

<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2540 (2020)	5 (h)
Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2514 (2020)	8 (a) (i), 8 (a) (vi), 8 (a) (vii), 19, 30
	Resolution 2524 (2020)	2 (ii) (b), 2 (iii) (d)
Thematic	Resolution 2550 (2020)	27
Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/8	twenty-first
Measures against the perpetrators of violations and abuses against children		
Country- and region-specific	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020) 13
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2511 (2020) 6
		Resolution 2551 (2020) 21
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2521 (2020) 15 (d), 15 (f), 21
Integration of child protection into peace processes and peace agreements		
Country and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020) 23
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2531 (2020) 54
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/3 seventh, eighth, twelfth, thirteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth

26. Protection of civilians in armed conflict

During the period under review, the Council held no meetings in connection with the item entitled “Protection of civilians in armed conflict”. Council members did, however, hold four open videoconferences in connection with the item.⁷²¹ More information on the videoconferences is given in table 1 below.⁷²²

On 21 April, at the initiative of the Dominican Republic,⁷²³ which held the Presidency for the month, the Council held an open videoconference on the topic of “Protection of civilians from conflict-induced hunger”. At the videoconference,⁷²⁴ the Council heard briefings by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the

Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council. At the outset, the Director-General of FAO welcomed the Council’s engagement on the subject and its continued recognition of the relationship between conflict and hunger. He focused his remarks on how the *2020 Global Report on Food Crises: Joint Analysis for Better Decisions* by the Food Security Information Network clearly showed the link between conflict and rising levels of acute food insecurity, especially in contexts of instability, such as in South Sudan, Yemen and the Sahel. In that connection, he stated that the experience of FAO showed that interventions supporting livelihoods and food security contributed to local peace and broader peace processes, as they addressed not only the symptoms but also the root causes of conflict. He stressed that conflict prevention and acting early to reduce the impact of conflict were highly effective steps that could be taken to avert and reduce acute food insecurity. In that sense, prevention was needed as conflicts, extreme weather, desert locusts, economic shocks and COVID-19 were likely to push additional millions of people into acute food

⁷²¹ For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

⁷²² See [A/75/2](#), part II, chap. 16.

⁷²³ The Council had before it a concept note annexed to a letter dated 14 April 2020 ([S/2020/299](#)).

⁷²⁴ See [S/2020/340](#).

insecurity in 2020. By closely monitoring the evolution of those shocks, FAO could rapidly intervene to mitigate their impact. In that regard, he expressed the commitment of FAO to rising to that challenge and concluded by stating that it would continue supporting the Council by providing professional consultation with up-to-date information and analysis on food security in conflict contexts, which would facilitate the Council's timely action to avert food crises. The Executive Director of WFP said that the world was not only facing a global health pandemic but also a global humanitarian catastrophe. With millions of civilians living in conflict-scarred nations and being pushed to the brink of starvation, the spectre of famine was "a very real and dangerous possibility". While commending the Council for its historic decision to adopt resolution 2417 (2018), he emphasized the need to live up to the pledge to protect the most vulnerable and act immediately to save lives. In that regard, it was critical for the global community to come together to defeat COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable nations and communities from its potentially devastating effects. WFP was the logistical backbone for the humanitarian world, even more so for the global effort to beat the pandemic, and he urged the Council to lead the way, underscoring the importance of a global ceasefire, as called for by the Secretary-General, swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to all vulnerable communities and coordinated action to support life-saving humanitarian assistance. The Secretary-General of the Norwegian Refugee Council focused his remarks on the need for help from the Council concerning field-based obstacles to reach civilians in need of assistance in conflict situations. In that regard, he highlighted five areas requiring particular action from the Council, namely, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all populations in need; stronger humanitarian diplomacy to promote humanitarian access; strengthening the instrument of deconfliction with parties to armed conflicts; standard exemptions for humanitarian aid, including food and agricultural products, in counter-terrorism laws and sanctions regimes; and strengthening of monitoring, reporting and accountability mechanisms.

