

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021)	30 (a) (iii), (c) (iii) and (d) (ii), 47
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2592 (2021)	6 (i)
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021)	3 (a) (i) and (v), 18 (j)
		Resolution 2579 (2021)	3 (ii) (b) and (iii) (d)
		Resolution 2609 (2021)	30 (m)
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	22
Measures against the perpetrators of violations and abuses against children			
Country- and region-specific	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021)	13
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2564 (2021)	8
Calls for the protection, respect and promotion of the right to education in armed conflict			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2605 (2021)	34 (a) (v), 46, 54
	Peace consolidation in West Africa	S/PRST/2021/3	ninth, twelfth
		S/PRST/2021/16	fourth, twelfth
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	3–10, 13–14, 16, 18, 21, 24, 27

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

25. Protection of civilians in armed conflict

During the period under review, the Council held one meeting and adopted one resolution in connection with the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The meeting took the form of a briefing.⁸⁹⁷ Council members also held two open videoconferences on the item.⁸⁹⁸ More information on the meeting, including on the participants and speakers, and on the videoconferences is given respectively in tables 1 and 2 below.

On 27 April, at the initiative of Viet Nam, which held the presidency for the month,⁸⁹⁹ the members of the Council held a high-level open videoconference focused on the topic of the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian

population.⁹⁰⁰ At the videoconference, the Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Peace Institute.

In their statements, the briefers reported that infrastructure and services that were essential to the survival of civilians, such as medical facilities, water infrastructure and energy systems, continued to be targeted by parties to armed conflict, including non-State armed groups, with effects that were compounded by climate change and environmental degradation and by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator expressed deep concern about the ability to protect decades of hard-won progress that had been achieved on compliance with international humanitarian law to

⁸⁹⁷ For more information on the format of meetings, including high-level meetings and videoconferences, see part II, sect. II.

⁸⁹⁸ For more information on the procedure and working methods developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, see part II, sect. I, and *Repertoire, Supplement 2020*, part II, sect. I.

⁸⁹⁹ A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 6 April ([S/2021/335](#)).

⁹⁰⁰ See [S/2021/415](#).

protect civilians and the objects they relied on to survive, owing to the disrespect or undermining of international humanitarian law by both States and non-State armed groups. He expressed concern over, *inter alia*, the direct impact of conflict on food security, including the destruction of stocks and agricultural assets, and warned of the looming risk of famine in north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, Yemen and elsewhere unless urgent action was taken. He also referred to the impact that conflict had had on sanitation and health, resulting in damage to water infrastructure, and the impact of attacks against medical care in Libya, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. Condemning the use of rape and sexual violence in pursuit of military goals and the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, as well as cyberattacks and the threat they posed to essential infrastructure, the Under-Secretary-General listed three ways to strengthen the protection of civilians and objects indispensable to their survival: enhanced compliance with international humanitarian law, ensuring accountability for serious violations of international humanitarian law and preventing the use of explosive weapons.

In his statement, the President of ICRC warned that, without urgent action to protect essential services in conflict zones, there would be a humanitarian disaster on a vast scale. The President said that the Committee was working to prevent critical infrastructure that was “too big to fail” from collapsing, which would plunge millions into crisis. In that connection, he called on the Council to take action on five specific areas, namely, ensuring that all parties made efforts to better respect international humanitarian law, adopting an “avoidance policy” regarding the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas, ensuring that sanctions and counter-terrorism measures complied with international humanitarian law, adopting measures to ensure that health care and interconnected services, such as water, sanitation and electricity, were protected to safeguard against public health risks, and adopting measures to minimize the impact of military operations on the environment and dependent civilians.

In a similar vein, the Chair of the Board of Directors of the International Peace Institute deplored the fact that both deliberate and inadvertent attacks against vital human infrastructure and the natural environment remained a daily reality and underscored that it was important for the Council to remain seized of the matter. He focused on the long-term impact of armed conflict on development and peace and provided recommendations for the United Nations on such issues as prevention and the protection of critical

infrastructure, including through the Secretary-General’s good offices, as well as peacekeeping operations and country teams. He also noted that the Secretariat, at the request of the Council, could consider systematically monitoring attacks against all types of essential infrastructure and that the United Nations should continue to work with international, regional and national partners to coordinate a holistic approach to rehabilitation and reconstruction. He cautioned, however, that the United Nations could not successfully promote the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population or support reconstruction without the political will and efforts of its Member States. In that connection, he called on Council members to take the lead in respecting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law, including by upholding their obligation to protect objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population.

