

**Security Council**

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**Letter dated 3 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative
of the Niger to the United Nations addressed to the President of
the Security Council**

Please find attached herewith the assessment of the activities carried out by the Security Council in September 2020 under the presidency of the Niger (see annex). This document was prepared following consultations with other members 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) Abdou **Abarry**



Annex to the letter dated 3 December 2020 from the Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: English]

Assessment of the work of the Security Council during the presidency of the Niger (September 2020)

I. Introduction

Under the presidency of the Niger, in September 2020, the Security Council held 18 videoconferences, of which 14 were open and 4 were closed.

In addition, the Security Council held seven public meetings (three adoptions, three briefings and one debate) and two sessions of informal consultations of the whole. All those activities were held in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. The Council adopted four resolutions and issued one presidential statement, on children and armed conflict ([S/PRST/2020/8](#)), and one press statement on Afghanistan. The President of the Council also read out press elements on the situation relating to Nagorny Karabakh. The Council considered agenda items covering geographical areas in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East, as well as thematic issues. The Niger organized four side events during its presidency.

In view of the unprecedented circumstances created by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Security Council adopted provisional working methods, allowing it to continue its work by videoconference.

The programme of work of the presidency of the Niger was presented and adopted on 1 September, by videoconference.

II. Africa

1. Libya

On 2 September 2020, the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Stephanie Williams, briefed the Security Council by videoconference on the call for a ceasefire made on 21 August by the main leaders of the two parties to the conflict in Libya, the lifting of the oil blockade and the resumption of political discussions under the auspices of the United Nations. She called upon the Council to fully support this positive momentum to prevent the conflict from escalating further.

Security Council members unanimously welcomed the political commitment of the Libyan parties and called for a permanent national ceasefire and an immediate resumption of intra-Libyan discussions on political and security issues.

The overwhelming majority of speakers also called upon the international actors involved in the conflict to abide strictly by their commitments made at the Berlin Conference on Libya and the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution [1970 \(2011\)](#).

As a neighbouring country of Libya, the Niger, speaking in its national capacity, expressed its commitment to a rapid resolution of the Libyan crisis through an inclusive process led by the Libyans themselves, with the support of the international community. It also stressed the link between the security situation in the Sahel region and the Libyan crisis.

At an in-person meeting held on 15 September, the Security Council adopted resolution [2542 \(2020\)](#) by 13 votes in favour, with 2 abstentions, by which it extended the mandate of UNSMIL for one year, listed a series of mediation and good offices tasks and requested the Secretary-General to conduct and provide the Council with an independent strategic review of UNSMIL by 31 July 2021.

2. Sudan

Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) concerning the Sudan

On 15 September 2020, the Permanent Representative of Estonia, Sven Jürgenson, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#) concerning the Sudan, presented the quarterly report of the Committee to the Council ([S/2020/907](#)). He commended the Sudan for reaching a historic peace agreement, welcomed the commitment of the transitional authorities in Khartoum to prioritizing peace and urged those parties that had not yet joined the peace agreement to do so urgently. He also presented elements from the interim report that the Panel of Experts on the Sudan had submitted to the Committee. The Chair informed the Council that the Committee was considering a proposal from a Member State to remove four individuals from the sanctions list. He also emphasized that the sanctions regime had been put in place for the sole purpose of bringing lasting peace to Darfur, not to punish the Sudan.

The Representative of the Sudan said that there had been major positive developments since his previous statement to the Security Council, in June, including the peace agreement of 31 August to end 17 years of conflict. He assured the members that Khartoum would continue to pursue a lasting, inclusive and sustainable peace and called upon the Council to respond positively to recent developments by lifting the sanctions regime imposed under resolution [1591 \(2005\)](#).

United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan and African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

On 25 September 2020, the Security Council heard a quarterly briefing on the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, briefed the Council on the preparations for the establishment of the new civilian mission to support the political transition in the Sudan. The Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean Pierre Lacroix, briefed the Council on the ongoing operations of UNAMID.

