, and implement, Security Council resolution 1701. The presidential statement could also demand that the parties respect international law and stress that civilians and civilian objects must never be targeted.

A ceasefire in Gaza—however remote the possibility currently appears—might contribute to quietening the situation along the Blue Line, possibly opening a space for progress in the indirect talks between Lebanon and Israel. The presidential statement could urge all relevant actors to engage constructively and with flexibility with the diplomatic efforts underway.

UNIFIL’s mandate expires on 31 August. Speaking at a 30 May press briefing, Lacroix said that “should there be a cessation of hostilities and the implementation of some of the proposals that are put forward by some of our member states to both Israel and Lebanon, should there be progress towards the implementation of resolution 1701, then UNIFIL is expected to play a role by both sides, [and] we would certainly need to adapt to these new circumstances”.

In July, Council members may begin to direct their attention to UNIFIL’s upcoming mandate renewal negotiations and consider whether the current situation requires any adjustment to the mandate. In this context, Council members are likely to follow closely any development across the Blue Line, including on the French and US initiatives for de-escalation.

### Council Dynamics

There continues to be broad consensus among Council members in support of Lebanon’s sovereignty, territorial integrity, and security. Council members also agree that a full-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah must be avoided, with several members—including China, France, Japan, and Slovenia—expressing concern about the risk of escalation at the 25 June Council meeting on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”.

Sharp differences among Council members persist over Hezbollah. Some members distinguish between Hezbollah’s political and military wings and have designated only its military wing as a terrorist organisation. Other members, including the UK and the US, have listed Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organisation. In contrast, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force.

France is the penholder on Lebanon.

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## Central African Republic

### Expected Council Action

In July, the Security Council is expected to vote to extend the sanctions imposed on the Central African Republic (CAR), which expire

at the end of the month, and renew the mandate of the Panel of Experts supporting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, which expires on 31 August.

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**UNDOCUMENTS ON THE CAR Security Council Resolution S/RES/2693** (27 July 2023) renewed the 2127 CAR sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee for an additional 12 months. **Secretary-General’s Report S/2024/473** (18 June 2024) was the most recent report on the situation in the CAR. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9673** (27 June 2024) was on the situation in the CAR.

# Central African Republic

## Key Recent Developments

On 27 June, Special Representative for CAR and Head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) Valentine Rugwabiza briefed the Council on the Secretary-General's latest report on MINUSCA and recent developments in the CAR. She highlighted some of the political developments in the CAR following the adoption of the 2023 constitution and progress in the implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR. Rugwabiza referred to MINUSCA's support to the decentralisation of the peace process through the involvement of prefectural implementation mechanisms. She also mentioned the mission's support for the first high-level national conference on peaceful and prosperous transhumance held on 13 May to develop strategies for reducing seasonal transhumance-related violence. The CAR has been affected by increasing intercommunal conflict as a result of transhumance-related activities, and the conference agreed, among other things, to strengthen the security of transhumance corridors and promote cross-border dialogue.

The CAR is preparing to hold local elections in October for the first time since 1988. A budget shortfall remains an ongoing challenge, despite recent financial commitments to support the election made by some partners, such as the EU, through the UN Development Programme basket fund. The Secretary-General's report also mentions the CAR government's formal request to the UN to provide electoral assistance to the country's presidential and legislative elections, set to be held in 2025-2026. The CAR government seeks MINUSCA's support in mobilising resources and providing continued technical, operational, logistical, and security support for the local, presidential, and legislative elections.

With the increased military activities of armed groups, particularly along the border, the security situation in the CAR remains volatile. The Secretary-General's report particularly notes the efforts by armed groups to gain control of mining sites and transhumance corridors. MINUSCA continues to support the extension of state authority in the CAR. Its joint patrols with the CAR armed forces (FACA) are intended to reinforce the state's presence in conflict-affected areas in order to protect civilians and support local reconciliation efforts.

The restrictions imposed by the CAR authorities on the use of uncrewed aerial vehicles remain in effect, undermining MINUSCA's freedom of movement. The Secretary-General's report notes the impact of these restrictions on the implementation of the mission's mandate, hindering its ability to acquire critical information and develop comprehensive security analyses for operational planning. It also mentions the risk to the safety and security of peacekeepers, as well as the protection of the mission's installations. MINUSCA has been engaging with the CAR authorities to resolve the issue.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 27 June, Siobhán Mullally, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, presented her report (A/HRC/56/60/Add.2) to the Human Rights Council on her country visit to the CAR from 24 to 30 November 2023. The Special Rapporteur highlighted that trafficking in persons, especially women and children, persists with impunity against the backdrop of continuing conflict and violence in the country. She underscored the importance of achieving peace, justice, and accountability in combating the trafficking of persons in the CAR. The Special

Rapporteur also called for implementing an inclusive, gender-sensitive, and effective disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration process.

