

Europe and the Mediterranean

The United Nations in 2015 worked to entrench peace, stability and recovery in post-conflict countries in Europe and the Mediterranean, including through efforts to re-establish their institutions and social and economic infrastructure. A number of issues, however, remained unresolved, first and foremost the continuing conflict in Ukraine.

Bosnia and Herzegovina in February adopted a written commitment with the European Union (EU), opening the way for a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU that entered into force on 1 June. A border treaty was signed with Montenegro, and in November a long-awaited joint session of the Governments of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina took place in Sarajevo. Some politicians, however, appeared determined to challenge the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and destabilize the situation in the country. The ruling party of the Republika Srpska, in April, adopted a declaration that threatened to hold an independence referendum in 2018, and the Parliament of the Republika Srpska, in July, decided to organize a referendum on whether the Republika Srpska authorities needed to respect the authority and decisions of the country's central judicial institutions. The Security Council renewed the authorization of the European Union Force-Althea for a further 12 months.

In Kosovo, the parties continued implementation of the 2013 First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations. The high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the EU, resumed in February, when the Prime Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo met in Brussels for the first time, concluding an agreement on the integration of the Kosovo judiciary. In May, Serbia's Prime Minister paid an historic State visit to Albania and held talks on joint infrastructure projects and the two countries' steps towards EU integration. In August, the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, led by the respective Prime Ministers, concluded in Brussels a package of agreements. In October, Kosovo's Prime Minister signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU which the Assembly of Kosovo ratified in November.

International efforts continued to advance the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process. International discussions under the leadership of the EU, the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to address security, stability and humanitarian issues in Georgia were held throughout the year.

No progress was made towards the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

In Cyprus, efforts continued through the Secretary-General's good offices mission to reach a settlement to the conflict opposing Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. After more than seven months of stalemate, the leaders of the two sides resumed peace talks, and on 28 May agreed on five concrete steps to improve intercommunal relations. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) continued to cooperate with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The Security Council extended the mandate of UNFICYP through 31 January 2016.

In Ukraine, continuing fighting in the east between the Government and separatist forces led to increased civilian casualties and a deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation. Efforts to find a political solution to the conflict, made more urgent by an increase in violence in the east in the early months of the year led to the adoption on 12 February of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the 2014 Minsk Agreements. On the same day, the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and France and the Chancellor of Germany adopted in Minsk a Declaration in support of the Package. The Security Council endorsed the Package on 17 February.

The eastern part of Ukraine, however, saw an escalation of violence, frequent violations of the ceasefire, fighting involving heavy weapons and tanks, grave violations of the Minsk Protocol and Package of Measures and lack of humanitarian access. The number of displaced persons and refugees in Ukraine and neighbouring countries reached 2.5 million people by July. Throughout the year, the Secretary-General, as well as the Trilateral Contact Group sought a diplomatic resolution of the conflict.

On 29 July, a draft resolution seeking to establish an international tribunal to hold accountable those responsible for the downing in 2014 of Malaysia Airlines flight MH-17 was not adopted owing to the veto of a Member State.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2015, the international community continued to assist the two entities comprising the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (where mainly Bosnian

Muslim—Bosniacs—and Bosnian Croats resided) and the Republika Srpska (where mostly Bosnian Serbs resided)—in implementing the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the annexes thereto (the “Peace Agreement”) [YUN 1995, p. 544], which had ended the 1992–1995 conflict. Since the conclusion of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in December 2002 [YUN 2002, p. 359], those efforts had been led by the European Union (EU) and accomplished through the activities of the Office of the High Representative for the Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina, responsible for the Agreement’s civilian aspects; the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, responsible for helping to develop sustainable policing arrangements; and the European Union Force-Althea (EUFOR-Althea), responsible for the Agreement’s military aspects. The Peace Implementation Council (PIC) and its Steering Board continued to monitor and facilitate the Agreement’s implementation.

The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina reported on progress made in the implementation process and related political developments during the year (see below) in the context of his mission implementation plan, which set out a number of core tasks to be accomplished.

The Security Council, by **resolution 2247(2015)** of 10 November (see p. 188), renewed the authorization of the EUFOR-Althea for a further 12 months.

Implementation of peace agreement

Civilian aspects

The civilian aspects of the 1995 Peace Agreement entailed a broad range of activities, including the provision of humanitarian aid and resources for infrastructure rehabilitation, the establishment of political and constitutional institutions, the promotion of respect for human rights, and the holding of free and fair elections. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, who chaired the PIC Steering Board and other key implementation bodies, was the final authority with regard to implementing the civilian aspects of the Peace Agreement.

Office of High Representative

Reports of High Representative. The High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Inzko (Austria), reported to the Security Council through the Secretary-General on the peace implementation process for the periods from 21 October 2014 to 21 April 2015 [S/2015/300], 21 April to 21 October [S/2015/841] and 22 October 2015 to 15 April 2016 [S/2016/395]. The Council considered the reports of the High Representative on 12 May [S/PV.7440] and 10 November [S/PV.7555].

Political situation and other developments

Briefing the Council on 12 May [S/PV.7440], the High Representative presented the forty-seventh report [S/2015/300], covering the period from 21 October 2014 to 21 April 2015. Three main political developments had dominated that period: the process of government formation following the general elections of October 2014; efforts to kick-start Bosnia and Herzegovina’s integration process in the EU; and continued actions and statements challenging the fundamentals of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Following the elections of October 2014, prolonged disagreement on the distribution of political posts among the Federation-based parties delayed the final appointment of the State-level Council of Ministers and the Federation government until 31 March 2015.

