

Monthly Forecast

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Overview

The US will have the presidency in April and has planned a briefing on UN [peacekeeping](#) where the Secretary-General is expected to be the main speaker. Members are likely to focus on whether current peacekeeping operations are able to meet the needs on the ground and the Council's political objectives, or if changes are needed. It seems that the US is also interested in holding a debate on [human rights](#) and maintenance of international peace and security, which at press time, had yet to be agreed on. This would be the first ever Security Council thematic debate on human rights.

The mandates of the UN missions in [Haiti \(MINUSTAH\)](#) and in [Western Sahara \(MINURSO\)](#) will be renewed in April. Ahead of the renewal of MINUSTAH, the Council is expected to convene a meeting with troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and hold a debate. There will also be a TCC meeting and consultations ahead of the renewal of MINURSO at the end of the month.

There are a number of Sudan and South Sudan issues on the programme of work. The Council will discuss developments in relation to [UNAMID in](#)

[Darfur](#), [UNMISS in South Sudan](#), and [UNISFA in Abyei](#), and will receive the quarterly briefing from the chair of the [1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee](#).

Other African issues the Council will consider in April include:

- [Great Lakes Region](#), a briefing on the implementation of the DRC's Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement;
- [Mali](#), the activities of MINUSMA; and
- [Somalia/Eritrea](#), discussion of the 751/1907 Sanctions Committee on Somalia and Eritrea.

Regarding Middle East issues, members are expecting briefings on the humanitarian and political situations in [Syria](#), as well as on chemical weapons.

There will also be the regular quarterly open debate on the Middle East, with a focus on [Israel/Palestine](#).

An update on developments in [Colombia](#) is expected in early April.

Finally, Council members will be watching developments in [Iraq](#), and meetings may be scheduled if the situation in Mosul deteriorates further.

Reviewing Peacekeeping Operations

Expected Council Action

In April, at the initiative of the US, the Council is expected to hold a briefing on reviewing peacekeeping operations. Secretary-General António Guterres will brief.

Background

A concept note circulated ahead of the meeting stresses the important role that political foundations play in the success of peacekeeping missions. One of the conclusions of the 2014-2015 review by the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) was the "primacy of politics", which implied the need for the Council to bring its collective leverage to bear in support of political solutions. In a 25 November 2015 presidential

statement, the Council underlined "the significant impact its statements and actions can exert in situations of armed conflict or in support of peace processes." However, the Council has often failed to agree on a political strategy in support of peace operations for many reasons, including decision-making processes that do not prioritise the emergence of strategic or collective thinking, divergent political priorities, inadequate Secretariat analysis and planning, and host state hostility.

The concept note encourages Council members to review missions and identify areas where mandates no longer match political realities, asking whether it is advisable or possible to operate a mission without the strategic consent of the host government. Even though the Council resolved

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Reviewing Peacekeeping Operations (con't)

in 2016 to send a regional protection force to Juba in South Sudan, and a police component to Burundi, these decisions have not been implemented promptly, if at all, in part due to the resistance of host states. The fact that the resolutions adopting these decisions were non-consensual testifies to the divisions among Council members faced with host state resistance. However, host state hostility has also featured in situations where the Council has continued to unanimously extend mandates of long-standing missions in Darfur and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The achievability of Council mandates and the need to bridge the gap between expectations and resources have been a key element in the discussions related to peace operations reform since at least 2000. The HIPPO report observed how, in recent years, mandates have become lengthier and more specific, and at times less realistic, manageable or achievable. It maintained that “too often, mandates and missions are produced on the basis of templates instead of tailored to support situation-specific political strategies”. This is particularly relevant in missions facing “conflict management” situations for which the concepts, tools, mission structures and doctrine originally developed for peace implementation tasks may not be well suited. The Secretariat and the Council have been unable to escape the so-called “Christmas tree mandates”, where template language for many tasks routinely appears in mission mandates. This is influenced by the lack of restraint on the part of Council members—and those lobbying them—in pressing specific issues, and internal Secretariat negotiations reflecting an arbitrage of interests rather than prioritisation. Although the 25

November 2015 presidential statement stated that the Council will consider sequenced and phased mandates, where appropriate, when evaluating existing UN peace operations or establishing new ones, so far this agreement in principle has had little impact on the Council’s mandating patterns. Prioritised and sequenced mandates, geared towards the achievement of clear objectives, could also provide a framework for clearer exit strategies. The concept note asks what the Council should do in situations where missions serve a valuable protection role, but without any conceivable conclusion to this role, and quotes the HIPPO report’s injunction that “protection mandates must be realistic and linked to a wider political approach.”

One of the issues raised in the concept note is the need for the Council to re-examine the value of a mission where there is no political process or the political process breaks down. In Council practice, most mandates are reviewed at the end of their cycles, irrespective of developments, unless these are especially dramatic, as in South Sudan in December 2013. Even though the conditions on the ground might change (for example, an increase in asymmetric attacks, a change in the nature of threats to civilians or the unravelling of the political process), Council members are often reluctant to reassess the appropriateness of mandates in light of bad news in the hope that tactical changes within the existing mandates can mitigate the new threats. The HIPPO report recommended that independent evaluations of peace operations should be commissioned at key decision points to provide objective assessments of progress in mandate implementation and overall context. The Secretariat has conducted several “strategic

reviews” of peace operations, sometimes at the request of the Council, but these have had no independent element.

Some recent dynamics show increased attention to the political context of peace operations: Council members are now regularly inviting regional actors, including mediators, to engage with them, formally and informally; and despite political divisions, Council members are increasingly striving to deliver unified messages after private meetings or during visiting missions. At the meeting, Council members are expected to discuss the range of options at the Council’s disposal to exert its political leverage.

The US decision to hold this discussion follows Ambassador Nikki Haley’s statement, in her Senate confirmation hearing, regarding the need for a mission-by-mission review of peacekeeping as well as the intention of the US administration to reduce its peacekeeping funding. The case for a close re-examination of the assumptions underpinning Council mandates throughout the life spans of peace operations challenges the past management of mandates by the Council, dominated by the P3 as penholders, as well as by the Secretariat. Other Council members may resist an approach which appears budget-driven, while recognising that these are issues which have not been sufficiently addressed since the HIPPO report. Council negotiations regarding the reduction of the troop ceiling in the renewal of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) have already seen divisions. The briefing constitutes an opportunity for the Secretary-General to lay out his approach to greater effectiveness of peace operations and for the Council to have a candid discussion about the way it establishes and oversees mandates.

In Hindsight: Women, Peace and Security—Closing the Security Council’s Implementation Gap

The Council has created several tools with considerable potential to enable its members to increase their own access to and understanding of gender-related conflict analysis

in the various country settings on its agenda. Council members have adopted new practices as well as continued using existing ones to respond to some of the recommendations

of the three UN peace and security reviews conducted in 2014-2015 on peace operations, peacebuilding and implementation of resolution 1325 to this same end. Our

UN DOCUMENTS ON PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2015/22 (25 November 2015) took note of the recommendations of the peace operations review. Security Council Letter S/2015/446 (17 June 2015) was the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO).

USEFUL ADDITIONAL RESOURCE The Security Council and Peace Operations: Reform and Deliver, Security Council Report, May 2016

In Hindsight: Women, Peace and Security—Closing the Security Council’s Implementation Gap (con’t)

research report, *Women, Peace and Security: Closing the Security Council’s Implementation Gap*, examines significant recent developments in the Council, most notably the establishment of the Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security and, for the first time, inviting women’s civil society representatives to brief the Council at country-specific meetings.

The Council’s implementation of its women, peace and security (WPS) agenda has improved after some new practical elements were incorporated into resolution 2242, adopted in October 2015. One such innovation was the decision to establish the Informal Experts Group on WPS. The guiding principle of the 2242 Group, which held its first meeting in February 2016 (on Mali), is that better information and analysis, combined with direct interaction with field missions, leads to better oversight and stronger implementation of women, peace and security norms in specific country situations. So far the group has met on Mali, Iraq, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, the Lake Chad Basin, and Yemen.

While it may be too early to assess fully the impact of the information exchanged at meetings of the 2242 Group on activity in the Council itself, various Council members have pointed out that the Group’s meetings have provided in-depth information from the UN system on gender conflict analysis, additional to that included in the Secretary-General’s country-specific reports or briefings to the Council; thus it has helped them identify ways in which WPS implementation deficiencies could be addressed. The format of the group also provides Council members with an opportunity to get away from discussions in a “WPS silo” by placing these issues within the broader political, security and humanitarian context, and providing Council members with the information necessary to incorporate focused gender concerns into their own interventions in the Council. Through participating in the meetings of the 2242 Group, some delegations have found that their own internal coordination in advocating for gender

references to be included in Council decisions can be enhanced: the information conveyed at meetings of the Group has led to a better understanding by their country experts of how WPS norms could be implemented to benefit mission performance, and as such has lowered resistance to including gender references in Council outcomes.

However, there are numerous areas for potentially enhancing the effectiveness of the Group in the coming years. Some ways in which Council members could increase the impact of the Group’s work on Council deliberations and outcomes could include raising more regularly issues identified in Group discussions during interventions, consultations and negotiations in the Council, including by addressing specific questions to field leadership during consultations. Exploring issues identified in the 2242 Group when they are relevant to issues being discussed by Council members during the Secretariat’s informal situational awareness briefings (for example, on Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and northern Nigeria as part of the Lake Chad Basin) would also enrich these discussions with a necessary gender dimension.

The regular engagement of all Council members in the 2242 Group meetings would enhance its effectiveness (so far, China has not attended and Russia attends only rarely). Better engagement of all Council members’ relevant country experts in the 2242 Group meetings would prevent a situation when gender experts talk only to other gender experts and thus help to avoid isolating gender issues from the broader context of the conflict. Furthermore, the Group’s meetings provide a useful forum for exchanges between Council members and mission leaders to explore how the Council can support each mission’s response to WPS issues. In particular, heads of mission could communicate ways in which gender expertise can be embedded within all functional components of mandates. Finally, improving forward planning of the 2242 Group’s meetings with field and headquarters interlocutors could help enhance the quality of information being conveyed to

Council members.

Another recommendation of the 1325 Global Study to improve the flow of gender information to Council members was for women’s civil society representatives to brief at country-specific meetings, an innovation also encouraged by the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO). The Global Study also recommended that the Council hear more regularly on country-specific issues from the head of UN Women and the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. These recommendations were also taken up in resolution 2242. The inclusion of these recommendations was controversial during the negotiation of resolution 2242, and it took more than a year for the Council to implement the practice. Since December 2016, however, the practice has been used in briefings on Liberia, the Lake Chad Basin, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Countries supportive of the WPS agenda hope to hold at least one such briefing per month.

These new practices have enhanced the dissemination of information and analysis to Council members on gender issues, but as our 9 February 2017 report on conflict prevention noted, even “the best and most timely analysis and information is useless if it is not acted upon.” Better information can lead to better outcomes, but it is not always enough to generate political will. That dynamic is not specific to the Council’s consideration of WPS, but this thematic agenda has the additional obstacle of overcoming a culture among Council members and within the UN system that views gender issues as an “add-on”, rather than being one of the central components that support conflict prevention and underpin long-term stability. As such, implementation gaps remain. However, through continued innovation and by working to enhance the usefulness of existing tools the Council may be able to further consolidate gains made in its approach to the women, peace and security agenda.