During the discussion, Council members expressed their appreciation to the Dominican Republic⁷²⁵ for its leadership on the issue of conflict-induced hunger.⁷²⁶ Delegations recalled that resolution 2417 (2018), which had been adopted unanimously, had acknowledged the link between food insecurity and armed conflict, with most Council members

⁷²⁵ The Dominican Republic was represented by its Minister of Foreign Affairs.

⁷²⁶ See S/2020/340.

underscoring that such linkage had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷²⁷ A number of delegations also emphasized the connection between famine and climate change.⁷²⁸ In that context, the French delegation expressed regret that climate change could not be explicitly mentioned in the draft presidential statement that was being negotiated.

Several speakers stressed the need for comprehensive implementation of resolution 2417 (2018).⁷²⁹ In that regard, a number of delegations underscored the importance of early action and, in particular, the role of the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Council with timely information about conflict-related famine and food insecurity in countries with armed conflict.⁷³⁰ The representative of Viet Nam stated in that sense that approximately two thirds of the worst food-security crises were in countries that were experiencing armed conflict and were on the agenda of the Council. In addition, a number of delegations condemned the use of starvation as a method of warfare.⁷³¹ In that regard, the representative of Belgium welcomed the amendment of the Rome Statute to include as a war crime the intentional starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. Many delegations expressed support for the Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire to facilitate humanitarian aid to affected populations during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁷³² The representative of Germany underlined the importance attached in resolution 2417 (2018) to adherence to international humanitarian law and to sustaining humanitarian access and called on all relevant actors to provide safe, rapid and unimpeded access to all people in need.

On 29 April, the Council issued a presidential statement recalling the link between armed conflict, violence and conflict-induced food insecurity and the threat of famine. In the statement, the Council called on all parties to armed conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding respecting and protecting civilians and

⁷²⁷ Dominican Republic, Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, South Africa, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

⁷²⁸ Dominican Republic, Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Tunisia.

⁷²⁹ Dominican Republic, Belgium, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Tunisia and Viet Nam.

⁷³⁰ Dominican Republic, Belgium, France, Germany, South Africa, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

⁷³¹ Belgium, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Tunisia, United States and Viet Nam.

⁷³² Belgium, China, Estonia, France, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

humanitarian personnel and underlined the importance of safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflicts.⁷³³ The Council noted with deep concern that over the past two years, armed conflicts continued to be one of the major factors causing or aggravating food insecurity and undernutrition in different areas all over the globe, with an increased number of people requiring urgent food aid, nutrition and livelihood assistance.⁷³⁴ The Council strongly condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the unlawful denial of access to humanitarian assistance and humanitarian personnel to the civilian population in armed conflict and called upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to take all feasible steps to protect civilians and civilian objects.⁷³⁵ In addition, the Council encouraged Member States to support relevant early warning systems to provide governments and humanitarian actors with timely, reliable, accurate and verifiable information regarding food security and allowing for anticipation and early action to prevent and mitigate the effects of a food crisis in the context of armed conflicts.⁷³⁶ Lastly, the Council encouraged the Secretary-General to include in his reporting on country-specific situations, analysis concerning the risk of occurrence of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity in armed conflict and expressed its intention to continue to give such information its due attention, including relevant recommendations to avert such risks.⁷³⁷

On 27 May, at the initiative of Estonia, which held the Presidency for the month,⁷³⁸ Council members held a high-level open videoconference⁷³⁹ to consider the annual report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in the context of new challenges and developments, among them the COVID-19 pandemic. At the outset of the videoconference, the Secretary-General stated that those already weakened by years of armed conflict were particularly vulnerable to the COVID-19 pandemic. With access to services and safety curtailed, and as some leaders exploited the pandemic to adopt repressive measures, it had become even more difficult to protect the most vulnerable. This was particularly true in conflict zones, where civilians were already exposed to

