



Weekly Geopolitical Report

Political, Security, and Strategic Affairs in the
Horn of Africa and Beyond

Coverage Period: September 21 – September 27

Publication Date: September 28, 2026



Issue No. 39 | 2026

Horn Review: Weekly Report

September 21 – September 27, 2026

1. Ethiopia

Addressing world leaders at the 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York on 23 September, President Taye Atske-Selassie placed Ethiopia's pursuit of reliable maritime access at the center of its diplomatic agenda. He argued that sustained national economic transformation supported by major infrastructure projects like a new international airport, cannot continue without dependable sea outlets that serve the shared interests of the Horn of Africa and deepen integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Extending his call for equitable global systems, the President simultaneously demanded comprehensive reform of the United Nations Security Council, questioning how the denial of a meaningful voice to 1.6 billion Africans can be justified after decades of waiting. He tied these institutional demands directly to broader multilateral goals, highlighting Ethiopia's commitments to climate action, renewable energy, and food security while reaffirming the nation's readiness to host COP32 in 2027.

Beyond policy reform, President Taye used the global platform to issue a stern warning regarding the country's worsening internal security crisis, labeling newly aligned opposition factions as "forces of destruction and mayhem." Demanding that destabilizing elements respect the right of the region's people to live in peace and prosperity, he reflected the federal administration's stance by firmly blaming foreign actors for exploiting domestic vulnerabilities to fuel internal conflict.

These diplomatic efforts unfolded against a rapidly deteriorating security backdrop. Seven Ethiopian armed groups announced the formation of the Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival on 21 September, uniting the Tigray People's Liberation Front, Amhara Fano National Movement, Oromo Liberation Army, Ogaden National Liberation Front, Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front, Benishangul Peoples' Liberation Movement and Gumuz Peoples' Democratic Movement in a coalition aimed at removing Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government.

After roughly a year of discussions the groups said they had set aside earlier differences to confront what they described as a shared survival threat. Their declaration came amid already elevated tensions in Tigray that had tested the 2022 Pretoria Agreement, while fighting continued in Oromia and Amhara. Some named members later publicly clarified or disputed their participation.

TPLF declared a new defensive war against the federal government on 23 September after forces seized the airports in Mekelle, Axum and Shire. They launched operations into neighbouring Afar and Amhara alongside local allies, including elements of Fano, actions

that effectively ended the four-year peace deal that followed the devastating 2020-2022 conflict. Reports also emerged of internal Tigrayan arrests of veteran commanders who had opposed the offensive.

The escalation created immediate alarm as residents in Tigray rushed to stockpile supplies and withdraw cash on 23 and 24 September. Ethiopian Airlines suspended flights to the region and later to the historic town of Lalibela because of nearby fighting. Network monitors confirmed subnational internet disruptions consistent with a telecoms blackout on 25 September, renewing fears of isolation and restricted access to food, medicine and cash similar to conditions that previously drove large numbers of people toward famine.

TPLF authorities responded on 24 September to African Union calls for de-escalation by accusing the bloc of failing to ensure implementation of the Pretoria Agreement. They said repeated requests for intervention and reconvening of the High-Level Panel had gone unanswered, leaving the deal largely dependent on federal actions, while alleging prior offensives and drone strikes and maintaining that dialogue remained their preferred path.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres expressed grave concern on 23 September over the airport seizures and spread of fighting, calling on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, immediately de-escalate, protect civilians, ensure humanitarian access and avoid a broader conflict while supporting African Union efforts including former President Olusegun Obasanjo's engagement.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development issued a parallel appeal on 23 September for immediate cessation of hostilities, maximum restraint, return to direct dialogue under the Pretoria framework and for neighbouring countries to refrain from actions that could aggravate the situation.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemned on 25 September the TPLF attacks, airport seizures and escalation into Afar and Amhara as threats to Ethiopia's unity and sovereignty. Minister of State Sheikh Shakhboot bin Nahyan Al Nahyan expressed full solidarity with the federal government, rejected any force-based change to the constitutional order, and urged an immediate halt to hostilities, civilian protection and adherence to the Pretoria Agreement.

United States Ambassador Ervin J. Massinga described the TPLF's large-scale offensive on 23 September as a poor decision and an unwinnable fight that benefits no one, recalling earlier sanctions and warning of possible further measures. He advised other armed groups to stay clear and insisted that reasoned political dialogue under African Union mediation remains the only viable course.

The United Kingdom condemned on 24 September the attacks in Afar and southern Tigray and the airport takeovers, rejected the alliance's aim of overthrowing the government, warned of severe consequences especially for women and girls, and

demanded an immediate end to fighting, return to African Union-led mediation and unhindered humanitarian access.

The European Union expressed deep concern on 23 September over the deteriorating situation, airport seizures and earlier drone strikes. It insisted on immediate de-escalation, resolution of differences solely through dialogue, full respect for international humanitarian law and condemnation of any interference with aid operations while reaffirming support for African Union mediation.

African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf voiced deep concern at the airport seizures, detention of federal personnel and expanding hostilities, as well as the formation of new alliances that risk reversing hard-won gains. He reaffirmed the Pretoria Agreement as the cornerstone of peace, called for utmost restraint and resumption of direct talks, urged neighbouring countries to avoid escalatory steps, and tasked former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo with urgent engagement.