Status Update since our March Forecast

Visiting Mission

Council members visited the countries of the Lake Chad Basin region from 2 to 7 March travelling to Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, where the terrorist group Boko Haram continues its insurgency. Members sought to assess the threat posed by Boko Haram and signal their support to the four countries in confronting the group, as well as to understand better the scale of the humanitarian crisis created by the conflict, and the underlying root causes. They met with government leaders and the UN country and humanitarian teams in the four countries and travelled to Maroua, in Cameroon's Far North region and to Maiduguri in Borno State to meet displaced persons and refugees, local authorities and military commanders. On 9 March, the three co-leads, France, Senegal and the UK briefed the Council on the mission (S/PV.7894). Discussions then proceeded among members, initially on a follow-up presidential statement, that was eventually made into a draft resolution, which was being negotiated at press time.

DPRK (North Korea)

In a 7 March press statement, Council members condemned the ballistic missile launches by the DPRK on 5 March (SC/12741). In a 23 March press statement, they condemned the DPRK's ballistic missile launch of 21 March and the ballistic missile engine test of 19 March (SC/12763). Both statements noted that such activities contribute to increasing tension in the region and beyond as well as the risk of a regional arms race, and emphasised the importance of the DPRK "showing sincere commitment to denuclearisation." The statements also called on member states to redouble their efforts to implement the sanctions measures imposed by the Council. On 23 March, in resolution 2345, the Council renewed for another 13 months the mandate of the Panel of Experts assisting the 1718 DPRK Sanctions Committee.

Burundi

On 9 March, the Council was briefed by Jamal Benomar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, on his latest report on the situation in Burundi (S/2017/165). Benjamin William Mkapa, East African Community facilitator of the Inter-Burundian Dialogue, and Ambassador Jürg Lauber (Switzerland), Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, also briefed the Council (S/

PV.7895). The briefing was followed by consultations. On 13 March, Council members issued a press statement expressing concern about the humanitarian and human rights situation in Burundi and the slow progress in the Inter-Burundian dialogue (SC/12750).

Iraq

On 10 March, on Russia's request, Council members met in consultations on the situation in and around Mosul, Iraq to discuss the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the alleged use of chemical weapons in eastern Mosul. Head of OCHA Stephen O'Brien and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo briefed Council members on the humanitarian situation and alleged chemical weapons use, respectively. On 24 March, Russia requested a meeting under "any other business" on the situation in Mosul because of reports regarding alleged use of chemical weapons by ISIL. During the meeting China and Russia circulated a draft resolution which sought to extend the mandate of OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism to Iraq.

Afghanistan

On 10 March, Tadamichi Yamamoto, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNAMA briefed the Council (S/PV.7896) on the latest UNAMA report (S/2017/189). Sima Samar, Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, also briefed the Council. On 17 March, the Council adopted resolution 2344, renewing the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2018.

Yemen

On 10 March, at Russia's request, the Council was briefed by O'Brien, who had travelled to Yemen from 26 February to 2 March (S/PV.7897). O'Brien highlighted that Yemen was the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with 18 million people in need of assistance, and was at risk of famine. He also addressed the humanitarian crises of South Sudan, Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin Region. On 17 March, following Russia's request, members discussed in consultations under "any other business" a planned attack against the port city of Hodeidah by the Coalition and Yemeni government. Political Affairs Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman briefed. On 29 March, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and Ambassador Koro Bessho (Japan), Chair of the Yemen 2140 Sanctions

Committee, briefed in consultations. Ahead of this meeting, on 23 March, the Informal Experts Group on Women Peace and Security met on Yemen. Participants included Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, Special Envoy Ahmed, the UN's Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick and the Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Conflict

On 15 March, the UK held a ministerial-level debate on modern slavery, forced labour and conflict (S/PV.7898). Secretary-General António Guterres; Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime; Ilwad Elman, a Somali human rights activist; and Kevin Hyland, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner of the UK briefed the Council (Fedotov and Elman by video teleconferencing, from Vienna and Mogadishu, respectively). In addition to Council members, more than 50 representatives of member states and international organisations participated in the debate. The Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Urmila Bhoola, also participated in the debate. The concept note circulated ahead of the debate highlighted the extent of the phenomenon of conflict related modern slavery and the links between trafficking in persons, organised crime and terrorism (S/2017/198).

Non-Proliferation (1540 Committee)

On 16 March, the chair of the 1540 Committee, Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorenty Solíz (Bolivia), briefed the Council on the work of the Committee (S/PV.7900). He said the Committee intended to build on the momentum generated by resolution 2325 adopted on 15 December 2016, which endorsed the 2016 comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1540, and that its programme of work for 2017 (S/2017/126) would enable significant progress towards more effective implementation.

Central African Republic

On 16 March, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous and the CAR President Faustin Archange Touadera briefed the Council on the situation in the CAR (S/PV.7901). At press time, the Panel of Experts assisting the 2127 CAR Sanctions Committee was to meet with the Committee

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to present its programme of work to the Committee on 31 March. Council members held an informal interactive dialogue on 13 March with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and Head of the AU Mission for Central Africa and the Central African Region, Mohamed El Hacem Lebart.

Lebanon

On 17 March Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, El Ghassim Wane, briefed Council members in consultations on the Secretary-General's 8 March report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (S/2017/201). On 9 March, the Council received the Secretary-General's strategic review of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (S/2017/202), which was requested by resolution 2305 of August 2016.

Myanmar

On 17 March, Feltman briefed Council members on the situation in Myanmar during informal consultations under "any other business". Hui Lu, of the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was also present and responded to questions during the session. The main focus of the briefing was the situation in Rakhine. Feltman also covered recent political developments and the efforts of the UN and regional organisations. Members expressed concerns about human rights violations and the humanitarian situation and were interested in how the UN could support the peace process.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 21 March, the Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO, Maman Sidikou, briefed the Council (S/PV.7903) on the latest

MONUSCO report (S/2017/206). President of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo Marcel Utambi and Marie-Madeleine Kalala of the NGO the Common Cause Network, also briefed the Council. At press time, the Council was set to adopt a resolution on 31 March, renewing the mandate of MONUSCO, including that of its Force Intervention Brigade, until 31 March 2018.

On 29 March, Council members condemned the killing of two experts from the DRC Sanctions Committee's Group of Experts who were on mission in the Kasai-Central region and expressed concern over the unknown status of the four Congolese nationals accompanying them (SC/12769).

Protection of Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflicts

On 24 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2347 on the protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts (S/PV.7907). Drafted by Italy and France, this was a first-ever resolution specifically on the issue of protection of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. The resolution, among other things, condemned destruction, looting and trafficking of cultural heritage in armed conflicts. Furthermore, the resolution calls on the member states to implement necessary measures to advance the protection of cultural heritage on their territory and, if requested, with the assistance of relevant UN agencies. At the meeting following the adoption the Council was briefed by Feltman; Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Fedotov (via video teleconference); and General Fabrizio Parrulli, head of the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

UNDOF (Golan Heights)

On 28 March, Council members held consultations on UNDOF. Ladsous briefed on the latest developments. Council members called on all parties to adhere to the Disengagements Forces Agreement. Furthermore and welcomed UNDOF's return to the Bravo side as well as the UN's efforts to ensure security.

Georgia

On 28 March, following the consultations on UNDOF the Council members discussed under "any other business" the situation in Georgia. Ukraine initiated the meeting because of concerns regarding the parliamentary elections on 12 and 26 March in Abkhazia, plans for the referendum on 9 April in South Ossetia, and the ongoing militarisation in breakaway territories in Georgia. Furthermore, Ukraine wanted to use the meeting to express support for the territorial integrity of Georgia. Ukraine also proposed a press statement following the meeting but its adoption was blocked by Russia.

Hybrid Warfare

At press time, Ukraine planned to hold a 31 March Arria-formula meeting on hybrid warfare as a threat to international peace and security. The main objective was to generate the discussion within the UN and the Security Council on possible responses to hybrid warfare. The meeting was to be chaired by Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine), with: Patrick Cullen, Senior Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs; Erik Reichborn, Research Fellow at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs; Taras Berezovets, Head of the Fund for National Strategies (Ukraine); and Alexander Motyl, Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University, as briefers.

Sudan (Darfur)

Expected Council Action

In April, the Security Council will hold a briefing on the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the AU/UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Acting Joint

Special Representative, Jeremiah Mamabolo, is expected to brief. The quarterly briefing of the chair of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Volodymyr Yelchenko (Ukraine), on the work of the Committee is

also expected in April in consultations.

The mandate of UNAMID expires on 30 June.

UN DOCUMENTS ON DARFUR Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2340 (8 February 2017) renewed the mandate of the 1591 Sudan Sanctions Committee Panel of Experts until 12 March 2018. **S/RES/2296** (29 June 2016) renewed the mandate of UNAMID for one year. **Secretary-General's Report S/2017/250** (23 March 2017) was the most recent UNAMID report. **Security Council Meeting Records S/PV.7860** (12 January 2017) was a UNAMID briefing. **S/PV.7833** (13 December 2016) was the ICC Prosecutor's semi-annual briefing on Sudan. **Sanctions-Related Document S/2017/22** (9 January 2017) was the final report of the Sudan Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts.

Sudan (Darfur) (con't)

Key Recent Developments

The Sudanese government scored major military successes in 2016 against the one major rebel movement still fighting in Darfur, the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Abdul Wahid (SLM/A-AW), in the Jebel Marra region. According to the government, no more than 300 SLM/A-AW fighters were still in Darfur as of early 2017. The most recent final report of the Sudan Sanctions Committee's Panel of Experts indicated that the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minnawi (SLA-MM) rebel group are now mainly based in Libya and South Sudan, "engaging in mercenary activities and, allegedly, in criminal activities (such as looting, kidnapping for ransom and trafficking)." While fighting between government forces and rebels has not occurred in recent months in Darfur, attacks against internally displaced persons by militia and criminal groups remain a problem.

On 8 March, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir issued a decree pardoning 193 imprisoned Darfuri rebels and removing death sentences that had been imposed on 66 other rebel prisoners. In a press statement, UNAMID's Acting Special Representative Mamabolo welcomed the decision, saying that "all parties to the conflict should capitalize on this gesture with a view to end hostilities and bring about a permanent and lasting peace for the people of Darfur". The decree did not extend to the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), which has been engaged in conflict with the government since 2011 in the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Notwithstanding these latest developments, the government continues to be criticised by human rights organisations for detaining and intimidating political prisoners.

The political process continues to falter. In recent months, the governments of Chad, Uganda and Qatar have engaged with the Sudanese government and Darfuri rebel groups in an effort to support the mediation by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). The current impasse concerns the role of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) in the negotiations, with the government of Sudan insisting on using the DDPD as the basis for the talks and the rebels requesting further discussion of the DDPD's provisions. (The DDPD focuses on seven areas: human rights; power-sharing; wealth sharing; justice and reconciliation; compensation of refugees and internally displaced

persons; ceasefire and security arrangements; and internal dialogue and consultation.)

The Council was last briefed on UNAMID on 12 January. During the meeting, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous said that the joint working group on an exit strategy for UNAMID—consisting of representatives of Sudan, the AU and the UN—had met in October and November 2016 in Khartoum, although they were unable "to reach consensus on specific modalities for the reconfiguration of the mission". Following Ladsous' briefing, Thabo Mbeki, the chair of the AUHIP, spoke with members about the political process in Darfur, which has been unsuccessful in ending a conflict now in its 14th year. He said that fulfillment of several of the provisions of the DDPD—including those related to compensation and justice and reconciliation, among others—has not occurred. In press elements read out by Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden), the Council President in January, members underlined their support for Mbeki's mediation efforts.

