



Security Council

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Letter dated 9 November 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Belgium in February 2020 (see annex).

This assessment was prepared by the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations. While other members of the Security Council have been consulted, the assessment should not be considered as representing the views of the Council.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Philippe **Kridelka**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative
of Belgium to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 9 November 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of Belgium (February 2020)

Introduction

Under the presidency of Belgium, in February 2020, the Security Council held 26 public meetings (consisting of one open debate, four “adoption” meetings and 19 briefings) and 12 consultations of the whole. The Council adopted four resolutions and issued three presidential statements and three press statements. In addition, one informal interactive dialogue was held.

In accordance with United Nations practice, and to promote transparency in the work of the Security Council, at the beginning of the presidency, Belgium held briefings with representatives of Member States, the media and civil society organizations on the work of the Council, based on the programme of work agreed to on 3 February in closed consultations. At the end of the month, Belgium held a summary briefing to review the work of the Council in February.

Africa

Burundi

On 26 February, the Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue on Burundi. The dialogue, which was attended, inter alia, by several States members of the East African Community, focused on a briefing by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Bintou Keita, on her latest visit to Burundi. The Assistant Secretary-General mainly addressed the humanitarian and political challenges in the run-up to the elections and emphasized that the current political momentum required further international support, adding that the Burundian authorities had stressed their openness to further and deeper engagement.

In response to comments and questions, the Assistant Secretary-General highlighted further potential avenues for regional involvement, including the forthcoming signature of a memorandum of understanding between the United Nations and the East African Community. She also stressed the importance of further electoral involvement of women mediators.

Central African Republic

On 20 February, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the Central African Republic. The Committee heard the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mankeur Ndiaye, the African Union Special Representative and Head of the African Union Office in the Central African Republic, Matias Matondo, the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, Olof Skoog, and the Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, Omar Hilale.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General took stock of progress made one year after the signature of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, while also noting, as did the African Union Special Representative, persistent violations of the accord by some armed groups. The African Union Special Representative and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union both referred to the possibility provided for in the peace

agreement of sanctions against the parties that breached it. All briefers underlined how the Political Agreement remained the only viable framework for peace.

On 27 February, the Security Council issued a press statement (SC/14128) in which it welcomed the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreement and condemned violations of the agreement and violence perpetrated by armed groups. The members of the Council welcomed the continued efforts of the Central African Republic authorities to extend State authority and advance the reform of the security sector. They underlined the importance of holding accountable all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights. They also urged the Central African Republic authorities and all national stakeholders to ensure the preparation of the presidential, legislative and local elections in 2020 and 2021. The members of the Council reiterated their strong support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic against the background of negative media campaigns.

Guinea-Bissau

On 14 February, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on the situation in Guinea-Bissau. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Guinea-Bissau and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), Rosine Sori-Coulibaly, briefed the Council about the post-electoral situation in the country and the drawdown of UNIOGBIS prior to its closure on 31 December 2020, including the intention to establish a high-level platform for relevant national and international actors to discuss, promote and accompany Guinea-Bissau in its reform agenda. In his capacity as Chair of the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ronaldo Costa Filho, warned of the financial cliff that reduced international support for Guinea-Bissau would create after the withdrawal of UNIOGBIS. He therefore called for continued support and expressed the readiness of the Peacebuilding Commission to accompany Guinea-Bissau in the future. The member States expressed support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her work and called for a peaceful resolution of the electoral dispute, while commending the role of the Economic Community of West African States. The members also stressed the need to support Guinea-Bissau in the longer term, in particular in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime.

On 28 February, the Security Council adopted resolution [2512 \(2020\)](#), extending the mandate of UNIOGBIS for 10 months. It called for the drawdown of the mission in view of its closure by the end of the year, while calling for accompanying measures to assist Guinea-Bissau in its peacebuilding and crisis resolution efforts.

Libya

On 11 February, with the adoption of resolution [2509 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council extended until 30 April 2021 the regime to prevent the illicit export of petroleum, including crude oil and refined petroleum products, from Libya, amending some of its technical aspects. In its resolution, the Council reiterated its call to respect the arms embargo, travel ban and asset freeze. It also extended the mandate of the related Panel of Experts until 15 May 2021.

On 12 February, the Security Council adopted resolution [2510 \(2020\)](#), expressing its support for a political solution to the crisis in Libya based on the three-point plan proposed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ghassan Salamé, following the Berlin Conference. In particular, the Council called for an urgent lasting ceasefire and respect for the arms embargo.