During the discussion that ensued, delegations welcomed the initiative of Viet Nam to convene the open debate and prepare a resolution on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam opened the discussion noting that, while the protection of civilians had been at the forefront of the work of the Council, more often than not, the Council’s discussions had been focused on protecting the people, with little attention paid to securing the means for their survival. He affirmed that the open debate was therefore a good opportunity for the Council to deliberate on the issue at a thematic level and that it was critical that the Council develop a comprehensive strategy to effectively protect infrastructure and objects that were critical for the survival of civilians in armed conflict, based on compliance with international humanitarian law and cooperation. In that regard, he stated that the Council should encourage and facilitate closer coordination among Member States, international organizations and humanitarian and development partners in post-conflict peacebuilding, especially in efforts to rebuild basic infrastructure and restore essential services to civilians. Delegations framed their remarks around the need for compliance with international humanitarian law and the need to hold perpetrators accountable as the increasingly complex dynamics of contemporary conflicts and threats continued to evolve. In that connection, several delegations⁹⁰¹ noted that the main challenge was not

⁹⁰¹ Estonia, Ireland, India, Mexico, Armenia, Brazil, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict) and Turkey.

the lack of existing international norms for protecting civilians in armed conflict, but the lack of implementation of and respect for such norms. More specifically, Member States⁹⁰² recalled a number of previously adopted Council resolutions on the protection of essential objects for the civilian population, including resolution [2417 \(2018\)](#), in which the Council recognized the link between hunger and conflict and condemned the use of the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare. In that context, some delegations⁹⁰³ welcomed the recent amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court concerning the war crime of starvation, including in non-international armed conflict, and encouraged States parties to ratify it. Expressing great concern regarding the widespread and deliberate attacks on medical facilities, humanitarian workers and schools in various conflict areas around the world, a number of delegations⁹⁰⁴ also condemned the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, with some⁹⁰⁵ expressing support for the Irish-led initiative to adopt a political declaration to strengthen the protection of civilians from the impact of explosive weapons in urban areas. In that light, Member States also expressed their grave concern about the widespread and deliberate destruction or damage caused to schools and education infrastructure, with a number of delegations⁹⁰⁶ endorsing initiatives such as the Safe Schools Declaration of 2015 and calling on other Members to do the same.

Furthermore, several Member States⁹⁰⁷ drew attention to the increasing number of cyberattacks directed at essential infrastructure, with particular impact on health-care, electrical and water systems and causing significant damage, given the unprecedented challenges and vulnerabilities that had emerged since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In that regard,

the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia stated that, with the increasing urbanization of armed conflicts, climate change and the environmental consequences of armed conflict, new technologies could help to find ways to improve humanitarian assistance, and cybersecurity needed to be part of both conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Some Member States⁹⁰⁸ underscored the importance of making effective use of monitoring and reporting mechanisms to inform decision-making processes so as to allow for early and quick responses to any threats. While some Member States⁹⁰⁹ called on the Council to continue designating perpetrators for targeted sanctions, others⁹¹⁰ pointed to the harmful effects of unilateral sanctions and ill-designed counter-terrorism measures. In addition, a number of Member States⁹¹¹ stressed that the effective protection of civilians by peacekeeping missions required well-defined, realistic and achievable mandates and adequate resources.