On 13-14 March, UNAMID, the UN Development Programme, Oxfam America and local officials held a conference in El Sereif, North Darfur, with members of the Beni Hussein, Northern Rezeigat and other communities to promote intercommunal reconciliation. According to UNAMID, "participants called for the establishment of joint mechanisms between Beni Hussein, northern Rezeigat, Zaghawa and Bediat tribes to manage pastoralists' movement and shared natural resources in Abo-Jidad Area, and the need to establish early warning systems to prevent intercommunal conflicts".

In March, a joint AU-UN team visited Darfur for one week, undertaking a strategic review of UNAMID that will be submitted to the Council in May.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 22 February, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, Aristide Nononzi, released a statement following his third mission to the country from 10 to 22 February in which he called on the Sudanese government to protect the rights of civilians in Darfur. Nononzi highlighted the "precarious" conditions of displaced people at Sorotony Camp in northern Darfur, with residents speaking of living in a state of insecurity due to "armed elements" and criminality in and outside the camp. Sexual and gender-based violence was also a serious concern in the camp. Nononzi urged the government to conduct investigations and bring perpetrators to justice, as

well as to abide by the Security Council's call for enhanced cooperation with UNAMID in efforts to protect civilians.

Key Issues

The key issue for the Council is to support efforts to break the ongoing impasse in the negotiations between the government and Darfuri rebel movements, leading to a durable cessation of hostilities and a final settlement.

Another issue is the need to promote intercommunal reconciliation, given the high levels of intercommunal fighting in Darfur in recent years.

Options

The Council could consider adopting a resolution or a presidential statement:

- urging the SLM/A-AW—the one major rebel group that is not currently participating in the peace talks—to join the political process;
- reiterating support for the mediation efforts of the AUHIP led by Mbeki and urging a return to negotiations;
- welcoming Bashir's pardoning of rebel figures while expressing concern about the regime's detention of civil society activists; and
- condemning recent attacks against internally displaced persons.

Another option moving forward is for the Council to consider seeking an African member as co-penholder on Darfur to share the pen with the current penholder, the UK, in order to enhance African involvement on this issue in the Council.

Regarding the Sudan Sanctions Committee, the chair of the Committee might consider holding the briefing in an open session, rather than in closed consultations, to enhance the transparency of the Committee's work.

Council Dynamics

There is sharp division in the Council regarding Darfur. On the one hand, some members, notably China and Russia, tend to emphasise the importance of upholding the sovereignty of Sudan, point to improvements in the security situation in Darfur and refer to efforts by the government to bring peace to the region. These states are critical of the International Criminal Court's (ICC) work on Darfur, particularly its efforts to pursue President al-Bashir, whom the Court has indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Among the African members of the Council,

Sudan (Darfur) (con't)

while Senegal is a state party to the ICC, Egypt and Ethiopia are not, and Egypt has argued in the Council that ICC proceedings against President al-Bashir should be suspended.

On the other hand, other members of the

Council—including the P3—have consistently been highly critical of the government of Sudan for committing human rights violations, for restricting the operations of UNAMID and for fostering a culture of impunity in Darfur.

The UK is the penholder on Darfur, while Ukraine chairs the Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Syria

Expected Council Action

In April, Council members expect to receive briefings on the humanitarian and political situation in Syria, as well as on chemical weapons.

Key Recent Developments

The fourth round of the intra-Syrian talks was held between 23 February and 3 March in Geneva. Following the parameters set out in resolution 2254, Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura proposed to discuss three “baskets” of issues in parallel: governance, constitution and elections. Following a request by the Syrian government delegation to add a fourth “basket” to discuss counter-terrorism, de Mistura proposed that this also tackles issues related to security governance and confidence-building measures. The Council welcomed this announcement in a press statement as “a clear agenda for future negotiations”. The fifth round of the intra-Syrian talks started on 23 March with the intention of discussing all four baskets with all delegations.

Russia, Turkey and Iran established a joint group as a trilateral mechanism to observe and ensure full compliance with the ceasefire. Efforts to operationalise the ceasefire received a setback when the opposition delegation refused to participate in a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, on 14 March, citing repeated violations of the ceasefire by the Syrian military.

Despite a new ceasefire announced by Russia, the ongoing military offensive by the government against besieged areas east of Damascus intensified and further worsened the living conditions for civilians by cutting off informal routes used to smuggle in basic items. Two suicide attacks in Damascus in early March, claimed by Tahrir al-Sham (a grouping that

includes the latest iteration of the Al-Qaida-affiliated Al-Nusra Front), left dozens of people killed. After years of besiegement, in mid-March the last rebel-held enclave of Homs, Al-Waer, started its evacuation following a local truce. (The opposition has repeatedly referred to such deals as forced population transfers.) In mid-March, the towns covered by the September 2015 “four towns agreement” (two besieged by armed opposition and two by government and Hezbollah militias) received some humanitarian aid after six months without access to basic items. On 29 March, a truce allowing evacuation was reportedly brokered by Iran and Qatar. At press time, OCHA head Stephen O'Brien was scheduled to brief the Council on 30 March.

On 2 March, the Syrian military took control of Palmyra, which had been under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) since December 2016. On 21 March, armed opposition groups, fighting alongside Tahrir al-Sham, launched an offensive against government-held areas north of Hama. During March, several US strikes targeting ISIL resulted in a heavy toll of civilian casualties in Syria as well as in Iraq. In a significant development, Israeli jets that were conducting operations against a convoy of military supplies for Hezbollah in Syria were attacked on 17 March by Syrian anti-aircraft missiles.

In northern Syria, a spate of violence between the forces of Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield and the People's Protection Units (YPG), a Kurdish militia that is part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), resulted in the killing of 71 YPG soldiers in the first week of March according to Turkey's military. On 22 March, a Turkish soldier was killed by a

YPG sniper. Efforts to defuse tensions included the handover of some towns from the SDF to the Syrian government to act as a buffer zone, and the deployment of Russian forces and US marines to SDF-held positions in Afrin and Manbij, to prevent attacks by Turkish military. On 8 March, the US announced the deployment of several hundred marines to participate in the SDF-led offensive towards ISIL's stronghold Raqqa.

On 28 February, a draft resolution establishing a sanctions regime, a committee and a panel of experts to ensure accountability for the use and production of chemical weapons in Syria, with an appended list of individuals and entities to be targeted, was vetoed by China and Russia, also receiving the negative vote of Bolivia and the abstentions of Egypt, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan. The draft—presented by France, the UK and the US—would have imposed sanctions on a number of individuals and entities associated with the Syrian government linked to cases where responsibility was established by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM): in Talmenes on 21 April 2014 and in Qmenas and Sarmin on 16 March 2015. In explaining its veto, Russia reiterated previously expressed concerns regarding the conclusions presented by the JIM and questioned the body of evidence on which they were based. China questioned the timing for the draft as the Geneva talks were under way. On 20 March, the EU imposed bilateral sanctions on four senior Syrian officials involved in the use and production of chemical weapons in Syria.

UN DOCUMENTS ON SYRIA [Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2336](#) (31 December 2016) welcomed efforts by Russia and Turkey to end violence in Syria and jumpstart a political process. [S/RES/2319](#) (17 November 2016) and [S/RES/2118](#) (27 September 2013) were on chemical weapons. [S/RES/2254](#) (18 December 2015) was on a political solution to the Syrian crisis. [Secretary-General's Reports S/2017/244](#) (22 March 2017) was on the humanitarian situation. [Security Council Letters S/2017/172](#) (28 February 2017) was the draft resolution on chemical weapons vetoed by China and Russia. [S/2017/175](#) (27 February 2017) was a report by the OPCW on progress in the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme. [Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7893](#) (28 February 2017) was the meeting at which Russia and China vetoed a draft resolution establishing a sanctions regime for the use and production of chemical weapons in Syria. [Security Council Press Statement SC/12749](#) (10 March 2017) welcomed de Mistura's announcement of a clear agenda for future negotiations as indicated by resolution 2254.

Syria (con't)

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 14 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held a high-level panel discussion on the human rights situation in Syria. In a statement, the High Commissioner for Human Rights labelled the conflict in Syria and its consequences “the worst man-made disaster the world has seen since World War II,” in which the country has become a “torture-chamber” for its population. The High Commissioner criticised repeated vetoes in the Security Council as holding back efforts to end the conflict and to refer crimes to the International Criminal Court (ICC), adding that his office was “moving as fast as possible” to set up the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, as stipulated by the General Assembly resolution 71/248. A number of other panelists emphasised that a lack of political will was the main issue preventing progress. On the same day, the HRC also held an interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria to discuss its latest report on Aleppo (A/HRC/34/64), which covers the period from 21 July to 22 December 2016. The report concluded that serious violations of international human rights law and war crimes were committed by all parties in the battle for Aleppo, including daily airstrikes by Syrian and Russian forces, the use of chlorine bombs by Syrian forces in residential areas, indiscriminate attacks on civilians by “Syrian and/or Russian forces” through the pervasive use of cluster munitions, and indiscriminate attacks by armed groups. The report attributed the 19 September airstrike on a humanitarian convoy, which killed 15 aid workers and destroyed much-needed aid supplies, to the Syrian military. It characterised it as one of the most “egregious” attacks and an attempt by Syrian forces to “deliberately obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid.” On 24 March, the HRC adopted by 27 votes to 7 (with 13 abstentions) resolution 34/37 on the human rights situation in Syria, extending the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for one year. The resolution recommended that the General Assembly submit the Commission’s reports to the Security Council and that the Commission continue to brief members of the Security Council.

Key Issue

Six years since the start of a war that has exacted a death toll approaching half a million, left 640,000 living under siege, and displaced half of the Syrian population, including almost 5 million refugees, the essential issue for the Council is to exert effective leadership in enforcing the ceasefire and promoting efforts to reach a political solution.

Options

The Council has many tools at its disposal—such as imposing an arms embargo or targeted sanctions, referring Syria to the ICC or authorising a no-fly zone to deter the Syrian government from using its aerial capacity—but P5 divisions have made it impossible for the Council to fulfill its role in maintaining international peace and security in the case of Syria.

Council members could, both individually and collectively, step up efforts to ensure that the government guarantees humanitarian access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

Council members could also hold an Arria-formula meeting with the HRC’s Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Council members welcomed the fourth round of the Geneva talks, where de Mistura succeeded in keeping the parties engaged throughout and reaching agreement on an agenda based on resolution 2254. Language regarding the fragility of the ceasefire and examples of continuous violations by the government were not included in the 10 March press statement given the opposition of some Council members, including Russia. Briefing

Council members on 8 March, de Mistura appealed to the guarantors of the ceasefire to urgently address spoiler acts and escalatory steps in contested areas. Failure to deliver on the ceasefire commitments could have a negative impact on the intra-Syrian talks.

Despite the public display of divisions in the 28 February vote, and the criticism repeatedly expressed by Council members, especially Russia, the JIM is still expected to investigate instances of the use of chemical weapons as identified by the OPCW’s fact-finding mission. Furthermore, in a briefing on non-proliferation on 16 March, Russia reiterated a proposal that the JIM investigates reports of non-state actors gaining access to chemical weapons also in Iraq. Resolution 2118, adopted on 27 September 2013 and drafted by the US and Russia, decided to impose measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in the event of non-compliance, including any use of chemical weapons in Syria. Nevertheless, Russia has continued to oppose any punitive action against the government. On the 24 March HRC vote, Bolivia and China voted against and Egypt and Ethiopia abstained.