A significant development was the initiative launched by the Foreign Ministers of Germany and the United Kingdom in November 2014, offering Bosnia and Herzegovina a real opportunity to make progress on integration with the EU. After the Presidency’s written commitment to the EU integration process was signed by 14 political leaders and then adopted by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly on 23 February 2015, the EU Council on 21 April adopted a decision concluding the Union’s Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A number of actions, however, raised concern. Those included the regular practice by the Republika Srpska-based Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and its partner, the Democratic People’s Alliance, of walking out of sessions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Representatives, and a short-lived boycott by those parties of the Bosnia and Herzegovina House of Peoples that briefly prevented the House from convening in March. On 17 April, the Republika Srpska National Assembly adopted a declaration denying the authority of decisions of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitutional Court as established under the General Framework Agreement for Peace, which also represented a challenge to the rule of law. In addition, a number of statements by officials of the Republika Srpska called for that entity’s secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina—a step prohibited by the General Framework Agreement for Peace, the Bosnia and Herzegovina Constitution and international law.

On 8 July [S/PV.7481], the Security Council was briefed by Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson and High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Al Hussein on the twentieth anniversary of the events in Srebrenica [YUN 1995, p. 529]. The Council voted on a draft resolution [S/2015/508], to commemorate the anniversary of Srebrenica; the draft, however, was vetoed by the Russian Federation.

Briefing the Council on 10 November [S/PV.7555], the High Representative presented the forty-eight

report [S/2015/841], covering the period from 21 April to 21 October 2015, which was dominated by the decision of 15 July of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on the authority of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Court and Prosecutor's Office; the threat of the Republika Srpska-based SNSD to hold an independence referendum in 2018; the entry into force of the Stabilization and Association Agreement; steps to advance the EU reform agenda, such as the adoption of the new Federation Labour Law; and a number of security incidents.

The decision of the Republika Srpska Assembly to hold a referendum and the threat of SNSD to hold an independence referendum represented an escalation of SNSD policy to challenge the fundamentals of the Agreement and the steps taken to implement it. That was one of the most serious challenges to the Agreement since its signing in 1995.

Following the signing and adoption on 23 February of Bosnia and Herzegovina's written commitment to the EU integration process, the EU decided that the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Bosnia and Herzegovina would enter into force on 1 June. That was followed by the adoption in July of the reform agenda by State and entity authorities and the delivery of concrete steps, such as the Federation's adoption of the new Labour Law.

Security incidents included the shooting at a police station in Zvornik on 27 April, several attacks on returnees which appeared to be ethnically motivated, and the attack on the Prime Minister of Serbia at the twentieth anniversary commemoration for the genocide committed in Srebrenica.

In a later report [S/2016/395], the High Representative said that the decision of 15 July of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska to hold a referendum on the validity of the legislation on the Court and Prosecutor's Office was neither published in the Republika Srpska official gazette nor implemented during the reporting period. While welcoming statements that the referendum had been put to one side, the High Representative noted that the National Assembly's decision had not been repealed.

Challenges to state judicial institutions continued, the most notable of which was set out in a statement signed by the leading Republika Srpska-based political parties expressing their refusal to implement the 26 November decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding the unconstitutionality of provisions of the Republika Srpska Law on Holidays, and threatening to boycott state institutions if legislation concerning the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not adopted.

Judicial reform

On 8 September, the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted the new Justice

Sector Reform Strategy for 2014–2018, replacing the previous strategy, which had expired in 2013. Discussions within the EU-led Structured Dialogue on Justice continued, concentrating on new draft legislation on the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The implementation of legislation adopted by the Federation in July 2014 to create a special prosecutors' department for fighting corruption and organized crime continued to be delayed owing to a lack of budgetary resources. As a result, legal uncertainty remained in regard to the jurisdiction over the prosecution of corruption and organized crime, negatively affecting prosecutions.

The Supervisory Board for the Implementation of the War Crimes Prosecution Strategy continued to meet regularly, with the backlog of cases in the prosecutor's offices being systematically reduced. The Board concluded that the goal of reducing war crimes cases in the prosecutors' offices by 15 per cent by 30 June 2015 had been met. The deadline set for the strategic goal of processing all serious war crimes cases within seven years, however, expired in December, with that goal not being achieved.

Economic reform

The year was generally positive in terms of economic recovery, with industrial production increasing by 2.6 per cent, exports increasing by 3.5 per cent and imports decreasing by 2.1 per cent. A positive trend continued in collection of indirect tax revenue. Public debt, however, increased by 3.6 per cent over 2014 and by 26.2 per cent compared to 2010; the administrative unemployment rate was about 44 per cent at mid-year, and about 60 per cent of youth was unemployed. Also discouraging were foreign direct investment levels, which in the first quarter of 2015 saw a decrease of 77.6 per cent compared with 2014. In July, the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a Framework Transport Policy for 2015–2030, setting sustainable transport development as a crucial element of the country's economic development.

Media development

Reforms aimed at ensuring the independence of public broadcasters, as well as their cooperation within a single system, continued to be stalled by political disagreements about the relationship between the public broadcasters and the various levels of government. Efforts to establish an independent public broadcasting system continued to encounter difficulties, not least due to the long-running failure to establish an umbrella Public Broadcasting System Corporation—as required by legislation—to facilitate cooperation among the three public broadcasters. Such failure continued to hold back overall public broadcasting reform, as well as the changeover from analog to digital broadcasting.

Return of refugees and displaced persons

Concerning the implementation of the 2012 Return Strategy, returnees continued to face difficulties in the education sector in several local communities, not least in relation to the use of official languages. Twenty years after the signing of the Peace Agreement, the issue of war crimes continued to divide local communities, pointing to the work that needed to be done to ensure that justice was served and reconciliation advanced so that local communities could reintegrate.

Military and police aspects

EUFOR

The European Union Force-Althea (EUFOR-Althea) in Bosnia and Herzegovina executed the military aspects of the Peace Agreement as specified in annexes 1-A and 2, which were transferred to it by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004 [YUN 2004, p. 401]. EUFOR-Althea activities in 2015 were described in reports covering the period from 1 March to 31 August [S/2016/299] and from 1 September 2015 to 29 February 2016 [S/2016/663], which were submitted by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

EUFOR-Althea was comprised of around 600 personnel, based in Sarajevo, with liaison and observation teams in other parts of the country. It continued to monitor and advise the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the context of activities related to ammunition and weapons storage sites; the civilian and military movement of weapons and military equipment; the disposal of surplus weapons and ammunition; and defence industry factories.

SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

On 10 November [meeting 7555], the Security Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2247(2015)**. The draft [S/2015/847] was submitted by the Russian Federation.

Kosovo

In 2015, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) continued to fulfil its mandate based on Security Council resolution 1244(1999) [YUN 1999, p. 353] and the reconfigured functions outlined in the Secretary-General's June and November 2008 reports [YUN 2008, pp. 438 & 441], following Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 [ibid., p. 437], the entry into force of the Kosovo Constitution on 15 June [ibid., p. 439] and the deployment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) throughout Kosovo in December of that year [ibid., p. 442]. Serbia condemned

Kosovo's declaration of independence and maintained that that action by Kosovo's Provisional Institutions violated Council resolution 1244(1999), which reaffirmed Serbia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, including Kosovo and Metohija. The position of the UN on the status of Kosovo was of status neutrality.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ), in a 2010 advisory opinion [YUN 2010, p. 416], concluded that Kosovo's declaration of independence did not violate any applicable rule of law. In September of that year, the General Assembly acknowledged the ICJ advisory opinion and welcomed the readiness by the EU to facilitate dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina [ibid.].

Political and security developments

Reports of Secretary-General. The Secretary-General reported on the implementation of the UNMIK mandate covering the periods from 16 October 2014 to 15 January 2015 [S/2015/74]; 16 January to 15 April [S/2015/303]; 16 April to 15 July [S/2015/579]; 16 July to 15 October [S/2015/833]; and 16 October 2015 to 15 January 2016 [S/2016/99].

The major political developments in early 2015 centred on the consolidation of the new Kosovo Government and the resumption of the high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, which was facilitated by the EU. On 9 February, the Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and the Kosovo Prime Minister, Isa Mustafa, met in Brussels for the first time. The discussions achieved concrete results, the most important of which was an agreement on the integration of the Kosovo judiciary.

On 23 April, following political discussions with Kosovo Albanian ruling parties, Kosovo Serb representatives from the Serbian Civic Initiative resumed full participation in the Kosovo Government and Assembly after a two-month absence, enabling the governing coalition to proceed with pressing matters. On 27 May, the Prime Minister of Serbia paid an historic State visit to Albania, the first at that level, and held talks on subjects including joint infrastructure projects and the two countries' respective steps towards EU integration.

On 3 August, the Kosovo Assembly approved the constitutional amendment needed to establish a specialist court to investigate allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflict in Kosovo.

On 25 August, the Pristina and Belgrade delegations, led by the Prime Ministers of Kosovo and Serbia, met in Brussels under the facilitation of the EU. The sides concluded a package of agreements, including on energy, telecommunications, freedom of movement on a bridge dividing the town of Mitrovica and establishment of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo. On 26 Au-

gust, Kosovo signed in Vienna an agreement on territorial delineation with Montenegro, conforming to the former administrative boundary of 1974 of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

In a later report [S/2016/99], the Secretary-General said that opposition lawmakers in the Assembly of Kosovo frequently disrupted the Assembly's functioning to protest against the agreements adopted on 25 August. Progress was achieved, however, in the European integration process. On 27 October, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, together with his Minister of European Integration, signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with EU High Representative and the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. On 2 November, the Assembly of Kosovo ratified the agreement.

In northern Kosovo, implementation of elements of the agreements of 25 August was mixed. The implementation of the agreed plan for the revitalization of the main Mitrovica bridge and its surroundings began on 17 October. Nevertheless, a memorandum of understanding delineating the administrative boundaries of cadastral areas in certain neighbourhoods had yet to be signed.

The Security Council considered the Secretary-General's reports [S/2015/74, S/2015/303, S/2015/579, S/2015/833] and on 6 February [S/PV.7377], 26 May [S/PV. 7448], 21 August [S/PV.7510] and 19 November [S/PV.7563], respectively.

EULEX

The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), established to undertake an enhanced operational role in the rule-of-law area, with a focus on policing, justice and customs, became fully operational in April 2009 [YUN 2009, p. 412]. It operated under the overall authority and within the status-neutral framework of the UN and submitted reports to it on a regular basis.

EULEX continued its monitoring, mentoring and advising activities, and to implement its executive functions in the rule-of-law area. The Mission supported the Kosovo Border Police and the Ministry of Internal Affairs with technical advice to deal with the potential influx of irregular migrants and refugees into Kosovo. Against the backdrop of the political stalemate and demonstrations by the opposition, EULEX provided advice to the Kosovo police in their response to the protests, some of which turned violent.

The Mission facilitated the first-ever meeting of the Police Directors of Serbia and Kosovo, held in Belgrade in March, and the third central level meeting on the implementation of the agreement on the integrated management of crossing points, held in Pristina in March.

EULEX provided advice to the Kosovo police on the operational planning for several public order events and supported steps in implementing EU-facilitated dialogue agreements. In the framework of the customs agreement, full implementation of the licensing regime for controlled goods, including medicine, was introduced. Belgrade and Pristina suggested and agreed to the opening of two additional interim crossing points by 2016.

The Reports of the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on EULEX activities in 2015 were annexed to the Secretary-General's reports to the Security Council on UNMIK [S/2015/74, S/2015/303, S/2015/579, S/2015/833].

UNMIK

The United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK), established in 1999 [YUN 1999, p. 357] to facilitate a political process to determine Kosovo's political future, comprised five components: interim administration, institution-building, economic reconstruction, humanitarian affairs, and police and justice. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 [YUN 2008, p. 437], and the deployment of EULEX in 2009 [YUN 2009, p. 412], the profile and size of UNMIK were reconfigured. The Mission's strategic goal remained the promotion of security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo and in the region through engagement with all communities in Kosovo, with the leadership in Belgrade and Pristina, and with regional and international actors. UNMIK was headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Farid Zarif (Afghanistan), who was succeeded in October by Zahir Tanin (Afghanistan), appointed in August.

