



Security Council

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Letter dated 18 June 2020 from the Representative of the Dominican Republic 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 the Dominican Republic in April 2020 (see annex).

This assessment was prepared under my responsibility and in consultation with the 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) José **Singer Weisinger**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Special Envoy of the Dominican Republic to the Security Council



Annex to the letter dated 18 June 2020 from the Representative of the Dominican Republic 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 Dominican Republic (April 2020)

Introduction

Under the presidency of the Dominican Republic in April 2020, the Security Council, being unable to meet physically owing to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, held 21 open or closed videoconferences; adopted a statement by the President of the Security Council that addressed the protection of civilians in armed conflict and protecting civilians from conflict-induced hunger; and agreed on five press elements, on MINUSMA, COVID-19, Yemen, the Great Lakes and UNAMID, as well as two press statements, on Colombia and Yemen. The geographical areas covered included Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas, as well as thematic issues.

In addition, the Council held one open meeting on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and protecting civilians from conflict-induced hunger; and another on the maintenance of international peace and security, and youth and peace and security.

Given the unprecedented circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council approved its working methods for April that allowed it to continue its work by videoconference.

Africa

Mali

On 7 April 2020, the members of the Council held an open videoconference meeting, followed by a closed videoconference meeting, on the situation in Mali and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), with the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mali, Tiébilé Dramé.

Members of the Council welcomed the progress that had been made so far in the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, highlighting the conclusions of the national inclusive dialogue as a positive step, while expressing the need for signatory parties to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and achieve more benchmarks.

Members of the Council also discussed the impact of COVID-19 in Mali and expressed solidarity with Mali amid the pandemic. They called for MINUSMA to continue to deliver on its mandate, with particular attention to the MINUSMA adaptation plan, and reiterated their call on States Members of the United Nations to give their support.

Members of the Council expressed their broad condemnation of recent terrorist attacks, including the kidnapping of the leader of the opposition, Soumaïla Cissé, and welcomed the recent military operations by the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, the national armies of the Group of Five for the Sahel and French forces, while encouraging the Government of Mali to increase its efforts to contain violence in the centre.

Press elements were adopted.

Libya

At the request of the Russian Federation, a closed meeting was held on 8 April to discuss the European Union's Operation Irini in the Mediterranean. During the meeting, the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary Di Carlo, and Pedro Serrano, the Head of Cabinet of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, gave briefings to Council members. The discussion was focused on the official launch of the Operation on 31 March and its parameters and geographic focus.

The Council was informed that Operation Irini would focus on the implementation and monitoring of the arms embargo and operate in the framework of Security Council resolutions [2292 \(2016\)](#), recently extended by Council resolution [2473 \(2019\)](#).

Members agreed that violations of the arms embargo should not continue to be committed with impunity, thus further exacerbating the conflict.

Mr. Serrano informed the Council that the vast majority of weapons delivered to Libya were flown in or driven across land borders.

In addition, it was mentioned that, as part of Operation Irini, the European Union was also mandated to train the Libyan Coast Guard, monitor and gather information on illicit exports of petroleum, crude oil and refined petroleum products and disrupt human smuggling and trafficking networks.

United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

The Council held a closed videoconference on 9 April to discuss the situation in Western Sahara. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Colin Stewart, and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Bintou Keita, gave briefings to the Council.

Mr. Stewart gave a briefing on the situation on the ground and the measures taken by Mission staff, highlighting that full implementation of the mandate had been maintained. Overall, he expressed that the impact of COVID-19 on the Mission was under control. Mr. Stewart said that the security situation had remained relatively calm since October 2019 and that the mission had continued to focus on enforcing the ceasefire.

Ms. Keita gave a briefing on the political situation. She informed the Council that the political process remained on pause since the resignation in 2019 of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Horst Köhler. She highlighted the importance of appointing a new envoy as soon as possible, but noted it was not an easy task since the Secretary-General believed that the position required an individual with a similar stature to Mr. Köhler.