On 23 March, at a meeting of the Global Coalition to counter ISIL, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said that the US will work to establish interim zones of stability through ceasefires, to allow refugees to return to Syria and Iraq. However, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, and other humanitarian actors have stressed that the situation on the ground does not allow for the planning of zones safe enough for the protection of civilians and the return of refugees.

Mali

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council expects to receive a briefing on Mali from the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix.

The mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) expires on 30 June 2017.

Key Recent Developments

Despite some recent signs of progress, the implementation of the 2015 Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali continues to be marked by obstacles and delays. Briefing the

UN DOCUMENTS ON MALI Security Council Resolution S/RES/2295 (29 June 2016) renewed MINUSMA’s mandate. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2016/16 (3 November 2016) strongly condemned repeated ceasefire violations in Mali and urged the parties to expeditiously carry out all their commitments under the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation. Secretary-General’s Report S/2016/1137 (30 December 2016) included benchmarks for monitoring the implementation of the agreement. Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7864 (18 January 2017) was a briefing on the situation in Mali by Ladsous with the participation of Boukadoum and the Foreign Minister of Mali, Abdoulaye Diop. Security Council Press Statements SC/12692 (24 January 2017) condemned the attack against a MINUSMA camp in Aguelhoc that caused the death of a Chadian peacekeeper. SC/12687 (18 January 2017) condemned the attack—claimed by the terrorist group Al-Mourabitoun—against the camp of the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao, which caused the deaths of dozens of persons.

Mali (con't)

Council on 18 January, then Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, conveyed to the Council a sense of urgency about the worrying state of the peace process in Mali. Tensions among the coalitions of armed groups (the Coordination and the Platform) and within them (particularly the fragmentation of the Coordination) have significantly impeded progress. In December 2016, the Coordination suspended its participation in the Comité de Suivi de l'Accord (CSA)—the main follow-up mechanism to the agreement, chaired by Algeria—and some of its members did not attend a meeting of the CSA on 30 January. The Coordination officially resumed its participation following a 10 February high-level meeting of the parties. However, key issues, such as the participation and status of splinter groups in the implementation of the agreement, remain unresolved.

As the end of the two-year interim period stipulated by the agreement approaches in June, key measures for this period remain unimplemented. In early March, the interim authorities responsible for regional administration were installed in three of the five northern regions. However, some armed groups have opposed the installation of the authorities and the appointment of interim presidencies in Taoudeni and Timbuktu. Efforts to deploy joint patrols persisted despite the 18 January terrorist attack that killed more than 50 participants in the Operational Coordination Mechanism in Gao; the first such patrol was deployed in Gao on 23 February.

Among the outstanding issues are the cantonment as well as the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of armed combatants. A national reconciliation conference, which was provided for in the agreement but has been repeatedly postponed, started on 27 March. On 19 March, however, the two coalitions of armed groups criticised the government for choosing the dates of the conference unilaterally and for insufficient cooperation regarding the preparations, including the conference's terms of reference. Even though the Coordination did not attend the inaugural session, it joined the conference the next day.

Resolution 2295 of 29 June 2016 expressed the Council's readiness to consider targeted sanctions against those undermining the implementation of the agreement, those violating the ceasefire and those who attack MINUSMA and other international presences. In his 30 December 2016 report, the Secretary-General called on the Council

to consider imposing targeted sanctions on those who obstruct the implementation of the agreement. Although the issue was brought up in consultations on 18 January, some Council members questioned the appropriateness and timeliness of establishing a sanctions regime, which at the time was also opposed by the Malian government.

Security threats continue to undermine the political process and impose operational constraints on MINUSMA. Since the mission was established in 2013, at least 72 peacekeepers have been killed as a result of hostile acts. Terrorist groups have carried out attacks against MINUSMA and French and Malian forces, including in the centre and south of Mali. Given that the mission uses a substantial part of its resources to protect itself and that most of the additional personnel and capabilities for the mission authorised by resolution 2295 have not been deployed, the Secretary-General urged the Council to actively engage with member states to ensure that the mission has the equipment, personnel and resources that it needs. In early January, Germany announced the deployment of 350 additional troops to MINUSMA, as well as combat and transport helicopters. At the initiative of the Council's president for the month, Sweden, an extraordinary meeting with current and prospective troop- and police-contributing countries was held on 27 January. However, the operational capabilities of MINUSMA remain unchanged. Beyond the north, inter-ethnic violence persisted in central Mali. On 22 March, at least 10 people were killed as a result of clashes between Fulani and Bambara communities in Ségou.

In February, the Group of Five Sahel (G5)—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger—announced in Bamako the creation of a regional force to combat terrorism and transnational crime. Given that G5 countries make up for more than 30 percent of MINUSMA's military and police personnel, it is unclear whether the deployment of a new operation would imply the reassignment of some MINUSMA contingents and a negative impact on an already under-resourced mission.

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, Suliman Baldo—who visited the country from 26 February to 8 March—to discuss his latest report (A/HRC/34/72). The report, which covers the period from 1 April to 30 November 2016, concluded that

the fragile security situation in central and northern Mali has led to the deterioration of the human rights situation in the country, and that the absence of Malian security forces outside Bamako and the main towns remains a concern. The report stressed the need to end impunity for both past and current human rights violations in order to ensure a lasting peace. On 24 March the HRC extended the Independent Expert's mandate for one year.

Key Issues

Three months before the end of the interim period and the renewal of MINUSMA's mandate, identifying key priorities for the mission is an important issue for the Council. The gap between MINUSMA's current mandate and its implementation, given the insufficient capacities and resources of MINUSMA, is a related issue.

An overarching issue is the slow implementation of the agreement and the potential for a relapse into conflict. Bridging divisions within the armed groups and between the parties, including by bringing on board new splinter groups and realistically adapting the timeline, are related issues.

The deterioration of the security situation in northern and central Mali and the spate of inter-ethnic violence are urgent issues for the Council. Addressing the grievances and frustrations of different communities that are not benefiting from the peace agreement in their daily lives, including youth at risk of being recruited by violent groups, is a related issue.

The frequent terrorist attacks and their reach, the deliberate targeting of MINUSMA and the safety concerns of troop- and police-contributing countries are further issues for the Council.

Options

The Council could:

- discuss the challenges of implementing the agreement in an informal interactive dialogue with the participation of the foreign minister of Algeria, Ramtane Lamamra, given his country's chairmanship of the CSA, and Mahamat Saleh Annadif, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of MINUSMA, in order to enhance a common political strategy;
- establish a sanctions regime targeting those violating the ceasefire and undermining the implementation of the agreement;
- request that the Military Adviser for Peacekeeping Operations brief Council members on force generation efforts to supply key capacities and personnel that

Mali (con't)

the mission is lacking; and

- request the Monitoring Team of the 1267/1989/2253 ISIL (Da'esh) & Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee to report on ways to curb the terrorist threat in Mali, including from non-listed terrorist groups.

Council and Wider Dynamics

Overall, Council members have expressed concerns about the slow pace of implementing the agreement. Despite threatening to impose

sanctions in resolution 2295, Council members have so far failed to reach a common position on following up on that threat. France, as the penholder, continues in its efforts to obtain support for sanctions from the government of Mali and other Council members.

Announcing the establishment of a new regional force, G5 member states implied that Council authorisation would be requested. Although a request has officially not been made, Council members are likely to have

differences over the political, operational and financial implications of such a deployment.

The participation of Ambassador Sabri Boukadoum (Algeria) in the 18 January meeting was the first time that an Algerian official briefed the Council, formally or informally, on efforts to implement the agreement. However, the public format of the meeting did not allow for a more interactive and frank discussion of the issues faced by Mali.

France is the penholder on Mali.

Haiti

Expected Council Action

This month the Security Council is due to extend the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) before the current mandate expires on 15 April. Ahead of the renewal, the Council is expected to convene a meeting with troop-contributing countries and hold a debate with a briefing by Special Representative and head of MINUSTAH Sandra Honoré, who will present the Secretary-General's latest MINUSTAH report.

Key Recent Developments

On 20 November 2016, Haiti held presidential and partial legislative elections. The elections were originally scheduled for 9 October but were postponed because of the damage caused by Hurricane Matthew, which struck Haiti on 4 October. The Council held its semi-annual debate on Haiti shortly thereafter, on 11 October, with the impact of the hurricane as a main theme. On 13 October, the Council renewed MINUSTAH's mandate for six months with no changes in its authorised military and police strength. It urged Haiti's political actors to complete the electoral process without further delays.

The November elections took place in a generally calm atmosphere with no major violent incidents, but voter turnout was only just over 20 percent. Following the release of preliminary tallies that showed Jovenel Moïse, the candidate of former president Michel Martelly's party Parti Haitien Tèt Kale (PHTK) with more than 50 percent of the votes, the

main opposition candidates—Jude Celestin, Jean-Charles Moïse and Maryse Narcisse—challenged the results. (Moïse also topped the poll in the presidential elections held on 25 October 2015, which were later annulled in response to allegations of irregularities and voter fraud.) The new challenges were rejected by the Provisional Electoral Council, which on 3 January announced the final results, confirming that Moïse had obtained 55.6 percent of the vote, thus removing the need for a second round. In a 4 January press statement, Council members welcomed the announcement and urged all political actors to accept the results, refrain from violence and work together to build a stable and prosperous Haiti.

On 29 January, the second round of the remaining parliamentary seats and the single round of local elections were held, giving PHTK a majority in parliament. Following both the 20 November and 29 January elections, the electoral observer mission of the Organization of American States concluded that no major irregularities had been observed that could have changed the outcomes.

Moïse was inaugurated on 7 February, as foreseen when the Council renewed MINUSTAH's mandate in October. On 22 February, Moïse announced the selection of Jack Guy Lafontant, a medical doctor, to serve as his prime minister. As required by the constitution, parliament confirmed Lafontant's 18-minister cabinet and his government programme on 21 March. In his inaugural speech, Lafontant stressed the seriousness of the challenges Haiti

faces and called for national unity as he outlined the government's new priorities.

On 16 March, the Secretary-General submitted his report to the Council with recommendations for the future reconfiguration of MINUSTAH based on the strategic assessment mission to Haiti conducted from 6 to 11 February. The mission concluded that despite recent positive developments on the political front, Haiti is still in "a delicate period of political transition". It would be important to avoid a security vacuum and to not repeat the failures of past transitions, such as the closing in 2000 of the previous UN operation in Haiti, which was followed by an electoral crisis and large-scale public unrest. The mission emphasised the importance of a strong UN political and good offices role.

Based on the findings of the mission, the Secretary-General recommended a final six-month extension of MINUSTAH involving the gradual withdrawal of the military component. He further recommended the establishment of a smaller successor peacekeeping mission focused on the rule of law and police development, which would retain seven of the current 11 formed police units, while the number of individual police would be reduced from 1,001 to 295. In an annex, the report provided an update on progress in achieving the mandated tasks identified in the Secretary-General's initial consolidation plan as outlined in his 8 March 2013 report to the Council.