significant risks, posing a major threat to refugees and internally displaced people. The Secretary-General added that his call for a global ceasefire would create conditions for a stronger response to the pandemic and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable people. He expressed regret, however, that the expressions of support had not been translated into concrete action and he cautioned that the pandemic might create incentives for warring parties to press their advantage, or to strike hard while international attention was focused elsewhere. United Nations peacekeeping operations were one of the most effective means of protecting civilians in conflict zones and United Nations peacekeepers were supporting national authorities in their response to the pandemic by protecting health-care and humanitarian workers and facilitating access to aid and protection. Affirming that it was only through respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and refugee law that it was possible to protect civilians, the Secretary-General averred, however, that prospects were bleak and his latest report had showed little progress on the protection of civilians and on compliance with international law in 2019. After highlighting the main issues faced by civilians in armed conflict, including the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in populated areas, the appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence to which women and girls were subjected and the violence against humanitarian and health-care workers, he urged all to move beyond rhetoric and close the accountability gap through national legislation and coordinated international action. Lastly, the Secretary-General outlined four actions that required global attention, namely, an urgent review of States' approach to urban warfare; the use of armed drones to conduct attacks; the implications posed by the development of lethal autonomous weapons systems; and the malicious use of digital technology to conduct cyberattacks on critical civilian infrastructure, as reports from several countries indicated a rise in cyberattacks on health-care facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the videoconference, Council members also heard briefings by the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and by the Nobel Laureate and former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The President of the ICRC underscored that the Secretary-General's report had highlighted the enormous violations and the failures to protect men, women and children around the globe. He expressed concern in relation to the rising number of displaced people and for the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and people with a disability and about the rapid spread of hate speech, the shrinking space for neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian work and the persistent

⁷³³ S/PRST/2020/6, fourth paragraph.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., fifth paragraph.

⁷³⁵ Ibid., tenth paragraph.

⁷³⁶ Ibid., fifteenth paragraph.

⁷³⁷ Ibid., sixteenth paragraph.

⁷³⁸ The Council had before it a concept note annexed to a letter dated 14 May 2020 (S/2020/402).

⁷³⁹ See S/2020/465.

disregard for international humanitarian law and other international legal frameworks. More specifically, he underscored the devastating impact on civilians when explosive weapons were used in populated areas, which raised serious questions about compliance with international humanitarian law, and signalled the urgent need for a change in behaviour to protect civilians. In that context, he asserted that the divisions within the Council on critical concepts of humanitarian law and work were increasing suffering on the front lines. While the ICRC took responsibility for delivering neutral and impartial humanitarian services independently and within the legal framework of the Geneva Conventions, it was the Council's responsibility to facilitate access to populations in need. He urged Council members to base their protection policies on international humanitarian laws, principles and concepts, which was the only reasonable basis for consensus, and to leave political controversies outside of humanitarian concerns. He added that the COVID-19 crisis was fast threatening to become a protection crisis and he feared that some groups might be excluded from life-saving measures. He also recognized that States had stepped up in response to the pandemic, by implementing more humane policies, including the safe release from detention of many people deprived of liberty, decisions to regularize non-documented migrants to ensure they could access health care and the adoption of unilateral ceasefires. At the outset, the former President of Liberia recalled the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) as milestones that could pave the way for increased women's leadership and strengthening efforts to protect traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups trapped by conflict. She expressed regret that, owing to the protracted nature of some conflicts, the lives of many people had often been defined, shortened and narrowed by conflicts they had no part in creating. In that connection, she called for bold action to end that cycle of immeasurable loss and human tragedy, echoing the Secretary-General's report that the most effective way to protect civilians was "to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of armed conflict."

During the discussion following the briefings, Council members⁷⁴⁰ acknowledged the bleak situation

⁷⁴⁰ Estonia was represented by its President. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was represented by its Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Integration; Indonesia and Tunisia were represented by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs; and the United Kingdom was represented by the Special Representative of the Prime Minister on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and Minister of State for the Commonwealth, the United Nations and South Asia.

regarding the protection of civilians in conflict zones around the world, as described in the report of the Secretary-General, despite the existing legal framework and efforts by the Council throughout the years.⁷⁴¹ Members also recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the vulnerability of the civilian populations in conflict zones and reiterated their support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire to allow an adequate response to the pandemic. In that regard, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia stated that the Council had a moral obligation to support that call and looked forward to the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution presented by France and Tunisia in that regard. In their statements, Council members focused on the need for compliance with international humanitarian law and for accountability for violations against civilians as the most pressing challenges to strengthening the protection of civilians in conflict zones. In that regard, the President of Estonia noted that the Council had a number of tools at its disposal to enhance compliance with international law and ensure accountability, including investigative and judicial mechanisms, mandates of peacekeeping missions and targeted sanctions. She added that those tools needed to be applied consistently across all conflict situations.