At the end of the videoconference, the President of the Council announced the unanimous adoption of resolution [2573 \(2021\)](#).⁹¹² By the resolution, the Council strongly condemned attacks in situations of armed conflicts directed against civilians or civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, resulting in the deprivation of the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival, and demanded that all parties to armed conflict immediately put an end to such practices.⁹¹³ The Council also demanded that all parties fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by distinguishing between civilians and combatants and military objects, taking due care to spare the civilian population and civilian objects, refraining from attacking, destroying, removing or rendering useless objects indispensable to their survival and respecting and protecting humanitarian personnel and consignments used for humanitarian relief operations.⁹¹⁴ The Council also strongly condemned the use of starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in a number of armed conflict situations, which was prohibited by international law

⁹⁰² Ireland, Norway, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, Guatemala, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Sweden (on behalf of the Nordic countries) and Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict).

⁹⁰³ Norway, Austria, European Union, Liechtenstein, Sweden (on behalf of the Nordic countries) and Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict).

⁹⁰⁴ Ireland, Norway, Armenia, Austria, Costa Rica, Ecuador, European Union, Italy and Malta.

⁹⁰⁵ Ireland, Norway, Austria, Costa Rica, Italy and Malta.

⁹⁰⁶ Norway, Mexico, European Union, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal and Spain.

⁹⁰⁷ Estonia, Ireland, Norway, China, India, Belgium, Ecuador, El Salvador, Liechtenstein, Malta and Sweden (on behalf of the Nordic countries).

⁹⁰⁸ France, United Kingdom, Belgium, Costa Rica, El Salvador, European Union, Portugal, South Africa and Spain.

⁹⁰⁹ France, Kenya, United Kingdom, Afghanistan, Belgium and South Africa.

⁹¹⁰ Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Islamic Republic of Iran.

⁹¹¹ India, Kenya, Belgium, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Portugal and South Africa.

⁹¹² See [S/2021/407](#) and [S/2021/410](#).

⁹¹³ Resolution [2573 \(2021\)](#), para. 1.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, paras. 2 and 3.

and might constitute a war crime.⁹¹⁵ The Council urged all parties to armed conflict to protect civilian infrastructure and reiterated its demand that they engage immediately in a durable humanitarian pause to facilitate the safe, unhindered and sustained delivery of humanitarian assistance, including the equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of COVID-19 vaccination in areas of armed conflict.⁹¹⁶ It also encouraged all efforts to protect objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure that was critical to enabling the delivery of essential services in armed conflict, including by protecting civilians operating, maintaining or repairing those objects and allowing and facilitating the safe passage of equipment, transport and supplies necessary for the repair, maintenance or operation of such objects.⁹¹⁷ Finally, the Council requested the Secretary-General to include a sub-item on the protection of objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population in his reports on the protection of civilians.⁹¹⁸

On 25 May, at the initiative of China, which held the presidency for the month,⁹¹⁹ the members of the Council held its annual debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in an open videoconference.⁹²⁰ At the videoconference, members of the Council heard briefings by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, the President of ICRC and the Director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. The briefers focused their remarks on how vulnerable populations around the world continued to bear the brunt of armed conflicts owing to the lack of implementation of Council resolutions and international humanitarian law, a situation which had been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator gave a briefing on the most recent annual report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.⁹²¹ He pointed out that, despite the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in 2020 so that the world could focus on ending the pandemic, deadly conflicts had continued in many places and new ones had emerged in others, frustrating the efforts to

control the spread of the virus and to care for the infected.⁹²² Referring to the plight of civilians in the various conflict situations around the world, the Under-Secretary-General focused his remarks on the five areas highlighted in the report, namely: the interplay between conflict and hunger and how the threat of famine had re-emerged in several areas in the previous year; the effects of using explosive weapons in populated areas and the devastating toll they inflicted on essential civilian infrastructure; the impact of conflicts on the environment, in particular in relation to water; the protection of medical care and the calls by the Secretary-General on States and armed forces to expand on the recommendations made in resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#); and ensuring that the behaviour of belligerents complied with international humanitarian law. The Under-Secretary-General also emphasized the crucial importance of accountability. He added that, as the laws and tools to protect civilians from harm in armed conflicts were already in place, it was time that all States and parties to conflict applied them.