The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs welcomed political progress, including the initialling of the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan between the Government of the Sudan and most armed groups. Significant challenges remained, in particular the economic crisis, and UNITAMS was being configured to support the efforts of the Government. While the United Nations would provide support within its mandate, she cautioned against unrealistic expectations on the part of the Sudanese parties with regard to international financing to implement the Agreement.

The Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations welcomed the national action plan for the protection of civilians of the Government of the Sudan and noted that UNAMID would support its implementation. Security Council members called for the provision of adequate resources to and a quick deployment of UNITAMS.

3. South Sudan

At a videoconference held on 16 September 2020, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, David Shearer, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, and a civil society representative gave presentations to the Security Council. It transpired from the presentations that, despite the ceasefire agreement in South Sudan, intercommunal conflict was on the rise, leading to a de facto increase in humanitarian needs.

The Special Representative for South Sudan stated that the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity continued to function and that activities were progressing well within the clusters of ministries headed by the five Vice-Presidents.

Security Council members reaffirmed their support for the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity and called upon the actors concerned to double their efforts to accelerate the full implementation of all provisions of the peace agreement of 2018. Some members stressed the need for a greater political participation of women in the peace process.

4. Sudan and South Sudan

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

At a briefing session held on 25 September 2020, the Security Council was informed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations of political and humanitarian developments in the Sudan and South Sudan.

Several Security Council members, in taking the floor, welcomed the Juba Peace Agreement reached between the Sudanese parties, some calling it historic and consistent with the principle of “African solutions to African problems”.

III. Middle East

1. Syrian Arab Republic

The Security Council examines the three dimensions of the Syrian crisis on a monthly basis.

Chemical weapons track

In her presentation of 10 September 2020, during the consideration of the eighty-third monthly report of the Director General of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) on the chemical weapons programme and alleged incidents of use of those weapons in the Syrian conflict ([S/2020/871](#)), the Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, told the Security Council that until the outstanding issues related to initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding its chemical weapons stockpile and programme were resolved, the international community could not be certain that its activities had come to an end. The High Representative for Disarmament Affairs also said that, in keeping with established practice, her office had maintained regular contact over the past month with its OPCW counterpart. She added that the OPCW Technical Secretariat was still planning to conduct two rounds of inspections of the facilities at the Barzah and Jamraya centres; noting, however, that the visits were subject to the evolving situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the ensuing discussions, Security Council members strongly condemned the use of chemical weapons as unjustifiable under any pretext. Some members called for an end to the Council's division on that issue, so that a final outcome could finally be reached on all outstanding issues concerning the initial declaration of the Syrian Arab Republic on its stockpiles and programme and the determination of responsibility for incidents of use of chemical weapons in the conflict.

Humanitarian and political tracks

At a videoconference held on 16 September 2020, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said that the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Syrian Arab Republic was steadily increasing and that reports from within the country indicated an increasing spread of the disease, but that it would be difficult to assess the extent of the epidemic with certainty without more laboratory testing throughout the country. He pointed out that community transmission was widespread, as nearly 90 per cent of newly confirmed cases could not be attributed to a known source.

During the ensuing debate, the representative of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the penholders on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, stressed the need for the continued implementation of the Turkish-Russian ceasefire agreement in the north-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic. Calling upon all parties to allow humanitarian aid to reach the population in need without hindrance, he stressed that administrative obstacles for the delivery of aid were unacceptable.

At an open videoconference held on 18 September, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, informed the Security Council that, in view of the relative calm in the Syrian Arab Republic and the need to alleviate the suffering of the population, the time had come to move towards a lasting political settlement of the crisis. He presented the results of the third session of the Constitutional Committee and stressed the need to achieve tangible progress, in accordance with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

Security Council members welcomed the convening of the Constitutional Committee session in a "constructive atmosphere", but deplored the lack of concrete results at the end of the discussions. Several speakers also stressed the obligation to respect international humanitarian law, as well as the importance of taking measures to build confidence among the Government and opposition groups, in particular releasing prisoners and clarifying the fate of disappeared persons.