Representatives of non-Council Member States also expressed support for the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire, agreeing that the COVID-19 pandemic had further aggravated the suffering of already vulnerable populations in areas of armed conflict. Various non-Council members also acknowledged the existing implementation gap between the normative framework and compliance and accountability with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.⁷⁴² In that connection, most delegations condemned the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, the persistent conflict-related sexual violence endured in particular by women and girls and attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities. Numerous delegations underlined, in that context, the importance of ensuring that United Nations peacekeepers had the capabilities and resources to fulfil their mandates for the protection of civilians.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴¹ See S/2020/465.

⁷⁴² Angola, Argentina, Bangladesh, Ecuador, Republic of Korea, Romania and United Arab Emirates.

⁷⁴³ Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Morocco, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the protection of civilians in armed conflict), Thailand and Uruguay.

Several delegations further emphasized the need to increase the participation of women in peacekeeping.⁷⁴⁴

On 17 September, the Council held an open videoconference⁷⁴⁵ on the issue of conflict-induced hunger, in which it heard a briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, in response to its request, contained in paragraph 12 of resolution 2417 (2018), to be swiftly informed of “the risk of conflict-induced famine and widespread food insecurity”. Stressing the importance of resolution 2417 (2018) and the clear links between armed conflict, food insecurity and the threat of famine, the Under-Secretary-General focused his briefing on the situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, north-east Nigeria and the Sahel as some of the main areas of concern, where millions were experiencing growing situations of food-insecurity and famine. In that regard, he stated that international humanitarian law was an important line of defence against food insecurity in conflict, urging parties to allow and facilitate humanitarian access and protect aid workers and assets. He outlined four concrete measures that the Council and Member States could take, namely, pressing for peaceful and negotiated political solutions to bring armed conflicts to an end; ensuring that the parties to conflict respect international humanitarian law; mitigating the economic impact of armed conflict and related violence; and scaling up support for humanitarian operations and taking bigger and more ambitious steps to support the economies of countries facing severe, large-scale hunger. The Council was also briefed by the Director-General of FAO and by the Executive Director of WFP. The Director-General of FAO focused his remarks on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic was having on the aggravation of conflict-induced food insecurity and the risk of famine in several conflict areas in the world, including Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Nigeria, Somalia and the Sudan. In that regard, he expressed his firm belief that the Council could play a pivotal role in addressing the threat of conflict-induced acute food insecurity at crisis or worse levels by advancing dialogue between parties to find political solutions and innovative approaches to end conflict and violence, thus allowing FAO to scale up urgent life- and livelihood-saving operations and to deliver better integrated humanitarian and development responses that addressed the multiple drivers of acute food insecurity. Recalling that resolution 2417 (2018) called

for effective early-warning systems, the Executive Director of WFP warned that the global hunger crisis caused by conflict, and compounded by COVID-19, was moving into a new and dangerous phase, especially in nations already scarred by violence. He also highlighted situations in several conflict zones of the world, including Yemen and South Sudan, and stated that the world needed political leadership to build peace and avert that hunger crisis.