The President of ICRC stated that global fragility was deepening owing to the converging challenges of armed conflict, the pandemic, economic downturn, rising inequality and climate change. He added that, as a result of the fragmentation and proliferation of actors, the privatization of warfare, the widespread availability of weapons and urban violence, violence within and between States and non-State armed groups was becoming even more complex. Highlighting the Committee's recent report on the systemic impacts of COVID-19 on communities shouldering the double burden of war and disease, the President stated that he would focus his briefing on the serious and compounding protection challenges that were emerging. In that regard, he said that the pandemic had intensified existing protection needs and created new concerns. He pointed out that, while the need for robust health-care systems had perhaps never been greater, health care was paradoxically under attack. Five years since the Council had adopted resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) and called for an end to impunity for attacks on health care, ICRC had observed that, in 40 countries affected by conflict, attacks on health care had gone unabated and health-care delivery continued to be impeded owing to a disregard for international humanitarian law. He affirmed that not enough was being done to protect health-care workers and medical facilities to translate resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#) into action and that a fundamental change of behaviour of belligerents in conflicts was needed, as well as better protection for civilians and more substantive and broader support for

⁹¹⁵ Ibid., para. 4.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid., paras. 6 and 7.

⁹¹⁷ Ibid., para. 9.

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., para. 12.

⁹¹⁹ A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 14 May ([S/2021/468](#)).

⁹²⁰ See [S/2021/505](#).

⁹²¹ [S/2021/423](#).

⁹²² See [S/2021/505](#).

humanitarian action. The President called on parties to conflict to respect international law and protect civilians and allow for rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access to populations in need. He asked States to prioritize the full implementation of resolution 2286 (2016) by taking concrete steps to protect health care. He also called on Council members to act more decisively to improve their own action and leverage their special relationship with allies, partners and proxies to respect international humanitarian law. Finally, he called on States to invest in local responses and prioritize community engagement and trust-building before, during and after crises and to strengthen health, water and sanitation services and protect them at all times in accordance with the rules of international humanitarian law.

Addressing the Council from a civil society perspective, the Director of the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit noted that the role of the media and women-led organizations had become more salient in Afghan civil society over the past two decades. She described the continued attacks on civilians and the humanitarian plight in Afghanistan and called on the Council to bring that to the direct attention of all parties to the conflict and ask for practical mechanisms to be put in place to stop the targeting of civilians during fighting. She also called on the Council to support an internationally mandated independent investigation of atrocities against civilians in Afghanistan. She added that international support for the national security forces needed to include key war-related conventions and humanitarian principles in order to maximize the protection of civilians during the military operations and to set up a mechanism that could hold violators accountable. She further stated that, while the only solution to ending the current cycle of violence and armed conflict was through peace talks, the current peace process was “in dire need of urgent boosting”. In that connection, she added that Council members had huge leverage to put stronger pressure on the Taliban and the rest of the political elites in Afghanistan to come to an agreement on a political settlement, with an immediate ceasefire as a first step.

In the ensuing discussion, Member States stressed the need for all parties to conflict to implement relevant Council resolutions and comply with international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian objects and to hold perpetrators accountable for grave violations, including for attacks on health

care. In that connection, a number of delegations⁹²³ expressed regret that, five years after the adoption of resolution 2286 (2016), attacks on medical facilities and personnel continued unabated. Participants⁹²⁴ further noted that the pandemic had exacerbated inequalities and harm to civilians in conflict, in particular to the most vulnerable populations, including women, children, displaced persons and disabled persons. Against that backdrop, Member States⁹²⁵ urged parties to conflict to adhere to the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire, which was reflected in resolutions 2532 (2020) and 2565 (2021), in order to address the COVID-19 pandemic and provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to civilians in need. Several delegations⁹²⁶ highlighted the role of United Nations peacekeeping missions in the protection of civilian populations, underscoring the importance of providing sufficient resources that were consistent with the mandate and the situation on the ground. At the same time, some Member States⁹²⁷ underscored the fact that the primary responsibility to protect civilians lay with national Governments.

On 16 July, at the initiative of France, which held the presidency for the month,⁹²⁸ the Council held a ministerial-level meeting on the issue of preserving

⁹²³ China, Estonia, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, United Kingdom, Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, European Union, Georgia, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Poland, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain (also on behalf of Egypt, Japan, New Zealand and Uruguay, its co-penholders on resolution 2286 (2016)) and Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict).