Financing

The General Assembly considered the Secretary-General's performance report on the UNMIK budget for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 [A/69/591], the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 [A/69/729] and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) [A/69/839/Add.10].

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 25 June [meeting 97], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee [A/69/959], adopted **resolution 69/300 (Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo)** without vote [agenda item 158].

On 23 December (**decision 70/554**), the Assembly decided that the item on UNMIK financing would remain for consideration during its resumed seventieth (2016) session.

KFOR

In accordance with resolution 1244(1999) [YUN 1999, p. 353], the Secretary-General transmitted to the Security Council reports on the activities during 2015 of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) covering the periods from 1 January to 31 March [S/2015/361], 1 April to 30 September [S/2015/886] and 1 October to 31 December [S/2016/118]. As at 31 December, the number of KFOR troops in theatre remained at approximately 4,600.

During the year, KFOR, in close cooperation with the Kosovo police and EULEX, continued to contribute to maintaining a safe and secure environment and ensuring freedom of movement in Kosovo. The situation in the northern part of Kosovo remained reasonably stable, with the ongoing implementation of the EU-facilitated agreement on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina of 2013 [YUN 2013, p. 361] continuing to have a positive effect on the security situation.

Georgia

In 2015, international efforts continued to advance the Georgian-Abkhaz peace process, based on the 2001 Basic Principles for the Distribution of Competences between Tbilisi (Georgia's Government) and Sukhumi (the Abkhaz leadership) [YUN 2001, p. 386]. That document was intended to serve as a framework for negotiations on the status of Abkhazia as a sovereign state within Georgia. Following the termination of the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in 2009 [YUN 2009, p. 418], the UN continued to support the Geneva international discussions on security and stability and the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees.

Geneva talks. In accordance with the 12 August 2008 six-point ceasefire plan between Georgia and the Russian Federation [YUN 2008, p. 456], and the provisions of the 8 September 2008 ceasefire implementation plan [ibid., p. 457], international discussions co-chaired by the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN to address security, stability and humanitarian issues in Georgia were held throughout the year. At the thirty-first (18 March) [A/69/831-S/2015/200], thirty-second (1 July) [A/69/975-S/2015/511], thirty-third (7 October) [A/70/434-S/2015/798] and thirty-fourth (10 December) [A/70/618-S/2015/957] sessions, participants met in two parallel groups. Working Group I focused on security and stability in the occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia, especially the key issues of the non-use of force and international security arrangements. Working Group II addressed the situation of IDPs, including their right of return and other durable solutions, and humanitarian and human rights issues, especially the violation of social,

economic and cultural rights, the restriction of the freedom of movement and the right to education in the native language. Participants assessed the overall security situation as relatively calm and stable. They expressed their concerns, however, with regard to procedures for crossings and the broader issue of freedom of movement. The Geneva discussions remained the only forum for stakeholders to address the issues identified in resolution 69/286 (see below) on IDPs.

Communications. Throughout 2015, Georgia submitted letters to the Secretary-General and the Security Council on issues relating to the Black Sea region, the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and Russia. The letters addressed the alleged signature of a treaty between the Russian Federation and the Tskhinvali region [A/69/824-S/2015/193]; the alleged placement of banners marking the territory adjacent to the village of Tsiteluba [A/69/982-S/2015/532]; alleged markings of the territory of Georgia by Russian military forces [A/69/1005-S/2015/612, A/69/1008-S/2015/629]; Russia's alleged efforts to annex the Abkhazia region [A/70/584-S/2015/924]; alleged ratification by the Russian State Duma of the Treaty between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia [A/69/746-S/2015/63] and the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Tskhinvali region [A/69/964-S/2015/470]; the seventh anniversary of the August 2008 war [A/69/1002-S/2015/609]; and military-related and other activities by the Russian Federation affecting Georgia, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali/South Ossetia region [A/69/813-S/2015/164, A/69/1013-S/2015/653, A/69/893-S/2015/314, A/69/1017-S/2015/666, A/70/617-S/2015/958].

IDPs and refugees. In response to General Assembly resolutions 68/274 [YUN 2014, p. 494] and 69/286 (see below), the Secretary-General submitted reports on the status of IDPs and refugees from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, covering the periods from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 [A/69/909] and 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 [A/70/879]. The reports focused on the right to return of all refugees and IDPs and their descendants; prohibition of forced demographic changes; humanitarian access; the importance of preserving the property rights of refugees and IDPs; and the development of a timetable to ensure the prompt voluntary return of all refugees and IDPs to their homes.

Owing to objections expressed by some participants, the Secretary-General said, there was little substantive discussion and no progress in addressing the issue of IDPs and refugees and their voluntary return. There was no sustainable return to areas of habitual residence and no new significant displacements.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 3 June [meeting 92], the General Assembly adopted **resolution 69/286** [draft: A/69/L. 469] (**Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/**

South Ossetia, Georgia) by recorded vote (75-16-78) [agenda item 33].

RECORDED VOTE ON RESOLUTION 69/286:

In favour: Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Canada, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kiribati, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States.

Against: Armenia, Belarus, Burundi, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Zimbabwe.

Abstaining: Algeria, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu.

Armenia–Azerbaijan

In 2015, Armenia and Azerbaijan maintained their positions with regard to the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. The conflict, which began in 1992 [YUN 1992, p. 388], was followed by a ceasefire in 1994 [YUN 1994, p. 577]. Both sides addressed communications to the Secretary-General regarding the conflict. The Minsk Group of OSCE (France, Russian Federation, United States) continued to mediate the dispute between the two countries.

Communications. In letters dated 8 January [A/69/718-S/2015/11], 29 January [A/69/755-S/2015/71], 5 February [A/69/767-S/2015/99], 10 February [A/69/776-S/2015/111], 16 March [A/69/817-S/2015/186], 16 April [A/69/875-S/2015/259], 11 May [A/69/910-S/2015/362], 18 June [A/69/949-S/2015/469], 13 July [A/69/983-S/2015/536], 17 August [A/69/1012-S/2015/643], 23 September [A/70/390-S/2015/738], 16 October [A/70/437-S/2015/803], 18 December [A/70/662-S/2015/1019] and 21 December [A/70/664-S/2015/1021], Armenia reported to the Secretary-General on violations of the ceasefire

by the armed forces of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan on 10 February [A/69/772-S/2015/105] rejected allegations made by Armenia in its letter dated 8 January.

