

**Security Council**

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Letter dated 29 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of China 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 China in March 2020 (see annex).

The document was prepared by the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations, following consultations with other members of the Security Council.

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

(Signed) **Zhang Jun**
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Permanent Representative of the People's Republic of China
to the United Nations



Annex to the letter dated 29 April 2020 from the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Assessment of the Work of the Security Council during the presidency of the People's Republic of China (March 2020)

Introduction

During the month of March 2020, the Security Council held six public meetings, one private meeting, six closed consultations and six video teleconferences. It adopted six resolutions, agreed on one presidential statement and gave five statements to the press. Several press elements were issued by the presidency. The Council discussed wide-ranging issues, including Africa and the Middle East, and a few thematic issues, among others. The signature event of the presidency was a debate on peace and security in Africa, and the Council adopted its first-ever resolution on the safety and security of peacekeepers, resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#).

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic posed a huge challenge to the work of the Council in the month of March 2020, especially in the second half of the month, when physical meetings were not possible. China worked closely with Council members, doing everything possible to tackle the impact of the pandemic. New modalities and methods were established, including a video teleconferencing format and written voting procedure, enabling the Council to function effectively and play its due role while maintaining transparency during this difficult time.

Africa

Central Africa Republic

On 16 March, the Council issued a statement to the press, in which Council members condemned in the strongest terms the attack on 15 March 2020 by anti-Balaka elements against the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in Grimari (prefecture of Ouaka), in the centre of the Central African Republic, which resulted in the death of one Burundian peacekeeper. Council members also strongly condemned the killing of a national staff member of MINUSCA in Ndélé (prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran), in the north-east of the Central African Republic, on 7 March 2020. Council members reiterated their strong support for MINUSCA in discharging its mandate pursuant to resolution [2499 \(2019\)](#).

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On 24 March, the Council met for their first video teleconference on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, and Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, briefed the Council.

Ms. Zerrougui outlined the situation of the spread of COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its possible impact over the coming months and briefed the Council on the recent progress made by the Government with the support of the Mission and other partners and on the challenges on the ground. Mr. Lacroix briefed the Council on the measures taken to improve the Mission's performance following the report of General Santos Cruz and to ensure it carry out

its mandate better, as well as on efforts in managing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mandate implementation and ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel.

Members of the Council welcomed the progress and efforts made by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in building stability and implementing key reforms, the steps taken to increase coordination between MONUSCO and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ongoing discussions between MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the future reconfiguration, transition and exit strategy of MONUSCO. They stressed that the continued cooperation between members of the ruling coalition and their commitment to broad political dialogue were critical to further normalization of the situation in the country. They expressed concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation and called on partners to step up their efforts. They also voiced concern over the continued instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Following the meeting, the President of the Council issued elements to the press.

Guinea-Bissau

On 4 March, the Council discussed the most recent political situation in Guinea-Bissau in closed consultations under the item “Any other business”. Council members were briefed by Rosine Sori-Coulibaly, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), and Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations.

Following the discussion, the Council issued a statement to the press on 5 March, in which Council members expressed deep concern at the post-electoral and institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau and called on the parties to respect the legal and constitutional frameworks and the democratic process to resolve the crisis. Council members expressed their support to the mediation role played by the Economic Community of West African States, including a mission of experts and possibly high-level political mission to Guinea-Bissau. Council members urged the defence and security forces of Guinea-Bissau not to interfere in the political process. Council members reminded all stakeholders that it may consider taking appropriate measures in response to further developments in the situation in Guinea-Bissau.

Libya

On 26 March, a Council video teleconference on Libya was held. The Council was briefed by Stephanie Williams, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. The members of the Council paid tribute to former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ghassan Salamé and expressed their concern at the significant escalation of hostilities on the ground in Libya. They also expressed concern at the possible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Libya and called on the parties to de-escalate the fighting urgently, to immediately cease hostilities and to ensure unhindered access of humanitarian aid throughout the country, and called for all Member States to comply with the arms embargo in Libya. The Council reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations central role in facilitating a Libyan-led and Libyan-owned inclusive political process. The President of the Council sent elements to the press after the meeting.

