

# Monthly Forecast

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## Overview

In August, Sierra Leone will hold the presidency of the Security Council.

Sierra Leone plans to organise two signature events. The first is a debate titled “[Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation in the UN Security Council](#)” under the “Maintenance of international peace and security” agenda item. Sierra Leonean President Julius Maada Bio is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are UN Secretary-General António Guterres, President of the UN General Assembly Dennis Francis, and a civil society representative.

The second signature event is an open debate titled “[A New Agenda for Peace— Addressing global, regional and national aspects of conflict prevention](#)” under the “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace” agenda item. Sierra Leone’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Timothy Musa Kabba, is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are Elizabeth Spehar, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support; Bankole Adeoye, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; Hawa Sally Samai, Executive Secretary of the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion in Sierra Leone, a body established by an act signed by Sierra Leone’s Parliament in December 2020 with a mandate to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts; and a civil society representative.

Additionally, Sierra Leone intends to convene a briefing on the [women, peace, and security \(WPS\)](#) agenda, focusing on sustaining WPS commitments in the context of accelerated drawdown of peace operations. The expected briefers are UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations (DPPA-DPO) Martha Ama Akyaa Pobe, and a civil society representative.

Also anticipated in August is a briefing on the Secretary-General’s biannual strategic-level report on [the threat posed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant \(ISIL/Da’esh\)](#) to international peace and security.

This month, several Council members will

undertake a visit to Geneva following an invitation from Switzerland to mark the 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions.

Middle Eastern issues on the programme of work in August are:

- [Syria](#), meeting on the political and humanitarian tracks;
- [Yemen](#), monthly meeting on developments;
- “[The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question](#)”, the monthly meeting, with the possibility of additional meetings depending on developments in [Gaza](#) and [Israel](#); and
- [Lebanon](#), consultations on the work of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and renewal of the mission’s mandate.

African issues on the programme of work this month are:

- [Libya](#), meeting on the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and the work of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee;
- [Somalia](#), authorisation of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and meeting to review the concept of operations (CONOPs) of the ATMIS follow-on mission pursuant to resolution 2741 of 28 June, which reauthorised ATMIS’ mandate until 12 August;
- [Sudan](#), the semi-annual briefing of International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan on the ICC’s Darfur-related activities;
- [South Sudan](#), briefing and consultations on the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS); and
- [Central Africa](#), expected exchange of letters to renew the mandate of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

The only Asian issue scheduled this month is a briefing on the work of the 1718 [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea \(DPRK\)](#) Sanctions Committee.

As in previous months, the Council may hold one or more meetings on [Ukraine](#) in August. Council members are also likely to hold a meeting under “any other business” to mark the 16th anniversary of the 2008 [Russia-Georgia](#) war.

Other issues could be raised during the month depending on developments.

### 1 August 2024

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## In Hindsight: The Geneva Conventions at 75: Much Work to be Done

On 12 August, the Geneva Conventions turn 75. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has described these foundational treaties in international humanitarian law (IHL) as “one of humanity’s most important accomplishments of the last century”. Switzerland is organising an informal visit of Council members to Geneva to mark the occasion and to take a closer look at the meaning and purpose of the Conventions, which have been universally ratified.

In recent years, blatant disregard for IHL has been a feature of conflicts around the world, including several on the Council’s agenda. For the Security Council, the anniversary offers a time for sombre and sober reflection.

### What do the Geneva Conventions Say?

The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their additional protocols contain rules designed to protect civilians and those who can no longer engage in conflict, such as wounded and sick soldiers and prisoners of war. The Fourth Geneva Convention focuses on civilians and includes detailed provisions on their treatment, status, and rights. It also includes rules relating to humanitarian access, which are frequently referred to in contemporary discussions on the protection of civilians.

All four conventions contain an identical Article 3, which applies to non-international armed conflicts. Among other things, it prohibits acts with respect to persons taking no active part in hostilities. These violations include:

- Violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment, and torture;
- Taking of hostages;
- Outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; and
- The passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees widely recognised as indispensable.

The Fourth Geneva Convention also sets out rules relating to accountability for grave breaches. Under Article 146, for example, parties to the Convention undertake to enact legislation that provides for penal sanctions for persons who commit grave breaches.

### The Growing Harm to Civilians in Armed Conflict

That the Security Council has continued to play a key normative role in promoting some of the principles that underpin IHL is substantiated in a 2024 policy brief by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reviewing the Council’s consideration of its protection of civilians’ agenda during the years 2019-2023. The brief describes ways in which the Council has pronounced itself on the obligations of conflict parties, including with respect to the conduct of hostilities and the protections accorded to specific people and objects in conflict. It notes that the Council has consistently integrated protection language into country-specific resolutions, including in the mandates of peace operations, most of which are called upon “to investigate, monitor, analyse and report on IHL and IHRL [international human rights law] violations and abuses”. It adds that the most common protection of civilians-related listing criteria for Security Council-authorized sanctions “relate to violations of IHL

and IHRL abuses”.

The Council’s pronouncements notwithstanding, OCHA offers a grim assessment of the status of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, finding that “the existing gap between the growing normative framework and the realities experienced by civilians in conflict-affected contexts across the world has remained, if not widened, in the past five years”.

The Secretary-General’s May 2024 report on the protection of civilians in 2023 similarly observes that in many conflicts—including issues on the Council’s agenda such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Syria, and Ukraine—“compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law is often lacking...and the demands of the Council’s protection of civilians resolutions of the past 25 years have gone largely unheeded”. In 2023, “hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed or suffered appalling injuries as victims of deliberate or indiscriminate attacks, as well as purportedly lawful attacks under international humanitarian law”: that year, the UN recorded more than 33,443 civilian deaths in armed conflict, representing a 72 percent increase over 2022. Not all civilian deaths in conflict can be attributed to violations of international law. But the lack of adherence to the laws and norms of war and what ICRC president Mirjana Spoljaric Egger calls the “elasticity” in how IHL is being interpreted are contributing to this high civilian death toll.

### Challenges in the UNSC

Why do Council resolutions on protection matters, including in relation to IHL, go unheeded? In some cases, Council members, both permanent and elected, are directly involved or have strategic interests in conflicts under discussion. This has hampered the Council’s leverage in resolving wars and in mitigating harm done to civilians by IHL violations. Conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, and Syria are notable examples of this.

Longstanding concerns that some members express about interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign states, and a willingness to defer to regional actors even when they are slow to act, can also limit the Council’s engagement. A case in point was the civil war in Tigray, Ethiopia: from 2020 to 2022 some members preferred to have the Council take a back seat to regional actors, severely limiting its scope of action while the fighting raged, with reports of extrajudicial killings, torture, sexual violence, the use of starvation as a military tactic, and the denial and obstruction of humanitarian access.

The war in Ukraine and the war between Israel and Hamas have focused international attention on how great power interests can hamper the Council’s work. Since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Council has, by and large, been a bystander amidst reports of attacks on civilian infrastructure, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, summary executions, torture, and sexual violence. It has adopted only one resolution on Ukraine since the start of the war, a “Uniting for Peace” resolution, which referred the issue to the General Assembly for an Emergency Special Session (ESS) precisely because of Council gridlock. (As this is considered a procedural matter, the resolution was not subject to the veto, which is why Russia was unable to block it.) Although the General Assembly has adopted seven resolutions in the Ukraine ESS since February

## In Hindsight: The Geneva Conventions at 75: Much Work to be Done

2022, its resolutions lack the political and legal standing of Security Council resolutions and cannot, for example, impose binding obligations on member states under the UN Charter.

A divided Council has also failed to protect civilians and uphold IHL in Gaza during the current war that began with the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks on Israel. The Council's response to the conflict in Gaza has featured contentious and prolonged negotiations, with multiple failed adoptions. The US, which has provided Israel with political and military backing throughout the war, has severely constrained the Council's ability to respond to the crisis. It has vetoed three draft resolutions on the conflict. As well, China and Russia have vetoed two US-proposed draft resolutions on the war. The four resolutions that have been adopted on the crisis have largely gone unimplemented. The Gaza conflict has included violations of IHL and IHRL, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, according to a 27 May report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, and Israel, covering the period 7 October to 31 December 2023.

An additional challenge has been the loss of support for some of the Council's robust tools—for example, peacekeeping and sanctions—which have historically been used to protect civilians and promote accountability. In part, the waning support for these tools reflects perceptions that they are failing to promote peace and security. The value of UN peacekeeping, once an area of broad agreement among Council members, is increasingly being called into question; tasking the AU or multinational actors, such as the multinational security support (MSS) mission in Haiti, are the most widely considered alternatives at present, as reflected in *A New Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General's July 2023 policy brief. Similarly, some Council members are skeptical about the effectiveness of sanctions regimes, and in certain cases, believe that they harm the ability of target countries to serve their populations.

Geopolitical interests also shape members' calculations with respect to the Council's robust tools. The Mali sanctions regime, which included violations of IHRL or IHL among its listing criteria, fell victim to a Russian veto in July 2023. In June 2023, Mali withdrew its consent for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)—a large peacekeeping operation with a robust protection mandate—which has since been shuttered. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and their allies have criticised the involvement of the Wagner Group, a Russian security company now renamed the Africa Corps, in Mali, a former French colony that until 2022 hosted French military forces.

Tension in the Council around legal accountability measures is not new, but has sharpened, judging by its approach to the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Three of the five permanent members (China, Russia, and the US) are not state parties to the ICC. While the Council referred two cases to the ICC—Sudan (Darfur) in 2005 and Libya in 2011—such a referral today feels unthinkable, given the antagonism towards the court from some key

Council members. Russia, which has regularly criticised the ICC, has amplified its opposition since the Court's 17 March 2023 announcement that it had issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russia's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for allegedly committing the war crimes of unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children from Ukraine to Russia. For example, in the semi-annual briefing of the ICC prosecutor on the court's work in Darfur in January, Russia said that “for some 20 years, the ICC has been engaged in sabotaging the mandates of the Security Council, shifting the blame to national authorities, the complex security situation or a lack of resources”.

The US, meanwhile, has continued to back Israel over Gaza, notwithstanding the fact that in May, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, announced that he was filing applications for warrants of arrest before the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli Minister of Defence Yoav Gallant for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the US government has hosted both officials since the applications were filed.

### Silver Linings?

The 75th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions invites reflection on how the norms and values they embody can be implemented in today's difficult environment. One heartening sign is that, notwithstanding the divisions in the Council, some members have continued to assert the importance of IHL and call out violations. In recent months, many elected Council members have done so in statements on issues such as Gaza, Sudan, and Ukraine. This is also evident in the language of resolutions penned by elected members on Gaza, including resolution 2728, which was drafted by the E10 as a whole and demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan, leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire, as well as the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.

The Council's tools—including those that promote prevention, protect civilians, and enhance accountability—need to be reinvigorated. Nearly ten years since the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, it is worth revisiting how to strengthen UN peace operations in light of recent developments. Similarly, with the adoption of resolution 2744 in July, the resurrected Informal Working Group of the Security Council on General UN Sanctions Issues, whose previous iteration operated from 2000 to 2006, could provide a useful forum for building trust and understanding around the use of UN sanctions.

In September, member states are expected to adopt the Pact for the Future, laying out their vision for the future of multilateralism. As a consensus document, the end product may not be bold and innovative. However, it could allow members to reaffirm the importance of international humanitarian and human rights law, and offer ideas for how to mitigate the barbarous effects of war on civilians.

<sup>1</sup> Khan is also seeking arrest warrants for various counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes for the Head of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar; the Commander-in-Chief of the Al-Qassam Brigades (Hamas' military wing) Mohammed Diab Ibrahim Al-Masri, also known as Mohammed Deif; and was doing so for the now assassinated Head of Hamas' Political Bureau, Ismail Haniyeh.

## Status Update since our July Forecast

### The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 2 July, the Security Council held an open briefing, followed by closed consultations, on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” (S/PV.9678). Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza Sigrid Kaag briefed.

On 17 July, the Security Council convened its quarterly open debate on “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question”. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chaired the meeting. To accommodate all speakers, the meeting was resumed and completed on 19 July (S/PV.9678 and Resumptions I and II). Earle Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the UN Secretary-General, briefed.

On 26 July, the Security Council held a briefing on the humanitarian situation in Gaza under “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” agenda item (S/PV.9694). Deputy Commissioner-General (Operational Support) of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) Antonia Marie De Meo and the Deputy Special Coordinator and Resident Coordinator at the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) Muhannad Hadi briefed. The meeting was called by Algeria, China, and Russia.

On 31 July, the Security Council held an emergency briefing under “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” agenda item to discuss developments related to the assassination of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran (S/PV.9696). The meeting was called by Algeria, China, and Russia following a request from Iran (S/2024/584). Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo briefed.