Ms. Keita said that a solution to the Western Sahara conflict was possible but would require increased political will. She encouraged the parties to take active steps to restore trust, including gestures of good faith, and to refrain from harmful rhetoric. She said all Council members should encourage the parties to engage in good faith as soon as a new envoy was appointed. She encouraged the parties to have regular contact with the civilian and military leadership of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and relayed that the Secretary-General was counting on the Council making a unified commitment to achieve a solution.

Council members voiced support to MINURSO and expressed their concern at the stalled political process owing to the vacant position of the Personal Envoy. They called upon the actors to resume negotiations and dialogues in good faith in order to seek a political solution.

Great Lakes Region

On 22 April, the Security Council held open and closed videoconferences to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes Region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Xia Huang, presented the report of the Secretary-General covering the most recent six months ([S/2020/272](#)) and gave a briefing to the Council on the recent key developments in the region, including the progress and efforts of the region's leaders to strengthen bilateral and regional relations and cooperation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. He provided information on the greatest challenges posed by the activities of armed groups, including the illicit exploitation of natural resources, as well as the humanitarian crisis and his focus and priorities.

The members of the Council welcomed the positive developments in the region and expressed their concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of the resurgence of the Ebola virus disease, among other issues. They expressed their solidarity with the people and Governments of the region and called for the strengthening of regional coordination of the Governments to meet this challenge, and for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all armed groups.

Press elements were adopted.

African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

On 24 April, the Security Council held open and closed videoconferences to discuss the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and its ongoing drawdown process and exit from Darfur. The Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean Pierre Lacroix, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary Di Carlo, who gave briefings to the Council on the impact of COVID-19 on the proposed drawdown and follow-up mission options contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

The members of the Council reconfirmed their support for the Government of the Sudan and their desire for a successful transition and sustainable peace on behalf of the people of the Sudan. Members of the Council welcomed the ongoing peace negotiations between the Government and armed groups in Juba and encouraged all stakeholders to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement without preconditions. They also welcomed the positive response of the Government of the Sudan and several armed groups to the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

The Council members also acknowledged the request for support from the Government of the Sudan to the Secretary-General in this transitional period. In that regard, they stressed the need to avoid a relapse into conflict in Darfur and to protect the peacebuilding gains.

At the same time, members noted with concern the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the humanitarian situation in the country. The Council members expressed their solidarity with the people of the Sudan and welcomed efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the effects of the outbreak.

The Council members also reaffirmed their intention to decide by 31 May 2020 on the drawdown, exit and follow-up mission.

Press elements were adopted.

United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei

On 28 April, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean Pierre Lacroix, and Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, gave a briefing to the Security Council on the current status of political progress between South Sudan and the Sudan to resolve the Abyei dispute, as well as the progress of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in implementing its mandate. They discussed the findings and proposals contained in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the matter.

The Council members welcomed the positive steps that had been taken by both countries and highlighted the need for a viable political process leading to the full implementation of the bilateral agreements.

The Council called on the parties to take this opportunity of improved bilateral relations and positive political developments in South Sudan and the Sudan to resolve the final status of Abyei.

At the meeting, members assessed the improved relations between South Sudan and the Sudan and addressed such issues as the reduction of troops, the increase in the police contingent and the inclusion of civilian elements in UNISFA.

Noting the fragile security situation, members expressed their condemnation of two major violent incidents between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities that had taken place in January, which had resulted in confirmed deaths. In that regard, it was noted that the paramount aim was to sustain the positive dialogue between the two communities.

With regard to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, it was acknowledged that some progress had been made towards reaching the benchmarks specified by the Council.

Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts on mitigation and prevention were highlighted.

The Council members encouraged the leaderships of both countries to facilitate the implementation of the pending aspects of the agreements on UNISFA.

Representatives from Ethiopia and the Sudan also addressed the Council.