On 25 November 2016, the Secretary-General submitted a report to the General

UN DOCUMENTS ON HAITI Security Council Resolution S/RES/2313 (13 October 2016) renewed MINUSTAH's mandate until 15 April 2017. **Secretary-General's Reports S/2017/223** (16 March 2017) was the most recent MINUSTAH report. **A/71/620** (25 November 2016) was on the new approach to cholera in Haiti. **S/2013/139** (8 March 2013) contained the 2013-2016 consolidation plan for MINUSTAH. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7789** (11 October 2017) was the Council's last debate on Haiti. **Security Council Press Statement SC/12666** (4 January 2017) welcomed the announcement of the election results. **Other A/HRC/34/73** (8 March 2017) was the report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti. **A/RES/71/161** (16 December 2016) was the General Assembly resolution welcoming the new cholera approach.

Haiti (con't)

Assembly that provided more details on the UN's new approach to cholera in Haiti. It was first signalled on 19 August when the UN spokesperson said the Secretary-General regretted the suffering of the Haitian people resulting from the cholera epidemic and that the UN had "a moral responsibility to the victims". As outlined in the report, the UN will work along two tracks. Track one involves intensifying the UN's support for efforts aimed at reducing and ultimately ending the transmission of cholera, improving access to care and treatment, and addressing the longer-term issues of water, sanitation and health systems in Haiti. Track two involves developing a package of material assistance and support to Haitians most directly affected by cholera, drawing on contributions from member states.

During a General Assembly meeting on 1 December 2016, the Secretary-General estimated that the new approach would require additional funding of \$400 million and called on member states to make contributions to the UN Haiti cholera response multi-partner trust fund already established. The General Assembly adopted a resolution on 16 December welcoming the new approach, calling on member states and other stakeholders to support it, and requesting the Secretary-General to submit another report during the General Assembly's current session. According to a letter from the Secretary-General sent to member states in February, however, the voluntary contributions that had been received as of 8 February amounted to only 2 percent of the total amount sought.

Human Rights-related Developments

On 21 March, the Human Rights Council held an interactive dialogue during its 34th session with

the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Haiti, Gustavo Gallón – who visited the country from 28 February to 11 March – to discuss his most recent report. The report, which covers the period from 24 March 2016 to 25 January 2017, welcomed the completion of Haiti's electoral process and its insufficient but encouraging progress on women's rights. However, the report also highlighted the extremely inhuman, cruel and degrading detention conditions in Haitian prisons and expressed concern at the lack of progress in the trial of former president Jean-Claude Duvalier's associates. Gallón reiterated his recommendations to set up a truth, justice and reparations commission to address past human rights violations and a similar commission to provide remedies to the victims of cholera.

Key Issues

A key issue for the Council in April is the renewal of MINUSTAH's mandate and whether to endorse the Secretary-General's recommendations. Related issues include the continued need to develop the capacity of the Haitian National Police and address the lack of progress in the areas of rule of law and human rights-related reforms, in particular with regard to criminal justice and ensuring accountability for past abuses, as noted in the Secretary-General's report.

A further issue is the lack of funding for the new cholera approach and the implications for the UN's standing in Haiti.

Options

The main option for the Council is to adopt a resolution extending MINUSTAH for a final six-month period and authorising a smaller successor mission, as recommended by the Secretary-General, with a strong rule of law and human rights monitoring mandate. It could also urge member states

to make contributions to the cholera trust fund.

Council Dynamics

According to established Council practice, draft resolutions on MINUSTAH are normally negotiated and agreed among the Group of Friends of Haiti, which comprises Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, France, Guatemala, Peru, the US and Uruguay, before being circulated to all 15 Council members by the US, as the penholder. At press time, it seems members of the Group of Friends were close to reaching agreement on a draft endorsing the Secretary-General's recommendations.

While some members apparently advocated a 12-month extension of MINUSTAH's mandate in discussions with the Secretariat ahead of the issuance of the Secretary-General's recommendations, there was no push-back in the Group of Friends on the proposed six-month renewal. Negotiations this time have instead focused on whether to include more language on the humanitarian situation, human rights and peacebuilding and add references to the new approach on cholera. It seems that France and the US have pushed for a shorter text and have reservations about including proposed language on cholera, while Brazil and other Latin-American countries feel it is important to reflect some of the observations on human rights and humanitarian challenges and the importance of peacebuilding contained in the Secretary-General's report. Other Council members seem supportive of the Secretary-General's recommendations and are expected to go along with the draft agreed by the Group of Friends without any major changes.

Somalia and Eritrea

Expected Council Action

In April, the Chair of the Somalia and Eritrea 751/1907 Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kairat Umarov (Kazakhstan), will deliver his 120-day briefing to the Council. The Council also expects to receive the midterm

update of the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG). The mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) expires on 16 June.

Key Recent Developments

The most recent Council action on Somalia and Eritrea sanctions took place last November. On 8 November 2016, the outgoing chair of the 751/1907 Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee, Ambassador

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOMALIA AND ERITREA Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2346 (23 March 2017) was a technical rollover of UNSOM's mandate until 16 June 2017. S/RES/2317 (10 November 2016) was on Somalia and Eritrea sanctions and was adopted with ten votes in favour. **Secretary-General's Report S/2017/21** (9 January 2017) was on the situation in Somalia. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7905** (23 March 2017) was a briefing by Keating, Madeira and Farnajo. **Sanctions Committee Documents S/2016/920** (7 October 2016) was the report on Eritrea of the SEMG. **S/2016/919** (7 October 2016) was the report on Somalia of SEMG.

Somalia and Eritrea (con't)

Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela), briefed Council members on the final reports of the SEMG. On 10 November, the Council adopted resolution 2317, renewing until 15 November 2017 the partial lifting of the embargo set out in resolution 2142, the humanitarian exemption, and the authorisation for maritime interdiction. The resolution also extended the SEMG's mandate until 15 December 2017.

During negotiations on resolution 2317, China proposed language requesting the SEMG to present a report within 120 days to the Committee on recommendations for lifting sanctions imposed on Eritrea, including benchmarks and a timeframe. (The report of the SEMG had found for the third year in a row that Eritrea was not supporting the Al-Shabaab terrorist group.) However, the proposal was not accepted by the penholder, the UK, in a draft placed under silence on 8 November. Angola, China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela all broke silence when this proposal was not incorporated into the draft. As a compromise, text was included in the draft in blue expressing the Council's "intention to review measures on Eritrea in light of the upcoming midterm update by the SEMG due by 30 April 2017 and taking into account relevant Security Council resolutions". Some members believed that this compromise had the benefit of not prejudging the review of the sanctions on Eritrea, which in their view was the case with the Chinese proposal. However, Angola, China, Egypt, Russia and Venezuela all abstained, and the resolution was adopted with only ten affirmative votes.

Meanwhile, Somalia is in the grip of an intense drought. More than six million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and half of those need urgent life-saving measures, according to UNSOM. Newly elected President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed "Farmajo" declared the drought situation a national disaster on 28 February and has pledged to use all available platforms in the coming weeks and months to highlight it, including a forthcoming high-level partnership meeting on Somalia scheduled to be held in London on 11 May. In attempting to facilitate the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid, the government has reportedly provided tax exemptions on imports of

critical humanitarian supplies that still carry any form of taxes; temporarily lifted taxes and levies on NGOs to enable them to scale up the delivery of humanitarian assistance; strengthened security at critical areas of humanitarian delivery, including the removal of illegal roadblocks; and imposed firm measures to prevent and penalise diversion of humanitarian assistance. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator has appealed for \$825 million to prevent the crisis from deteriorating into a famine. More than \$400 million has been pledged by donors to support an escalation of the drought response, and the Humanitarian Coordinator urged donors to expedite disbursement of these funds to allow partners to scale up their work. On 7 March, Secretary-General António Guterres visited Somalia to highlight the crisis and appeal for assistance.

Al-Shabaab militants have reportedly been distributing food to drought-stricken Somalis. During the last famine, in 2011, Al-Shabaab blocked aid deliveries, burned food, and killed humanitarian workers. More than 260,000 people died in that famine. Meanwhile, the group continues to launch asymmetrical attacks, such as the 22 March deadly car bomb attack targeting a security checkpoint near the presidential palace in Mogadishu that killed at least five people and wounded several others.

The Council was last briefed on the situation in Somalia on 23 March, when Special Representative Michael Keating, African Union (AU) Special Representative to Somalia Francisco Madeira, and President Farmajo addressed the Council, the latter two by video teleconference. Also on 23 March, the Council adopted resolution 2346, which extended the mandate of UNSOM until 16 June. The Council is awaiting recommendations from the Secretary-General on the UN's role in Somalia in the post-election period, and for that reason opted for a rollover of UNSOM's mandate until those recommendations can be duly considered. The report is expected in mid-May.

Key Issues

On sanctions, a key issue in April will be assessing the Federal Government of Somalia's management of arms and ammunition and implementation of maritime interdiction

measures regarding arms and charcoal.

Considering the findings of the midterm report of the SEMG and determining whether to consider altering or ending the Eritrea sanctions regime, as advocated by some Council members, will be a major issue.

Regarding Somalia more generally, the pressing issue is the drought and looming famine and ensuring an appropriate humanitarian response.

Ensuring that progress is made towards the constitutional review process and completion of the federal state formation, with support from UNSOM, continues to be a concern.

Regarding security concerns, a main priority is strengthening the Somali national security forces and enhancing their ability to work with the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in the fight against Al-Shabaab, particularly in light of AMISOM's plan to begin transitioning out of Somalia in October 2018.

Options

The most likely option in April will be merely to receive the briefing by the chair, and waiting until after the receipt of the midterm report at the end of the month before determining whether to take any further action concerning the Eritrea sanctions regime.

Council Dynamics

Regarding sanctions, the Council is divided between those members who believe it should reconsider sanctions measures against Eritrea, such as China, Russia and Egypt, and those who remain concerned about Eritrea's other activities in the region and seem to view cooperation with the SEMG as a precondition for any changes in the sanctions regime. Ethiopia is likely to oppose the easing or lifting of sanctions on Eritrea advocated by some members.

On Somalia more generally, Council members are united in supporting state-building processes and in their support for AMISOM, as demonstrated by unified messages conveyed during the Council's visit to Somalia in May 2016 and the uncontentious adoption of several recent Council outcomes on Somalia.

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

Libya

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is expected to receive a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Martin Kobler. The Council also expects a briefing by the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden).

The mandates of the Panel of Experts of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee and UNSMIL expire on 31 July and 15 September, respectively.

Key Recent Developments

Efforts to reach an inclusive and sustainable political settlement in Libya continue to falter. Kobler told the Council in a briefing on 8 February that, as a response to the political deadlock, visions from the east, south and west of Libya have started to converge on possible amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA). In January, a letter to the Security Council from the President of the House of Representatives, Agila Saleh, advocated that the Presidency Council be reduced from nine members to three, and that its decision-making processes be restructured. Agila Saleh also called for the composition of the State Council to be reconsidered and for article 8 of the LPA, regarding the authority of the supreme commander of the armed forces, to be amended. In late January, members of the Libyan Political Dialogue held a consultative meeting to discuss this proposal. Even though the delegation of the House of Representatives was recalled to Tobruk and did not participate, those present issued a communiqué after the meeting, identifying key challenges to the implementation of the LPA and agreeing in principle on some of the House proposals. So far, divisions among members of the House have led to the failure to appoint a new delegation, and a 7 March vote rejected the LPA. The Libyan Political Dialogue has not met since January.