2. Yemen

At a briefing held on 15 September 2020, the Security Council was informed of the continued and intensifying fighting in Yemen. Already described as the worst humanitarian crisis in the world, and with the threat of famine looming, the situation in the country remained very worrying. Donor countries, especially regional ones, had not kept their promises to fund humanitarian action.

Speaking by videoconference, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator said that the spectre of famine had returned to Yemen, just as it had two years previously, when rapid international action had saved thousands of lives. This time, however, those that were in a position to help, and that had a special responsibility to do so, were for the most part choosing not to.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, said that the parties to the conflict had yet to adhere to the road map for a national ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks.

Thus, with the intensification of fighting, increasing humanitarian needs and the continuing devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yemen appeared to be moving further and further away from progress towards peace.

In their statements, delegates expressed concern about developments in the country and urged the parties to the conflict to sign the joint declaration on a national ceasefire. They also encouraged the Houthi authorities to grant United Nations experts, without delay, access to the abandoned FSO *Safer* oil tanker off the coast of Yemen.

Security Council members also reiterated their support for the efforts of the Special Envoy.

3. The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 29 September 2020, the Security Council held a meeting, followed by consultations, to hear a briefing from the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov. The Special Coordinator expressed his concern about a number of destabilizing factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, that might further alienate Israelis and Palestinians from a negotiated solution to their conflict. He expressed his determination to support both peoples in resolving the conflict and ending the occupation.

In addition, he said that the recent normalization of relations between Israel and two Arab countries provided an opportunity to re-engage Israel and the State of Palestine in negotiations for a two-State solution to their long-standing conflict. In the discussion that followed, Security Council members exchanged views on the Abraham Accords Peace Agreement sponsored by the United States of America.

4. United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da‘esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

At an open videoconference held on 18 September 2020, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2544 \(2020\)](#), by which it renewed the mandates of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da‘esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and of the Special Adviser and Head of the Team until 18 September 2021.

In its resolution [2544 \(2020\)](#), the Security Council took note of the request by Iraq contained in its letter dated 16 September ([S/2020/909](#)). It also decided that any further extension of the mandates would be determined at the request of the Government of Iraq, or any other Government that had requested the Team to collect evidence of acts that might constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide committed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant on its territory, in accordance with resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#).

IV. Americas

Colombia

On 25 September 2020, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2545 \(2020\)](#), by which it extended the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the related reporting obligations until 25 September 2021.

In extending the mandate on the basis of the peace agreement of 2016 between the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army, the Security Council also expressed its readiness to consider the extension of the

mandate of the Verification Mission, in due course, to include the monitoring of compliance with the sentences of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace.

V. Asia

1. Afghanistan

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

On 3 September 2020, and just as the intra-Afghan peace negotiations were expected to be launched, the Security Council held a debate on the situation in Afghanistan. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Deborah Lyons, warned the Council that the continued general violence in the country had created an atmosphere of mistrust that threatened to derail long-awaited talks between the Government and the Taliban. She added that the stakes for the country's most vulnerable people could not be higher, and described the forthcoming intra-Afghan talks as historic.

The Chair and Chief Executive of MOBY Group, Saad Mohseni, also briefed the Security Council and called for more coherence in the international community's stance towards the Taliban, as well as for the protection of the Constitution of Afghanistan and of the human rights guaranteed therein.

In the exchanges that followed the briefing, Security Council members deplored the acts of violence and their toll of victims among the civilian population, including women and children. They expressed concern at the impact that the violence would have on the long-awaited peace talks between the Government and the Taliban.

On 15 September 2020, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2543 \(2020\)](#), by which it extended the mandate of UNAMA by one year, until 17 September 2021.

Welcoming the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations, in Doha, on 12 September 2020, Security Council members, through a press statement, strongly encouraged the parties to continue to pursue confidence-building measures, including reductions in violence, and urged them to commit themselves in good faith and to work towards a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and an inclusive political settlement.