During the subsequent discussion, Council members continued to underscore the link between food insecurity and conflict in many situations on the agenda of the Council, sharing strong concerns in particular about the rising risk of famine and acute food insecurity in Yemen, north-eastern Nigeria, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The representative of the Russian Federation argued, however, that armed conflicts were not the only reason for the increase in the number of food-insecure people in the world and suggested that instead of focusing in the Council on the exclusive link between conflict and hunger, other factors of food insecurity had to be considered. Those included economic stagnation and investment deficits, environmental degradation and, most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. In that sense, he argued, unilateral economic measures, which undermined countries’ rights and capacities for development, also had a place in the list. That view that was echoed by the delegation of South African. The representative of the Russian Federation further added that food-security issues should be taken up in the Council only in the context of examining the situations of specific countries that posed a threat to international peace and security.

Council members continued to emphasize the need for international humanitarian law to be respected by all parties to conflict, with several delegations stressing that hunger should never serve as a weapon of war.⁷⁴⁶ Several speakers called once again for a global ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to all those in need.⁷⁴⁷

In 2020, the Council continued the practice of hearing briefings by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs concerning the protection of civilians in armed conflict under country- and

⁷⁴⁴ Canada, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India, Ireland, Philippines, Rwanda, Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the protection of civilians in armed conflict) and Uruguay.

⁷⁴⁵ See [S/2020/930](#).

⁷⁴⁶ France, Indonesia, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States.

⁷⁴⁷ China, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Indonesia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

region-specific items.⁷⁴⁸ The Council also included protection-related provisions in most of its decisions in relation to both country- and region-specific situations and thematic items in 2020. The Council focused on multiple aspects and used a variety of language formulations to address the protection of civilians in its decisions; selected provisions of those decisions are listed in table 2. In particular, the Council: (a) condemned all forms of attacks against civilians and civilian objects, especially against women and children, including attacks against schools, hospitals and medical facilities; (b) demanded that all parties to armed conflict ensure unhindered access for delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need and ensure the safety of humanitarian and medical personnel; (c) called upon all relevant parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law

and called for accountability measures against perpetrators of crimes committed in contravention of those laws; (d) emphasized the primary responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to protect civilians; (e) requested additional monitoring mechanisms and reporting arrangements to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict; and (f) adopted or expressed its intention to adopt targeted sanctions measures against perpetrators. In addition, the Council practice of strengthening the mandates of United Nations peace operations with a view to protecting civilians continued to evolve. During the reporting period, the Council continued to request several missions to take the protection of civilians under threat of physical violence as specific priorities and benchmarks of their mandates, with particular attention on but not limited to women, children and internally displaced persons, including by creating a secure environment for the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, in particular in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as strengthening local community engagement and empowerment, early warning and information-sharing mechanisms.

⁷⁴⁸ In 2020, the Council heard briefings by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 26 times at either public meetings or open videoconferences and 21 times in either closed meetings or informal consultations, for a total of 47 briefings. For more information on briefings on those items prior to 2020, see *Repertoire, Supplement 2019*, part I, sect. 29.

Table 1
Videoconferences: protection of civilians in armed conflict

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
21 April 2020	S/2020/340	Letter dated 23 April 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
29 April 2020	No record ^a		S/PRST/2020/6
27 May 2020	S/2020/465	Letter dated 29 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	
17 September 2020	S/2020/930	Letter dated 21 September 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

^a See [A/75/2](#), part I, chap. IV.B. The Council adopted the presidential statement following its debate on 21 April (see [S/2020/340](#)).

Table 2

Selection of provisions relevant to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, by theme and agenda item

	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Condemnation of and demands for the cessation of attacks and acts of violence against civilians and civilian objects and abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	3, 23
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	9, 12
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2520 (2020)	35
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2514 (2020) Resolution 2550 (2020)	27, 28 25
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/8	fifth, seventh
Calls for humanitarian access and safety of humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	49, 50
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	35
	The situation Mali	Resolution 2531 (2020)	52
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2504 (2020)	1, 4
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2521 (2020) Resolution 2550 (2020)	2 8, 22
	Peace consolidation in West Africa	S/PRST/2020/7	eighth
Thematic	Maintenance of international peace and security	Resolution 2532 (2020)	2, 6
Calls for compliance with and accountability under applicable international humanitarian law and human rights law and relevant Security Council resolutions by all parties			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	20
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	6
	The situation Mali	Resolution 2531 (2020)	51
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2504 (2020)	2
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2514 (2020)	35, 38
Thematic	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/6	tenth
Affirmation of primary responsibility of States and parties to the conflict to protect civilians			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2531 (2020)	53