### Myanmar Meeting under “Any Other Business”

On 3 July, Council members discussed the humanitarian situation in Myanmar under “any other business”. The Republic of Korea (ROK), the UK, and the US requested the meeting after a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse was looted and burned in the town of Maungdaw in Rakhine State on 22 June. Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya briefed.

### Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 8 July, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), including the work of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/PV.9681). Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO Bintou Keita briefed. The DRC and Rwanda also participated in the meeting under rule 37 of the Council’s provisional rules of procedure.

During the meeting, Council members discussed the implementation of MONUSCO’s disengagement plan, agreed with the Congolese government and endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2717 of 19 December 2023. At the time of writing, Council members were negotiating a draft text proposed by France and Sierra Leone, co-penholders on the DRC, to authorise MONUSCO to provide limited operational and logistical support to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC).

### “Stepping Up Preventive Action: From Environmental Challenges to Opportunities for Peace”

On Monday (8 July), Council members held an Arrria-formula meeting on “Stepping up Preventive Action: From Environmental Challenges to Opportunities for Peace”. Slovenia organised the meeting together with Guyana, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and Sierra Leone. The briefers were Amy Pope, the Director-General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM); Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh; and Nohora Alejandra Quiguntar, the founder of Tejiendo Pensamiento-Indigenous Women for the Climate in Colombia.

### Ukraine

On 9 July, the Security Council held an emergency meeting on Ukraine (S/PV.9682). Ecuador and France (supported by Slovenia, the UK, and the US) requested the meeting following a series of Russian missile attacks targeting multiple cities across Ukraine on 8 July, including a strike that caused significant damage to the Okhmatdyt children’s hospital in Kyiv. Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Joyce Msuya and Volodymyr Zhovnir, a cardiac surgeon and activist, briefed the Council.

On 25 July, the Council convened for an open briefing under the “Threats to international peace and security” agenda item (S/PV.9693). Russia requested the meeting to discuss the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. Deputy to the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Adedeji Ebo briefed.

### Cyprus

On 11 July, Council members held closed consultations on the situation in Cyprus. Special Representative and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) Colin Stewart briefed the Council, presenting the Secretary-General’s report on his good offices in Cyprus (S/2024/526) and on UNFICYP (S/2024/527).

### Colombia

On 11 July, the Security Council held an open briefing on Colombia (S/PV.9683). Special Representative and Head of the UN Verification Mission in Colombia Carlos Ruiz Massieu briefed on recent developments and the Secretary-General’s latest 90-day report on the mission (S/2024/509). The Council was also briefed by Diego Tovar, an ex-combatant from the former rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and signatory to the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace concluded in 2016 between the government of Colombia and the former FARC-EP. Colombian President Gustavo Petro Urrego represented his country at the Council meeting for the first time since taking office in August 2022. The meeting also marked the first time that a former FARC-EP member briefed the Council in person.

On 18 July, Council members issued a press statement on Colombia (SC/15768), in which they re-emphasised the importance of ensuring the comprehensive implementation of the 2016 agreement. Among other issues, they expressed concern about continuing violence, noting that conflict-related violence, including conflict-related

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sexual violence, as well as violations against children, such as recruitment and use, continue to disproportionately affect indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. The statement referenced the Colombian government's dialogue efforts with armed groups operating in the country, calling for the strengthening of the ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), including "the return to prior commitments to protect the civilian population with a view to improve security in the territories".

### Haiti

On 12 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2743, renewing the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for another year, until 15 July 2025.

On 3 July, the Council received its regular quarterly briefing from Special Representative and Head of BINUH María Isabel Salvador on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's latest report on BINUH. Haiti's interim prime minister Garry Conille participated in the meeting under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure. Canada (on behalf of the Economic and Social Council Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti), the Dominican Republic, Kenya, and Saint Kitts and Nevis (on behalf of the Caribbean Community) also participated.

### West Africa and the Sahel

On 12 July, Special Representative and Head of the UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) Leonardo Santos Simão briefed the Council (S/PV.9685), presenting the Secretary-General's biannual report on West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of UNOWAS (S/2024/521). Following the public session, Council members held closed consultations with Simão.

During July, Council members agreed to a draft letter that took note of the Secretary-General's recommendation in his November 2023 and May 2024 letters to the Council to end the Secretariat's reporting obligations on the Group of Five for the Sahel Joint Force. In their letter responding to this recommendation, Council members requested that the Secretary-General provide three annual reports on West Africa and the Sahel and the activities of UNOWAS—rather than two such annual reports—in 2024 and 2025.

### “Multilateral Cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order”

On 16 July, the Security Council held 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 (S/PV.9686 and Resumption I). Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov chaired the meeting, which was one of the signature events of Russia's July Council presidency. There were no briefers.

### UN Sanctions

On 19 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2744, strengthening the mandate of the Focal Point for Delisting, which was established by resolution 1730 of 19 December 2006 to receive requests for delisting from UN sanctions regimes. Resolution 2744 also established an Informal Working Group of the Security Council on General UN Sanctions Issues, a previous iteration of which was active between 2000 and 2006. The resolution, which was co-penned by Malta and the US, was co-sponsored by 52 member states.

### Cooperation between the UN and Regional Organisations

On 19 July, the Security Council held a debate on cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organisations (S/PV.9688), focusing on the role of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in maintaining international peace and security. Russia, a founding member of these three organisations, convened the debate as a signature event of its July Council presidency, and its Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Vershinin chaired the meeting. Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Elizabeth Spehar, CSTO Secretary General Imangali Tasmagambetov, CIS Secretary General Sergey Lebedev, and SCO Secretary General Zhang Ming briefed.

### UNRCCA (Central Asia)

On 23 July, Council members held closed consultations on the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA). Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNRCCA Kaha Imnadze briefed.

### Central African Republic

On 30 July, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2745, lifting the arms embargo on the CAR and renewing the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee until 31 August 2025, which henceforth will be known as the Panel of Experts pursuant to resolution 2745. The Council also extended all other sanctions measures targeted against armed groups and associated individuals until 31 July 2025.

# Women, Peace and Security

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold a briefing on “Sustaining Women, Peace and Security Commitments in the context of accelerated drawdown of peace operations”. Assistant Secretary-General for Africa in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations Martha Ama Akyaa Pobee, UN Women Executive Director Sima Sami Bahous, and a civil society representative are the anticipated briefers.

It appears that Sierra Leone intends to draw the Council’s attention to challenges for the implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda and gender equality during and in the aftermath of drawdowns, reconfigurations, and accelerated terminations of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

## Background and Key Recent Developments

UN peace operations transitions have emerged as a key focus of Security Council attention in the context of the termination of the mandates of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in June 2023 and the UN Integrated Transition Mission in Sudan in December 2023, as well as the drawdown of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) from the end of 2023. Looking ahead, in May, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) was renewed for a final 19-month period until December 2025, after which the mission will cease its operations. Also in May, Somalia sent two letters to Council members; the first calling for the “swift conclusion of the necessary procedures for the termination of the [m]ission by the end of the mandate in October”. The second letter expressed Somalia’s readiness to engage with relevant stakeholders in the “preparation of [a] complex transition process within [the] appropriate timeframe”.

Strained relations between host countries and missions, as well as divisions among Security Council members, which are then exploited by host country leaders, have made recent transitions particularly challenging. In these circumstances, host governments may compel UN missions to withdraw in haste, possibly undermining gains made during their presence and with potentially dangerous consequences for civilians if the security vacuum left by the mission is not adequately filled. (For background, see our UN Transitions in a Fractured Multilateral Environment research report.)

Additional risks and challenges for the WPS agenda in these contexts include a decline in attention to, and monitoring of, women’s participation in peace and political processes; women’s rights; sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV); and attacks on women human rights defenders and peacebuilders.

The Council has held several thematic discussions on UN peace operation transitions in general, most recently in an open debate organised by former Council member Ireland in September 2021. Members have also begun to address the effects of such processes on specific capacities of UN peace operations. For instance, the Council’s latest annual open debate on children and armed conflict, held on 26 June, spotlighted the need to preserve and transfer child protection data and capacities during the transition of UN peace operations.

August’s briefing will mark the first time that the Security Council focuses specifically on challenges of accelerated drawdowns for

the WPS agenda. Some of these concerns have been touched upon in recent meetings of the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on WPS, such as the 6 November 2023 meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the 26 January meeting on Sudan, and the 8 April meeting on Iraq.

Adopted following the September 2021 open debate, resolution 2594 was the first thematic Security Council resolution on transitions. It recognised that mission reconfiguration may entail increased risks for civilians, including women, and emphasised the need for peace operations to engage “at the earliest possible stage in integrated planning and coordination on transitions” with the UN presence on the ground, the host state and other national stakeholders including civil society.

Resolution 2594 requested the Secretary-General to make sure that a comprehensive gender analysis; technical gender expertise; and the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women are included throughout the transition process, as well as to ensure the inclusion of youth and “measures to safeguard the interests of persons with disabilities”. It further requested the Secretary-General to make sure that “their needs are fully integrated in all prioritised and sequenced stages of a mission mandate and mission transitions”. (This language was likely based on resolution 2242 on WPS. Adopted in 2015, resolution 2242 had already urged the UN to make sure that gender analysis and technical gender expertise were included in mission drawdowns, and that women’s needs and participation were integrated in all sequenced stages of mission mandates.)

The June 2022 Secretary-General’s report on transitions in UN peace operations included examples of UN approaches to gender-responsive conflict analysis and integration of gender equality into transition processes. It noted the need for additional planning, monitoring and evaluation capacities, including on human rights and gender mainstreaming, as part of integrated transition teams in missions.

In his latest report on CRSV, issued in April 2024, the Secretary-General noted that with the accelerated drawdown of peace operations in Mali and Sudan, the UN “encountered significant challenges” in sustaining the implementation of Security Council resolutions on CRSV. The report called for the timely deployment of women’s protection advisers, noting, however, that the level of human and budgetary resources allocated to their deployment “is far from commensurate with the scale of the challenge”. More broadly, the 2023 Secretary-General’s annual report on WPS recommended that UN member states ensure that predictable resources are made available for gender equality and WPS programming and expertise during drawdowns and transitions.

Women civil society representatives have highlighted these and other issues in their briefings at the Security Council. In her briefing at the 11 December 2023 meeting on the DRC, National Coordinator of the NGO Solidarité Féminine pour la Paix Sandrine Lusamba addressed MONUSCO’s drawdown. She recommended that MONUSCO and the UN Country Team work with local and national NGOs to develop indicators to evaluate the security situation in the country, measuring “the protection and promotion of women’s human rights, including in the areas of gender-based violence, attacks on women human rights defenders, sexual and

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# Women, Peace and Security

reproductive rights and the meaningful participation of women”. Lusamba also recommended that donors support the DRC government “so that it can fulfil its protection responsibilities”. She further called for funding the UN humanitarian response plan for the DRC, and women-led and women’s rights organisations.

## Key Issues and Options

The pivotal issue for the Security Council remains the full implementation of the WPS agenda and its impact on the ground. A key issue for Council members supportive of the agenda is to preserve and strengthen WPS language in thematic and country-specific outcomes and to follow up on the implementation of these decisions.

Regarding the topic of the briefing, an option for Council members is to politically and materially support comprehensive, context-specific, coordinated, and gender-responsive strategies for transition processes and the post-drawdown period by both the UN and host states. At August’s briefing and in relevant Council decisions, members could call for the meaningful participation of feminist and women’s rights organisations as well as women human rights defenders in determining such strategies, and follow up on the effective inclusion of such advice.

Members could also call for and adequately fund mechanisms for the continuity, preservation, and transfer of knowledge and capacity on monitoring the implementation of the WPS agenda across all its pillars (participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery) including, for instance, monitoring sexual and gender-based violence and attacks on women human rights defenders and peacebuilders. Members can further provide enhanced support to the deployment of gender advisers and women protection advisers in peace operations, including those undergoing transitions.

As the organiser of this briefing, Sierra Leone could prepare a chair’s summary of the meeting to capture salient themes of the discussion to be circulated in a Council letter.

## Council Dynamics

Most Council members are generally supportive of the WPS agenda. However, the prevalent assessment, including among several Council members and civil society actors, is that the dynamics on this file remain difficult and uncondusive to the adoption of new WPS outcomes, these difficulties being further complicated by the Council’s polarisation in the context of the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Supportive members and civil society organisations emphasise instead the need to close the persisting gap in the implementation of the framework set out in the Council’s WPS resolutions and the numerous domestic and regional initiatives it generated. Feminist civil society organisations—such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom—have criticised Security Council members who express rhetorical support for the WPS agenda, human rights and the rule of law, while “simultaneously contributing

to violence and insecurity around the globe”.