Ethiopia and Djibouti advanced a major energy project with the Dangote Group on 24 September, announcing a 660-million-dollar refined petroleum products pipeline linking Damerjog in Djibouti with Dewele in Ethiopia. The 120-kilometre infrastructure aims to cut transport times sharply, lower costs and strengthen energy security along the vital trade corridor. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed highlighted how the project converts geographic proximity into shared prosperity by enabling larger fuel reserves and greater resilience against global disruptions. He noted benefits across manufacturing, transport, agriculture and urban centres and praised African capital invested in African infrastructure.

Additional domestic steps included the appointment of Abraham Belay as Commissioner of the Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission to advance the peaceful use of nuclear power within the country's clean-energy strategy. At the same time, East African Affairs Advisor Getachew Reda called at a Global Development Initiative meeting for revitalised international partnerships to accelerate the 2030 Agenda through focused progress on poverty, energy, food systems and climate action.

2. Sudan

Sudan's war entered another increasingly regional and politically consequential phase this week. Fighting continued across Kordofan and Blue Nile, while the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) intensified drone attacks against army-held areas. At the same time, Washington's pressure on the Sudanese military leadership deepened, and a new diplomatic dispute emerged between Sudan and Ethiopia after Addis Ababa accused Khartoum of supporting an alliance of Ethiopian opposition groups.

On the battlefield, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continued to consolidate gains in North Kordofan. The army and allied forces recaptured Sodari, a strategically located

town that had served as an important RSF base, following a broader offensive that has progressively reduced the paramilitary group's presence in the state. The capture of Sodari follows the army's earlier advances along the strategic route connecting El Obeid and Khartoum and represents another setback for the RSF in the Kordofan theatre.

The fighting has nevertheless remained highly destructive. Sudanese medical organizations accused the RSF of looting and destroying Sodari Rural Hospital after the town changed hands. The hospital had reportedly served more than 50,000 families before the war, and its destruction has further reduced access to healthcare in an already severely affected region.

The RSF, meanwhile, has increasingly relied on drones to compensate for territorial losses and extend its ability to strike deep into army-held areas. Drone attacks reportedly targeted cities and strategic infrastructure, including fuel depots in Al Jazirah State. The expanding use of drones has significantly altered the geography of the war by allowing both sides to threaten infrastructure and population center far from conventional front lines. It has also increased the vulnerability of essential economic infrastructure at a time when Sudan is already experiencing severe shortages.

The humanitarian and economic situation continued to deteriorate. Sudan's currency has suffered a dramatic decline, with the Sudanese pound losing almost half of its value in army-controlled areas since the beginning of the summer. The resulting inflation has sharply reduced household purchasing power and contributed to shortages of basic goods. The economic crisis is compounded by the fragmentation of Sudan's productive and financial systems between territories controlled by the SAF and RSF.

Economic deterioration is occurring alongside a deepening food crisis. Aid agencies have warned that severe funding shortages could disrupt emergency food distributions, while millions remain at risk of acute hunger. The combination of conflict, displacement, inflation, disrupted agricultural production and restricted humanitarian access is pushing Sudan closer to a wider famine emergency.

The regional dimension of the war became particularly prominent following renewed tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia. Ethiopia's army chief, Field Marshal Birhanu Julia, accused Sudan, Egypt and other external actors of supporting a newly formed alliance of Ethiopian opposition groups seeking to remove Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. The alliance includes the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Army and the Amhara Fano National Movement, among others. The accusations came as fighting intensified in northern Ethiopia and the alliance expanded its military activities.

Sudan strongly rejected the accusation. The SAF described the claims as baseless and reaffirmed that Sudan does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. At the same time, however, the Sudanese military repeated its own allegations that Ethiopian

territory was being used to support the RSF through training, supplies and drone operations. Neither side's accusations have been independently established.

The exchange is significant because it adds another layer to an already complicated regional environment. Sudan's eastern and southeastern borderlands have become increasingly important to the war, while Ethiopia's renewed internal conflict is unfolding alongside its deteriorating relations with Eritrea and continuing tensions with Egypt over the Nile. The possibility of overlapping conflicts and competing alliances across the three countries increases the risk that Sudan's civil war could become further embedded in the wider security competition of the Horn of Africa.

Diplomatically, relations between Khartoum and Washington also remained strained. The United States reportedly withheld a visa for SAF commander and Sovereignty Council Chairman Abdel Fattah al-Burhan ahead of the UN General Assembly, with the decision reportedly connected to US efforts to secure a 90-day humanitarian ceasefire. Sudan rejected what it described as external pressure and maintained that it would not accept externally imposed solutions. The dispute has consequently developed beyond the question of a single diplomatic visit into a broader disagreement over the legitimacy of the army-led authorities and the terms of international engagement with Sudan.

The question of legitimacy is becoming increasingly central to Sudan's diplomatic environment. While the SAF continues to present itself as the defender of Sudanese sovereignty and state institutions, Washington has avoided formally recognizing the army-backed authorities as Sudan's legitimate government. This creates a difficult situation in which the military leadership controls major state institutions and territory while facing international pressure over its conduct of the war and its resistance to ceasefire proposals.