2. Myanmar

At a closed videoconference held on 11 September 2020, the Security Council discussed the humanitarian situation in Myanmar, as the country prepared for elections in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members called upon the authorities of Myanmar to create the conditions for a safe, voluntary and dignified return of the Rohingya refugees to their places of origin. They also reiterated the importance of accountability.

3. The situation relating to Nagorny Karabakh

On 29 September 2020, under "Other matters" in closed consultations of the whole, the Security Council considered the situation arising from the outbreak of heavy fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorny Karabakh. Council Members were united in their assessment of the situation on the ground. Following the consultations, the Council published press elements in which Council members strongly condemned the use of force in the region, expressed their support for the call of the Secretary-General for an immediate ceasefire, a de-escalation of tensions and

an immediate return to constructive negotiations under the auspices of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

VI. Thematic and other issues

In September 2020, the Security Council addressed a number of thematic and other issues under its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, as outlined below.

1. Maintenance of international peace and security

Implementation of resolution 2532 (2020)

In its resolution 2532 (2020), adopted in support of the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide updates on the United Nations efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic in countries in situations of armed conflict or affected by humanitarian crises, as well as on the impact of COVID-19 on the ability of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to deliver their mandated priority tasks. At an open videoconference held on 9 September 2020, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator briefed the Council on the broad implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts around the world.

Security Council members commended the efforts of peacekeepers and partners involved in COVID-19 response plans and called for the full implementation of resolution 2532 (2020). They urged all parties to the conflict to implement the global ceasefire called for by the Secretary-General. Some members expressed concern about the escalation of violence and the fragility of some States, which at the same time needed to make enormous efforts to combat the pandemic.

Humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security

On 17 September 2020, a high-level open debate on the humanitarian effects of environmental degradation and peace and security was held by videoconference under the chairmanship of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, African Integration and Nigeriens Abroad of the Niger, Kalla Ankourao.

In his presentation, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, told the Security Council that conflict-affected people were also disproportionately affected by climate shocks, calling for further political reflection on the links between environmental degradation, climate risk, humanitarian needs and peace and security.

Faced with the cumulative pressures of conflict, climate change and environmental degradation, communities in the Sahel and Lake Chad region were “now walking the tightrope of survival”, he added.

The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, Ibrahim Thiaw, made the link between conflict and environmental issues. In the Sahel region, for example, where three aggravating factors combined, namely, a strong dependence on natural resources, the consequences of climate change and a constant increase in population, competition for access to or use of resources, which had become increasingly scarce, was often the source of violence between communities.

In his statement, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Niger said that, although all regions of the world were experiencing the effects of climate change to varying degrees, Africa had been hard hit and responses had been timid.

Several participants noted that, in the Sahelian region and the Lake Chad basin, which were marked by great fragility and exponential population growth, climate shocks had a definite influence on the security situation in the area.

Global governance after COVID-19

On 24 September 2020, a high-level debate on global governance after COVID-19 was held by videoconference, under the chairmanship of the President of the Niger, Issoufou Mahamadou, and in the presence of the Presidents of Estonia, South Africa and Tunisia, prime ministers and ministers for foreign affairs of the other members of the Council.

In his presentation during the debate, the Secretary-General noted the failure of international cooperation in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic effectively. He stated that countries had largely failed to cooperate to prevent and control the global spread of the coronavirus, and he called for a rethinking of global governance and multilateralism.

Addressing the Security Council, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, said that humanity's brief experience with COVID-19 had called into question its intuitive ability to respond to such a threat.

Most speakers expressed support for the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire to better address the pandemic, reaffirming their commitment to multilateralism and the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security: role of the International Organization of la Francophonie

A debate on the role of the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF), the first of its kind, was held on 8 September 2020. The Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, Bintou Keita, and the Secretary-General of OIF, Louise Mushikiwabo, briefed the Security Council.

In her statement, the Assistant Secretary-General said that OIF, which was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, was particularly well placed to strengthen United Nations conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. She described the cooperation between OIF and the United Nations as rich and varied, in particular in the areas of early warning and conflict prevention.