Council members retained WPS-related language in several resolutions and were, at times, able to strengthen it. For instance, in June the Council adopted resolution 2736 which, among other things, demands that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) halt the siege of El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state in Sudan. For the first time since the outbreak of the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF in April 2023, this resolution encouraged engagement by UN and regional actors to advance peace and an inclusive Sudanese-led political process with the “full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women”.

At the same time, Russia and China often challenge the inclusion of language on WPS in Security Council products. Russia has regularly argued that the Council’s engagement on WPS should be limited to the consideration of “women’s issues in a context of the maintenance of peace and security and in connection to situations that are on the Council’s agenda”, since human rights and the role of women are already discussed in other UN forums such as the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.

Russia has advanced a similar argument regarding the human rights and gender aspects of transitions and peacekeeping, saying that “providing States with long-term assistance in the areas of development and human rights through peacekeeping organizations is not appropriate”, and calling for reducing “peacekeepers’ secondary and non-core tasks, especially those on the human rights, social and gender fronts”. During the negotiations of UNAMI’s final mandate renewal Russia opposed the inclusion of WPS language.

Council members Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, the UK, and the US have given continuity to the Shared Commitments on WPS initiative, which was started in 2021 by Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico. It seems that these members held regular strategy meetings and tried to coordinate their positions on key WPS issues. They have also held seven WPS-focused press stakeouts this year in connection with Council meetings, including on Sudan, the Great Lakes and Afghanistan.

Engagement on some commitments remained uneven, however. Only Malta and the ROK have used their Security Council presidencies in 2024 to focus a mandated country-specific meeting on WPS, respectively on the Great Lakes and Sudan. In April, Malta also focused the annual open debate on CRSV on demilitarisation and gender-responsive arms control, seemingly the first time that this annual open debate addressed this issue.

It also appears that commitment holders have yet to develop coordinated strategies to implement their pledge to draw attention to, and follow up on, “the recommendations and priority issues raised by civil society briefers in Council meetings”.

The UK is the penholder on WPS, and the US is the penholder on CRSV. Sierra Leone and Switzerland are the co-chairs of the IEG on WPS.

# Sudan

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will receive the semi-annual briefing of International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Asad Ahmad Khan on the ICC's Darfur-related activities.

## Background and Key Recent Developments

More than 17 years after the Council's ICC referral on the situation in Darfur, through resolution 1593 of 31 March 2005, the first trial opened on 5 April 2022 with the case of *Prosecutor v. Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman* ("Ali Kushayb"). Abd-Al-Rahman, reportedly a former leader of the Janjaweed militia, is accused of 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed between August 2003 and approximately April 2004 in Darfur. The prosecution presented evidence from 81 witnesses during the trial and concluded its case on 28 February 2023. Subsequently, the defence for Abd-Al-Rahman made its opening statement from 19 to 20 October 2023 before Trial Chamber I of the ICC, following which the defence proceeded to call witnesses and present its case. Between 14 January 2022 and 6 May, the Trial Chamber authorised the participation of 1,331 victims in the trial proceedings. (For background, see the brief on Sudan in our January *Monthly Forecast*.)

Four arrest warrants issued by the ICC remain outstanding—against Omar Al Bashir, former Sudanese President; Ahmad Muhammad Harun, former Sudanese Minister of State for the Interior; Abdel Raheem Muhammad Hussein, former Sudanese Minister of National Defence; and Abdallah Banda Abakaer Nourain, commander-in-chief of the Justice and Equality Movement at the time of the warrant. Pursuant to resolution 1593 and the subsequent orders of the ICC, Sudan remains under an obligation to surrender the four remaining suspects to the court.

In his 29 January briefing to the Council, Khan said that the failure to execute arrest warrants for those indicted by the court had contributed to "the climate of impunity and the outbreak of violence that commenced in April [2023] and that continues today". He added that there is reason to believe that "Rome Statute crimes" are being perpetrated in Darfur by both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a Sudanese paramilitary group, in the current fighting, although he did not specify which type or types of crimes he was referencing under the statute. (Under the Rome Statute, the ICC has jurisdiction over four crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.)

Since the onset of the current conflict in April 2023, more than 18,650 people have been killed, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, a non-governmental organisation that collects conflict-related data, as at 12 July. (For background and more information, see the Sudan brief in our June *Monthly Forecast* and 17 June *What's in Blue* story.)

According to the ICC Prosecutor's most recent report—submitted to the Council on 29 January, pursuant to resolution 1593—the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) has accelerated investigations with respect to crimes committed in Darfur as part of the current hostilities. To this end, the OTP deployed investigative missions to the region and carried out extensive open-source investigations and analyses. The report indicated that outreach missions had also been

conducted to refugee camps in eastern Chad and noted that investigations into the current hostilities include crimes committed in El-Geneina, with other areas of Darfur also of significant interest because of alleged crimes in these states.

With respect to the investigations of other individuals subject to arrest warrants in the Darfur situation, the prosecutor's report said that these suspects were detained in Kober prison in Khartoum before the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023. Several reports, however, indicated that "prisoners were either released from, escaped, or otherwise left Kober prison". The report also took note of accounts suggesting that Al Bashir and Hussein remained in the custody of the SAF at the Al-Alia military hospital in Omdurman. It noted that Harun remained at large in eastern Sudan and that Sudanese authorities were able to communicate with him. During the period covered by the report, the OTP was able to strengthen the case against Harun by collecting additional relevant information.

In her remarks during the annual open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, held on 21 May, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide Alice Wairimu Nderitu raised alarm about the spiralling situation in Sudan which she said "bears all the marks of risk of genocide, with strong allegations that this crime has already been committed".

The final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, dated 15 January, underscored that in West Darfur (particularly in El Geneina, Sirba, Murne, and Masteri), the RSF and allied militias specifically targeted the Masalit community and systematically violated international humanitarian law. The report indicated that some of these violations might constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 26 June press release, a group of UN experts warned that "the extent of hunger and displacement...in Sudan today is unprecedented and never witnessed before". It also expressed concerns about "the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers and local volunteers", which it said has undermined aid operations, putting millions of people at further risk of starvation.

On 12 July, the UN Human Rights expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, Radhouane Nouicer, issued a statement after his five-day visit to Port Sudan. He called on authorities immediately to address four key priority areas: ensuring the protection of civilians by refraining from indiscriminate attacks; permitting unhindered humanitarian access, including by expediting administrative processes; refraining from arbitrary arrests and detentions; and ensuring accountability for human rights violations and abuses.

The International Fact-Finding Mission for Sudan, established by the Human Rights Council in October 2023, visited Chad from 30 June to 18 July and travelled to several areas in eastern Chad along the border with Sudan, including Adre, Farchana, and Abeche. In its press release following the visit, the mission noted that it had documented disturbing patterns of grave human rights violations and called on the international community urgently to step up efforts to end the conflict.

## Women, Peace and Security

As the Council's president for June, the Republic of Korea (ROK) elected to include a focus on women, peace and security (WPS) at the 18 June Council briefing on Sudan. Several participants addressed WPS issues during the meeting. In her briefing, Director of OCHA's Operations and Advocacy Division Edem Wosornu said that the UN Population Fund received reports of women and girls being raped and subjected to other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) as they leave their homes in search of food, with local women-led organisations reporting rising suicide rates among survivors and shrinking access to services. Limiaa Ahmed, Senior Programme Director

UN DOCUMENTS ON SUDAN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1593 (31 March 2005) referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9659 (18 June 2024) was a meeting on Sudan, pursuant to resolution 2715 of 1 December 2023, which terminated the mandate of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan. S/PV.9538 (29 January 2024) was the semi-annual briefing on the ICC's Darfur-related activities.



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## Sudan

of the non-governmental organisation Sudan Family Planning Association, stressed that although women's rights and women-led organisations "have spared no effort" to assist women and girls affected by GBV, they are "severely underfunded and do not have the capacity to cope with the scale of violence against women and girls". Malta, Slovenia, and Switzerland condemned sexual violence against women and girls, and the ROK urged the warring parties to "maintain strict command-and-control systems over their forces". Ecuador noted that the "political path to peace must ensure the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of Sudanese women". Similarly, Japan said that women's meaningful participation in political decision-making is "a precondition to creating lasting peace and security".

### Key Issues and Options

An underlying key issue for the Council is how to promote justice and accountability for past atrocities committed in Darfur and for the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law by the Sudanese warring parties across the country.

Another key issue for the Council is how to enhance cooperation between the ICC prosecutor and relevant Sudanese authorities.

In the upcoming Council meeting on Sudan, several Council members, including the P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and like-minded members, may welcome the efforts of the OTP in leading investigations regarding ongoing hostilities and the work done by the Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan. These members may encourage the ICC's cooperation with third states, as well as with regional and civil society organisations. They may call upon the Sudanese warring parties to uphold international humanitarian law and cooperate with investigative agencies in carrying out their work.

In addition to receiving Khan's briefing, Council members supportive of the ICC's work in Sudan could consider requesting a briefing from the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to spotlight the crimes being committed in the conflict.

### Council Dynamics

The Council is divided on the work of the ICC. Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, the ROK, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, and the UK are state parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC. Algeria,

China, Mozambique, Russia, and the US are not. These distinctions, however, do not necessarily reflect how members view the court's work on Sudan. For instance, the US has supported the ICC's efforts regarding Sudan.

In December 2023, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced that he had determined that members of the SAF and the RSF had committed war crimes in Sudan. He further determined that members of the RSF and allied militias had committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. This determination, Blinken said, "provides force and renewed urgency to African and international efforts to end the violence, address the humanitarian and human rights crisis, and work towards meaningful justice for victims and the affected communities that ends decades of impunity".

At the last semi-annual briefing on 29 January, wide-ranging views were expressed about the ICC's work in relation to Darfur. Most members welcomed the progress on Abd-Al-Rahman's trial while calling on Sudan to increase its cooperation with the court, including by providing access to key witnesses. These members also welcomed and supported the efforts by the OTP to conduct investigations into crimes committed as part of the ongoing hostilities in Sudan. At the same time, Russia declared that "[t]he regrettable, if not outright tragic, effects of the Council's involvement of the ICC in the situations in Libya and Darfur teach us one thing only: the Council made a mistake by transferring these situations to the ICC, a mistake that must not be repeated. It is important to assess the damage that this entity has caused to specific countries".

Russia's negative view of the ICC hardened following the court's announcement on 17 March 2023 that it had issued arrest warrants for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, for allegedly committing the war crime of "unlawful deportation" and "unlawful transfer" of children from Ukraine to Russia.

The UK is the penholder on Sudan, and the US is the penholder on Sudan sanctions.

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## Somalia

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is expected to extend the authorisation of the African Union (AU) Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which expires on 12 August.

Council members are expected to receive a written update from the Secretary-General by 31 August on the modalities and timeline for the transition of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) to the UN Country Team, as requested by the Council in a 16 May letter.

The mandate of UNSOM is set to expire on 31 October and was most recently renewed by resolution 2705 of 31 October 2023.

### Key Recent Developments

In a 21 June communiqué, the AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) endorsed the establishment of a new AU-led and UN-authorized mission for Somalia in support of Somalia's federal government following the expected departure of ATMIS in December. It decided that this mission must be given a strong political mandate, with its scope, size, posture, composition, and duration aligning with the country's security threats. The AUPSC requested the AU Commission (the organisation's secretariat) to develop financing options for this mission in consultation with the UN, including through Security Council resolution 2719 of 21 December 2023 on the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs). It also requested the AU Commission to submit by the end of July a

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA** Security Council Resolutions [S/RES/2741](#) (28 June 2024) extended the authorisation of ATMIS until 12 August. [S/RES/2719](#) (21 December 2023) was a resolution on the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs). [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.9677](#) (28 June 2024) was a meeting on the situation in Somalia.

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## Somalia

concept of operations (CONOPs), including the mandate, configuration, and duration of the new mission, as well as timelines for the transition from ATMIS, in consultation with the Somali government, ATMIS and other relevant stakeholders.

On 28 June, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2741, reauthorising ATMIS and extending the drawdown of 2,000 ATMIS personnel until 12 August. The resolution encouraged the AU Commission to include benchmarks in the CONOPs, with clear indicators and milestones to measure progress and a comprehensive exit strategy. (For background and more information, see the Somalia brief in our June *Monthly Forecast* and 28 June *What's in Blue* story.)

On 17 July, a nine-member AU delegation concluded a four-day visit to Somalia. During the visit, the delegation met with officials of ATMIS, the Somali government, and the troop-contributing countries (TCCs) as well as members of the Core Security Partners Group—the EU, the UN, Türkiye, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the US. The discussions apparently focused on the size, mandate, timelines, and exit strategy of the post-ATMIS mission.