Middle East

Situation in the Middle East (Syrian Arab Republic)

Chemical weapons

On 15 April, the Security Council held a meeting on the implementation of resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#).

The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, gave a briefing to the Council on the monthly report entitled “Progress in the elimination of the Syrian Chemical Weapons Programme”, in accordance with Security Council resolution [2118 \(2013\)](#).

Political and humanitarian affairs

On 29 April, the Security Council held videoconferences on the political and humanitarian situations in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir Pedersen, gave a briefing to the Council on the developments in the political process since his previous briefing on 30 March. Regarding the Constitutional Committee, Mr. Pedersen said

that, after the agreement on an agenda for its next session, it was yet to be determined when the Committee would be able to meet owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. He reiterated his call for the immediate release of abductees and arbitrarily detained persons and for more information on the missing. He also reiterated his ongoing efforts with all the parties involved for a sustainable, long-lasting, nationwide ceasefire in order to allow humanitarian assistance to reach all those in need, particularly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and the difficult economic crisis Syrians are facing. He recalled the Secretary-General's appeal for the waiving of sanctions that could undermine the capacity to ensure access to essential health supplies and COVID-19 medical support. He noted the positive response of different countries to the United Nations on the availability of humanitarian exemptions to sanctions and their full utilization to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The increase of food prices and other goods were a source of great concern. He also raised the fragility of the current calm, highlighting a terrorist attack that had taken place in Afrin that had claimed the lives of more than 40 people.

Also on 29 April, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, gave a briefing to the Council on the humanitarian situation in the country. Humanitarian action in the country was currently focused largely on preparedness arrangements to face a possible outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. So far, there were 42 reported cases in the country, with one in the north-east and none in the north-west. Cross-border humanitarian operations had been scaled-up to meet the needs of the affected population, including those displaced, and to prepare for a possible COVID-19 outbreak. Thanks to the ceasefire agreement achieved on 6 March between the Russian Federation and Turkey, the relative calm in the north-west area was allowing life-saving assistance to reach populations in a humanitarian situation that remained concerning owing to its gravity. Mr. Lowcock also highlighted the challenges in meeting the needs of those living in the north-east, where needs remained high.

Situation in the Middle East (Yemen)

On 16 April, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and Mr. Lowcock gave a briefing to the Council on the situation in Yemen. During the closed videoconference, the Chair of the Redeployment Coordination Committee, Abhijit Guha, also gave a briefing to the Council.

Mr. Griffiths provided an update on the latest political and security developments in Yemen, particularly in the light of the Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak. He also reported to the Council on the progress of the ongoing negotiations with the parties to the conflict around his ceasefire initiative.

Mr. Lowcock discussed the humanitarian situation, focusing on the protection of civilians, humanitarian access and delivery, funding for the relief effort, the Yemeni economy and progress towards peace. He highlighted how COVID-19 affected all those issues.

The members underlined the vital importance of humanitarian and economic measures and access to those in need to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people, which were especially important in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. They called on the parties to engage constructively and without delay with the Special Envoy in order to agree on a ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures as well as the restart of the political process.

The Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations also delivered a statement to the Council.

Press elements were adopted.

Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

On 23 April, the Council held its quarterly open debate on the Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, gave a briefing on the latest developments on the ground.

Mr. Mladenov echoed the Secretary-General's call for a worldwide ceasefire to allow a full response to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the prospect of annexation by Israel of parts of the occupied West Bank was a growing threat and recalled the Secretary-General's position on the matter. He was encouraged that the COVID-19 crisis had also created some opportunities for cooperation and urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders to seize the moment to take steps towards peace and reject unilateral moves that would only deepen the wedge between the two peoples and undermine the chances for peace. Members of the Security Council supported this call. He also recalled the Secretary-General's long-standing position on annexation.

He also took this opportunity to commend once again the Palestinian and Israeli authorities for their continued efforts and sustained coordination to contain the virus and mitigate its economic fallout, but said a strengthened cooperation was needed.