On 5 February [A/69/767-S/2015/99], Armenia reported an alleged increase in violations of the ceasefire by the armed forces of Azerbaijan on the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and across the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On 17 April [A/69/876-S/2015/261], Armenia transmitted the Pan-Armenian Declaration on the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide, which mentioned the “Artsakh war”. Azerbaijan replied on 16 July [A/69/985-S/2015/539] that what Armenia defined as “Artsakh” was Azerbaijan’s Nagorno-Karabakh region.

On 12 October [A/70/419-S/2015/781], Armenia addressed elections held on 13 September in the Nagorno-Karabakh region. On 13 October [A/70/427-S/2015/791], Armenia reported on alleged escalation of tensions along the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan and across the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On 18 December [A/70/663-S/2015/1020], Armenia drew attention to the alleged adoption of a legislative act by Nagorno-Karabakh to unilaterally accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Azerbaijan drew the Secretary-General’s attention to violations of the ceasefire by the military forces of Armenia in letters dated 8 January [A/69/718 S/2015/11], 14 January [A/69/726-S/2015/26], 16 January [A/69/735-S/2015/34], 12 February [A/69/777-S/2015/112], 9 March [A/69/815-S/2015/170], 14 April [A/69/869-S/2015/255], 8 May [A/69/897-S/2015/329], 11 June [A/69/936-S/2015/431], 16 July [A/69/986-S/2015/540], 7 August [A/69/1003-S/2015/610], 14 September [A/69/1031-S/2015/712] and 21 October [A/70/442-S/2015/814]. On 9 January [A/69/719-S/2015/14], Azerbaijan reported that on 3 January the armed forces of Armenia allegedly shelled the defence positions of the Azerbaijani army.

On 25 February [A/69/796-S/2015/140], Azerbaijan recalled the incident on 25–26 February 1992 when the Armenian armed forces allegedly invaded and ruined the town of Khojaly. In response, Armenia on 17 March [A/69/821-S/2015/192] drew attention to a 2012 statement [YUN 2012, p. 367] of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on that event. In response, Azerbaijan on 8 April [A/69/885-S/2015/280] said that Armenia’s letter of 17 March testified to Armenia’s policy of denial of its responsibility for atrocious crimes against civilians. On 6 March [A/69/840-S/2015/215] and 8 May [A/69/896-S/2015/325], Azerbaijan transmitted statements from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the alleged elections to be held in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 3 May. On 26 May [A/69/914-S/2015/384], Azerbaijan transmitted a summary of the reaction of the international community to the alleged elections by Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 3 May. On 17 June [A/69/945-S/2015/449], Azerbaijan transmit-

ted a statement from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the 16 June decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the case of *Chiragov and Others v. Armenia*, which ruled in favour of the applicants, recognizing continuing violations by Armenia of a number of their rights under the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. On 8 July [A/69/974-S/2015/516], Azerbaijan transmitted an interview of Azerbaijan's Minister for Foreign Affairs with the APA news agency related to the 16 June decision of the European Court of Human Rights. On 1 July [A/69/971-S/2015/499], Azerbaijan drew attention to the alleged movement of personnel in leadership positions between Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region. On 8 September [A/69/1025-S/2015/692], Azerbaijan transmitted a statement from its Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the alleged elections to be held in the Nagorno-Karabakh region on 13 September. On 11 September [A/69/1028-S/2015/704] Azerbaijan reported an alleged attack by the Armenian armed forces on civilians in Gapanly village of the Terter district on 1 September. On 3 November [A/70/537-S/2015/836], Azerbaijan alleged repeated gunfire from territories controlled by Armenia's armed forces in the direction of the positions of Azerbaijan's armed forces. On 11 December [A/70/610-S/2015/961], Azerbaijan transmitted a memorandum concerning the "International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime".

On 23 December (**decision 70/554**), the General Assembly decided that the item on the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan would remain for consideration during its resumed seventieth (2016) session.

Cyprus

During 2015, the United Nations continued its sponsorship of the Cyprus peace talks. The Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus, with the support of the Special Representative, assisted the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders in implementing the 8 July 2006 Set of Principles and Decision [YUN 2006, p. 487], which included commitment to the unification of Cyprus based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation and political equality, and an agreement to meet regularly on issues affecting the day-to-day life of the Cypriot people. Discussions centred on core issues relating to governance and power-sharing, citizenship, property and territory.

The political environment surrounding the talks changed significantly when, following runoff elections on 26 April, Mustafa Akinci was elected the new leader of Turkish Cypriots. On 15 May, the meeting of Mr. Akinci and Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Ana-

stasiades marked the resumption of the talks after a seven-month stalemate. At their second meeting on 28 May, the leaders agreed to focus on the issue of missing persons and on five concrete steps: working to open more crossing points, interconnecting the electricity grids, making mobile telephone networks interoperable, working on the prevention of radio frequency interferences and establishing a committee on gender equality. As a part of confidence-building measures, the leaders agreed to open two new crossing points. On 1 September, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus hosted a meeting between the two Cypriot leaders, who focused mainly on the issues of property and governance.

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), established to prevent the recurrence of fighting between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities and to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions, continued to assist in the restoration of normal conditions and in humanitarian functions. The Security Council extended UNFICYP's mandate until 31 January 2016. The Secretary-General submitted two reports covering UNFICYP activities for the periods from 16 December 2014 to 20 June 2015 [S/2015/517] and 21 June to 18 December [S/2016/11].