Tensions continued between Ethiopia and Somalia against the backdrop of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland, a self-proclaimed republic in the northern region of Somalia, on 1 January. (For background, see the Somalia brief in our February 2024 *Monthly Forecast* and 28 January and 22 June *What's in Blue* stories.)

On 1 July, the foreign ministers of Ethiopia and Somalia convened in Ankara for mediation talks facilitated by Türkiye. Both parties engaged in separate discussions with Türkiye to address their differences and “explore perspectives towards addressing them within a mutually acceptable framework”. They further agreed to hold a second round of discussions on 2 September. However, it appears that the talks did not yield significant progress with both sides continuing their truculent rhetoric thereafter. In a 4 July address to Parliament, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed stressed the importance of sea access to the country’s economy and claimed that Ethiopia signed the 1 January MoU only after all its neighbouring countries, including Somalia, rejected its request for support. On the other hand, Somali President Hassan Sheik Mohamud said, in remarks to the joint session of his country’s Parliament on 6 July, that “the Ethiopian government continues to evade its responsibility for its diplomatic misstep...and has never engaged with us in a neighbourly manner to resolve the current issue”. He further claimed that Türkiye had proposed mediation at Ethiopia’s request; however, Ethiopia’s position remained unchanged, which led to the postponement of talks.

On 15 July, local Marehaan clan militia ambushed and looted a convoy of trucks transporting heavy weapons near the town of Abudwaaq in central Somalia. The weapons reportedly included machine guns, anti-aircraft weapons, and rocket-propelled grenades. The origin of these weapons remains contested, but reports suggest that the convoy crossed into Somalia from Ethiopia and was escorted by personnel from the Somali National Intelligence Agency. The clashes apparently resulted in the deaths of at least five people, with some reports indicating a death toll as high as 20. The incident has raised significant concerns amidst the potential for these weapons

to be acquired by Al-Shabaab, a terrorist group affiliated with Al-Qaida, as well as escalating inter-clan conflicts within the country. While some reports have linked the arms shipment to a political leader in Somalia’s Galmudug state, Somali officials maintain that government security forces seized the weapons from illegal weapons traders. The Council lifted the arms embargo on the Somali government through resolution 2741 of 1 December 2023, adopted unanimously. (For more information, see our 1 December 2023 *What's in Blue* story.)

On 18 July, Somali President Mohamud convened an extraordinary meeting of the National Security Council (NSC) to address the looting of the weapons convoy. A press release issued after the meeting said that the NSC had instructed the Ministry of Internal Security to submit a detailed report and recommendations within two weeks, including identifying those responsible and proposing strict measures to prevent similar incidents. The NSC also agreed to impose a total ban on the trade, smuggling, and any other business related to weapons and ammunition within the country by non-state actors.

On 22 July, clashes broke out between Somali security forces and Al-Shabaab militants in the west and south of Kismayo town in Jubaland state. According to media reports, the fighting erupted after the militants carried out coordinated attacks against military bases manned by federal and regional forces in three villages in the state, which were captured from Al-Shabaab earlier in July. The Somali Defense Ministry claimed that the forces repulsed the attack and, in a counter-offensive, killed more than 80 militants, while the Jubaland regional forces reported the number of militants killed to be approximately 135.

### Key Issues and Options

The key issue for Council members in August will be the reauthorisation of the ATMIS mandate, which was extended until 12 August pursuant to resolution 2741. A related issue is the ATMIS drawdown process and post-ATMIS security arrangements. Council members are expected to convene a meeting upon receipt of the CONOPs for the post-ATMIS mission, which was anticipated to be submitted to the Council by 31 July, to review it and discuss subsequent steps.

Regarding the ATMIS mandate, the likely option for Council members is to reauthorise ATMIS and extend the drawdown of 2,000 troops until the end of September. In the same resolution, the Council could request the Secretary-General to work with the AU and other relevant stakeholders to finalise the overall design of the follow-on mission, provide a cost estimate, and articulate a range of options for financing the mission, including through resolution 2719. The Council could also ask the Secretary-General, jointly with the AU and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, to produce a consolidated CONOPs for the follow-on mission as well as the role and responsibilities of the UN Support Office in Somalia.

The other important issue for Council members is the future of UNSOM. The Council is likely to be guided by Somalia’s request as contained in its letters circulated to members on 8 and 10 May, the Secretary-General’s written update, which is expected by 31 August, and the various discussions on post-ATMIS security arrangements. In his remarks during the 24 June Council meeting on Somalia, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and

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## Somalia

Head of UNSOM James Swan said that a joint technical committee comprising senior officials from Somalia’s federal government and the UN had been established to outline the planning process for the transition. The committee held its first meeting on 22 June.

### Council Dynamics

Council members support the Somali government’s priorities and recognise the many challenges the country faces, including the persistent insecurity caused by the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab. They also support ongoing efforts to fight the group. Some members, however, believe that a security approach will not be sufficient and underscore the need to make progress in governance, justice, and economic reforms. Other Council members emphasise the need for progress in implementing the Somali Transition Plan, including

national force generation.

Although Council members seem to agree on continuing security support to Somalia post-ATMIS, views differ on how such efforts should be financed. The US is apparently not keen to consider a follow-on mission in Somalia within the framework of resolution 2719. Some other Council members also share this view. These members seem to believe that there is a lack of clarity on the modalities of implementing resolution 2719, including burden-sharing. Apparently, the US preference is to apply the resolution to an entirely new AUPSO with a narrow set of tasks and a defined timeline. The EU, a major financial contributor to ATMIS, advocates a sustainable financing model based on diversified contributions and a significant element of cost-sharing, including the possible use of the AU Peace Fund and Crisis Reserve Facility.

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## Maintenance of International Peace and Security: “Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation in the UN Security Council”

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is expected to convene for a debate titled “Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation in the UN Security Council” under the “Maintenance of International Peace and Security” agenda item. The briefers are expected to include UN Secretary-General António Guterres; Dennis Francis, the President of the UN General Assembly; and a civil society briefers.

No formal outcome is anticipated.

### Background and Recent Developments

In recent years, the struggles of the Security Council in addressing major conflicts in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria, Sudan and elsewhere have fuelled long-standing calls for its reform. Many advocates of Council reform note that the composition of the Council, which was founded in 1945, reflects an anachronistic world order. This perspective was echoed in *A New Agenda for Peace* by the Secretary-General, who wrote, “A Security Council that is more representative of the geopolitical realities of today, and of the contributions that different parts of the world make to global peace, is urgently needed.”

The common position of the African Union (AU) on Security Council reform, known as “The Ezulwini Consensus”, is based on the communiqué it adopted in Addis Ababa in March 2005. It calls for Africa to have “not less than two permanent seats” and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council. (It currently has no permanent seats and three non-permanent seats on the Council.) The common position further states that while Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, “so long as it exists, and as a matter of common

justice, it should be made available to all permanent members of the Security Council”. In July 2005, the AU Assembly reaffirmed the Ezulwini Consensus in the Sirte Declaration on the Reform of the United Nations.

The AU’s Committee of Ten (C-10)—a group of ten African states (Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Libya, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia) that advocates internationally for the Ezulwini Consensus—held a summit meeting in Oyala, Equatorial Guinea, from 22 to 24 November 2023. In the summit communiqué, the C-10 “reaffirmed that the Common African position, as espoused in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration remains the only viable option for Africa to successfully achieve its objectives”. The C-10 also decided to strengthen its efforts to promote this position in the UN Security Council reform process, addressing the “historical injustice” of African underrepresentation.

A C-10 ministerial meeting was convened in Algiers, Algeria, from 9 to 10 June. In the outcome document, the C-10 said that Africa’s participation in the September Summit of the Future should be “at the highest level, especially C-10 Heads of State and Government, to further solidify the aspirations of the continent and language input in the Pact for the Future”. (This pact is the envisioned outcome of the Summit of the Future planned for September and designed to provide a blueprint for the future of multilateralism.) It further reiterated that the C-10 ministers should meet with their counterparts among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council during the opening of the UN General Assembly (that is, “high-level week” in September), in keeping with

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**UNDOCUMENTS ON SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM** [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. **Other** [Assembly/AU/Decl. 2 \(V\)](#) (4–5 July 2005) was the AU Assembly’s declaration reaffirming the Ezulwini Consensus. [Ext/EX.CL/2 \(VII\)](#) (7–8 March 2005) was the AU Executive Council’s communiqué outlining the continent’s common position on Security Council reform, also known as the Ezulwini Consensus.

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# Maintenance of International Peace and Security: “Addressing the historical injustice and enhancing Africa’s effective representation in the UN Security Council”

a decision made at the Oyala summit.

The “Intergovernmental Negotiations on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters to the Security Council” (IGN) is currently negotiating its input to the Pact for the Future. The IGN co-chairs—Ambassador Tareq Albanai (Kuwait) and Ambassador Alexander Marschik (Austria)—circulated the most recent iteration of the document to member states on 14 June. In it, the IGN calls for an enlarged Security Council of 21 to 27 seats, adding that the enlargement should “redress the historical injustice against Africa as a priority and, while treating Africa as a special case, serve to improve the representation of the underrepresented and unrepresented regions and groups”.

## Council Dynamics

Algeria, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone—the three African members of the Council—have publicly championed the AU’s perspective on Council reform. At the 16 July ministerial-level open debate on “Multilateral cooperation in the interest of a more just, democratic and sustainable world order”, Algeria and Sierra Leone explicitly referred to the “historical injustice” done to Africa regarding Security Council membership, and Mozambique argued that the need for reform should account for the common African position (that is, the Ezulwini Consensus). Echoing the common position, Sierra Leone, which currently chairs the C-10, called for increasing African representation in both permanent and elected categories, noting that much of the Council’s work focuses on the continent. In this regard, 78 of the Council’s 204 meetings in 2023 on country or region-specific situations (38.24 percent) were on African matters, more than any other region. In addition, of the 49 formal outcomes

(45 resolutions and four presidential statements) that the Council adopted in 2023 focusing on country or regional issues, more than half (51.02 percent or 22 resolutions and three presidential statements) dealt with Africa.

The permanent Council members have publicly expressed support for structural reform of the Security Council, including by adding seats for underrepresented regions such as Africa. The US says that it supports expanding the permanent and elected membership of the Council, including permanent seats for Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. France and the UK have also said that they support expansion of both the permanent and elected membership of the Council, including permanent representation for Africa. At the General Assembly debate on 24 September 2022, Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov noted that the Council needed to adapt to today’s reality and that this should be done through a broader representation of African, Asian and Latin American countries. China has indicated that it espouses greater representation of developing countries on the Council.

Notwithstanding generic statements of support for structural reform, it is unclear how the permanent members would react if a critical mass of UN member states coalesced around a concrete reform proposal that required them to vote on it in the General Assembly. Reforming the composition of the Council and the use of the veto would require amending the Charter. The bar to do this is high. Any reform would require a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly membership—as well as ratification by two-thirds of UN member states, including all the permanent members, through “their respective constitutional processes”—in accordance with Article 108 of the UN Charter.

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## South Sudan

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold a briefing, followed by consultations, to discuss the situation in South Sudan. Special Representative and Head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Nicholas Haysom is anticipated to brief on the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on South Sudan, circulated to Council members on 29 July, and developments in the country.

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 30 April 2025.

### Key Recent Developments

On 9 May, high-level mediation talks (known as the Tumaini initiative) between the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU) and the non-signatories to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), facilitated by Kenya, commenced in Nairobi.

Kenyan President William Ruto appointed former Kenyan army commander Lazarus Sumbeiywo as the chief mediator for the South Sudanese peace process.

On 15 July, the parties reportedly reached agreements on eight protocols under the Tumaini initiative, including issues related to humanitarian access and support; trust- and confidence-building measures; a permanent ceasefire; security arrangements, and reforms; and land disputes. The agreement apparently provides for an inclusive governance structure among the government, opposition groups, and other stakeholders, covering areas such as executive roles, legislature, security, constitutional processes, and elections management. However, Riek Machar, South Sudan’s first Vice President and the leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLM-IO), reportedly decided to withdraw from the talks, arguing that the agreed protocols fail to recognise the revitalised

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN** Secretary-General’s Report S/2024/188 (26 February 2024) was the Secretary-General’s 90-day report on South Sudan. Security Council Letter S/2024/297 (8 April 2024) transmitted the assessment regarding South Sudan’s election preparedness and outstanding tasks related to the implementation of the R-ARCSS. Sanctions Committee Documents S/2024/343 (29 April 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, submitted pursuant to resolution 2683 of 30 May 2023. S/2024/65 (15 January 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, submitted pursuant to resolution 2676 of 8 March 2023.

## South Sudan

agreement and establish alternative institutions to replace or run in parallel with those in the revitalised agreement. He asserted that the Tumaini Initiative was only supposed to be a mediation forum for the parties to agree on a document that could serve as an annex to the revitalised agreement, thereby bringing the non-signatories into the fold, and not a stand-alone agreement.