Somalia

On 24 February, the Security Council held a briefing and consultations on Somalia. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, James Swan, briefed the Council, including during the consultations, as did the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of African Union Mission in Somalia, Francisco Madeira, and the Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Dan Smith.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General briefed the Council on electoral preparations, including the federal electoral law, the relationship between the federal member states and the Federal Government of Somalia and security, socioeconomic and humanitarian issues. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission expressed concern about the slow generation of Somali security forces. The Director of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute highlighted the effect of climate-related challenges on peace and security developments and the fragile context of Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

Member States discussed progress and challenges and stressed the need to enhance political dialogue between the Federal Government and the federal member states and make progress in building capacities to confront Al-Shabaab.

On 27 February, the Security Council was briefed by the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution [751 \(1992\)](#) concerning Somalia, Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, on the activities of the Committee over the previous 120 days. The main focus was his visit to Mogadishu, which had opened the perspective of renewed cooperation between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Panel of Experts on Somalia. Several member States stressed the usefulness of the sanctions regime in diminishing the capacities of Al-Shabaab and supporting the Government.

On 28 February, the Security Council issued a press statement on elections in Somalia (SC/14133).

Sudan

On 11 February, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2508 \(2020\)](#), in which it extended for one year the mandate of the Panel of Experts on the Sudan established pursuant to Security Council resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#).

The Americas

Haiti

On 20 February, the Security Council was briefed on the situation in Haiti. It was the first formal meeting since the start of the new special political mission, the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH), on 16 October 2019. The first briefer was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti, Helen Meagher La Lime, by videoconference. She presented the work of BINUH and its efforts to mediate between the various political factions in the country. She underlined the humanitarian needs of Haiti, the impact of the crisis on the Haitian National Police and the root causes of the crisis. Later in the meeting, at the invitation of the President, the Executive Director of civil society organization Fondasyon Je Klere, Marie Yolène Gilles, briefed the Council, also by videoconference. She focused on the fight against corruption, good governance and the protection of human rights.

In their interventions, Security Council members shared their assessment of the dramatic situation and expressed support for the work done by the United Nations in Haiti. They also gave their views on the political situation, the capacities of the Haitian National Police and the role of civil society organizations and shared their

concern about the humanitarian situation. The representative of Haiti intervened to stress the difficult political, socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the country.

Closed consultations were held after the briefing, during which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General provided clarifications on the political situation in Haiti. The Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas Single Regional Political-Operational Structure, Miroslav Jenča, also attended.

Asia

Myanmar

On 4 February, the Security Council held closed consultations to discuss developments in Myanmar. Members were briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Mohamed Khaled Khiari, on recent developments, including with regard to repatriation and accountability. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs also presented the situation of displaced individuals in Bangladesh, the ongoing tensions in Rakhine State and the collaboration between Myanmar and the United Nations. Members agreed on the positive role of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and recognized the efforts by Bangladesh to host refugees.

Europe

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

On 6 February, the Security Council was briefed by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Edi Rama, on the priorities of the Chairperson and the cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE. The Chairperson focused on the following topics: (a) making a difference on the ground, with a special focus on the conflict in Ukraine; (b) implementing commitments, addressing some transnational threats, such as human trafficking; and (c) dialogue, stressing, inter alia, the need to combat hate speech and promote tolerance. Council members expressed support for the work of OSCE and stressed the need for strong cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Ukraine

On 18 February, the Security Council convened at the request of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Minsk agreements. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, gave an overview of the most recent political developments, while also addressing the humanitarian situation. The Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Heidi Grau, and the Chief Monitor of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission, Halit Çevik, also briefed the Council. Council members intervened along their well-known positions, followed by an intervention by the representative of Ukraine.

Middle East

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 11 February, the Security Council was briefed by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The briefing was held at the request of Indonesia and Tunisia. The Secretary-General formulated opening remarks, during which he gave an overview of the volatile situation in the region, reiterated the need to find a solution to the conflict and reaffirmed the position of the United Nations in that regard. The Special Coordinator gave an overview of the reactions of the

international community to the vision for peace between Israelis and Palestinians presented by the United States of America, as well as reactions on the ground. He warned against annexation and its consequences and stated that was not enough to reaffirm positions, but that it was time to hear proposals on how to move the process forward. The President of the Observer State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, made an intervention, followed by the representative of Israel. The representative of the United States explained the rationale behind the vision for peace of her country. Most of the Council members reiterated the need to respect international law and “internationally agreed parameters”, as well as the need for both parties to restart direct negotiations. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States also made an intervention on behalf of the League.

On 24 February, the Security Council was briefed during consultations by the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and agreed on press elements.

Syrian Arab Republic

On 5 February, consultations on the implementation of resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#) were held. The Security Council was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Under-Secretary-General Izumi Nakamitsu, on the latest monthly report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

On 6 February, the Security Council was briefed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, on the situation in Idlib, who stressed the consequences of the military escalation on the difficult humanitarian situation.