UNFICYP

The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), established in 1964 [YUN 1964, p. 165], continued to monitor the ceasefire lines between the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot forces on the northern side of the island and the Cypriot National Guard on the southern side; maintain the military status quo and prevent recurrence of fighting; and undertake humanitarian and economic activities. Lisa Buttenheim (United States) continued to serve as the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP. Espen Barth Eide (Norway) continued to serve as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Cyprus. Major General Kristin Lund (Norway) was the UNFICYP Force Commander. As at 15 December, UNFICYP comprised 860 troops and 57 civilian police.

Political and security developments

Reports of Secretary-General. In his report of 2 July [S/2015/517], covering UNFICYP activities from 16 December 2014 to 20 June 2015, the Secretary-General said that after an almost seven-month hiatus, negotiations were relaunched on 15 May with the facilitation of his Special Adviser on Cyprus, during a meeting between the Greek Cypriot leader, Nicos Anastasiades, and Mustafa Akinci, who assumed the leadership of the Turkish Cypriot community on 30 April. At the meeting, Mr. Anastasiades provided Mr. Akinci with the coordinates of 28 minefields laid by the Cyp-

riot National Guard in the north of the island before and during 1974. Mr. Akıncı announced that, from the following day, there would no longer be a requirement to fill in administrative forms at crossing points. The positive momentum surrounding the resumption of the talks was enhanced on 23 May, when the two leaders took a walk together in old town Nicosia, north and south and crossing through the buffer zone, during which they emphasized their common vision for a united Cyprus and their joint commitment to reaching a solution. On 28 May, the leaders announced further confidence-building measures to bring the two communities closer together, including working towards the opening of more crossing points.

On 4 June, the Secretary-General met Mr. Akıncı, who asked for assistance in addressing the challenge of the 28 minefields. In response, UNFICYP and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) worked to refine the data provided and map out the minefields.

UNFICYP continued to maintain the integrity and stability of the buffer zone. It fostered bicomunal cooperation and reconciliation, including by supporting 70 civil society events in cooperation with international and local partners, at which nearly 5,000 individuals from both communities engaged in sporting, cultural, educational and other activities.

In a later report [S/2016/11], covering developments from 21 June to 18 December, the Secretary-General said that the talks between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot leader, as well as their respective negotiators, continued to take place at a steady pace. In addition, the sides worked intensively in various working groups of experts and technical committees.

The Turkish forces installed closed-circuit television equipment at 28 locations along the length of its ceasefire line, in addition to the existing 29 locations in sectors 2 and 4. Of the 57 closed-circuit television-equipped locations, 42 posts had seen no reduction in military personnel. Without such reductions, closed-circuit television cameras conferred a military advantage and, as such, constituted a breach of the status quo. In addition, military positions established by both forces inside the buffer zone that violated the status quo remained in place and were classified as permanent violations.

Following the transfer by Mr. Anastasiades to Mr. Akıncı of the coordinates of 28 minefields (see p. 192), a survey by UNMAS, facilitated by UNFICYP, revealed that 25 of the 28 locations did not pose a threat. Regarding the remaining three locations, and two further areas that were identified from information received from the Turkish Cypriot security forces, UNFICYP deemed that they did not pose immediate risk to life, as they were either inaccessible or well-marked.

As at 18 December, out of the 2,001 persons on the official list of missing persons, the bicomunal teams of archaeologists of the Committee on Missing

Persons had exhumed the remains of 1,059 missing persons on both sides of the island. The remains of 625 individuals had been identified and returned to their families.

A related report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus [S/2016/15] covered developments from 15 May to 22 December.

Communications. Throughout the year, the Secretary-General received letters from the Government of Cyprus, and from Turkish Cypriot authorities containing charges and counter-charges, protests and accusations, and explanation of positions regarding the question of Cyprus. Letters from the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” were transmitted by Turkey.

By letters of 14 January [A/69/727-S/2015/25], 16 January [A/69/736-S/2015/33], 10 February [A/69/771-S/2015/101], 20 March [A/69/829-S/2015/197], 21 April [A/69/878-S/2015/267], 26 May [A/69/913-S/2015/379], 17 June [A/69/947-S/2015/452], 21 July [A/69/989-S/2015/553], 26 August [A/69/1016-S/2015/665], 11 September [A/69/1029-S/2015/701], 27 October [A/70/447-S/2015/822], 11 November [A/70/551-S/2015/864] and 14 December [A/70/620-S/2015/971], Cyprus reported alleged violations of international air traffic regulations, airspace and territorial waters of Cyprus by Turkey. The “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” responded to those allegations in letters of 4 February [A/69/761-S/2015/92], 25 February [A/69/798-S/2015/145], 3 April [A/69/859-S/2015/239], 8 May [A/69/898-S/2015/330], 9 June [A/69/931-S/2015/423], 26 June [A/69/967-S/2015/489], 29 July [A/69/995-S/2015/578], 5 October [A/70/404-S/2015/765], 13 November [A/70/561-S/2015/889] and 3 December [A/70/591-S/2015/932].

On 6 March [A/69/814-S/2015/169], responding to the statement made by Cyprus on 23 February [S/PV.7389] at the Security Council’s debate on “Maintenance of international peace and security: reflect on history, reaffirm the strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations”, the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” stated that none of the Council’s resolutions on Cyprus referred to the legitimate presence of Turkish troops in the island as “occupation”.

SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

On 29 January [meeting 7370], the Security Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2197(2015)**. The draft [S/2015/60] was submitted by the United Kingdom and the United States.

On 29 July [meeting 7496], the Security Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2234(2015)**. The draft [S/2015/564] was submitted by Angola, France, Lithuania, New Zealand, the Russian Federation, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States.

On 23 December (**decision 70/554**), the General Assembly decided that the item on the question of Cyprus would remain for consideration during its resumed seventieth (2016) session.

Financing

In June, the General Assembly considered the Secretary-General's report on the UNFICYP financial performance for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 [A/69/587], the proposed UNFICYP budget for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 [A/69/741] and the related ACABQ report [A/69/839/Add.7 & Corr.1].

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 25 June [meeting 97], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Fifth Committee [A/69/956], adopted **resolution 69/296 (Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus)** without vote [agenda item 153].