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	<i>Agenda item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/8	third
	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/6	seventh
Requests for specific monitoring and analysis of and reporting on protection of civilians			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	32 (d) (i), 54
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	29 (ii) (e)
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2504 (2020)	6, 7, 8
		Resolution 2533 (2020)	3
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2550 (2020)	26, 33
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/8	twelfth
Imposition of targeted measures against perpetrators of violations against civilians in armed conflict			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	5, 20
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	5, 13
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2511 (2020)	2
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2521 (2020)	15 (c), (d), (g) and (h), 24
Inclusion of mission-specific protection mandates and benchmarks^a			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2552 (2020)	31 (a) (i)–(ii), 32 (d) (iii), 32 (e) (vii) 40
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2556 (2020)	29 (i) (c), (d) and (f), 29 (ii) (g)
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2531 (2020)	28 (b) (iii), 28 (c) (i), 28 (e) (i)–(ii)
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2539 (2020)	21
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2514 (2020)	8 (a) (i), (iv), (vii) and (viii), 8 (b) (i), 8 (d) (i) and (iv), 10 (iii), 14
		Resolution 2521 (2020)	22
		Resolution 2524 (2020)	2 (iii) (d)
		Resolution 2525 (2020)	4, 8
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	S/PRST/2020/8	sixteenth

^a For additional information on mandates and decisions relevant to peacekeeping and political missions, see part X.

27. Small arms

During the period under review, the Council held one meeting in connection with the item entitled “Small arms” which took the form of a briefing.⁷⁴⁹ The last time that the Council had considered the item had been on 18 December 2017.⁷⁵⁰ More information on the meeting, including on participants, speakers and outcomes, is given in the table below.⁷⁵¹

At a meeting on 5 February⁷⁵² pursuant to the biennial report of the Secretary-General,⁷⁵³ the Council heard a briefing by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and the Deputy Director of Operations of Conflict Armament Research.⁷⁵⁴ In her briefing, the High Representative addressed “two themes of high relevance to the work of the Security Council”: the role of illicit small arms, light weapons and their ammunition in conflict and pervasive crime; and the deeply crosscutting and wide-ranging impact of illicit small arms and light weapons flows. Those two fundamental themes had been consistently raised in the biennial reports of the Secretary-General, as well as in the context of the two thematic resolutions adopted by the Council on small arms and light weapons, namely, resolutions 2117 (2013) and 2220 (2015). With an estimated one billion small arms in circulation worldwide, the use of those weapons in lethal violence, whether in conflict or non-conflict settings, was prevalent across regions and subregions from the Americas to Africa to southern Europe, and no State was immune from the challenges posed by illicit arms flows. In addition, the High Representative provided an overview of significant trends and developments over the previous two years and expressed her concerns regarding the continued rise in global military expenditure and the role that small arms and light weapons continued to play in hindering peace, security and sustainable development. She further emphasized that the gender dimension had not been sufficiently integrated into policies regulating small arms and light weapons, while stressing the need to mainstream the consideration of small arms and light weapons across the work of the Council.

The Deputy Director of Operations of Conflict Armament Research recounted that since the early 1990s the international community had sought to control the conventional arms trade so as to minimize weapons diversion and explained that the lack of detailed reporting had consistently hampered those efforts. He highlighted the work of his organization in that regard. He also described the work of his organization in support of United Nations sanctions monitoring groups and panels of experts, as well as in embargo and sanctions enforcement, and expressed the hope that his briefing had demonstrated the importance of an evidence-based approach to tackle the illicit proliferation of weapons.

Following the briefings, Council members welcomed the report of the Secretary-General and its recommendations. However, the representative of the Russian Federation questioned references to the Arms Trade Treaty, citing that the instrument was far from universal and did not fully allow for the implementation of its own provisions. In addition, the representative of the United States raised concerns with regard to civilian ownership of firearms as reflected in the report. The representatives of the Dominican Republic and Estonia called for the promotion of gender equality and the meaningful participation of women in combating the illicit arms trade.