On 3 July, South Sudan's Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) passed the controversial National Security Act 2014 (Amendment) Bill 2024, which reportedly grants the National Security Service broad powers to arrest and detain without a warrant individuals suspected of a crime, particularly “under emergency circumstances” and in instances of “crimes against the state”. The SPLM-IO rejected the legislation, saying that it goes against the spirit of the revitalised agreement and undermines security sector reforms. The hold-out groups participating in the Tumaini initiative also expressed their opposition to the legislation and called for reconstituting the National Security Service into a civilian intelligence service with the mandate to gather intelligence without powers of arrest, detention, and interference in political processes. In a 10 July joint statement, the embassies of Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, the US, and the EU expressed grave concern about the passage of this legislation, noting that it constituted a “significant step away from the opening of political and civic space, which is a prerequisite for genuine and peaceful elections to take place”.

In a 5 July press release, the National Elections Commission (NEC) announced that the much-awaited national elections will be held on 22 December. However, South Sudan's information minister said the next day (6 July) that the presidency will decide the election date based on the outcome of the Tumaini initiative talks. On 7 July, the SPLM-IO political bureau adopted a resolution rejecting the proposed date. It argued that the NEC failed to take into consideration the “pre-requisites” for holding the elections, including the transitional security arrangements and the drafting of the permanent constitution. In an 11 July joint press release, the AU Mission in South Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and UNMISS urged the parties to the R-ARCSS to provide clarity on the electoral roadmap and reach consensus on the way forward.

The humanitarian situation in the country remains difficult, with nearly nine million people—almost 76 percent of the country's population—in need of humanitarian assistance and 7.1 million people facing high levels of food insecurity. At the same time, recent months have witnessed an increase in incidents that impeded humanitarian access. According to a 6 June humanitarian access snapshot by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 47 incidents related to humanitarian access restrictions were reported in May, 23 of which involved violence against humanitarian personnel and assets. Meanwhile, other incidents were attributed to bureaucratic impediments and operational interference.

### Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 10 July press release, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan said that the National Security Act 2014 (Amendment) Bill 2024 would “entrench arbitrary detention and further repression by South Sudan's National Security Service”. Yasmin

Sooka, the Chair of the Commission, called for the bill to be returned to the legislators to make amendments “that align with the government's commitment to scrap this institution's arrest powers, which are systematically abused and unlawful.”

On 17 July, the UNMISS Human Rights Division released its quarterly brief on violence affecting civilians (covering January to March), which reported that widespread attacks against civilians persist across South Sudan, driven primarily by subnational armed violence. During the reporting period, the brief documented 240 incidents of violence affecting 913 civilians. In comparison to the previous quarter (October to December 2023), the brief reported an eight percent increase in the number of documented violent incidents (from 223 to 240) and a six percent increase in the number of victims documented (from 862 to 913).

### Key Issues and Options

An ongoing concern for the Council is the significant political and security challenges in South Sudan stemming from the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS. A key issue in this regard is what the Council can do to encourage the parties to make progress towards implementing the outstanding tasks (including finalising transitional security arrangements, drafting a new constitution, and establishing an election dispute resolution mechanism) and reach consensus on the modalities for holding elections, expected to take place in December. Looking ahead to the general elections, several members may reiterate their call for these to be peaceful, transparent, inclusive, and credible. They may also continue to encourage South Sudanese authorities to promote free civic space and call on all parties to engage in dialogue and seek consensus to resolve any election-related disputes.

Council members might be keen to follow up on the progress of the inter-party dialogue and the Tumaini initiative mediation talks.

Ahead of the election period, Council members could consider a visiting mission to South Sudan to assess the situation on the ground and engage with the various parties to the R-ARCSS. (The last Council visiting mission to South Sudan was in 2019.)

An additional key issue for Council members is the humanitarian and food security situations. An option would be to seek regular briefings on these matters from OCHA.

The impact of the conflict in neighbouring Sudan on the humanitarian, political, and security situations in South Sudan remains a matter of concern for Council members. The final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee, dated 29 April, said that several senior South Sudanese government officials have confirmed the participation of “mercenaries” of South Sudanese origin in the Sudan conflict and have cautioned that this may trigger further illicit movement of firearms across the Sudan-South Sudan border. Reports have also suggested that the Rapid Support Forces, a Sudanese paramilitary group and one of the warring parties in the Sudan conflict, had secured a supply route from South Sudan for fuel.

### Council Dynamics

Most Council members share similar concerns about the delays in implementing the R-ARCSS, the ongoing sub-national and inter-communal violence, and the economic and humanitarian crises in South Sudan. There are, however, differences in tone in members' statements. Some members, such as the US, are more critical than others about what they perceive to be the South Sudanese government's lack of political will to implement the R-ARCSS. During

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## South Sudan

the 5 March Council briefing on the situation in South Sudan, the US said that in the absence of urgent action from the South Sudanese government, “allocating further financial resources for election preparations...sends a wrong message”. It added that future funding for the elections must be accompanied by a renewed push on the South Sudanese peace process and improved humanitarian access.

On the other hand, Council members such as China, Russia, and the members of the “A3 plus one” (Algeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, and Guyana) are less critical of the government. In their

statements, these members often highlight the progress the South Sudanese government has made amidst the country’s severe challenges, including the dire humanitarian situation, intercommunal violence, and the economic crisis. These members advocate for enhanced international financial support to assist South Sudan in its political transition and strengthen its capacity.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan, and Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu (Sierra Leone) chairs the 2206 South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

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## Yemen

### Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is expected to hold a briefing, followed by closed consultations, on Yemen. UN Special Envoy Hans Grundberg and a representative of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are expected to brief. The Head of the UN Mission to Support the Hodeidah Agreement (UNMHA), Major General Michael Beary, will brief in consultations.

### Key Recent Developments

Attacks by the Houthi rebel group on Israel and commercial shipping in the Red Sea and surrounding waterways threatened a further escalation of violence in Yemen. On 19 July, a Houthi-claimed drone attack hit a residential building in Tel Aviv, killing one civilian and injuring at least ten others. According to Israeli authorities, the strike was carried out by an Iranian model of a Samad-3 uncrewed aerial vehicle that had been adapted for long-distance flights. It was the first deadly Houthi attack against Israel, which had intercepted multiple drones and missiles that the group launched since October 2023 in response to its military campaign in Gaza that followed the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks against Israel.

On 20 July, Israel carried out retaliatory airstrikes in the Hodeidah Port area, killing nine people and injuring 83 others, according to the Houthi-run Ministry of Health. This marked the first publicly acknowledged Israeli strike inside Yemeni territory. Israel claimed that it had struck sites used for military purposes, saying that Iran has been using Hodeidah Port to supply weapons to the Houthis. In a 20 July statement, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sare’e maintained that the bombing struck civilian targets, including a power station that supplies the city of Hodeidah with electricity and fuel tanks. He said that the Houthis will continue to conduct operations against Israel. Meanwhile, continuing US-led strikes against Houthi targets since January have not appeared to slow Houthi attacks against commercial shipping.

The Council held a briefing on the escalation on 22 July, which France, the UK, and the US requested following a letter to the Council from Israel on the attack against Tel Aviv. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and Major General Beary briefed. DiCarlo noted that the extent of the damage to Hodeidah Port had yet to be confirmed, though local

authorities had reported that the port was functioning at a limited capacity. Hodeidah Port serves as the entry point for the majority of Yemen’s critical imports, such as food, and the strikes heightened concerns about damage that could worsen Yemen’s humanitarian crisis.

The next day, the Council held its monthly briefing and consultations on Yemen. Grundberg expressed concerns about Yemen’s trajectory of escalation, which had reached “a new and dangerous level”. However, in a rare recent positive development, Grundberg announced an agreement reached the day before between the Houthis and the Yemeni government to de-escalate the economic warfare that the sides have been waging against each other. According to the agreement, the parties committed to several measures and requested the UN’s support in implementing them. Those measures called for:

- cancelling all the recent decisions and procedures against banks by both sides and refraining in the future from any similar decisions or procedures;
- resuming Yemenia Airways’ flights between Sana’a and Jordan and increasing the number of flights to three per day, as well as operating flights from Sana’a to Cairo and India daily or as needed;
- addressing the administrative, technical, and financial challenges faced by Yemenia Airways; and
- initiating meetings to discuss all economic and humanitarian issues based on the UN roadmap for an inter-Yemeni political process.

Grundberg thanked Saudi Arabia for its role in brokering the deal, while underscoring the need for the parties to engage in good faith and address underlying issues. The deal followed the revocation of the licenses of six Yemeni banks by the government-controlled Central Bank of Yemen on 7 July for failing to relocate their offices from the Houthi-held city of Sana’a to Aden. The move threatened to exclude Houthi-held areas from using the SWIFT banking system.

Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya, who briefed as well, also highlighted the continued detention of 13 UN staff and of dozens of other Yemeni nationals from local and international aid organisations, civil society

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON YEMEN** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2742 (8 July 2024) renewed the mandate of UNMHA until 15 July 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 Meeting Records S/PV.9692 (23 July 2024) was a briefing by Special Envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg and Acting Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Joyce Msuya. S/PV.9691 (22 July 2024) was a briefing by Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo and UNMHA Head Major General Michael Beary.

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# Yemen

and the private sector whom the Houthis arrested in early June. They repeated UN demands for their immediate release. Msuya additionally drew attention to the importance of Hodeidah Port, which she called a “lifeline” for millions of Yemenis. “There are no viable alternatives to receive commercial imports at scale”, she said, adding, “Infrastructure that plays such an indispensable role must be spared”.

Earlier, on 6 July, the Supervisory Committee on the Implementation of the Detainees’ Agreement met in Oman. According to a statement by the Office of the Special Envoy, which co-chairs the committee with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the talks led to a “significant breakthrough”, with the sides reaching an understanding on releasing Mohamed Qahtan—a political leader aligned with the Yemeni government whom the Houthis have held incommunicado since 2015. The statement added that the sides had agreed to a follow-up meeting to finalise the list of detainees to be freed and the details of Qahtan’s release.

On 8 July, the Council renewed the mandate of UNMHA, in resolution 2742, until 15 July 2025.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 July, UN Human Rights spokesperson Jeremy Laurence said that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) remains extremely concerned about the well-being of the 13 UN staff and several employees of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who have been held incommunicado for more than a month by Houthis. Additionally, two UN staff members have been in prolonged detention since November 2021 and August 2023, according to Laurence.

He called on those states and entities with influence over the Houthis to help secure the safe and prompt release of all detained UN and NGO staff. Voicing concern over the conditions of captivity, the spokesperson also urged the de facto authorities to ensure that those detained are treated with full respect for their human rights and are able to contact their families and legal representatives.

The 13 UN staff detained include six who work for OHCHR; one each from the Office of the Special Envoy in Yemen, the UN Development Programme, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, and the World Health Organization; and two from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

## Key Issues and Options

Houthi attacks on commercial shipping and Israel, retaliatory US-led strikes, and now Israeli strikes on Houthi targets are key issues. The crisis has frozen Yemen peace talks: Omani-facilitated talks between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia on a peace agreement and Grundberg’s efforts to develop a roadmap for a ceasefire and an inter-Yemeni political process. The stalled processes and the risk to the gains that had been made in talks since Yemen’s April 2022 truce remain key issues.

Members are likely to monitor developments. They could encourage the parties to engage in good faith with the Special Envoy to implement the economic measures that they have committed to and to use the momentum of this process to refocus on a broader political process.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen, where 18.2 million people require assistance and protection services, remains a key issue. In addition to the importance of Hodeidah Port for responding to this need, Msuya also highlighted at the 23 July briefing worsening food insecurity because of the pause in food assistance in the

Houthi-controlled north since December 2023 and deteriorating economic conditions across the country.

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.

Another issue, related to the sanctions regime, is the reports that Iranian ships have travelled to Hodeidah Port since October 2023 without informing the UN Verification and Inspection Mechanism (UNVIM), which provides clearance for and inspects ships travelling to Houthi-controlled ports to ensure compliance with the arms embargo against the group. These reports follow the end of ship inspections by the Saudi-led coalition, which it also conducted on vessels travelling to Hodeidah, after it began peace talks with the Houthis in October 2022.

## Council Dynamics

Yemen is an issue on which Council members have maintained general unity in support of UN mediation to achieve a sustainable resolution to the conflict. The Red Sea crisis, however, has produced some notable divisions, despite all members having called for an end to the Houthi attacks on shipping and being concerned about the consequences for maritime security and Yemen’s peace process.