On 23 December (**decision 70/554**), the Assembly decided that the item on the question of the financing of UNFICYP would remain for consideration during its resumed seventieth (2016) session.

Ukraine

In early 2015, continuing fighting in eastern Ukraine between the Government and separatist groups led to increased civilian casualties and a deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation. Efforts to find a political solution to the conflict, made more urgent by an increase in violence in the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions in January-February, led to the adoption on 12 February of the Package of Measures for the Implementation of the 2014 Minsk Agreements [YUN 2014, p. 510]. On the same day, the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and France and the Chancellor of Germany adopted in Minsk, Belarus, a Declaration in support of the Package. On 17 February, by resolution 2202(2015) (see p. 195), the Council endorsed the Package of Measures, reaffirmed its respect for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and welcomed the Declaration of 12 February.

The east of Ukraine, however, saw an escalation of violence, frequent violations of the ceasefire, fighting involving the use of heavy weapons and tanks, grave violations of the Minsk Protocol and Package of Measures, lack of humanitarian access and an increasing number of displaced persons and refugees in Ukraine and neighbouring countries, which by July had reached 2.5 million people.

In July Malaysia, on behalf of the members of the Joint Investigation Team (Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, Netherlands, Ukraine) presented a draft resolu-

tion seeking to establish an international tribunal to hold accountable those responsible for the downing of flight Malaysia Airlines MH-17 [YUN 2014, p. 507]. On 29 July a draft resolution presented by Malaysia and co-sponsored by a number of Council and non-Council members was not adopted owing to the veto of the Russian Federation.

The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights kept the Security Council informed on human rights violations on the territory of Ukraine, including in the areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions not under Government control. He also spoke about the human rights situation in Crimea. Throughout the year, the Trilateral Contact Group—Ukraine, the Russian Federation and OSCE—sought a diplomatic resolution of the conflict.

Political, security and humanitarian developments

Security Council consideration. Briefing the Security Council on 21 January [S/PV.7365], the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, said that following weeks of relative calm, eastern Ukraine had seen the worst hostilities since the ceasefire and the Minsk protocol were agreed to on 5 September 2014 [YUN 2014, p. 510]. Signs of progress, such as the exchange of hundreds of prisoners, had been overshadowed by renewed fighting and a deepening political stalemate. Violence had spread throughout the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, including in heavily populated civilian areas, such as the city of Donetsk. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko had stated that there were more than 9,000 regular Russian troops in Ukraine, an accusation that Moscow denied. The upsurge in fighting had been accompanied by mutual recriminations between Kyiv and Moscow, and a continued impasse on the diplomatic and political front. A country that until the previous year had no displaced people reportedly had at least 850,000 citizens displaced within its borders and over 600,000 in neighbouring States.

Communications (22–24 January). On 22 January [S/2015/49], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged terrorist act in Donetsk committed on that same day. On 24 January [S/2015/55], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged terrorist attack committed on that same day in Mariupol, Donetsk region.

Security Council consideration. Briefing the Council on 26 January [S/PV.7368], Under-Secretary-General Feltman said that over 5,000 lives had been lost in the conflict. In just five days since the last Council meeting on Ukraine, close to 50 civilians had been killed. On 22 January, at least 10 civilians were killed amid heavy fighting in the city of Horlivka, and over a dozen civilians died when rockets hit their

trolleybus in Donetsk city. On 24 January, attacks with multiple rocket launcher systems hit the city of Mariupol, killing dozens of civilians. On 23 January, the leader of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic announced a unilateral withdrawal from the ceasefire and a boycott of future consultations with the Trilateral Contact Group and threatened to seize further territory, acts that constituted a violation of the Minsk accords. The Ukrainian leadership had been vocal about its commitment to the Minsk accords and had said that it remained in a defensive position. The National Security and Defence Council, however, had adopted emergency measures, particularly on “strengthening counter-terrorism measures”.

Communications (10–12 February). On 10 February [S/2015/102], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged shelling of Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, carried out on that same day. On 12 February [A/69/778-S/2015/110], the Russian Federation transmitted the Declaration of the Presidents of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and France and the Chancellor of Germany, adopted on the same day, in support of a package of measures for implementing the Minsk accords.

SECURITY COUNCIL ACTION

On 17 February [meeting 7384], the Security Council unanimously adopted **resolution 2202(2015)**. The draft [S/2015/117] was submitted by the Russian Federation.

Communication. On 24 February [S/2015/135], Ukraine transmitted the Protocol on the results of the consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group (Minsk, Belarus, 5 September 2014) and the memorandum on the fulfilment of the Protocol based on the results of the consultations of the Trilateral Contact Group (Minsk, 19 September 2014).

Security Council consideration. Briefing the Council on 6 March [S/PV.7400], Under-Secretary-General Feltman said that the most significant development related to the conflict in eastern Ukraine was the signing, on 12 February by the Trilateral Contact Group and rebel representatives, of a package of measures for implementing the Minsk agreements, which provided a road map for lasting peace. On that same day, however, the fight for Debaltseve had reached its climax, with innocent civilians caught in the crossfire. Since 18 February, the situation appeared to have calmed. Nevertheless, the ceasefire remained fragile, not having taken hold firmly across the region.

Nearly 1.1 million people were registered as internally displaced, more than 670,000 people had fled to neighbouring countries and more than 2 million people were living in conflict-affected areas. Five million people were in need of humanitarian assistance—1 million in Government-controlled areas and 3 million in non-Government-controlled areas.

The stark escalation of hostilities had led to increased violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, with a sharp spike in casualties and devastating consequences for the population. The estimated number of people killed had passed the 6,000 mark.