Several initiatives involving regional actors, such as Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia, have taken place over the last two months to try to address the political stalemate. On 14 February, Egypt attempted to convene a meeting between the head of the Presidency Council, Faiez Serraj, and General Khalifa Haftar. At the last minute, however, Haftar refused to participate in direct talks, and both leaders spoke separately with General Mahmoud

Hegazy, the chief of staff of the Egyptian army. In March, the EU joined the UN, the League of Arab States, and the African Union (AU) to form a Quartet to mobilise support for a political settlement in Libya.

Despite diplomatic efforts, violence has escalated. In March, the Benghazi Defense Brigades temporarily took over two key ports in Libya's Oil Crescent (Ras Lanuf and Es-Sidr) that were, and remain, under the control of Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). In Benghazi, the LNA's renewed offensive to take over the eastern district of Ganfouda has resulted in war crimes, according to human rights organisations. In the south, the LNA has repeatedly clashed with Misrata-based militias.

The Presidency Council continues to have limited capacity to deliver on the ground and relies heavily on the loyalty of militias, some of which are from the western city of Misrata. In Tripoli, these militias clashed with rival ones supporting Khalifa Gwell, the self-appointed prime minister of a so-called national salvation government announced in 2015, until a ceasefire was agreed on 15 March. However, tensions among Misrata-based militias resulted in the toppling of the Misrata municipal council on 20 March. On 23 March, the Appeals Court of Tripoli temporarily suspended a Memorandum of Understanding between the Presidency Council and Italy on migration, questioning the legitimacy of the Presidency Council to sign such agreement.

The situation of migrants and refugees in Libya, which was characterised in December 2016 as a "human rights crisis" by UNSMIL and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, continues to be critical. A 28 February report by the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) detailed how migrant and refugee women and children who are trying to reach Europe through Libya are being beaten, raped and starved in detention centres run by militias that are described as "living hellholes".

Human Rights-Related Developments

On 21 March, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue at its 34th session to discuss the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, prepared in cooperation with UNSMIL, on the situation of human rights in Libya (A/HRC/34/42). The report concluded that armed groups, some of whom act on behalf of the state, are primarily responsible for grave violations and abuses of human rights. These included unlawful

killings, sexual abuse, and abduction of children; torture, abduction for ransom, extortion, forced labour, and killing of migrants; and the abduction and murder of media professionals, activists, and human rights defenders. The report said that it was critical that the Government of National Accord move to establish a professional army, police and other security forces; prioritise disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes; and implement the justice and rule of law provisions of the LPA. While acknowledging it as the most prominent effort to bring accountability for past crimes, the report argued that the trial of Saif al-Islam Gaddafi and 36 other members of Muammar Gaddafi's regime raised "serious concerns," including regarding the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges, the right to a public trial, the right to call and examine witnesses, and the right not to be compelled to confess guilt or incriminate oneself. In a statement on 21 February, the High Commissioner had described the trial as a "missed opportunity for justice".

On 24 March, the HRC adopted resolution 34/18 requesting the High Commissioner to provide an oral update, along with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Libya (a previous such joint briefing took place in September 2016), at its September session, and to present a written report during at its 37th session in 2018.

Key Issues

The overarching issue is to ensure that the parties agree on a consensual solution to end the political deadlock that addresses the issues raised by those refusing to support the LPA.

Related issues are maintaining the relevance of UN mediation efforts, and pressing external actors to exercise leverage to encourage engagement in the political process and to ensure the coherence of their mediation efforts with a Libya-led process under the aegis of the UN.

Options

Options for the Council include holding an unscripted and frank discussion to re-assess and seek agreement on a political strategy for Libya.

As soon as the strategic assessment review of the UN presence in Libya is completed, the Council could adopt a resolution prioritising a limited set of tasks that UNSMIL can realistically achieve to align the mission's mandate with the political, security and operational realities on the ground.

Council members could also organise a visit to Libya and the region to hold

Libya (con't)

discussions with the parties, including spoilers, and regional stakeholders to help overcome the political deadlock.

Council Dynamics

Council members generally support UNSMIL's mediation efforts but have arguably failed to set a clear direction to reach and support a political settlement. Some Council members have engaged with parallel institutions, including providing various degrees of support to Haftar's forces. In response to the

current deadlock, there seems to be a consensus among Council members about the need to amend the LPA. In his 1 December 2016 report, the Secretary-General suggested a review of the international community's approach to the Libyan democratic transition process, should efforts to adopt a new constitution and establish democratically elected institutions within a reasonable timeframe fail. Although it renewed UNSMIL's mandate in December, the Council—which includes key actors regarding Libya, such as Egypt and

Italy, as well as the permanent members—has yet to have such a strategic discussion.

Following the US decision to block the appointment of Salam Fayyad, former prime minister of the Palestinian Authority, as head of UNSMIL on 11 February, the Secretary-General has yet to appoint another candidate.

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

Israel/Palestine

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is expected to hold its regular quarterly open debate on the Middle East, with a focus on Israel/Palestine.

Key Recent Developments

On 24 March, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov briefed the Council in the regular monthly meeting. The briefing included the first report on the implementation of resolution 2334, adopted on 23 December 2016 with 14 votes in favour and an abstention by the outgoing administration of US President Barack Obama. The resolution condemned Israeli settlement building and reaffirmed that the establishment of settlements in Palestinian territory that Israel has occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to report on its implementation every three months.

Mladenov reported that there had been a significant uptick in statements, announcements and decisions by the Israeli government to increase settlement expansion, as well as large-scale demolitions of Palestinian and Bedouin structures in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. He reported that no steps were taken to comply with the resolution and that the rate of settlement activity during the reporting period was far higher than in the year preceding it. He also addressed the so-called 'regularisation law' adopted by the Knesset on 6 February that

enables the use of privately owned Palestinian land for Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank without the owners' consent, which he stated contravenes international law.

Mladenov also addressed compliance with other aspects of resolution 2334, including the call on both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, reporting that leaders on both sides were found to be in violation, and cited in particular several instances of dangerous rhetoric by Hamas leaders. Mladenov also said an increase in rockets fired from Gaza toward Israel was a "worrying development" and described it as regrettable that Palestinian Authority (PA) officials had not condemned attacks against Israelis. He noted that during the reporting period there were no significant developments pertaining to the call on all States to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between Israeli territory and the territories occupied since 1967.

On 15 March, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), which comprises 18 Arab states, published a report accusing Israel of being an "apartheid state" and racially discriminating against the Palestinian people. The report elicited strong criticism from Israeli ambassador to the UN Danny Danon and US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said that "the report as it stands does not reflect the views of the Secretary-General" and said that Executive Secretary of ESCWA, Under-Secretary-General Rima Khalaf, had been asked to remove the report from the Commission website "not

because of what it said but because no one at headquarters had been consulted prior to its release". On 18 March, Khalaf submitted her resignation to Secretary-General António Guterres, saying that in the space of two months he had instructed her to withdraw two reports produced by ESCWA "due to the political pressure by member states who gravely violate the rights of the people of the region." She said she could not "withdraw yet another well-researched, well-documented UN work on grave violations of human rights" and the only solution would be for her to step down.

The US boycotted a 20 March session at the Human Rights Council (HRC) that focused on Palestine and other Arab-occupied territories. Referring to the agenda item regarding Israel and the Palestinian territories, Haley said, "The United States will not participate in discussions under Agenda Item 7 at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, other than to vote against the outrageous, one-sided, anti-Israel resolutions".

On 23 March, Gaza's Administrative Court overturned a decision by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to establish a Palestinian Supreme Constitutional Court, saying the decision "is based on the fact that President Abbas' four-year [presidential] term expired in 2009" and that "Abbas lacks the legal authority to issue such a decision". Abbas abruptly announced his decision to establish a Palestinian constitutional court in April 2016, and Hamas at that time opposed the decision, saying the court would be dominated by members of Abbas' Fatah movement.

UN DOCUMENTS ON ISRAEL/PALESTINE Security Council Resolution S/RES/2334 (23 December 2016) condemned Israeli settlements and was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a US abstention. **Security Council Meeting Record S/PV.7908** (24 March 2017) was Mladenov's briefing on the implementation of resolution 2334.

Israel/Palestine (con't)

Human Rights-Related Developments

During its 34th session, the HRC held an interactive dialogue on 20 March with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, Michael Lynk, to discuss his latest report (A/HRC/34/70). The report concluded that Israel's occupation has been "profoundly corrosive" to human rights and that the Israeli government's treatment of human rights defenders is "contrary to the basic guarantees of international human rights law". The HRC also considered the Secretary-General's reports on the human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem (A/HRC/34/38), and on Israeli settlements in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/HRC/34/39). The Secretary-General's report, which covers the period from 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016, concluded that "chronic" human rights violations by all parties have persisted, highlighting the "devastating impact of the Israeli occupation" on Palestinian rights, while also expressing concern at international law violations by the Palestinian Authority, the authorities in Gaza and Palestinian armed groups. The report on Israeli settlements, which covers the same period, concluded that Israeli settlement activity is "incompatible with Israel's obligations under international law" and is a key driver of humanitarian need and a range of human rights violations.

On 24 March, the HRC adopted four resolutions on human rights in the OPT: on the human rights situation in the OPT, including East

Jerusalem; on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination; on ensuring accountability and justice for violations of international law in the OPT, including East Jerusalem; and on Israeli settlements in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan. All four resolutions were adopted with two members – the US and Togo – voting against and some abstentions.

Key Issues

The overarching issue is determining how the Council can encourage the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties to achieve a two-state solution, including promoting compliance with resolution 2334 to salvage prospects for a two-state solution.

Options

Given the difficult Council dynamics on this issue and the objection of the new US administration to much of the Council's engagement on Israel/Palestine, the most likely option will be to merely receive the briefing and hold the open debate with no outcome.

Council and Wider Dynamics

While the new US administration's approach to resolving the conflict is as yet unclear, it has made it known that it plans to staunchly defend Israel at the UN, and that it fiercely

opposes resolution 2334 and what it deems to be a pervasive anti-Israel bias by the UN. Therefore, it is likely to prevent any Council action regarding the resolution's implementation as well as other efforts to produce outcomes in the Security Council and elsewhere in the UN system.

Several other Council members are attempting to bring the parties back to the negotiating table. France held the second meeting of its international conference on the conflict on 15 January, which brought together more than 70 foreign ministers and culminated in the adoption of a statement proclaiming support for a two-state solution. Also, Russia last year announced its intention to host direct talks between the parties. Among elected members, Egypt has voiced its willingness to act as a broker between the parties and is likely to play a leading role in any implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative. Incoming member Sweden appointed an envoy in February to address the conflict.

Israel remains staunchly opposed to international initiatives on the issue, including involvement by the Council, preferring direct negotiations with the Palestinians, while the PA favours international participation.

South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council will consider the Secretary-General's 30-day assessment focusing on the deployment and future requirements of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), obstacles to setting up the force and impediments to the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in carrying out its mandate. A briefing is expected by Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and head of UNMISS David Shearer.

The mandate of UNMISS expires on 15 December 2017.

Key Recent Developments

A security and humanitarian disaster continues to grip South Sudan, amidst a flagging

political process. Fighting continues to be reported in various parts of the country between government and anti-government forces. Food insecurity—brought on by conflict, high prices and poor harvests—affects some 4.9 million people in the country. Starvation faces 100,000 people in Leer and Mayendit counties in Unity State, while an additional 1 million South Sudanese are on the verge of famine. In addition to the 1.9 million internally displaced persons in South Sudan, approximately 1.6 million refugees have fled to neighbouring states, including nearly 200,000 since the beginning of 2017.