Peace and security in Africa: countering terrorism and extremism in Africa

On 11 March, the Council held a debate on the theme “Peace and security in Africa: countering terrorism and extremism in Africa”. The Council was briefed by

Rosemary DiCarlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres; Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union, on behalf of Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Special Adviser to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme. Council members and 17 other Member States attended the debate and delivered remarks.

In her statement, Under-Secretary-General DiCarlo emphasized that, as the Secretary-General has stated, terrorism cannot be addressed without its underlying factors being addressed, including the development, humanitarian, human rights and security challenges. Security and military solutions alone are not sufficient. The response should be a holistic approach that addresses, among others, poverty, weak governance, intercommunal tensions, gender inequality and youth unemployment. She highlighted that, as terrorism has no borders, preventing and combating it requires strong multilateral cooperation. Ms. Mohammed stated that a greater focus must be placed on prevention, noting that countries are often overly focused only on securitized approaches that fail to address the underlying conditions of radicalization to violence. Mr. Dieye pointed out that addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism would bring dividends and that funds directed at prevention should be more effectively spent than by simply responding to crises as they happen. He underlined that prevention must include respect for human rights, peace and sustainable development, among others.

In the ensuing debate, representatives noted the importance of African leadership and ownership of their counter-terrorism initiatives and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting African Member States in their efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism while protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular through the delivery of effective and targeted capacity-building, training and sharing of best practices, experiences and other necessary resources. Member States also recalled in their statements that respect for human rights and international law is crucial for effectively countering terrorism and violent extremism.

During the meeting, the Council adopted a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2020/5](#)), in which the Council, among others, reaffirmed its political commitment to support and strengthen the capacity of African countries in countering terrorism and violent extremism in a holistic approach and identified specified areas in which the international community can support African countries, in compliance with international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law.

Somalia

On 30 March, the Council unanimously adopted resolution [2516 \(2020\)](#), in which it extended until 30 June 2020 the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.

South Sudan

On 3 March, a troop-contributing countries meeting on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was held. Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General, briefed the Council. Members of the Council, Ms. Keita and representatives of participating troop-contributing countries had an exchange of views.

On 4 March, a briefing and closed consultations were held on UNMISS. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNMISS, and Betty Sunday, coordinator of the non-governmental organization Women's Monthly Forum on the Peace and Political Process in South Sudan, briefed the Council. The

Permanent Representative of South Sudan participated in the meeting and delivered a statement.

Mr. Shearer reported that President Salva Kiir, agreeing to compromise, abandoned the current state system to restore the original 10 states while establishing 3 administrative areas. Riek Machar, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition, then agreed to join the transitional Government, taking up the position of First Vice-President. However, many challenges remained of concern: the humanitarian situation, human rights and the lack of implementation of the revitalized peace agreement. Ms. Sunday reported that serious challenges lay ahead for South Sudan's people, including violence, humanitarian need and an extreme risk of rape and sexual and gender-based violence to women and girls, and called for the full and meaningful participation of women in the peace process.

Council members welcomed the steps taken to form a new transitional Government and called upon the parties to resolve pending issues in a steady manner and in the spirit of mutual trust and understanding.

On the same day, the Council issued a statement to the press on South Sudan. The members of the Council welcomed encouraging developments in the country's peace process, including the beginning of the formation of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, recognized that that represented a significant step towards sustainable peace by the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and called on the signatories to the Agreement to finalize establishment of the Revitalized Transitional Government and all transitional institutions.

On 12 March, the Council adopted resolution [2514 \(2020\)](#) unanimously to renew the mandate of UNMISS. The renewed mandate will run until 15 March 2021.

Sudan

On 12 March, the Council issued a statement to the press, in which members of the Council condemned in the strongest possible terms the attack on Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's convoy in Khartoum on 9 March 2020.