⁹²⁴ France, Mexico, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Chile, El Salvador, European Union, Georgia, Italy, Malta, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovakia, South Africa, Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict), Turkey and Ukraine.

⁹²⁵ China, Estonia, France, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (also on behalf of Kenya, Niger and Tunisia), Viet Nam, Algeria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Indonesia, Italy, Malta, Qatar, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain (also on behalf of Egypt, Japan, New Zealand and Uruguay, its co-penholders on resolution 2286 (2016)) and Turkey.

⁹²⁶ France, India, Norway, United States, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, European Union, Fiji, Nepal, Republic of Korea, South Africa and Switzerland (on behalf of the Group of Friends on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict).

⁹²⁷ India, Norway, Viet Nam, Bangladesh, Fiji, Latvia, Portugal and South Africa.

⁹²⁸ A concept note was circulated by a letter dated 1 July (S/2021/618).

humanitarian space.⁹²⁹ At the meeting, the Council heard briefings by the Deputy Secretary-General, the Director-General of ICRC and the Delegate Director for Advocacy of Action against Hunger.

The Deputy Secretary-General stated that the scale of humanitarian needs had never been greater and that the humanitarian crisis was compounded by a relentless wave of attacks on humanitarian and medical workers and the imposition of ever-narrower constraints on the humanitarian space. In that connection, she reiterated the Secretary-General's calls for the Council to take strong, immediate action to support its resolutions designed to protect civilians and the humanitarian space. Drawing on examples of security incidents affecting humanitarian organizations in numerous conflicts around the world, she said that such incidents had increased tenfold since 2001, adding that, in the five years since the Council's landmark resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#), health-care workers and patients had suffered thousands of attacks. She noted that it was becoming increasingly difficult to provide desperately needed humanitarian aid to people in need, highlighting examples of the crises in the Tigray region and Afghanistan and Yemen. While noting that humanitarian assistance had never reached so many people so quickly as a result of the efforts of the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations, she added that measures were needed to protect humanitarian actors since humanitarian needs were outpacing the capacity to meet them. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the Council must do everything in its power to end attacks on humanitarian personnel and assets, to ensure and promote respect for international humanitarian law and to seek accountability for serious violations in line with the numerous resolutions on the protection of civilians, medical care and humanitarian and United Nations personnel. In that regard, she outlined four main areas for action. First, the practical tools within and outside the Council to foster greater respect for international humanitarian law should be used systematically. Second, investigation and accountability were essential to preventing attacks on aid workers. Third, all Governments must protect the ability of humanitarian organizations to engage with all parties to a conflict, including non-State armed groups. Fourth, counter-terrorism measures should include clear provisions to preserve humanitarian space and ensure that humanitarian workers were not punished for doing their jobs. Fifth, the Deputy Secretary-General called on the Council to use its influence to ensure that attacks against schools and hospitals ceased

immediately, adding that Member States should review and revise their military policies and practices to ensure the protection of such facilities.

The Director-General of ICRC affirmed that the humanitarian space, or spaces, must be protected without exception. In that regard, he highlighted three of the most pressing concerns, namely, the politicization and manipulation of humanitarian aid, States resorting to armed escorts and the growing negative impact of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures on humanitarian aid. In terms of how those concerns could be resolved, the Director-General asked States, including Council members to: (a) ensure that humanitarian organizations were able to maintain close physical proximity to affected populations and sustained engagement with parties to conflict; (b) ensure that the key tenets of international humanitarian law were respected and implemented; and (c) consider and mitigate the humanitarian impact of counter-terrorism measures by putting in place well-crafted standing humanitarian exemptions.