The Secretary-General of OIF noted that, while OIF could be considered a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter, in reality it was a transnational grouping of 88 States and Governments, including 54 full members from five continents.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, speaking in his capacity as Chair of the Ministerial Conference of la Francophonie, said that the COVID-19 pandemic had shown that international cooperation and effective multilateralism were more important than ever. He added that the United Nations and OIF must strengthen their cooperation to promote peace, cooperation, solidarity and values common to both organizations.

3. Children and armed conflict: attacks against schools as a grave violation of children's rights

On 10 September 2020, the issue of attacks against schools in conflict situations, which is becoming a recurring phenomenon, was the topic of discussion in an open debate.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Henrietta Fore, and a representative of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Marika Tsolakis, gave presentations to the Security Council. The Council also heard testimonies from two girls from the Niger on their experiences following attacks on their schools by armed groups and their struggle to protect children's enjoyment of their rights to education.

Speakers urged Member States to develop effective measures to prevent attacks and threats against schools, including by putting in place national legal frameworks to address them. In a presidential statement originally proposed by Belgium and the Niger ([S/PRST/2020/8](#)), the Security Council reaffirmed the right to education and its contribution to the achievement of peace and security, and expressed grave concern about the significant increase in attacks on schools in recent years and the resulting high number of children denied access to quality education, as well as the disproportionate impact that attacks on schools had on girls. The Council also expressed its grave concern about the use of schools for military purposes, in violation of applicable international humanitarian law, and encouraged Member States to take concrete measures to address that problem, taking note of the Safe Schools Declaration in that regard. In addition, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to monitor and report on attacks against and the abduction of children and teachers, among others, and the use of schools for military purposes, in contravention of international humanitarian law.

4. United Nations peacekeeping operations

The Security Council held its annual debate on peacekeeping operations on 14 September 2020. In his presentation to the Council, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations stated that the Action for Peacekeeping flagship initiative of the Secretary-General to generate collective commitment to peacekeeping would soon move into its second phase of implementation, to prepare missions for future challenges. He recalled that the initiative had been launched in March 2018 with the aim of reviving political commitment to peace operations. To date, 154 Member States and four regional organizations had signed the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

The Under-Secretary-General said that, two years after its launch, tangible progress had been made in strengthening peacekeeping operations, adding that the Secretariat had begun to define overall priorities for the next phase in 2021 and beyond, and was pushing to complete the outstanding tasks of the first phase.

Several Security Council members welcomed the reform initiatives of the Secretary-General, including the Action for Peacekeeping, which had guided the adoption of several Council resolutions and helped to establish mechanisms for planning and evaluating the performance of those operations.

5. Protection of civilians in armed conflict

During an open videoconference on the protection of civilians in armed conflict held on 17 September 2020, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Executive Director of the World Food

Programme, David Beasley, and the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Qu Dongyu, gave presentations to the Security Council. They indicated that, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of food-insecure people was expected to double in 2020. People living in conflict zones continued to face the most serious threat of hunger and even famine, hence the call for donors to strengthen their support for humanitarian operations to help those populations.

Security Council members expressed their support for the calls by the briefers for increased humanitarian assistance to countries facing conflict and the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members drew attention to violations of international humanitarian law by warring parties, such as the blocking of the delivery of food aid or the displacement of people living from agriculture in conflict zones, and stressed that hunger should never be used as a weapon of war. Other members emphasized the need for sustainable development to address the root causes of hunger and conflict.

6. Fifth informal joint seminar and fourteenth annual joint consultative meeting between the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union

Further to the request of the African Union to hold the annual joint consultative meeting between the members of the Security Council and those of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in September, the Niger and Djibouti (the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the month of September 2020) co-chaired the fifth informal joint seminar and the fourteenth annual joint consultative meeting of the two councils on 29 and 30 September 2020, respectively. A joint communiqué, in which the two councils pledged to maintain close coordination, was adopted at the joint consultative meeting.