On March 30, the Council adopted resolution [2517 \(2020\)](#) unanimously. By that resolution, the Council decided that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) would maintain its current troop and police ceilings until 31 May 2020 and maintain all team sites for mandate implementation. In the resolution, the Council expressed its intention to decide, by 31 May 2020, courses of action regarding the responsible drawdown and exit of UNAMID and further expressed its intention to adopt a new resolution at the same time, establishing a follow-on presence to UNAMID.

Middle East

Iraq

On 3 March, the Council held an open meeting and closed consultations and was briefed by Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The Permanent Representative of Iraq also participated in the meeting and delivered a statement. The Special Representative introduced political, economic and security developments in Iraq. Council members reiterated their support for the independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and prosperity of Iraq. They welcomed progresses in the country's electoral reform and encouraged Iraq to take further steps to promote political dialogue and national reconciliation and undertake necessary reforms in the

governance, economy and security sectors to meet the demands of Iraqi people. Council members expressed support for continued efforts by Iraq to prevent the resurgence of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). Members also discussed developments pertaining to the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. They expressed appreciation to efforts by the Special Representative and UNAMI and called for continued cooperation between the Iraqi Government and UNAMI.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

On 30 March, the Council met via video teleconference on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, delivered a statement to Council members introducing the quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). The representatives of Palestine and Israel also participated in the meeting. Mr. Mladenov noted the lack of progress during the reporting period in implementation of a number of measures set out by the Council in resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#). He observed that the expansion of Israeli settlements continued to pose a significant obstacle to achieving a viable two-State solution, informed the Council about continued demolitions and seizures of Palestinian-owned structures by Israeli authorities and condemned violence against civilians and provocative rhetoric, among others. He cited the dire situation in Gaza as a major concern and encouraged the Palestinian Government and donors to work with the United Nations to support the health system in Gaza, particularly in relation to COVID-19 preparedness. He reiterated the United Nations commitment to supporting Palestinians and Israelis to resolve the conflict on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, multilateral agreements and international law.

Council members discussed developments on the ground, including in the context of the outbreak of COVID-19. Members also expressed concerns over settlement activities and announcement of plans of annexation, reiterated support for a two-State solution, condemned all forms of violence against civilians and called for the resumption of dialogue and negotiation. Support for the Special Coordinator and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the call for increased humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people were also emphasized. They welcomed ongoing Israeli-Palestinian coordination to respond to COVID-19 and called for the intensification of such efforts by the parties, in line with their respective obligations. Following the meeting, the President of the Council sent elements to the press.

The situation in the Middle East (Syrian Arab Republic)

On 5 March, the Council held closed consultations and was briefed by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, on the most recent monthly report of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons concerning the Syrian Arab Republic.

On 6 March, the Council held closed consultations to discuss recent developments concerning the Additional Protocol to the Memorandum on the Stabilization of the Situation in the Idlib De-Escalation Area between the Russian Federation and Turkey. Members welcomed or noted the ceasefire arrangement in Idlib and called for the full implementation of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Some members also underlined the central role of the United Nations in this regard.

On 30 March, the Council held a video teleconference on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic (political and humanitarian issues). Members of the Council were briefed by Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs

and Emergency Relief Coordinator; and Geir O. Pedersen, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria. Mr. Lowcock expressed concerns about the humanitarian needs in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in the north-west and north-east, and raised the alarm regarding the COVID-19 crisis and the potential implications including for humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic. He called for a global response to overcome the multiple challenges, including the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Mr. Pedersen informed the Council of recent developments in the political track and called for a national ceasefire to cope with the pandemic. The representatives of the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey also participated in the meeting and delivered statements.