Algeria, China, and Russia abstained on the vote adopting resolution 2722 in January on the Red Sea crisis because of their concerns over its wording, particularly on the right of states to defend their merchant vessels, which they argue does not reflect international law. China and Russia have also criticised the US-led strikes against the Houthis on Yemeni territory, since, as they contend, exceed the mandate of the resolution, which did not authorise such attacks. Moreover, the three countries regularly highlight the need to end the war in Gaza as the best way to resolve the crisis in the Red Sea.

The US has called for the Council to take further action to impede Iran’s supply of arms to the Houthis, including by strengthening UNVIM, which was established in 2016 through an agreement between the UN and the Yemeni government and relies on voluntary funding. Further punitive measures by the Council against the Houthis or Iran would seem unlikely, however, given Council dynamics. Traditionally, Russia seeks to streamline references to the Houthis and is reluctant to single them out in Council products. A red line for Russia has also been Council products identifying Iran as violating the arms embargo against the Houthis.

The renewal of UNMHA in July proved uncontentious. No members proposed changes to the mandate, leading to swift agreement on the renewal.

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.

# Lebanon

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council is expected to renew the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) ahead of its 31 August expiry. Prior to that, Council members will hold closed consultations on UNIFIL. Khaled Khiari, the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, is the anticipated briefer.

Council members are also likely to watch developments in Lebanon, Israel, and the region closely and evaluate whether additional Council action is required.

## Key Recent Developments

Following the outbreak of the war between Israel and Hamas on 7 October 2023, near-daily exchanges of fire across the Blue Line between Israel and Hezbollah and other armed groups in Lebanon have continued, with the intensification of strikes and bellicose rhetoric by Israeli and Hezbollah officials in recent months raising concerns about the possibility of an all-out war. (While not representing an international border, the Blue Line acts in practice as a boundary between Lebanon and Israel in the absence of an agreed-upon border between the two states. Any unauthorised crossing of the Blue Line constitutes a violation of resolution 1701, which in 2006 called for a cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah. For background on the war in Gaza, see “The Middle East, including the Palestinian Question” brief in our July *Monthly Forecast*.)

The exchanges of fire have resulted in casualties among combatants and civilians on both sides of the Blue Line. A 16 July update by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that over 460 people have been killed in Lebanon since the start of the escalation in early October, including at least 100 civilians. According to figures cited by the Associated Press on 20 July, 21 soldiers and 13 civilians have been killed in Israel. The exchanges of fire have displaced tens of thousands of people, caused property and environmental damage, and generated unexploded ordnance contamination on both sides of the Blue Line. (For more, see the Lebanon brief in our July *Monthly Forecast*.)

Developments in late July have the potential to change the trajectory of the confrontation and lead to a wider regional escalation. On 26 July, twelve children were killed in a rocket strike on the town of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-occupied Golan. Israel accused Hezbollah of being responsible for the strike, while Hezbollah denied having any role in it, with some analysts suggesting that the strike could have been a misfire. On 30 July, Israel claimed responsibility for the killing of Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in an airstrike on the Haret Hreik suburb of Beirut, saying that Fuad was responsible for, among other things, the strike in Majdal Shams. Besides Fuad, five civilians, including two children, were killed in the Beirut strike.

A few hours after Fuad’s assassination, Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh was killed in an airstrike in Iran’s capital, Tehran, where he was attending the inauguration ceremony of Iran’s President Masoud Pezeshkian. While Israel neither claimed nor denied responsibility for Haniyeh’s killing, it had reportedly pledged to kill Haniyeh and other Hamas leaders following the 7 October 2023 Hamas-led attacks in Israel. Iran and Hamas accused Israel of Haniyeh’s assassination, with Iran stating in a 31 July letter to the Security

Council that the killing could not have occurred without US authorisation and intelligence (S/2024/584). US Secretary of State Antony Blinken denied that the US knew of, or was involved in, the operation in Tehran. Developments related to Haniyeh’s assassination were discussed in a 31 July Security Council emergency briefing requested by Algeria, China, and Russia following Iran’s request in its 31 July letter. The meeting was held under “The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question” agenda item.

On 24 July, Council members held a briefing in consultations on the Secretary-General’s 12 July report on the implementation of resolution 1701, which covers the period from 21 February to 20 June. According to the report, UNIFIL recorded over 1,500 trajectories of projectiles fired from north of the Blue Line and more than 3,000 from south of the Blue Line, each trajectory possibly representing multiple projectiles.

The report described the use of artillery, anti-tank guided missiles, surface-to-air missiles, mortars, rockets, and drones by Hezbollah and air and drone strikes by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), with UNIFIL observing the use of white phosphorus ammunition in artillery strikes on Lebanese territory on at least three occasions. (Human rights organisations have attributed the use of white phosphorus in southern Lebanon to Israel.)

The Secretary-General’s report says that UNIFIL conducted Blue Line vehicle patrols and counter-rocket-launching patrols “in close coordination” with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). Operational activities such as foot patrols and air operations remained suspended, however, “except for a limited number of foot patrols in areas sufficiently distant from the Blue Line”. While the freedom of movement of the mission was respected “in most cases”, the report said that UNIFIL “continued to experience restrictions”, noting that in several such incidents, the LAF “helped to resolve the situation through dialogue”. UNIFIL also facilitated movement of civilians and civilian activities, such as infrastructure repairs, in areas close to the Blue Line.

UNIFIL registered 25 instances of impacts on UN positions during the reporting period, with the mission’s headquarters in Naqurah being one of the most affected sites, and two incidents in March during which UN personnel suffered injuries during patrols. The report further noted that the LAF “did not engage in the breaches of the cessation of hostilities, despite coming under fire”, including on one occasion in which LAF soldiers “were reportedly injured as the result of white phosphorus shell explosions”.

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. 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.

Almost four years since the 4 August 2020 Beirut port explosion, the inquiry into responsibility for the blast remains stalled.

## Key Issues and Options

Averting a full-scale war in Lebanon and a possible regional conflagration are pivotal issues for the Security Council. A ceasefire



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# Lebanon

in Gaza—however remote the possibility currently appears—might contribute to de-escalating the situation along the Blue Line and in the wider region.

UNIFIL's mandate renewal is a key issue for the Security Council in August. Protecting the mandate's integrity against a backdrop of escalating violence and uncertainty is an important issue for the Security Council. The Council could extend UNIFIL's mandate for one year without changes to the mission's mandate and configuration. The upcoming negotiations are likely to be complicated by issues on which Council members disagree sharply, including the escalation between Hezbollah and Israel, and the war in Gaza. This may result in Council members opting to pursue a straightforward renewal of the mission's mandate.

Resolution 2695—which in August 2023 extended UNIFIL's mandate until 31 August—was adopted with 13 votes in favour and two abstentions (Russia and China), marking the first non-unanimous renewal of UNIFIL's mandate since 1985. Although the lack of unanimity was caused by diverging positions on how language on the mission's freedom of movement was framed and negotiated rather than a lack of support for UNIFIL's mandate, re-establishing Council unity on UNIFIL's reauthorisation is likely to be an important issue for several Council members and may send a message of stability to the region.

Additional issues include the various violations of resolution 1701 identified in the Secretary-General's report, such as the fire exchanges across the Blue Line; the maintenance by Hezbollah and other armed groups of weapons outside the control of the Lebanese state in the area between the Litani River and the Blue Line; the IDF's continuing occupation of northern Ghajar, a village which straddles the Blue Line, and its "adjacent area" north of the Blue Line; and violations of Lebanese and Israeli airspace and sovereignty. The report also noted that, if confirmed, alleged arms transfers to non-state armed actors in Lebanon would also constitute a violation of resolution 1701.

That the root causes of the hostility between Israel and Hezbollah and of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remain unaddressed is a long-standing issue.

## Council Dynamics

Sharp differences persist in Security Council members' views of 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. On the

other hand, Russia sees Hezbollah as a legitimate sociopolitical force in Lebanon. Despite these differences, Council members agree that a full-scale conflict between Israel and Hezbollah must be avoided.

Council members are also broadly supportive of UNIFIL. Nevertheless, the negotiations of resolution 2695 proved difficult. The resolution retained language introduced for the first time in 2022 reaffirming that, pursuant to the Agreement on the Status of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (SOFA), UNIFIL does not require prior authorisation to undertake its tasks and that it is authorised to conduct its operations independently. During the negotiations, however, the phrase "while continuing to coordinate with the Government of Lebanon, as per the SOFA" was added in an attempt to address the demands by the Lebanese government and Hezbollah, echoed in the Council by China and Russia, to remove language about UNIFIL's not needing prior authorisation to undertake its tasks.

China and Russia also asked and initially obtained the removal of a reference demanding that the parties guarantee UNIFIL's freedom of movement, "including by allowing announced and unannounced patrols". It seems, however, that then-Council member United Arab Emirates was particularly unhappy with these changes, apparently leading France (the penholder on Lebanon) to reinsert the language on "announced and unannounced patrols" in the draft text that had already been put in blue. In its explanation of vote Russia lamented the change, saying that the final version of the text failed to maintain the "fragile compromise" previously reached. China explained its abstention by saying that the resolution did not fully address the concerns expressed by Lebanon and some Council members.

Unsurprisingly, differences have also emerged among Council members regarding how to address the relationship between the war in Gaza and the escalation across the Blue Line. In June, members were apparently unable to agree on a press statement proposed by France calling for de-escalation along the Blue Line. It seems that Algeria and Russia argued for including a reference to the situation in Gaza. Apparently, Russia also requested adding language on coordination between UNIFIL and the LAF. For its part, the US opposed the idea of issuing a Council press statement, apparently arguing in favour of giving space to diplomatic efforts on the ground.

At the 17 July open debate on "The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question", the US expressed support for "a straightforward extension" of UNIFIL's mandate. At the same meeting, Lebanon announced that in June it had submitted a request to the UN for the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate "without any modification".

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# Libya

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold its bimonthly briefing on the situation in Libya. Deputy Special Representative and Political Officer in Charge of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)

Stephanie Koury will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and on the Secretary-General's most recent report on UNSMIL. The chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kazuyuki Yamazaki (Japan),

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**UN DOCUMENTS ON LIBYA** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2733 (31 May 2024) renewed for one year the authorisation for member states, acting nationally or through regional organisations, to inspect vessels on the high seas off the coast of Libya that they have reasonable grounds to believe are violating the arms embargo. S/RES/2702 (30 October 2023) extended UNSMIL's mandate until 31 October 2024. **Secretary-General's Report S/2024/301** (9 April 2024) was the 120-day report on UNSMIL.

# Libya

is also expected to brief on the committee's activities.

## Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah, and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and aligned with the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The prolonged stalemate involving the rival governments has persisted since the indefinite postponement of elections that had been scheduled for December 2021 and is a key driver of Libya's political, security, and economic instability.

Recent efforts by both the UN and national actors to facilitate agreement on a new roadmap for national elections to unify the country's divided governments have not borne fruit. The joint 6+6 committee—which was established by the HoR and the GNU-affiliated High State Council (HSC) to draft electoral laws to enable elections and includes six representatives from each body—presented its initial draft legislation in June 2023. Because of persistent disagreement about certain provisions in that draft, however, the committee subsequently amended the proposed legislation in September 2023. The HoR approved this version, but HSC leader Mohamed Takala rejected it, instead endorsing the previous draft. Takala is considered a close ally of Dbeibah.

A subsequent attempt by Special Representative Abdoulaye Bathily to mediate an agreement between the stakeholders was unsuccessful. (Bathily has since stepped down.) Parallel to that effort, the heads of the HoR, the HSC, and the Presidential Council—which was established under the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement to serve as the country's head of state—met on 10 March in Cairo under the auspices of the League of Arab States (LAS). In a joint statement following the meeting, the three leaders said that they had agreed on the need to establish a unified interim government to organise elections and had decided to set up a technical committee “within a specified period of time” to build consensus on the 6+6 committee's legislation, consider amendments, and resolve contested issues. The talks did not include Dbeibah, who has opposed the establishment of a new interim government prior to elections.

The heads of the HoR, HSC, and Presidential Council were expected to attend another meeting hosted by the LAS in mid-July to further develop their proposal. However, these discussions were put on hold after the HoR on 10 July unilaterally approved an additional \$18.3 billion budget for the GNS, supplementing the original annual budget that the HoR had passed in April, which its lawmakers subsequently deemed insufficient. Funds for the additional budget would be drawn from the Central Bank of Libya, the country's sole depository for state revenues, which services both governments. Takala opposed the adoption of the additional budget, which he argued had no legal effect without the HSC's approval, and reportedly withdrew from the scheduled follow-up meeting of the HoR, HSC, and Presidential Council under the LAS format.