Communication. On 30 March [S/2015/225], Ukraine transmitted a letter from its Minister for Foreign Affairs requesting the UN to deploy a peacekeeping operation in Ukraine. The first step would be the dispatch of a preliminary assessment mission, so as to bring lasting peace and stability to the areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

Security Council consideration. Briefing the Council on 5 June [S/PV.7457], Under-Secretary-General Feltman said that the ceasefire continued to largely hold in most parts of the conflict zone, and the political process aimed at full implementation of the Minsk agreements was finally under way. The ongoing deadly clashes, the use of heavy weaponry, the laying of minefields on both sides of the contact line, the reported continued presence of foreign mercenaries and the reported flows of heavy weaponry into eastern Ukraine, however, ran contrary to key provisions of the Package of Measures. The latest death toll stood at over 6,400 people and the internally displaced numbered over 1.3 million. The Secretary-General visited Poland, Ukraine and Russia from 7 to 10 May and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Russian President Vladimir Putin had reassured him of their continued commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Communications. On 10 August [S/2015/611], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged attacks on Ukrainian military positions in the Donbas region. On 25 August [S/2015/662], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged decision by the Russian authorities to sentence Ukrainian citizens Oleg Sentsov and Oleksandr Kolchenko. On 27 August [S/2015/675], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged continued illegal detention by Russian authorities of Ukrainian parliament member Nadiya Savchenko. On 6 November [A/70/545-S/2015/848], Ukraine informed the Secretary-General of the release of the report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe following his visit to Ukraine (29 June–3 July). On 12 November [S/2015/869] and 27 November [S/2015/913], Ukraine transmitted comment of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the deterioration of the situation in Donbass. On 25 November [A/70/582-S/2015/920], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on an alleged decision by Russia's Supreme Court in the case of two convicted Ukrainians, Mr. Sentsov and Mr. Kolchenko.

Security Council consideration. Briefing the Council on 11 December [S/PV.7576], Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said that the situation in eastern Ukraine remained tense and volatile. Since the ceasefire began on 1 September, fighting throughout the conflict zone had generally subsided. Sporadic fighting, however, had resumed around parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. The parties had started to implement the agreement to withdraw so-called lighter weapons from the contact line, but the process remained incomplete. On the diplomatic front, modest but tangible progress had been made following the 2 October meeting of the leaders of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine. Most of the provisions of the Minsk agreements, nevertheless, remained unimplemented and the conflict zone remained highly militarized.

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović told the Council that, despite a considerable decrease in hostilities, people continued to die, increasingly from explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices. In the east, the lack of the rule of law made the human rights situation of the estimated 2.7 million people living in the territories controlled by the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic very difficult.

Communication. On 28 December [A/70/657-S/2016/24], Ukraine transmitted an appeal of the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine to parliaments of foreign States, the European Parliament and parliamentary assemblies of international organizations to extend and toughen sanctions against the Russian Federation for organizing terrorist acts in Ukraine.

Situation in Crimea

Communications. On 30 January [S/2015/76], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the alleged arrest by Russian Federation authorities of the Deputy Chairman of the Mejlis (executive-representative body) of the Crimean Tatar People. On 23 March [A/69/822-S/2015/194], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the anniversary of the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, by the Russian Federation. On 18 May [S/2015/347], alleging repression and violations of human rights of the Crimean Tatar population in Crimea by the Russian Federation, Ukraine transmitted information on the deportation of Crimean Tatars in 1944 and measures undertaken by Ukraine to protect the rights of the deported nations. On 18 August [S/2015/644], Ukraine transmitted a statement of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs protesting the visit of the Russian President, the head of the Russian Government and other high-level officials to Crimea and Sevastopol on 17 August. On 4 November [A/70/542-S/2015/838], Ukraine transmitted a joint statement of 36 UN Member States on the human rights situation in Crimea.

Downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17

Security Council consideration. On 10 July [S/2015/528], Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Ukraine requested the Security Council to establish an ad hoc international criminal tribunal under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to prosecute persons responsible for crimes connected with the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukrainian territory on 17 July 2014 [YUN 2014, p. 507].

On 20 July [S/2015/551], the Netherlands provided an update on the steps that it had taken regarding the downing of flight MH17 since its last letters to the Council [YUN 2014, p. 509] with regard to the repatriation and recovery efforts, the technical investigation and the accountability process.

On 29 July [S/PV.7498], the Council examined a draft resolution [S/2015/562] submitted by 18 States, by which the Council would establish an international tribunal for prosecuting persons responsible for crimes connected with the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. Annexed to the draft resolution was the Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. During the consultations, the Russian Federation presented a different draft resolution, focusing on further implementing resolution 2166(2014) [YUN 2014, p. 507] and requesting the Secretary-General to play an active role in the investigation and to report to the Council. The draft providing for the establishment of an international tribunal was not adopted owing to the negative vote of the Russian Federation, with Angola, China and Venezuela abstaining.

On 13 October [S/2015/780], the Netherlands drew the Council's attention to the final report regarding the accident, published on the same day by the Dutch Safety Board and submitted to the International Civil Aviation Organization. The report, available on the Board's website, concluded that "the in-flight disintegration of the aeroplane near the Ukrainian/Russian border was the result of the detonation of a warhead. The detonation occurred above the left hand side of the cockpit. The weapon used was a 9N314M-model warhead carried on the 9M38-series of missiles, as installed on the Buk surface-to-air missile system".

Other issues

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean

In response to General Assembly resolution 69/80 [YUN 2014, p. 511], the Secretary-General in July submitted a report [A/70/160 & Add.1] containing replies from Portugal, Spain, Qatar and the EU to his 9 February note requesting the views of Member States on ways to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ACTION

On 7 December [meeting 67], the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the First (Disarmament and International Security) Committee [A/70/465], adopted **resolution 70/72 (Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region)** without vote [agenda item 102].

Organization for Democracy and Economic Development–GUAM

The Organization for Democracy and Economic Development–GUAM (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova,

Ukraine), a regional cooperation organization established by the 2006 Kyiv Declaration [YUN 2006, p. 486], was headquartered in Kyiv, Ukraine. On the issue of conflict settlement, GUAM emphasized respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of its member States.

On 23 December (**decision 70/554**), the General Assembly decided that the item on protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development would remain for consideration during its resumed seventieth (2016) session.