The members of the Council expressed their concern at the humanitarian situation and the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Syrian Arab Republic. They stressed the need to ensure the necessary conditions to tackle the spread of COVID-19 in the Syrian Arab Republic and called on all parties to ensure safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian assistance, including medical items, in all parts of the country and to all Syrians in need, in accordance with humanitarian principles and in line with relevant Council resolutions. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the most recent statements by Secretary-General António Guterres and Special Envoy Pedersen, the members of the Council called on all parties to ensure a sustained period of calm throughout the country and reaffirmed the need for the full implementation of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). They took note of the most recent developments with regard to the Syrian political process and called on all Syrian parties to engage constructively through the Constitutional Committee to find a sustainable peace. They reaffirmed that there could be no military solution to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, and that it would only be resolved through an inclusive Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process in line with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) under United Nations auspices. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. The President of the Council sent elements to the press after the meeting.

The situation in the Middle East (Yemen)

On 12 March, the Council held a briefing on the situation in the Middle East (Yemen). The Council heard briefings from Martin Griffiths, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and Ramesh Rajasingham, Acting Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Mr. Griffiths expressed concern about the increasingly dire military situation, in particular in the north of the country, and warned of devastating humanitarian and political consequences. He called on the parties to exercise maximum restraint, stop fighting and focus on resuming an inclusive political process. He encouraged parties to continue engaging in confidence-building measures and to implement the agreement on a large-scale exchange of prisoners. Mr. Rajasingham said he was concerned about civilian casualties and displacement due to fighting as well as persistent access restrictions on humanitarian aid. He reiterated the need for a nationwide ceasefire and called on the parties to fulfil their obligations under international law. He presented the funding status of the United Nations aid operation in Yemen and expressed concerns about the Yemeni economy.

Members of the Council echoed concerns about the military escalation, impasse in the political process and dire humanitarian situation. They agreed that a political solution was the only way to resolve the crisis and voiced support for the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy. Many called for a ceasefire and for the parties to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and help to resolve access challenges. The Permanent Representative of Yemen also delivered a statement to the Council.

Immediately after the briefing, the Council held closed consultations, during which members of the Council interacted with Mr. Griffiths and Mr. Rajasingham.

Asia

Afghanistan

On 10 March, the Council adopted resolution [2513 \(2020\)](#) unanimously. In the resolution, the Council welcomed the significant steps taken towards ending the war in Afghanistan and opening the door to intra-Afghan negotiations enabled by the peace agreement signed by the United States of America and the Taliban, the intention of all Afghan parties to pursue the successful negotiation of an inclusive political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, and the continuation of the efforts of all regional and international partners of Afghanistan to support peace, reconciliation and development in Afghanistan. It also affirmed that any political settlement must protect the rights of all Afghans, including women, youth and minorities. It called on the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban to pursue additional confidence-building measures in good faith, thereby creating conditions conducive to a swift beginning of intra-Afghan negotiations, and reaffirmed the importance of ensuring that the territory of Afghanistan should not be used by Al-Qaida, ISIL or other international terrorist groups to threaten or attack any other country. It welcomed the work under way by the international community to prepare for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and development assistance throughout Afghanistan and the efforts of regional cooperation for regional development and stressed the importance of international and regional economic cooperation for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In addition, upon the commencement of the intra-Afghan negotiations, the Council expressed its readiness to consider the start of the review of the status of individuals and entities on the List established and maintained pursuant to resolution [1988 \(2011\)](#).

On 31 March, Council members met through video teleconference on the situation in Afghanistan and were briefed by Ingrid Hayden, officer-in-charge of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The Permanent Representative of Afghanistan also participated in the meeting and delivered a statement. Council members called on the political leadership of Afghanistan to put aside their differences, urged all Afghan parties to heed the Secretary-General's call for a comprehensive ceasefire, expressed hope for the intra-Afghan negotiations to start without delay and called on the international community to work with the Government of Afghanistan to prevent the further spread of COVID-19. They stressed the importance of sustained efforts to continue to reduce the violence and to ensure that the territory of Afghanistan would not be used by international terrorist groups, underlined that the economic, social, political and development gains, including in the field of human rights, must be protected and built upon and welcomed the efforts of international and regional partners in advancing regional cooperation, development and reconstruction in Afghanistan. Following the meeting, the President of the Council sent elements to the press.