Instead, on 18 July members of the HoR and HSC met independently in Cairo, outside the structures of the LAS. In an outcome statement, the lawmakers agreed on the need to establish a unified

interim government, to hold elections according to the electoral laws already issued by the HoR, and to develop a joint electoral roadmap on this basis. In a 20 July statement, UNSMIL took note of the meeting and welcomed steps in support of the political process towards elections but reiterated its previous calls for such steps to be “inclusive” and involve all relevant stakeholders “to ensure the outcomes lead to a politically implementable solution”—an apparent reference to the GNU's continued absence from the talks.

Regarding the security situation, the 2020 ceasefire agreement continues to hold. However, sporadic violence has persisted between criminal groups and rival militias in the country's western region, primarily in the coastal town of Zawiyah, where one civilian was reportedly killed and 22 injured in clashes in mid-May. On 1 July, authorities re-opened the nearby Ras Jdir border crossing into Tunisia after a three-month closure following repeated confrontations between local authorities and GNU-affiliated security forces. Independent analysts have cited control over illicit economic activities such as drug smuggling and human trafficking as the main source of these tensions in the region.

On 16 July, Libya's High National Elections Commission (HNEC) announced that it had completed the first phase of the voter registration process for the country's municipal elections. This phase of the process was open to 60 municipalities and registered over 210,000 voters after HNEC twice extended the registration period to facilitate higher-than-expected participation. In a statement, UNSMIL congratulated HNEC for its achievement in “challenging circumstances” and commended those who registered to vote for demonstrating their commitment to “choosing their local leaders”. The statement further urged Libyan authorities to provide the necessary resources to facilitate the next steps in the municipal electoral process, and it encouraged HNEC and other Libyan institutions to continue efforts to increase the participation of women, who currently make up 29 percent of registered voters. The second phase of the registration process for the remaining municipalities will begin after the full results of the first phase have been published and verified. The municipal elections are expected to take place later this year, although a specific date has not yet been set.

## Women, Peace, and Security

On 25 June, the Informal Experts Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) met on the situation in Libya. Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Officer-in-Charge of UNSMIL Stephanie Koury briefed. Among other issues, Koury and Council members apparently discussed women's participation in the upcoming municipal elections as both voters and candidates, and efforts to guarantee women's safe participation in a context where politically active women have faced threats and violence, including sexual violence. IEG members also inquired about UN efforts to counter restrictions and reprisals against civil society in Libya and strategies to support accountability for gender-based crimes. It seems that other issues discussed at the meeting included arrests and detentions of Libyans, including women, for exercising their right to freedom of expression, and concerns raised by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) about reprisals for engaging or trying to engage with the UN.

UN Women, as the IEG Secretariat, apparently recommended that the Security Council retain all existing gender-related language from resolution 2702 in its upcoming decisions on Libya, including provisions on the prevention and response to conflict-related sexual violence. It seems that UN Women also recommended that the Council condemn and call for accountability for any threats, attacks and killings of women participating in public life, including WHRDs. UN Women further recommended requesting UNSMIL to prioritise activities related to the protection and promotion of women's

# Libya

rights, and to monitor and report on threats and reprisals against WHRDs.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

On 9 July, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) conducted an interactive dialogue on the report of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the technical assistance and capacity-building that it has provided to Libya (A/HRC/56/70).

The report noted that Libya continued to experience an accountability deficit, marked by the erosion of the rule of law, including attacks on judges, prosecutors and lawyers, due process concerns, and legislative enactments undermining the independence of the judiciary. The report also found that migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers continued to experience gross and widespread human rights violations and abuses at the hands of state and non-state actors.

The report indicated that the absence of a comprehensive human rights-based national reconciliation and transitional justice process has allowed cycles of violence and impunity to persist. OHCHR recommended immediate steps to protect and promote the rights of women, human rights defenders, civil society actors, journalists, intellectuals, and other persons at heightened risk of human rights violations and abuses.

On 11 July, during the same session, the HRC adopted a resolution (A/HRC/RES/56/16) requesting OHCHR to continue to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to improve human rights in Libya.

## Key Issues and Options

Supporting political momentum towards national elections to unify Libya's divided governments remains the key issue for the Security Council. In this context, an important objective for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country's rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement on electoral laws, including the possible establishment of a unified interim government to organise the elections.

To receive additional perspectives on the political process in Libya, especially women's participation, the Council could consider inviting a woman civil society representative to participate in the August briefing. A civil society briefer could also shed additional light on

the human rights situation in the country. It is essential that members and the UN take all possible measures to keep briefers safe, in consultation with the briefer, including carrying out risk assessments, developing protection plans, and responding to any reprisals.

Following the resignation of Special Representative Bathily in April, another issue for the Council is the Secretary-General's appointment of his successor. When former Special Envoy Jan Kubiš resigned in November 2021, it took nearly a year to identify a successor, leading to Bathily's appointment in September 2022. (Resolution 2629 of 29 April 2022 changed UNSMIL's leadership position from a Special Envoy to a Special Representative.) Several Council members have urged a quicker appointment this time, although political differences may again complicate the process, and the Secretary-General had not yet officially nominated a candidate at the time of writing.

## Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country. They also remain broadly supportive of the UN's mediation role towards this end.

Broader geopolitical tensions still influence Council dynamics with respect to Libya, however. The US and other Western members remain concerned about Russia's presence in the eastern part of the country that is under Haftar's control, which has reportedly included recent arms shipments to the port of Tobruk. For its part, Russia routinely blames Libya's current instability on the NATO-led military intervention in 2011 and accuses Western countries of seeking to exploit Libya's oil reserves for economic gain.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

# Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

## Expected Council Action

In August, the Security Council will hold an open debate on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace, one of the signature events of Sierra Leone's Council presidency, focusing on national and regional conflict prevention strategies. Sierra Leone's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Timothy Musa Kabba, is expected to chair the meeting. The anticipated briefers are Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Elizabeth Spear; AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye; Executive Secretary of the Independent Commission for Peace and National Cohesion in Sierra Leone Hawa Samai, and a civil society representative.

## Key Recent Developments

On 20 July 2023, Secretary-General António Guterres presented his policy brief, *A New Agenda for Peace* (NAfP), which underscored

the urgency of focusing on conflict prevention consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 16.1, through which all states are committed to reducing all forms of violence. The NAfP emphasised that preventive tools in Article 33 of the UN Charter have been under-utilised. (Article 33 directs parties to any dispute to seek a solution by peaceful means, including negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, and judicial settlement. It further asserts that the Security Council "shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means".)

The NAfP recommended that member states and regional organisations develop prevention strategies "to address the different drivers and enablers of violence and conflict in societies". It stressed that these strategies should have "cross-regional dimensions to address transboundary threats, collectively harvesting and building on the wealth of knowledge and expertise existing at the national level on effective conflict prevention measures". The NAfP further

**UN DOCUMENTS ON CONFLICT PREVENTION** Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2282 (27 April 2016) was on the ten-year review of the UN peacebuilding architecture, emphasising that a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace involves the prevention of conflict and addressing its root causes. S/RES/2171 (21 August 2014) recognised the importance of early warning mechanisms and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to taking preventive action. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2018/1 (18 January 2018) was on conflict prevention. Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.9574 (13 March 2024) was an open debate on promoting conflict prevention. S/PV.9250 (26 January 2023) was an open debate on "Investment in people to enhance resilience against complex challenges".

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## Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

recommended that the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) create a mechanism to mobilise political and financial support for national and regional strategies of states that are interested in receiving international assistance for developing and implementing their strategies.

On 26 January 2023, Japan convened an open debate on “Investment in people to enhance resilience against complex challenges” as a signature event of its Security Council presidency during the month. The discussion explored the need to invest in conflict prevention and peacebuilding as one of its core subjects, a theme of *A New Agenda for Peace*, which had not yet been released.

On 13 March, Japan also convened an open debate on “Promoting Conflict Prevention—Empowering All Actors Including Women and Youth”. Following the meeting, sixty-seven member states issued a joint statement at the press stakeout in which they committed to work together “to effectively incorporate proposals and recommendations made by various countries and regions into the Council’s activities to further promote conflict prevention”.

On 22 March, the PBC held an ambassadorial-level meeting on national efforts for prevention and peacebuilding, with the objective of providing a platform for member states to share good practices and lessons learned on these issues. Kenya, Norway, and Timor-Leste shared experiences based on their national prevention and peacebuilding efforts. The meeting encouraged member states to continue using the PBC as a forum for sharing experiences, best practices, and lessons learned on developing national prevention and peacebuilding strategies. It also underscored the need to promote inclusivity in these endeavours and called for stronger partnerships among international, regional, national, and local actors.

### Key Issues and Options

The key issue is how to support the implementation of the recommendations contained in the NAFp regarding conflict prevention, particularly how to implement prevention strategies at the national and regional levels. The open debate could provide an opportunity for member states to share their experiences in developing national prevention strategies.

Another key issue is the need to generate the political will, resources, and capacities to support the effective implementation of national and regional strategies. Many countries have strategies for the prevention of violent extremism, crime, or domestic violence, along with national development strategies, which contain elements or precedents of a national prevention strategy. Regional strategies that have been developed to target structural drivers or root causes of conflict and may be discussed at the August open debate include the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery, and Resilience (RS-SRR) of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention, and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region.

A related issue is whether and how the open debate can feed into the ongoing negotiation on the Pact for the Future—the outcome document expected to be adopted at the Summit of the Future in September—particularly the language on conflict prevention. The co-facilitators of the negotiation, Germany and Namibia, circulated a second revised text on 17 July. The draft text, among other things, underscores the need to:

- prioritise conflict prevention and resolution by revitalising and implementing existing mechanisms for peaceful dispute settlement;
- develop and implement new mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution, confidence-building, early warning, and crisis management at sub-regional, regional, and international levels to address new and emerging threats to peace and security;
- intensify diplomacy and mediation efforts to ease tensions, including early diplomatic interventions;
- urge the Secretary-General to actively use his good offices and encourage him to bring any matter that may threaten international peace and security to the attention of the Security Council; and
- support the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in diplomacy, mediation, and peaceful dispute resolution, and strengthen coordination and cooperation between these organisations and the United Nations.

An additional important issue is how to leverage the role of the PBC in supporting national and regional efforts to develop prevention strategies and mobilise financial and political support for their implementation. Regarding the PBC, the draft Pact for the Future stresses the following:

- enhancing the PBC’s role as a platform for building and sustaining peace by sharing best practices among member states and mobilising political and financial support for national prevention and peacebuilding efforts, particularly to avoid conflict relapse;
- making greater use of the PBC to support nationally owned peacebuilding and prevention efforts; enhancing its advisory, bridging, and convening roles; and facilitating the inclusion of stakeholders’ perspectives on peacebuilding through dialogue with civil society actors; and
- establishing more systematic and strategic partnerships with international, regional, and sub-regional organisations, including international financial institutions, to bolster peacebuilding efforts, mobilise resources, and align national development, peacebuilding, and prevention approaches.

At some point, Council members could potentially consider a new resolution on conflict prevention. This could update resolution 2171 of 21 August 2014, the Council’s most recent resolution dealing directly with conflict prevention, and focus on areas improving the UN’s efforts in this regard.

### Council Dynamics

The Security Council has struggled to engage effectively in prevention, often because of concerns about interference in states’ internal affairs, a particular impediment to addressing intra-state conflict. Past initiatives like “Horizon Scanning” and “Situational Awareness” briefings for the Council to identify potential conflict situations have failed to gain traction, partially because of these concerns. Even after conflict erupts, states frequently try to block the Council from discussing such situations because of sensitivities over external interference and the stigma often associated with being on the Council’s agenda. Current geopolitical dynamics have made the Council’s preventive engagement particularly complicated.

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## Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace

Useful prevention tools that Council members all appear to value are the UN's regional offices for West Africa, Central Africa, and Central Asia (UNOWAS, UNOCA, and UNRCCA), known for their early warning and good offices activities. These offices also support states and sub-regional organisations in developing responses to structural conflict drivers and helping to promote common analysis and coherence among UN agencies, funds, and programmes for more conflict-sensitive development assistance.

Several Council members are interested in seeing the Council strengthen its engagement on prevention. Sierra Leone's organisation of this open debate is a further expression of its interest in prevention and peacebuilding. Japan capitalised on its two presidencies

in January 2023 and March to facilitate discussion on these interrelated topics. The UK has traditionally been a proponent of improving the Council's engagement on prevention.

Meanwhile, there appears to be rising interest among UN member states in having the PBC become more explicitly involved in prevention, given its mandate to address issues that lie between peace and development and the PBC's practice of discussing situations only with the consent of the country concerned. Some states remain hesitant, however, to endorse the PBC's role as a conflict prevention platform. (For more, see the "*In Hindsight*" on the Security Council and conflict prevention in our *March Monthly Forecast*.)