On 14 February, the Security Council discussed the situation in Idlib under “any other business”. Council members expressed their concerns over the humanitarian situation. There was a call for a cessation of hostilities.

On 19 February, the Security Council held briefings by the Special Envoy for Syria and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Special Envoy echoed the recent call by the Secretary-General for an immediate ceasefire in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic and for international humanitarian law to be upheld, described the security situation in that part of the country and reported on his five priorities. The briefings were followed by consultations.

On 27 February, the Security Council was briefed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ursula Mueller, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund, Henrietta Fore. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in charge of the Fight against Tax Fraud, and Minister of Development Cooperation of Belgium, Alexander De Croo, and in the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Heiko Maas. The Assistant Secretary-General expressed concern over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Idlib. She reiterated the importance of the cross-border mechanism for humanitarian help for the region and presented the report of the Secretary-General on the review of alternative modalities for the border crossing of Ya’rubiyah, submitted pursuant to resolution [2504 \(2020\)](#) (S/2020/139). The Executive Director briefed the Council on the situation of children in the Syrian Arab Republic.

On 28 February, the Secretary-General addressed the Security Council, which was subsequently briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. The Secretary-General expressed his concern about the conflict in Idlib and the dramatic humanitarian situation.

Yemen

On 18 February, the Security Council held its monthly meeting on Yemen with a briefing and consultations. During the briefing, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, gave an update on the security and political situation, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator gave an update on the humanitarian situation and the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Inga Rhonda King, in her capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2140, reported on the work of the Committee. During the consultations, the Head of the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, Lieutenant General Guha, gave an update on the work of the Mission.

On 25 February, the Security Council adopted resolution [2511 \(2020\)](#), by which it renewed the sanctions regime pertaining to Yemen for one year, with 13 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.

Thematic and other issues

Small arms

On 5 February, the Security Council held a briefing on small arms at which it considered the report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons of 30 December 2019 ([S/2019/1011](#)). The Council was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and by the Deputy Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research, Damien Spleeters.

When presenting the report of the Secretary-General, the High Representative first provided a brief history of the small arms and light weapons issue within the Security Council, identifying certain major recurring themes. More generally, she highlighted the increase in global military spending and the threat that small arms and light weapons continued to pose to international peace and security; the efforts made at the international, subregional and national levels to strengthen their control; and the importance of adopting a regional approach, especially in Africa. She concluded by pleading for a regular engagement of the Council in the topic and for mainstreaming the issue in its work. The Deputy Director of Operations then presented the work of Conflict Armament Research, in particular on small arms and light weapons tracing, and how his organization helped to identify, by means of the information collected, the various loopholes that allowed the diversion of small arms and light weapons to illicit markets. He advised the Council to better integrate the tracing of small arms and light weapons into peace operations mandates and arms embargoes. In their remarks, most of the members of the Council called for enhanced cooperation at the national, regional and international levels to improve controls and stressed the importance of the various international instruments (the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its International Tracing Instrument, and the Arms Trade Treaty). Several members insisted on the primary responsibility of States, but the centrality of the regional approach was unanimously recognized. The Sahel region, Central Africa and the Libyan case raised particular concerns in that respect.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 7 February, the Security Council discussed the tenth report of the Secretary-General on the threat posed by ISIL (Da'esh) to international peace and security and the range of United Nations efforts in support of Member States in countering the threat ([S/2020/95](#)). The Council was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General of the Office of Counter-Terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov, and the Executive Director of the

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, Assistant Secretary-General Michèle Coninsx. The President of the Security Council also invited a civil society representative, Mona Freij, to participate. Ms. Freij used to live in Raqqa (Syrian Arab Republic) and had managed to escape ISIL and flee to Turkey.

The Under-Secretary-General called upon Member States to transcend their differences in order to tackle the terrorist threat together. Citing partnerships, activities and persistent threats, he urged the international community to work closely together to prevent the resurgence of ISIL and a rise in splinter groups around the world. The importance of the gender and other dimensions in counter-terrorism was also underlined.

The Assistant Secretary-General commended the work of women in civil society and their fight against terrorism. She stressed the importance of prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration, including accountability and reparation for victims. She stated that the way in which those issues were tackled would affect future generations.

Ms. Freij shared her personal experience with ISIL in Raqqa, describing how ISIL members had tried to arrest her and how she had managed to escape. She condemned the sexual violence perpetrated by ISIL and talked about its lasting impact on society. She also described her work in the reconstruction of Raqqa and in the education of women, with a view to increasing resilience against radicalization and terrorism.