Europe

Georgia

On 5 March, Council members discussed in closed consultations the issue of malicious cyberoperations in Georgia under the item "Any other business". Some Council members referred to the letter dated 21 February 2020 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia ([S/2020/135](#)) and accused Russian Federation for planning

and carrying out the cyberattack launched against Georgia on 28 October 2019. The representative of the Russian Federation denied the accusation as baseless and asserted that there was no evidence of official Russian agencies' involvement. Council members emphasized the importance of cooperation in safeguarding cybersecurity and dialogue for the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Thematic and other issues

Non-proliferation: Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The Council met in consultations on the launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea under the item "Any other business" on 5 March and on 31 March through video teleconference. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, briefed the Council on 5 March.

On 30 March, the Council adopted resolution [2515 \(2020\)](#) unanimously. By that resolution, the Council extended until 30 April 2021 the mandate of the Panel of Experts established pursuant to resolution [1874 \(2009\)](#). It requested the Panel of Experts to provide a midterm report to the Council no later than 4 September 2020 and a final report no later than 5 March 2021.

Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts

On 26 March, the Council issued a press statement, in which Council members condemned in the strongest terms the terrorist attack that took place at the Dharamshala Sikh Temple in Kabul on 25 March 2020.

United Nations peacekeeping operations: safety and security of peacekeepers

On 30 March, the Council adopted resolution [2518 \(2020\)](#) unanimously, relating to the safety and security of peacekeepers. In it, the Council emphasized the importance of enhancing the safety and security of peacekeepers and listed a number of areas that would contribute to that objective, such as ensuring freedom of movement and adequate capacities and systems, strengthening situational awareness, improving training and performance, health, security and relief capabilities, requesting peacekeeping missions to enhance engagement with host countries, local authorities and the population to build mutual trust, improve the integration of technology, strengthen relevant coordination mechanism arrangements and, through partnerships, support the African Union and other regional organizations in their capacity-building efforts.

Working methods and enhancing transparency

COVID-19 poses a threat to global public health and an enormous challenge to the functioning of the Council. Since assuming the presidency of the Council, China has worked closely with Council members to tackle the impact of the pandemic, ensure the fulfilment of duties of the Council and promote transparency.

In the first two weeks, while keeping to the work plan in general, the Council took necessary precautionary measures to reduce the risk of infection. Given the increasing risks of COVID-19, after thorough discussions and consultations with Council members and the United Nations Secretariat, the presidency of the Council suggested working guidelines to Council members. The guidelines encouraged members of the Council to limit the number of participants in Council meetings within the 1+2 format, limit Council meetings as appropriate, postpone consultations that were not urgent and move closed consultations to the Chamber. The guidelines also

encouraged the Secretariat to increase the frequency of disinfectant cleaning of Council venues.

In the second half of the month, when physical meetings were not possible, great efforts were made to explore new methods for the conduct of meetings and discussions, including through holding video teleconferences. The Council managed to focus on major topics, hot spot issues and the most recent developments, had its voice heard and took actions promptly and played its due role.

On 27 March, to proceed in a way that allowed for the adoption of resolutions, and on the basis of agreement among Council members, the presidency sent a letter to all Permanent Representatives of Council members and set forth a written voting procedure for the adoption of resolutions and arrangements to enhance the transparency of video teleconferences. The letter was later issued as a document of the Council ([S/2020/253](#)).

In accordance with United Nations practice and to promote transparency of the work of the Council, at the beginning of the presidency, China held briefings for Member States, United Nations media and civil society on the work of the Council, based on the programme of work adopted on 2 March in closed consultations. During the month, China facilitated the process of having press elements and releasing meeting records after video teleconferences, to allow the Council to be heard and to promote unity. At the end of the month, China transmitted a letter to all United Nations Member States and the Secretary-General containing the text of a briefing on the work of the Council in March during the presidency of China.