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## Syria

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

On 30 June, anti-refugee protests broke out in central Türkiye following a reported incident of sexual harassment of a child in the city of Kayseri, allegedly by a Syrian refugee. According to media reports, Turkish police arrested at least 474 people for targeting properties and assets belonging to Syrian refugees in Türkiye. In response, demonstrations erupted the next day (1 July) in several parts of north-west Syria, including Afrin, al-Bab, Azez, and Jarablus. The protests reportedly turned violent, leading to clashes with Turkish armed forces present inside Syria, in which at least eight people were killed and more than 20 others injured.

In a 2 July press briefing, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said that protesters reportedly attacked vehicles, buildings, and commercial trucks entering the Bab al-Salam crossing on the Syria-Türkiye border. He noted that some medical teams operating in Afrin and al-Bab and several non-governmental organisations had suspended their operations. He also reported that fuel shortages had led to power outages and communications breakdowns.

In response to persistent insecurity, Turkish authorities closed all three crossings on the Syria-Türkiye border—Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salam, and Al Ra'ee—used by UN agencies and partners to conduct humanitarian operations. However, the Bab al-Hawa crossing was re-opened on 3 July while the other crossings resumed operations on 8 July.

On 10 July, the Syrian government announced its decision to extend its authorisation for the use of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing until 13 January 2025. 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.

Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria Adam Abdelmoula travelled to the Al Hasakeh Governorate in northeast Syria

from 7 to 10 July. During his visit, Abdelmoula met with various stakeholders and visited several humanitarian projects, including a water filtration station installed in Hasakeh city. He also visited camps for refugees and internally displaced persons, including Al Hol—which hosts more than 41,000 people, 90 percent of whom are women and children, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). At the end of his visit, he highlighted the growing humanitarian needs in the area due to severe water shortages, destruction of civilian infrastructure, climate shocks, displacement, and economic decline. He also stressed the need to complement emergency assistance activities with early recovery programming.

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 (HRP), which called for \$4.07 billion, was only 20.5 percent funded.

Syria and Türkiye have apparently indicated a renewed interest in pursuing diplomatic rapprochement. Since last year, Russia and Iran have led efforts to mend ties between the two countries. The foreign ministers of the four countries met in Moscow on 10 May 2023 to advance these efforts; however, the talks apparently stalled, with Syria insisting on the withdrawal of Turkish armed forces from northern Syria. (For background, see the Syria brief in our June 2023 *Monthly Forecast*.) It appears that Iraq has also made efforts recently to mediate between the two sides. According to media reports, in a 31 May press interview, the Iraqi prime minister acknowledged these efforts and said that Iraq is trying to create grounds for reconciliation and dialogue between the two countries.

During a 26 June meeting with the Russian President's Special Representative on Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad expressed his openness to all initiatives regarding Syrian-Turkish relations, based on respect for Syrian sovereignty. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has similarly expressed his desire to improve relations with Syria. In a 7 July statement, Erdogan said that he may extend an invitation to al-Assad to visit Türkiye "at any moment". According to media reports, the local council

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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.

# Syria

of the city of al-Bab in eastern Aleppo governorate announced in June the opening of the Abu al-Zandeen crossing, which connects the area controlled by the Syrian National Army—a coalition of armed groups allegedly backed by Türkiye—and the region under the control of the Syrian government. The announcement reportedly came against the backdrop of Turkish-Russian efforts to normalise economic relations between opposition-held areas and regime-controlled territories.

Airstrikes, allegedly by Israel, continue to target sites across Syria. On 14 July, airstrikes reportedly hit several military sites and a residential building in Damascus, killing one Syrian soldier and injuring three others. Media reports quoted Israeli Defense Forces as saying that the strikes were conducted in response to two drones that were launched from Syria towards the north of Eilat, Israel, the previous day (13 July). On 15 July, an airstrike that hit a car on the al-Saboura highway near Damascus killed a Syrian businessman, Muhammad Bara Qatirji, who reportedly had ties to the Syrian government as well as Iran-backed militias in the region, including Hezbollah, and was sanctioned by the US for “facilitating shipments of fuel and weapons to the Syrian regime”.

The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) continues to pose a significant security threat in Syria. In a 16 July statement on X (formerly Twitter), the US Central Command said that ISIS claimed 153 attacks in Iraq and Syria during the first half of this year; if sustained at the current pace, the number of attacks in 2024 will more than double the number claimed by Da’esh in 2023. Between January and June, the US and the Syrian Democratic Forces—a primarily Kurdish group opposing the Syrian government—conducted 59 operations, which resulted in the deaths of 14 Da’esh operatives and the detention of 92 others.

## Human Rights-Related Developments

In a 1 July statement, Alice Jill Edwards, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, called on Syrian authorities to implement the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 16 November 2023 and to take action to eradicate all forms of torture and ill-treatment in the country. She raised alarm about reports indicating that torture continues to be practiced on a large scale in Syria in flagrant disregard for the lives, and the physical and psychological health, of thousands of individuals who are in detention centres operated by the Syrian government.

In its 16 November 2023 provisional measures, the ICJ ordered Syria to “take all measures within its power to prevent acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and ensure that its officials, as well as any organizations or persons which may be subject to its control, direction or influence, do not commit any acts of torture or other acts of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”. (For background and more information, see the Syria brief in our December 2023 *Monthly Forecast*.)

On 3 July, during the 56th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, said that the long-running conflict in Syria and its consequences have become further entrenched, adding that “impunity and lawlessness have shaped a grim reality for all Syrians, with no end in sight”. He highlighted several instances of abuses, including monetary extortion of civilians by security forces and militias, incommunicado detention and enforced disappearances, the detention of Syrian refugees returning from Lebanon, and drug trafficking and smuggling involving both pro- and anti-government factions. Pinheiro urged member states to act urgently in three critical areas: repatriating their nationals detained in northeast Syria since 2019; reviewing the imposition of unilateral coercive measures on Syria to mitigate their unintended consequences on civilians; and increasing support for Syria’s 2024 HRP.

## 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. 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 on the situation in Syria when its 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 Syrian 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 with the Syrian government. While the US and like-minded members continue to oppose engagement with the government, China and Russia have advocated for the normalisation of ties. In a 2 July press briefing, the US State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel said that the US would not normalise relations with the Assad government “absent authentic progress toward a political solution to the underlying conflict”. He added that the US

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# Syria

had been clear with regional partners, including Türkiye, that any engagement must focus on human rights, improving the

humanitarian conditions and the security situation for all Syrians. Switzerland is the penholder on the Syria humanitarian file.

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## DPRK (North Korea)

### Expected Council Action

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

### Key Recent Developments

The DPRK has continued to build closer ties with Russia in recent months. On 19 June, Russian President Vladimir Putin met with DPRK leader Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang, where the two leaders signed a "Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership". According to media reports, the treaty refers to several measures intended to boost relations between the DPRK and Russia, including exchanges and joint research in science and technology, cooperation at the UN and other international organisations, and joint actions to strengthen defence capabilities. Most notably, the treaty reportedly provides that "in case any one of the two sides is put in a state of war by an armed invasion from an individual state or several states, the other side shall provide military and other assistance with all means in its possession without delay in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of the DPRK and [Russia]".

Following the summit, Kim characterised the treaty as elevating relations between the DPRK and Russia to a "new high level of alliance", while Putin thanked the DPRK for taking an "objective and balanced stance on Ukraine" and understanding "the true original causes of this crisis". Putin also criticised the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime and called for it to be revised. In remarks delivered to the press on 21 June, Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised that the sanctions had been approved by the Council and said that "any relationship that any country has with [the] DPRK, including the Russian Federation, must entirely abide by those sanctions".

On 28 June, the Council convened for an open briefing on the DPRK. The meeting was requested by France, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the US to discuss "unlawful arms transfers from the DPRK". High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu and Executive Director of Conflict Armament Research Jonah Leff briefed.

The open briefing took place three months after Russia vetoed a draft resolution that would have extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee for another year, until 30 April 2025. (For more information, see our 22 March *What's in Blue* story.) In a statement delivered on behalf of 50 member states and the European Union on 1 May, the day after the Panel's mandate expired, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield (US) criticised Russia's veto and emphasised the need to "consider how to continue access to this kind of objective, independent analysis

in order to address the DPRK's unlawful WMD and ballistic missile advancements".

Since the expiration of the Panel's mandate, reports have continued to emerge regarding the DPRK's efforts to evade UN sanctions and mitigate their effects. On 3 May, the White House announced that during March Russia shipped refined petroleum to the DPRK at levels that appear to violate a cap imposed by the 1718 sanctions regime. In mid-May, several former members of the Panel reportedly provided an unfinished report to the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee containing evidence suggesting that the DPRK laundered \$147.5 million through a virtual currency platform in March.

The DPRK has continued to test its weapons systems and military technology in recent months. On 27 May, the DPRK announced that its latest attempt to launch a military reconnaissance satellite had been unsuccessful. DPRK state media reported that "the launch of the new satellite carrier rocket failed when it exploded in mid-air during the flight of the first stage" and claimed that the rocket used in the launch had utilised a new "liquid oxygen and petroleum engine." The Council convened for an open briefing to discuss the failed launch on 31 May following a request from France, Japan, Malta, the ROK, the UK, and the US. Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Mohamed Khaled Khiari briefed. The DPRK has also recently conducted several missile tests, including the 1 July launch of a ballistic missile that DPRK state media claimed was capable of carrying a large nuclear warhead.

On 12 June, the Council convened for an open briefing on the human rights situation in the DPRK at the request of Japan, the ROK, the UK, and the US. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the DPRK Elizabeth Salmón, and DPRK refugee Gumhyok Kim briefed. (For more information, see our 11 June *What's in Blue* story.)

From 13 to 16 July, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) Qu Dongyu visited the DPRK. Qu's trip marked the first occasion that a UN official has travelled to the DPRK since the country partially reopened its borders in August 2023.

### Human Rights-related Developments

On 16 July, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a report on forced labour in the DPRK. Among other matters, the report concludes that people in the DPRK are controlled and exploited through an extensive and multi-layered system of forced labour that is directed towards the interests of the state and institutionalised through various means, including prisons, schools, compulsory state-allocated employment, and overseas work.

### Key Issues and Options

The expiration of the Panel's mandate has created a significant issue

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UN DOCUMENTS ON THE DPRK Security Council Resolution S/2024/215 (7 March 2024) was the final report of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

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## DPRK (North Korea)

for the Council. While the Council could choose to adopt a resolution requesting that the Secretary-General reconstitute the Panel, this appears unlikely given the prevailing dynamics among Council members.

Those members who support independent oversight of the 1718 DPRK sanctions regime could choose to push for the General Assembly to establish a mechanism comparable to the Panel. This mechanism could be tasked with performing functions similar to those assigned to the Panel, including analysing information regarding the implementation of the 1718 sanctions regime, preparing reports, and making appropriate recommendations. These members could also choose to establish a body to monitor the 1718 DPRK regime outside UN fora.

### Council Dynamics

The Council is deeply divided over the DPRK. The P3 (France, the UK, and the US) and other like-minded countries, including Japan and the ROK, support using sanctions to manage the threat posed by the DPRK and often call on member states to comply with existing Council resolutions. Many of these members have urged the DPRK to engage in dialogue and abandon its weapons programmes, while emphasising that it is responsible for escalating tensions. Some of these members also call for the Council to show unity and respond to the DPRK's weapons tests and argue that China and Russia have emboldened it by blocking Council action on the file.

China and Russia, on the other hand, blame the US for heightening tensions and accuse it of not doing enough to incentivise the DPRK to participate in denuclearisation talks. These two members

have also contended that sanctions should be eased because of their impact on the humanitarian situation and continue to express their support for a draft resolution circulated by China in October 2021 that would provide sanctions relief to the DPRK if adopted.

The divisions between Council members were evident during the negotiations of the US draft resolution on the Panel's mandate. In a statement delivered before the vote on this draft, Russia claimed that the Panel had ceased to carry out its obligations and said that the sanctions regime no longer reflects realities on the ground, imposes a heavy burden on the population of the DPRK, and has failed to achieve the international community's stated aims. It further argued that a provision requiring an annual review of the regime was needed to address these issues. China expressed support for an annual review of the regime and called on the Council to consider the draft resolution it circulated in October 2021.

Other Council members strongly criticised Russia's veto, arguing that it undermines the global non-proliferation regime and emboldens the DPRK in its attempts to evade sanctions. Several members—including France, Japan, the ROK, the UK, and the US—linked the veto to Russia's alleged purchase of arms from the DPRK. Some of these members emphasised that the 1718 regime remained in place and said that they would continue efforts to monitor and enforce its provisions.

It appears that some Council members are currently considering whether and how to establish an alternative to the Panel, including outside the Council. While some members are open to this idea, other members are apparently concerned about possible unforeseen implications and the precedent that such a mechanism would create.



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