Many Council members emphasized that the proliferation of and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons posed a serious threat to international peace and security. In that regard, they pointed out that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons had contributed to terrorism and transnational organized crime and called for a comprehensive approach in addressing the fight against illicit trafficking. Many speakers drew attention to the implementation of several crucial international mechanisms intended to combat the illicit trade, such as the Arms Trade Treaty, the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons, the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and, in 2020, the Group of Governmental Experts on problems arising from the

⁷⁴⁹ For more information on the format of meetings, see part II, sect. II.

⁷⁵⁰ See [S/PV.8140](#). For more information, see *Repertoire, Supplement 2016–2017*, part I, sect. 31.

⁷⁵¹ See also [A/75/2](#), part II, chap. 17.

⁷⁵² See [S/PV.8713](#).

⁷⁵³ [S/2019/1011](#). For more information on the biennial report of the Secretary-General, which was requested by the Council in its presidential statement contained in document [S/PRST/2007/24](#), see *Repertoire, Supplement 2004–2007*, chap. VIII, sect. 40.

⁷⁵⁴ See [S/PV.8713](#).

accumulation of conventional ammunition stockpiles in surplus.

Most Council members commended the efforts of regional organizations, such as the African Union's Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative, in dealing with the challenges of illicit small arms and light weapons and called for strengthening the partnership between

the United Nations and regional organizations. In that connection, the representative of Indonesia emphasized the important role of other regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in the implementation of the programme of action to address arms smuggling and related issues.

Meeting: small arms

<i>Meeting record and date</i>	<i>Sub-item</i>	<i>Other documents</i>	<i>Rule 37 invitations</i>	<i>Rule 39 and other invitations</i>	<i>Speakers</i>	<i>Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)</i>
S/PV.8713 5 February 2020	Report of the Secretary-General on small arms and light weapons (S/2019/1011)			High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Deputy Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research	All Council members, all invitees	

28. Women and peace and security

In 2020, the Council held no public meeting in relation to the item entitled “Women and peace and security”. However, Council members held two open videoconferences in connection with the item.⁷⁵⁵ More information on the videoconferences is given in table 1 below.

On 17 July, at the initiative of Germany, which held the Presidency for the month,⁷⁵⁶ the Council held a high-level open videoconference on the theme “Conflict-related sexual violence: turning commitments into compliance”.⁷⁵⁷ At the videoconference,⁷⁵⁸ the Council heard briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Envoy of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees, the Founder and Chair of Progressive Voice, on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and the Executive President of the Association des femmes juristes de Centrafrique. In her briefing to the Council, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General noted that the report of the Secretary-General featured, for the first time, an assessment of compliance gaps, which found prevailing disregard for international norms and obligations by parties to armed conflict as well as a lack of meaningful commitment to curbing violations by the majority of persistent perpetrators. In that connection, she expressed the urgent need for greater coherence between the practice of listing and the practice of imposing targeted and graduated measures to leverage behavioural change. She stated that 2020 had begun with the anticipation of a “jubilee year” for the women and peace and security agenda, but had become a fight to prevent the rollback of women’s rights, which was evident in reprisals against women’s human rights defenders, physical and financial risks to women’s civil society organizations and shrinking civic space. The Special Representative mentioned that the COVID-19 pandemic had dramatically affected the work of the United Nations, including her mandate, but that the virus had not changed the needs of survivors or the right to physical integrity and bodily autonomy. In that regard,

⁷⁵⁵ For more information on the procedures and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II.

⁷⁵⁶ The Council had before it a concept note annexed to a letter dated 8 July 2020 ([S/2020/665](#)). See also [S/2020/487](#).

⁷⁵⁷ Belgium was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, Germany was represented by its Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, South Africa was represented by its Minister for International Relations and Cooperation and the Niger was represented by its Minister for the Advancement of Women and Child Protection.

⁷⁵⁸ See [S/2020/727](#).