Members of the Security Council commended the United Nations for its efforts to support this coordination and the Palestinian people at this critical time, including given the particular vulnerability of the Gaza Strip, which was already facing a dire humanitarian situation. Most members of the Security Council expressed their concern with regard to a possible annexation of occupied Palestinian territory, reaffirmed their support for a negotiated two-State solution and called for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Europe

Status of proceedings regarding flight MH17

On 8 April, a closed discussion was held under the item "Other matters" on the status of the legal proceedings related to flight MH17 in the light of Council resolution [2166 \(2014\)](#).

The Council discussed the tragic crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in July 2014. The topic was raised by the Russian Federation. Member States discussed the criminal proceedings that had started on 9 March in the Netherlands and their adherence to the provisions of the resolution [2166 \(2014\)](#).

Member States also reiterated the need for a full, impartial and independent international investigation into the incident and stressed the importance of the cooperation of States in order to bring justice to all the victims, in line with resolution [2166 \(2014\)](#).

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

On 24 April, the members of the Security Council held a videoconference on the situation in Kosovo. The Special Representative and head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Zahir Tanin, gave a briefing. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Ivica Dačić, and Glauk Konjufca from Kosovo delivered statements.

The Special Representative described the COVID-19 outbreak as an unprecedented challenge for Kosovo and the region that could only be defeated with regional cooperation. He recognized the effective way in which the pandemic had

been managed through the institutions, organizations and corresponding personnel. It was indicated that UNMIK had worked together with local and international organizations to respond to the pandemic.

As for the political environment, Mr. Tanin pointed out that the polarization between the different factions continued. He highlighted the solidarity among health professionals regardless of ethnicity or political preference.

The Special Representative mentioned the elimination of tariffs for products from Serbia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the application of the principle of reciprocity. He reiterated that the talks for the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, through the facilitation of the European Union, remained essential to achieve sustainable peace. Furthermore, he reminded members of the Secretary-General's call to make the fight against COVID-19 a priority.

Americas

Colombia

On 14 April, a videoconference was held to discuss the situation in Colombia, with the participation of the Foreign Minister of Colombia, Claudia Blum, and the representative of a Colombian non-governmental organization, David Santiago Cano.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Carlos Ruiz Massieu, gave a briefing to the Council on the report of the Secretary-General on the previous 90 days, and said that the pandemic would have an impact on the implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed on 24 November 2016 by Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). The latest developments and challenges outlined in the report were discussed, specifically the concerns over continued violence against former combatants, community and social leaders, and human rights defenders, as well as the importance of the sustainability of the reintegration process in the long term and the need to focus on bringing peace dividends and security to conflict-affected communities.

Council members recalled the Secretary-General's appeal on 23 March for a global ceasefire and noted the active unilateral ceasefire declared by the National Liberation Army for April in response to that appeal. They expressed their hope that its observation, including the cessation of threats and violence by all elements of the group, would facilitate these and other efforts to address the pandemic in conflict-affected areas.

A press statement was agreed upon.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

On 22 April, members of the Security Council held a closed videoconference meeting under the item "Other matters" to discuss the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela regarding concerns raised in the note verbale dated 3 April from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations. The Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Miroslav Jenča, gave a briefing.

On 28 April, members of the Security Council held a closed videoconference meeting to discuss the humanitarian situation in the country in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, with the participation of Reena Ghelani, Director of Operations and Advocacy for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Thematic and other issues

COVID-19

On 9 April, the Council held a closed videoconference to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the issues that fall under its mandate. The Secretary-General gave a briefing to the Council.

The Secretary-General highlighted that the pandemic posed a significant threat to the maintenance of international peace and security, potentially leading to an increase in social unrest and violence that would greatly undermine our ability to fight the disease. He also emphasized his call for an immediate global ceasefire, urging all warring parties to silence the guns in order to help create conditions for the delivery of aid, open up space for diplomacy and bring hope to places among the most vulnerable to the pandemic.