The Delegate Director for Advocacy of Action against Hunger affirmed that the current humanitarian needs were unprecedented and that the confluence of the effects of conflicts, environmental and climate crises, social inequalities and the COVID-19 pandemic were disproportionately affecting those most in need, leading to a veritable hunger pandemic. Humanitarian organizations were facing an unprecedented decrease in humanitarian space owing to the widespread disdain for international humanitarian law by all, in particular warring parties, and the blatant instrumentalization of aid, which was increasingly threatening humanitarian work. She noted that the Council had so far been unable to prevent or reverse the narrowing of humanitarian space and that its failure to act was putting in jeopardy the lives of vulnerable people and the humanitarian workers helping them. She added that, although certain conflicts had been on the Council's agenda for years, only sparse concrete action had been taken, effectively imperilling humanitarian space. In that connection, firm, rapid and unambiguous condemnations were required, followed by ambitious measures when respect for humanitarian space was flouted. While welcoming the historic progress represented by the adoption of landmark Council resolutions, including resolution [2573 \(2021\)](#), she cautioned that those resolutions seemed to remain without effect, as they were disregarded by States and parties to conflict, who were convinced that the Council would not follow up on their implementation. That inconsistency endangered human lives and the humanitarian work and undermined the credibility of the Council. She pointed out that the

⁹²⁹ See [S/PV.8822](#).

Council continued to adopt resolutions while failing to take into account the potentially harmful and extremely serious consequences that they might have for humanitarian activities and for humanitarian and medical personnel, in particular certain counter-terrorism measures and sanctions regimes. She added that such a lack of consistency encouraged States and parties to conflict to ignore their obligations concerning humanitarian space. In conflict areas, State and non-State armed actors prevented access and instrumentalized or criminalized humanitarian assistance, preventing dialogue with parties to the conflict and gradually eroding humanitarian neutrality and space. Moreover, she said that the requirement by some donors that beneficiaries of humanitarian aid undergo screening was a red line, as it compromised the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide impartial aid. Drawing attention to instances of attacks on humanitarian workers in Afghanistan, the Niger, Sri Lanka and the Tigray region, the Delegate Director called on the Council to take action and put an end to that deadly spiral. She also called on Council members to reaffirm their unequivocal support for aid based on humanitarian principles, while ensuring that their decisions did not block the humanitarian space. She also reiterated her call on the Council to adopt a systematic humanitarian exemption, thereby excluding impartial humanitarian work from the scope of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures. Furthermore, she urged the Council to collectively and systematically condemn crimes against civilians and medical and humanitarian workers, adding that combating impunity for perpetrators must be a genuine priority for the Council. In that regard, she said that the Council must systematically demand and support national and international inquiries to ensure that such crimes did not go unpunished. In closing, she welcomed the Secretary-General's announcement of the appointment of a special adviser for the protection and strengthening of humanitarian space.

During the discussion that ensued, Council members expressed concern over increasing attacks on humanitarian workers, underscoring the need to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of such crimes in order to end the cycle of impunity that persisted in conflicts around the world. Several members⁹³⁰ also pointed to the negative impact of sanctions and counter-terrorism measures on the delivery of humanitarian aid and stressed that such policies must not hinder humanitarian workers from performing their duties or

interfere with their operations. In that connection, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico stressed that it was essential to understand in greater detail the scope of sanctions, especially in terms of unintended consequences. In the same vein, the representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines said that there was greater need for more systematic monitoring and reporting on the impact of sanctions regimes on humanitarian actions. In that regard, she suggested that efforts to systematize reporting could be undertaken by the Secretariat and that humanitarian impact and risk assessments should precede the establishment and renewal of all sanctions regimes. A number of speakers⁹³¹ were of the view, however, that applicable Council sanctions could target those responsible for crimes against humanitarian and medical personnel, therefore serving as deterrents. In that regard, some Council members⁹³² recognized the progress achieved through resolution 2582 (2021), on the sanctions regime concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Some representatives⁹³³ advocated for the lifting of unilateral sanctions altogether. A number of speakers cautioned against the politicization of humanitarian operations,⁹³⁴ and stressed the primary responsibility of States in protecting civilians and humanitarian workers.⁹³⁵ Furthermore, some members⁹³⁶ called for referring cases to the International Criminal Court when States were unwilling or unable to prosecute perpetrators. A few speakers⁹³⁷ also expressed support for the humanitarian call to action, which was aimed at strengthening accountability for those who would attack medical and humanitarian workers in the course of their work.