## Sanctions-Related Developments

Following the extension of the CAR sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts' mandate in July 2023, four of the five panel members were appointed in January after Russia lifted its hold on their appointment during the last week of December 2023. On 30 May, the Secretary-General appointed Fiona Magnan (Ireland) as the natural resources/finance expert.

On 3 June, the panel briefed the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee on its final report, which described the spillover effects of the conflict in Sudan and its impact on the activities of armed groups in the CAR. The report noted "the presence of Sudanese conflict parties crossing into Central African Republic territory, with confirmed reports of Sudanese Armed Forces air raids in and around border areas". It also indicated that "[t]he Rapid Support Forces of the Sudan have recruited from among armed groups in the Central African Republic and move between the two countries easily through a long-standing network".

Additionally, the report highlighted the humanitarian situation in the CAR, which has been exacerbated by the influx of Sudanese refugees. It also stated concerns about the increasing tensions between local communities and refugees, with armed groups infiltrating refugee camps and engaging in forced recruitment, use of child soldiers, and attacks based on religious and ethnic grounds. The panel recommended, among other things, the need to control the surge in arms trafficking from neighbouring countries and the infiltration of foreign fighters into the CAR. It also underscored the need to enhance regional cooperation to address security challenges.

On 15 May, the Secretary-General submitted his report on the CAR authorities' progress towards the key benchmarks that could guide the Security Council in reviewing the arms embargo measures imposed under the 2127 CAR sanctions regime, pursuant to resolution 2693 of 27 July 2023 by which the regime was renewed. These benchmarks relate to security sector reform; the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation process; and weapons and ammunition management. The report notes the steady incremental progress in implementing these benchmarks and, among other things, calls on the CAR authorities to make further progress in addressing the illicit transfer of arms and ammunition to armed groups operating in the country, including explosive ordnance.

## Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in July is the renewal of the 2127 CAR sanctions regime and the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the sanctions committee. In light of the CAR authorities' request for the total lifting of the arms embargo, which is supported by some Council members, the upcoming negotiations are expected to be contentious. In particular, it might prove difficult to maintain the arms embargo despite the complex regional security dynamics and the surge in arms trafficking described in the panel's final report.

The panel's own mandate is also likely to be contentious. Last year, Russia was critical of the panel, whose 18 May 2023 report said that the CAR authorities did not provide clarity on weapons and aircraft that were transferred from Russia without advance notification to the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee. The report also noted other cases in which advance notification was given about the transfer of Russian military vehicles that were then used at mining sites, contrary to what was stated in the notification.

One option would be to renew the sanctions (that is, the arms embargo, the assets freeze, and travel bans) and the mandate of the panel of experts. Given the views of some Council members, another option for Council members would be to try to achieve a compromise by lifting the arms embargo while renewing the panel's mandate so it can continue to report on the implementation of the sanctions regime.

# Central African Republic

## Council Dynamics

Last year, the Council renewed the 2127 CAR sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts' mandate with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (China and Russia). The Council also lifted the arms embargo imposed on the CAR government, while maintaining all other sanctions measures, including the obligation for bilateral and multilateral partners to notify the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee, except for deliveries to the CAR government.

Russia and China called for the complete lifting of the arms embargo. Russia, in particular, argued in its explanation of vote that armed groups have been acquiring “arms for the 10 years during which the sanctions regime has been in place, and maintaining those restrictions will have no impact on the problem”. China also maintained that “the arms embargo no longer meets the country’s needs, given its situation, and impedes its efforts to enhance its security capacity and to maintain its national security and stability”.

The US, however, argued that the sanctions regime does not prevent the CAR government from acquiring weapons or training and that the Council should not lift the arms embargo until the country makes further efforts to strengthen its stockpile management and address cross-border arms and natural resource smuggling. Additionally, the US expressed alarm about reports that man-portable air defence systems had been transported through the CAR into Sudan by the Wagner Group, a Russian private security company recently renamed the Africa Corps, and underscored the need for oversight of those weapons to monitor the security situation in the CAR and the broader region.

France is the penholder on the CAR, and Ambassador Amar Bendjama (Algeria) chairs the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee.

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