The Secretary-General expressed the need to remain cautious, as any gains were fragile and easily reversible, and reiterated that the engagement of the Security Council would be critical to mitigate the peace and security implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and that a signal of unity and resolve from the Council would count for a lot at this anxious time.

The members of the Security Council expressed their support for all efforts of the Secretary-General concerning the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to conflict-affected countries and recalled the need for unity and solidarity with all those affected.

Press elements were adopted.

On 23 April, a closed videoconference under the item “Other matters” was held to discuss views on a draft resolution on COVID-19 presented by France and Tunisia.

Protection of civilians: protecting civilians from conflict-induced hunger

On 21 April, the Council held an open meeting on the issue of “Protection of civilians from conflict-induced hunger”. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme and the Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council gave briefings to the Council. Council members were informed of the current trends affecting food security in conflict-affected countries. The briefings also included the potential implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and the existing measures for the prevention of its outbreak in conflict-affected and among food insecure populations.

A presidential statement ([S/PRST/2020/6](#)) was adopted on 29 April in connection to this issue, in which the Council recalled the link between armed conflict, violence and conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine.

Maintenance of international peace and security: youth and peace and security

On 27 April, the Council held an open videoconference on youth and peace and security. The Secretary-General, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, and two young peacebuilders, Olla Al-Sakkaf from Yemen and Gatwal Gatkuoth, a South Sudanese refugee living in Uganda, gave briefings.

The Secretary-General presented his first report on youth and peace and security, outlining the findings since the Council’s adoption of its resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#) and [2419 \(2018\)](#).

Ms. Wickramanayake underscored that much more needed to be done to implement resolutions [2250 \(2015\)](#) and [2419 \(2018\)](#) in the United Nations and recommended that the Council consider regular and systematic reporting to ensure sustainability and continuity of this issue. She urged the Council to put young people at the heart of its efforts to bring about global peace and security.

Ms. Al-Sakkaf and Mr. Gatkuoth agreed with Ms. Wickramanayake, and spoke about their work implementing the Council's resolutions on youth and peace and security in South Sudan, Uganda and Yemen. They highlighted the efforts being made by young people in the maintenance of peace and security, in returning public life to normal in the response to COVID-19, and in humanitarian work and peacebuilding. They stated that young people stood ready to support all actors in pursuing and upholding the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

In statements, Council members recognized the constructive role young people can play in the maintenance of peace and security. Non-Council members were invited to participate by submitting written statements.

The Dominican Republic, together with France, announced the joint presentation of a draft resolution on youth and peace and security in the light of the fifth anniversary of the adoption of Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#) and the presentation of the first report of the Secretary-General on this issue, with a view to accelerating its implementation.

Working methods

Given unprecedented present circumstances, it was stated that the main goal of the presidency was to maintain the transparency of the Council by sharing as much information as possible with the wider membership and the general public. To accomplish that goal, the working methods of the Council during the presidency of the Dominican Republic were presented in the annex to a letter from the President ([S/2020/273](#)).

Those working methods made it possible to continue to conduct videoconferences on the items in the Council's programme of work.

Furthermore, the monthly and daily programmes of work were published on the Council's website to inform the members of the Council, as well as the United Nations community as a whole, of the Council's work. In addition, concerned countries, specifically those referred to under rules 37 and 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, were able to participate.

On 21 April, the first briefing via videoconference was broadcast live entirely on United Nations Web TV, including statements from members of the Security Council.

All subsequent open videoconferences were also broadcast on United Nations Web TV.

Members were encouraged to provide written statements during the open videoconferences, which were later shared as a document of the Council.

Finally, and following United Nations practice, the Dominican Republic held briefings with the wider membership of the United Nations, civil society and the United Nations media during its presidency, in which it promoted transparency and engagement with the Security Council.