On 6 March, Thomas Cirillo Swaka, the former Deputy Chief of the General Staff for Logistics of the Sudan People's Liberation

Army (SPLA, the South Sudanese army), announced that he was forming a rebel group called the National Salvation Front (NSF) to oust President Salva Kiir from power. Swaka, an Equatorian from the Bare ethnic group, resigned from the SPLA on 11 February, accusing it of being a "partisan and tribal army" that had committed rape and murder and served the interests of Kiir's Dinka ethnic group. The NSF is one of several new anti-government militias that have formed since the July 2016 fighting in Juba between forces loyal to Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar, who fled the country as a result of the violence.

The operating environment for UNMISS and humanitarian organisations remains very difficult. The freedom of movement of

UN DOCUMENTS ON SOUTH SUDAN Security Council Resolutions S/RES/2327 (16 December 2016) extended the mandate of UNMISS for one year and reauthorised the Regional Protection Force. S/RES/2304 (12 August 2016) authorised the Regional Protection Force. Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2017/4 (23 March 2017) emphasised the need for a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan. Security Council Meetings S/PV.7906 (23 March 2017) was a high-level briefing on South Sudan. S/PV.7897 (10 March 2017) was the briefing by Stephen O'Brien. Secretary-General's Report S/2017/224 (16 March 2017) was an UNMISS report. Other S/2016/1085 (23 December 2016) was the draft resolution on an arms embargo and targeted sanctions that failed to receive the necessary support to be adopted.

South Sudan (con't)

UNMISS personnel continues to be significantly hindered, and in February more than 200 peacekeepers attempting to enter the country faced delays in receiving government clearances. The South Sudanese government announced in early March that it would charge up to \$10,000 for work permits for foreign aid workers; fees had been \$100 per person. This has raised concerns that the exorbitant fees will decrease the ability of humanitarian workers to serve in South Sudan.

In a 21 March press conference in Juba, outgoing Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous said that during his visit to South Sudan he had spoken about the impediments to the operations of UNMISS and of humanitarian actors with President Kiir, who told him that “this is not going to happen further”. Despite similar assurances in the past, violations of the Status of Forces Agreement have been a consistent problem. Ladsous further affirmed that he believed the first units of the RPF would be deployed in the “next few weeks”.

On 10 March, the Japanese government announced that it would withdraw the 350 members of its Self-Defence Forces, who conduct engineering tasks as a part of UNMISS, by the end of May. Japan has contributed peacekeepers to UNMISS since 2012.

During the 21 February meeting of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, Kiir announced that the “national dialogue” that he proposed in late 2016 was a government priority in 2017. He has appointed a steering committee for the dialogue that includes 26 people—including parliamentarians, religious leaders and retired military officials—which is expected to create an agenda and timetable for the process.

While visiting Yei in South Sudan’s Central Equatoria State, African Union (AU) High Representative for South Sudan Alpha Oumar Konaré spoke on 7 March about the envisioned “national dialogue” process announced by President Kiir. He said the dialogue “should be led by independent personalities accepted by the people” and that all parties to the conflict, including Machar, should be included. Concerns have been expressed about whether an enabling environment exists in South Sudan for a national dialogue, given restrictions on freedom of speech.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Stephen O’Brien briefed the Council on 10 March on the humanitarian situations in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia,

Kenya, Nigeria and the Lake Chad region. Referring to his 4-5 March visit to South Sudan, O’Brien said the “situation is worse than it has ever been.” He added that “active hostilities, access denials and bureaucratic impediments continue to curtail...efforts to reach people who...need help”, while “aid workers have been killed” and “humanitarian compounds and supplies have been attacked, looted and occupied by armed actors”.

On 23 March, Secretary-General António Guterres, Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission Chairman Festus Mogae and Betty Sunday, the Coordinator of the Women’s Monthly Forum on Peace and Political Processes in South Sudan, briefed the Council in a meeting chaired by UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Boris Johnson. A presidential statement was adopted during the meeting in which the Council called on the parties to adhere to a permanent ceasefire and underscored the need for a political solution to the crisis in South Sudan.

Sanctions-Related Developments

The South Sudan Sanctions Committee was briefed on 21 March by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Bangura, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui. Bangura described the widespread sexual violence in South Sudan, indicating that soldiers in the armed forces were a major source of this problem. Zerrougui said that child soldiers continued to be recruited by government and opposition forces.

On 29 March, the Sanctions Committee met to discuss the final report of its Panel of Experts. In the report, yet to be publicly released at press time, the panel reportedly advocated an arms embargo on South Sudan.

Human Rights-Related Developments

At its 34th session, the Human Rights Council (HRC) held an interactive dialogue with the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan on 14 March to discuss the Commission’s latest report (A/HRC/34/63), which covers the period from July 2016 to February 2017. The report recommended the “immediate establishment of an international, independent investigation, under the auspices of the United Nations, into the most serious crimes committed in South Sudan since December 2013”. The report also concluded that there had been a “massive increase in gross human rights violations and abuses” since the outbreak of violence in July 2016 and that a “process of ethnic cleansing” was underway in South Sudan. Tackling impunity was emphasised as being key to the viability of South Sudan as a nation state, with the report noting that human rights violations have mainly been committed by

government and government-aligned forces. In her statement to the HRC, the chair of the Commission, Yasmine Sooka, also briefed members on a number of “worrying developments” since the report was written, including the serious escalation of fighting in parts of Greater Upper Nile and the Greater Equatoria region, government obstruction of humanitarian assistance and UNMISS access, and the increase in the cost of work permits for foreigners following the declaration of the famine. On 24 March, the HRC extended the mandate of the Commission for one year.

Key Issues

The key issue is how the political process in South Sudan can be revitalised and what role the Council can play in supporting this process. The splintering of the opposition would appear to complicate mediation efforts. The Council has emphasised the need for a credible and inclusive national dialogue; however, it needs to determine how it can exert leverage on the government to ensure that this happens.

A further important issue is how to allay the devastating impact on civilians of the ongoing fighting and the acute humanitarian crisis.

Another issue for the Council is how effectively the RPF will be able to fulfil its mandate to facilitate safe and free movement into, out of and around Juba; to protect the airport and other key facilities in Juba; and to provide security for civilians, humanitarian actors, and UNMISS staff. This is a relevant concern given the restrictions the government has consistently imposed on the freedom of movement of UNMISS and given that the government has expressed concerns with the RPF’s activities at the airport, previously indicating that the force should only be permitted to protect the UNMISS terminal and installations.

Options

One option would be for Council members to meet with the UN Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, and AU High Representative for South Sudan Konaré, to hear their views on how the UN and the AU are collaborating with one another and with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in pursuit of a political solution to the conflict, and to ask for their input on how the Council could most effectively support their efforts. Neither has yet briefed the Council on South Sudan.

Another option would be for the Council to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan, given the continued fighting in the country. In late 2016, a draft resolution pursuing

South Sudan (con't)

targeted sanctions and an arms embargo did not receive the requisite support from the Council to be adopted; however, an effort to pursue an arms embargo separately from targeted sanctions has not been attempted.

A further option would be to authorise the establishment of an independent investigatory mechanism to collect and preserve evidence of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law that could be used by the Hybrid Court for South Sudan envisioned in the August 2015 peace agreement. This proposal was endorsed by the HRC-mandated Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan in its March report to the HRC.

Council Dynamics

All Council members are concerned about

the security and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, which has been marked by ongoing conflict in various parts of the country, famine in some areas, and large-scale displacement. Members are further disturbed by restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMISS staff and government impediments to the work of humanitarian personnel.

However, while there is general agreement on the gravity of the situation and the need for a political solution to the crisis, there does not seem to be a unified strategy for how to exert leverage on the parties. Tools such as targeted sanctions and an arms embargo have long been controversial in the Council. The failed draft resolution in December 2016 that sought to pursue these measures received only seven affirmative votes along with eight

abstentions. (A resolution requires nine votes to be adopted, assuming a veto is not cast by one or more of the permanent members of the Council on a matter that is not procedural.) It is unclear whether a similar resolution regarding an arms embargo and targeted sanctions, or a resolution to impose an arms embargo alone, would now garner enough support to be adopted. In the 23 March briefing, France, Ukraine, the UK and the US mentioned an arms embargo and targeted sanctions as tools available to the Council, while Egypt and Russia reaffirmed their opposition to sanctions against South Sudan.

The US is the penholder on South Sudan, while Senegal chairs the South Sudan Sanctions Committee.

Western Sahara

Expected Council Action

In April, the Council is expected to adopt a resolution extending the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The Council will receive the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Western Sahara and will be briefed on the situation ahead of MINURSO's renewal.

Key Recent Developments

There were some significant developments concerning the situation in Al-Guergarat, in the southern part of Western Sahara within the buffer strip, where Morocco had since August 2016 been attempting to build a road connecting its position at the berm with the Mauritanian border. In reaction to Morocco's presence in the strip, Polisario Front forces also entered, rendering both parties in violation of the September 1991 ceasefire agreement.

On 25 February, Secretary-General António Guterres issued a statement expressing deep concern about the increased tensions in the vicinity of Al-Guergarat, where armed elements of both Morocco and the Polisario Front remained in close proximity to each other. Guterres called on both parties to take all necessary steps to avoid escalation

and stressed that no action should be taken that might constitute a change in the status quo of the buffer strip. In addition, he called on the parties to adhere to their obligations under the 1991 ceasefire agreement and to respect both the letter and the spirit of the agreement. This statement followed a phone conversation between Guterres and Moroccan King Mohammed VI and a reported meeting between Guterres and the Polisario's UN representative, both on 24 February.

On 26 February, Morocco announced that it would unilaterally withdraw its forces from Al-Guergarat. The UN welcomed the pull-out of Moroccan security forces and called on the Polisario to also withdraw its fighters.

On 7 March, it was announced that the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, had offered his resignation after serving in the position for eight years. Mohamed Khaddad, the Polisario's coordinator with MINURSO, claimed that Ross's resignation was the result of "Morocco's obstruction of the negotiations in 2012" and that the UN is also responsible for the resignation as it did not react "to Morocco's dismissal of the UN Mission for Western Sahara". In 2012, Morocco had declared Ross persona

non grata following accusations he made concerning abuses by Morocco in Western Sahara. Guterres is expected to appoint a new personal envoy in April.

On 31 January, Morocco became the 55th member state to join the African Union (AU). Thirty-nine countries reportedly supported Morocco's bid for admission, while nine voted against it. Morocco left the AU's predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, in 1984 after the organisation admitted the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

On 20 March, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) held a meeting on Western Sahara. In response to an invitation to attend, Morocco sent a letter saying that the question of Western Sahara is in the hands of the UN Security Council instead and that "The organs of the African Union are invited to support this process in line with the United Nations' mandate." The day after the PSC meeting, Western Sahara Foreign Minister Mohamed Salem Ouldsalek called on the AU to sanction Morocco. On 23 March, the PSC issued a communiqué on the meeting that regretted Morocco's absence and called on Morocco to extend the necessary cooperation in conformity with the provisions of the

UN DOCUMENTS ON WESTERN SAHARA Security Council Resolution S/RES/2285 (29 April 2016) renewed the MINURSO mandate with ten votes in favour, two against (Uruguay, Venezuela) and three abstentions (Angola, New Zealand and Russia). **Secretary-General's Reports S/2016/355** (19 April 2016) was on the situation concerning Western Sahara. **S/2014/258** (10 April 2014) was on the situation concerning Western Sahara. **Security Council Letters S/2007/210** (16 April 2007) was from South Africa to the Council transmitting the Polisario plan. **S/2007/206** (11 April 2007) was from Morocco to the Council transmitting the Moroccan plan.