Member States shared their views on the state of play of the international terrorist threat and on how to shape a policy response. They agreed that impunity must end. Many of them focused on the importance of including a gender dimension in counter-terrorism policy, referring to the intervention from the civil society briefer. Many member States highlighted that the international fight against terrorism must be fully in line with international human rights standards and obligations under international humanitarian law. Many also highlighted the fight against impunity and the need to ensure accountability and justice for the victims of terrorism as part of the counter-terrorism policy. Other issues that were frequently mentioned were the need to develop a solid policy to counter the terrorist narrative, including by combating the misuse of the Internet and social media.

Children and armed conflict

On 12 February, the Security Council held a briefing on children and armed conflict with a focus on child protection in peace processes, chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Belgium, Philippe Goffin, and in the presence of King Philippe, King of the Belgians. The Secretary-General presented the United Nations Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict. The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smaïl Chergui, gave a presentation about the experience of the African Union in that field, including by referring to the peace agreements in Burundi, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan, and the Chair of the Advisory Board of Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, Jo Becker, participated as a civil society representative. At the beginning of the meeting, the Council adopted presidential statement PRST/2020/3, in which it commended the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, and relevant child protection actors for developing the aforementioned practical guidance and encouraged the Secretary-General to broadly disseminate and promote the use of the guidance in United Nations-supported, -sponsored, and -facilitated peace and mediation processes. In addition, it encouraged mediators, facilitators and all other

relevant actors involved in peace and mediation processes to use the practical guidance as a tool, as much as possible, in such processes.

Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations

On 13 February, the Security Council held an open debate on transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations under the item “Peacebuilding and sustaining peace”. The meeting was chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Belgium. The Council was briefed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, by videoconference, the President of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition of Colombia, Francisco de Roux, and the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa, Trustee of the Desmond Tutu Peace Centre and Chair of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, Yasmin Sooka. The High Commissioner stressed the need for the United Nations to support context-specific transitional justice initiatives that were inclusive and focused on the needs of victims. The President of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition of Colombia also placed victims at the heart of his work in Colombia, as well as truth-seeking, a profound transition and guarantees of non-recurrence. The Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in South Africa stressed the need for a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice processes and attention to the most vulnerable groups, as well as the centrality of accountability for the most serious crimes. The speakers highlighted the link between transitional justice processes and the mandate of the Council.

The open debate was the first time that the Security Council held a meeting on transitional justice as a thematic issue. Almost 60 delegations took the floor, a number of which shared their national experiences with transitional justice and lessons learned. In their interventions, member States and observers underlined several aspects of the need for context-sensitive approaches to transitional justice, the importance of inclusivity and national ownership of transitional justice processes, the centrality of the needs of victims, the need to look at the root causes of conflict, the need for a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice, the inclusion of provisions in support of national transitional justice processes in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the importance of cooperation with regional organizations, the link of transitional justice approaches to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform, and the important roles of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in terms of technical and financial support.

Supporting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons ahead of the 2020 Review Conference

On 26 February, the Security Council held a briefing on supporting the Non-proliferation Treaty ahead of the 2020 Review Conference, which would mark the fiftieth anniversary of its entry into force. The Council was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the President-designate of the 2020 Review Conference for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Gustavo Zlauvinen.

For the High Representative, the 2020 Review Conference represented both a concrete and a symbolic opportunity. She highlighted some of the challenges, such as the more volatile security environment, distrust and division among nuclear States and an arms race that had become qualitative. None of those challenges, however, prevented constructive dialogue, she concluded, stating that the Review Conference could also serve as a springboard for a new way of looking at the challenges of nuclear weapons, taking into account the new security environment. Along the same line, the

President-designate expressed hope that the Review Conference would produce an outcome document that would take into account not simply the immediate context, with its limitations and opportunities, but also medium-term and future aspirations.

All members of the Security Council recognized the Non-Proliferation Treaty as the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation system. They acknowledged its successes over the past half century and called for its future preservation, as well as for the success of the 2020 Review Conference.

A press statement in support of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 2020 Review Conference was adopted on that occasion (SC/14125).

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

On 27 February, the Security Council held consultations with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1718 \(2006\)](#). The Chair of the Committee presented the latest quarterly report on the work of the Committee to the Council, submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 (g) of resolution [1718 \(2006\)](#). The report covered the activities of the Committee from 13 November 2019 to 27 February 2020. Members of the Council discussed the report and focused their interventions on the progress and challenges described therein, such as the violations of Council sanctions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the lack of national reports transmitted by Member States and the humanitarian situation. The recent analyses and recommendations in the final report of the Panel of Experts were also mentioned in that respect, especially in relation with the continuation of the nuclear and ballistic missile programmes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.