Throughout 2021, 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 region-specific items.⁹³⁸ The Council also included

⁹³¹ France, Mexico, India, United Kingdom, Estonia, Ireland and Norway.

⁹³² France, Mexico and Norway. For more information on developments with regard to the sanctions measures concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, see part VII, sect. III.

⁹³³ China and Russian Federation.

⁹³⁴ Mexico, India, Niger, China and Norway.

⁹³⁵ Mexico, India, Viet Nam and China.

⁹³⁶ France, Mexico, Estonia and Norway.

⁹³⁷ France, Mexico and Ireland.

⁹³⁸ In 2021, the Council heard briefings by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 28 times at either public meetings or open videoconferences and 17 times at either private meetings or informal consultations, for a total of 45 briefings. For more information on briefings on those items prior to 2021, see *Repertoire, Supplement 2020*, part I, sect. 26.

⁹³⁰ Mexico, Kenya, United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Niger, China, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Norway.

protection-related provisions in most of its decisions in relation to both country- or region-specific and thematic items during 2021. The Council focused on multiple aspects and used a variety of language formulas to address the protection of civilians in its decisions. Selected provisions of those decisions are listed in table 3 below. In particular, the Council: (a) condemned all forms of attacks and abuses committed against civilians and objects indispensable to their survival, in particular against women and children and humanitarian and medical workers, including attacks against schools and education facilities;⁹³⁹ hospitals and medical facilities; (b) demanded that all parties to armed conflict ensure unhindered access for the 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 such

crimes; (d) emphasized the primary responsibility of States to comply with their relevant obligations to protect civilians; (e) requested additional monitoring mechanisms and reporting arrangements in order to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict; and (f) adopted or expressed its intention to adopt targeted measures, such as sanctions, against perpetrators. In addition, the Council's 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 make the protection of civilians under threat of physical violence a specific priority and benchmark 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, and by strengthening local community engagement and empowerment, early warning and information-sharing mechanisms.⁹⁴⁰

⁹³⁹ For more information on the decisions of the Council concerning children and armed conflict and specifically the protection of schools and education facilities, see sect. 24 above.

⁹⁴⁰ For more information on the mandates of peacekeeping and special political missions, see part X.

Table 1
Meeting: protection of civilians in armed conflict

Meeting record and date	Sub-item	Other documents	Rule 37 invitations	Rule 39 and other invitations	Speakers	Decision and vote (for-against-abstaining)
S/PV.8822 16 July 2021	Preserving humanitarian space Letter dated 1 July 2021 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2021/618)			Director-General of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Delegate Director for Advocacy of Action against Hunger	Deputy Secretary-General, all Council members, ^a all invitees	

^a France (President of the Council) was represented by its Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs; India was represented by its Foreign Secretary; Kenya was represented by its Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Mexico was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs; Tunisia was represented by its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Migration and Tunisians Abroad; and the United States was represented by its Permanent Representative of the United Nations and member of the President's Cabinet.

Table 2
Videoconferences: protection of civilians in armed conflict

Videoconference date	Videoconference record	Title	Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure
27 April 2021	S/2021/415	Letter dated 29 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	Resolution 2573 (2021) 15-0-0 S/2021/407

<i>Videoconference date</i>	<i>Videoconference record</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Decision, vote (for-against-abstaining) and record of written procedure</i>
25 May 2021	S/2021/505	Letter dated 27 May 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council	

Table 3

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

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Condemnation and demands for the cessation of attacks and acts of violence against civilians and civilian infrastructure and humanitarian and medical personnel			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in Afghanistan	Resolution 2593 (2021)	1
	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2605 (2021)	3–4, 25–26, 54
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021)	9, 12
	The situation in the Great Lakes region	S/PRST/2021/19	seventh
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2568 (2021)	38
		Resolution 2592 (2021)	12
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2609 (2021)	28
		Resolution 2567 (2021)	9
	Peace consolidation in West Africa	S/PRST/2021/3	twelfth
		S/PRST/2021/16	fourth
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	1–2, 8
	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	Resolution 2573 (2021)	1, 4–5
Demands on parties to allow humanitarian access and ensure the safety of humanitarian and medical personnel and facilities			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in Afghanistan	Resolution 2593 (2021)	3
	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2605 (2021)	52–53
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021)	35
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021)	51
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021)	10
		Resolution 2609 (2021)	25
	Peace consolidation in West Africa	S/PRST/2021/16	twelfth
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	25
	Maintenance of international peace and security	Resolution 2565 (2021)	3–4
	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	Resolution 2573 (2021)	7