Western Sahara (con't)

AU Constitutive Act and the PSC Protocol. It also regretted the resignation of Ross and noted with deep concern that four decades after the onset of the conflict, all efforts aimed at finding a solution have so far failed. The PSC expressed the urgency of renewed efforts to achieve a resolution to the conflict and took several steps, including deciding to strengthen the mandate of former president Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique, as AU High Representative for Western Sahara, to facilitate direct talks between the two member states, reactivating the Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on the conflict, and requesting the AU Commission immediately to take steps for the re-opening of the AU Office in Laayoune.

Concerning the upcoming MINURSO mandate renewal, the PSC urged the UN Security Council to take the necessary steps to restore the full functionality of MINURSO and to provide the mission with a human rights mandate.

On 24 March, Morocco demanded the exclusion of the SADR from a meeting between the AU and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the grounds that the SADR is not a member of the ECA. As a result, the ministerial meeting had to be postponed.

The last resolution on MINURSO, resolution 2285, adopted on 29 April 2016, renewed MINURSO's mandate for one year. The resolution garnered only ten votes in favour, with two against (Uruguay and Venezuela) and three abstentions (Angola, New Zealand and Russia). The lack of consensus reflected deep divisions over the process leading up to the adoption, and regarding how the Council ought to address the dispute between Morocco and then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Morocco's expulsion of most of MINURSO's civilian staff. The resolution requested the Secretary-General to brief the Council within 90 days on whether MINURSO had returned to full functionality and expressed the Council's intention, if it had not done so, "to consider how best to facilitate achievement of this." Shortly before the 90-day briefing, Morocco agreed to allow 25 staff members to return, and although full functionality was not resumed, the Council took no action. Currently, a year after the

expulsion of the staff, only those 25 staff members have been reinstated.

Resolution 2285 also emphasised the importance of the parties' commitment to continue the process of preparing for a new round of negotiations, and called upon the parties to continue to show political will in order to enter into a more intensive and substantive phase of negotiations. The Council affirmed its full support for the commitment of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy towards a solution and called for renewed meetings and strengthening of contacts. It also called upon the parties to continue negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General without preconditions and in good faith with a view to achieving a just, lasting, and mutually acceptable political solution, which will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. However, Ross had since been unable to facilitate the fifth round of negotiations.

Key Issues

The underlying issue is that the parties to the conflict remain deadlocked and the political process has stalled because the parties' proposals for the basis of a political solution as outlined in 2007 are mutually exclusive. Ascertaining what the Council is willing to do to break the deadlock between the parties is therefore a key issue.

Another issue is MINURSO's staffing. The 2016 report of the Secretary-General said that the expulsion of most of MINURSO's international civilian component in March of that year had resulted in the "de facto alteration of the mandate of MINURSO" and that the issue of immediate concern then was to ensure that MINURSO resumed full functionality, as was later requested by the Council in resolution 2285. A year later, MINURSO has still not resumed full functionality.

Another key issue is that the resumption of armed conflict cannot be ruled out, and the Council may need to focus on how best to mitigate that threat.

Options

On the mandate renewal, one option is for the Council to renew the mandate of MINURSO for a period of 12 months, as has been common practice. The Council could

use the opportunity to convey political messages to the parties, perhaps on the situation in Al-Guergarat and on the importance of resuming direct negotiations in good faith, and to reiterate the request for MINURSO to resume full functionality.

Another option would be to heed the recommendation of the AU and add a human rights monitoring mechanism to the mandate of MINURSO—an option that has in the past been attempted, but never gained the support of all Council members.

Given the failure to bring the parties to negotiations, a further option would be for the Council—as recommended by the Secretary-General in his 2014 report—to engage in a comprehensive review of the framework that it provided for the negotiating process in 2007, with a renewed sense of urgency to resolve the political stalemate.

Council Dynamics

Deep divisions have rendered the Council largely impotent on Western Sahara through successive recent crises. Following Morocco's expulsion of MINURSO's civilian component in March and the crisis in Al-Guergarat in August 2016, the Council remained mostly silent due to the insistence of some members, notably permanent member France, which staunchly supports the Moroccan position concerning Western Sahara.

The African members of the Council do not have a common position. Egypt and Senegal have in the past year worked to protect Morocco's interests in the Council. The new A3 member, Ethiopia, recognises an independent Western Sahara and is expected to advocate the positions of the AU.

Among other members, Uruguay has attempted to enhance the Council's role and oversight of the situation by requesting ad hoc briefings. New member Bolivia also recognises an independent SADR and this is likely to be reflected in their contributions in the Council. While the parliament of another new member, Sweden, voted to recognise Western Sahara in 2012, this has not been implemented by the Swedish government.

The US is the penholder on Western Sahara, and the resolution will initially be discussed among the Group of Friends (France, the UK, the US, Russia and Spain).

Sudan and South Sudan

Expected Council Action

In April, Council members are expected to hold consultations on the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and on Sudan/South Sudan issues. Incoming Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix is expected to brief on the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of UNISFA's mandate, as well as on a separate report focusing on a strategic review of the mission that is expected to include "findings and recommendations for how UNISFA should be optimally configured and streamlined as appropriate", as per resolution 2318. Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Nicholas Haysom is scheduled to brief on Sudan/South Sudan issues.

The mandate of UNISFA expires on 15 May 2017.

Key Recent Developments

Immersed in their own domestic problems, Sudan and South Sudan have made no progress in addressing the final status of Abyei, the disputed territory along the Sudan-South Sudan border. Sudan continues to maintain police around the Diffra oil facility in contravention of several Security Council resolutions, which have called for the demilitarisation of Abyei with the exception of UNISFA peacekeepers and the envisioned but yet-to-be-agreed Abyei Police Service. Temporary administrative units envisaged by the 20 June 2011 agreement between Sudan and South Sudan to provide stability in the region until its final status can be determined—including the Abyei Area Legislative Council and the Abyei Area Administration—have also not been established. In addition to Abyei, no progress has been made on other outstanding differences related to border demarcation and the status of disputed areas.

In recent months, Sudan and South Sudan have reportedly been responsible for delays in approvals for aerial and ground patrols needed for the effective operation of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) along their mutual border. The Council first authorised this mechanism in

December 2011 through resolution 2024.

UNISFA held a public ceremony on 19 January at which it destroyed 13 small arms that its peacekeepers had confiscated. Since opening a facility in November 2015 to manage weapons and ammunition, UNISFA has destroyed more than 100 small arms and light weapons and more than 6,800 rounds of ammunition.

President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, while addressing female parliamentarians on 13 February, stated that Abyei is part of Sudan, reiterating a claim he has made in the past. Ngok-Dinka Paramount Chief Bulabek Deng Kuol criticised al-Bashir's assertion.

More than 80 female representatives of the Misseriya and Ngok-Dinka communities convened in the Todach—a village in the northern part of Abyei—for the "Open Day for Women, Peace and Security" on 14 February. Senior UNISFA personnel and Misseriya and Ngok-Dinka community leaders attended the meeting. The women from these communities discussed ways to promote peacebuilding in Abyei. The Ngok-Dinka group, which considers Abyei their ancestral homeland, and the Misseriya, who migrate through the area to graze their cattle, have in the past clashed with one another.

Secretary-General António Guterres announced on 23 February the appointment of Major General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael of Ethiopia as the new UNISFA force commander. Most recently, he has served as the head of the Ethiopian Armed Forces Defence Logistics Department.

In early March, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), a rebel group fighting the Sudanese government in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, released 127 prisoners apprehended during fighting with government forces. Ahmed Khalifa al-Shami, a spokesman for the Sudanese army, called the releases "a positive step toward achieving peace." The SPLM-N has been engaged in conflict with the government of Sudan in South Kordofan and Blue Nile since 2011.

Key Issues

The key issue is to ensure that the Abyei region stays peaceful and that UNISFA's efforts to promote cooperation and mitigate tensions between the Misseriya and Ngok-Dinka continue, given longstanding concerns that conflict between these two groups could be a flashpoint for wider conflict that draws in Sudan and South Sudan.

Another important issue is to improve the cooperation of Sudan and South Sudan with the operations of the JBVMM.

Options

The Council could request that its president for the month, the US, makes a démarche on behalf of the Council to the Sudanese and South Sudan missions, urging prompt approvals for aerial and ground patrols as a part of JBVMM.

Another option could be holding an open Arria-formula meeting in the near future on the humanitarian and security situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states to ensure that attention to the impact of the conflict in these areas does not wane.

Council Dynamics

Council members have for some time recognised that both Sudan and South Sudan are consumed by their own domestic crises, decreasing the time and energy focused on addressing their differences over Abyei and other border-related issues. The Council's focus on Abyei has been limited in recent years, largely overshadowed by its ongoing and intensive engagement on South Sudan and, to a lesser extent, on Darfur. Concerns expressed by some Council members in the years immediately following UNISFA's 2011 deployment that a mission meant to be an "interim force" was becoming a much longer deployment gain increasing relevance with each year, as no progress has been made by the parties in resolving the final status of the region or even in establishing temporary administrative bodies.

The US is the penholder on Abyei.

Notable Dates for April

REPORT DUE	REPORTS FOR CONSIDERATION IN APRIL	REQUESTING DOCUMENT
15 March	SG report on MINUSTAH (Haiti)	S/RES/2313
24 March	SG report on UNAMID (Darfur)	S/RES/2296
24 March	SG report on Colombia	S/RES/2261
28 March	OPCW report on the implementation of resolution 2118 (Syrian chemical weapons)	S/RES/2118
29 March	SG report on MINUSMA (Mali)	S/RES/2295
31 March	SG report on strategic review of UNISFA (Abyei)	S/RES/2318
7 April	SG report on MINURSO (Western Sahara)	S/RES/2285
12 April	SG report on UNSMIL	S/RES/2323
13 April	SG report on UNISFA (Abyei)	S/RES/2318
20 April	SG report on the humanitarian situation in Syria	S/RES/2139

MANDATES EXPIRE	RELEVANT DOCUMENT
15 April	MINUSTAH (Haiti) S/RES/2313
30 April	MINURSO (Western Sahara) S/RES/2285

Security Council Report Staff

Ian Martin
Executive Director

Joanna Weschler
Deputy Executive Director

Shamala Kandiah Thompson
Associate Director

Astrid Forberg Ryan
Associate Director

Paul Romita
Senior Policy Analyst

Victor Casanova Abos
Policy Analyst

Finnian Cheshire
Policy Analyst

Dahlia Morched
Policy Analyst

Vladimir Sesar
Policy Analyst

Eran Sthoeger
Policy Analyst

Benjamin Villanti
Policy Analyst

Robbin VanNewkirk
Website Manager

Audrey Waysse
Operations Manager

Maritza Tenerelli
Administrative Assistant

Aubrey Bloomfield
Research Assistant

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Design Point Five, NY

Security Council Report
One Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
885 2nd Ave at 48th St, 21st Floor
New York NY 10017

Telephone +1 212 759 6394
Fax +1 212 759 4038
Web securitycouncilreport.org
whatsinblue.org

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