<i>Item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	Resolution 2615 (2021)	3
Calls for compliance with and accountability under applicable international humanitarian law and human rights law and relevant Council resolutions by all parties		
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2605 (2021) 14, 22
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021) 6, 11–12, 19, 34
	The situation in Libya	Resolution 2570 (2021) 11
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021) 15, 36, 50
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2592 (2021) 10
		Resolution 2568 (2021) 31, 35–36
		Resolution 2607 (2021) 16
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021) 8–9, 15
Thematic	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	Resolution 2573 (2021) 2–3
Affirmation of the primary responsibility of States and parties to conflict to protect civilians		
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2566 (2021) 2
		Resolution 2605 (2021) 34 (a) (i), 35 (f) (vii)
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021) 14, 30 (c) (i)
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2568 (2021) 5
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021) 18 (d)
Thematic	United Nations peacekeeping operations	Resolution 2594 (2021) 5
	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021) 5
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 2605 (2021) 35 (a) (i)
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021) 29 (ii) (e), 42
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021) 30 (d) (ii)
	The situation in the Middle East	Resolution 2585 (2021) 5
	The situation in Somalia	Resolution 2568 (2021) 17–18, 39 (iv)
		Resolution 2607 (2021) 43
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021) 3 (d)
		Resolution 2577 (2021) 22
		Resolution 2609 (2021) 30 (a), 34

	<i>Item</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Paragraph</i>
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	19
	Maintenance of international peace and security	Resolution 2565 (2021)	7
	Protection of civilians in armed conflict	Resolution 2573 (2021)	12
	United Nations peacekeeping operations	Resolution 2594 (2021)	4
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 2588 (2021)	5
		Resolution 2605 (2021)	5, 22
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2582 (2021)	3
		Resolution 2612 (2021)	5
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2590 (2021)	2
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021)	16
		Resolution 2577 (2021)	12
Inclusion of mission-specific protection mandates and benchmarks^a			
Country- and region-specific	The situation in the Central African Republic	Resolution 2605 (2021)	34 (a) (i)–(iv) and (c)
	The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo	Resolution 2612 (2021)	29 (i), 31, 36, 43
	The situation in Mali	Resolution 2584 (2021)	30 (b) (i) and (iii), (c) (ii)–(iii) and (d) (i)
	Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan	Resolution 2567 (2021)	3 (a) and (b) (i)
		Resolution 2579 (2021)	3 (iii) and (iv) (b)
		Resolution 2609 (2021)	14, 30 (j)
Thematic	Children and armed conflict	Resolution 2601 (2021)	23

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

26. Small arms

During the period under review, the Council held two meetings in connection with the item entitled “Small arms”. The first meeting took the form of a briefing, while the second was held as a high-level open debate.⁹⁴¹ More information on the meetings, including on the participants and speakers, is given in the table below.⁹⁴²

On 6 October, the Council held a meeting under the item in connection with the biennial report of the

Secretary-General.⁹⁴³ At the meeting,⁹⁴⁴ the Council heard briefings by the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States and a Senior Researcher at Small Arms Survey. In her briefing, the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs focused on the need to address the threats

⁹⁴¹ For more information on the format of meetings, including high-level meetings and videoconferences, see part II, sect. II.

⁹⁴² See also [A/76/2](#), part II, chap. 15.

⁹⁴³ [S/2021/839](#). For more information on the biennial report of the Secretary-General, which was requested by the Council in its presidential statement adopted on 29 June 2007 ([S/PRST/2007/24](#)), see *Repertoire, Supplement 2004–2007*, chap. VIII, sect. 40.

⁹⁴⁴ See [S/PV.8874](#).