Taken together, this week's developments show a Sudanese conflict that is becoming increasingly difficult to separate from the wider politics of the Horn of Africa. The SAF has continued to make territorial gains in North Kordofan, but the RSF's expanding drone campaign demonstrates that battlefield momentum has not translated into decisive military victory. At the same time, economic collapse and worsening hunger are increasing the costs for civilians, while tensions with Ethiopia and the deteriorating relationship with Washington are adding new external pressures. Sudan's war is therefore evolving from a struggle over territorial control into a broader contest involving competing claims to state legitimacy, external alliances and the regional balance of power.

3. Egypt

Egypt rejected Israeli annexation efforts in Palestinian territories and any displacement of Palestinians. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly spoke on behalf of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi at a United Nations General Assembly summit on Palestine. He called for a

Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and full implementation of the Gaza plan.

Egypt outlined its priorities at the United Nations General Assembly, focusing on Gaza, the Strait of Hormuz, Sudan, and regional stability. Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly led the delegation while Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held intensive meetings. Cairo emphasized practical responses to Middle East crises and protection of Arab and African security.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty hosted eight Arab and Muslim counterparts in New York to discuss ending the Gaza war. The group included ministers from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, and Indonesia. Participants called for full implementation of the Gaza peace plan and accelerated early recovery efforts.

He also stated that Egypt's foreign policy rests on strategic commitment and rejects military solutions to crises. He highlighted contacts with counterparts from Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and others within a regional quartet. Abdelatty stressed the need to rebuild trust between the United States and Iran and pursue political settlements.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi held a phone call with Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council Chairman Rashad Al-Alimi. The leaders discussed developments in Yemen and efforts to restore security and stability. El-Sisi reaffirmed Egypt's support for Yemen's unity, national institutions, and a comprehensive political settlement.

Egypt hosted defense ministers from Greece and Cyprus to advance security and energy cooperation in the eastern Mediterranean. The meetings formed part of ongoing trilateral coordination. Discussions focused on regional stability and joint interests in the Mediterranean basin.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman visited Egypt amid escalating Houthi attacks and Red Sea tensions. Talks addressed maritime security, the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, and broader regional coordination. Egypt reiterated that Saudi and Gulf security form an integral part of its national security.

Turkish defense companies participated in the El Alamein Airshow seeking closer military-industrial cooperation with Egypt. The engagement reflected efforts to expand defense ties between Ankara and Cairo. Discussions covered potential sales and joint projects.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty met Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in New York. The talks focused on implementing the Gaza peace plan, regional de-escalation, and bilateral relations. Both sides stressed continued coordination on Palestinian and regional issues.

Egypt condemned Israeli escalation in the West Bank and settler incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque. Official statements described the actions as serious violations. Cairo reaffirmed

its rejection of measures altering the status of holy sites.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly told the United Nations that Egypt's water security is an existential issue. He linked the matter to broader regional and international concerns. The statement formed part of Egypt's address on development and security priorities.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty called for a rapid shift from emergency humanitarian response to early recovery and reconstruction in Gaza. He spoke at an event co-chaired with Germany, France, and the European Commission. Abdelatty urged full implementation of the Gaza peace roadmap without delay.

Egypt, Greece, and Cyprus reaffirmed their commitment to deepen regional partnership during meetings on the United Nations General Assembly sidelines. The trilateral framework covers security, energy, and economic cooperation. Leaders described it as a successful model for eastern Mediterranean stability.

Egypt condemned Houthi missile attacks targeting Saudi Arabia's Taif and Yanbu. Official statements described the strikes as violations of international law and threats to regional security. Cairo expressed solidarity with Saudi Arabia and support for efforts to restore stability in Yemen.

4. Eritrea

The Jerusalem Post reported on September 25 that the Eritrean Blue Revolution Front (EBRF), which grew out of the diaspora protest movement Brigade N'Hamedu, is seeking to turn activism into organized opposition to President Isaias Afwerki's government. The article profiles the group's work in Israel, including community programs and political outreach, and describes an August congress attended by about 1,300 members and supporters. Its account also situates the movement within Eritrea's post-independence record of indefinite national service, the 2001 crackdown on reformists and independent media, and the absence of national elections. These details are reported by the Post and the activists it interviewed; the movement's claims about its organization, reach, and capabilities should be understood as self-description rather than independently verified measures of its influence.

The EBRF's evolution from street protest toward a more structured political network signals an effort to address the fragmentation that has constrained Eritrean opposition abroad. Its community initiatives in Israel may help sustain membership across generations, while contacts with U.S. political figures suggest an attempt to build external visibility; neither activity, by itself, demonstrates leverage over decision-making inside Eritrea. Leaders' emphasis on the diaspora's military experience points to a more confrontational political horizon, but the article offers no evidence that the movement has an operational presence or capacity inside the country. The gap between parents' stated commitment to return and their children's social integration in Israel also illustrates a

practical challenge for diaspora mobilization: maintaining a shared political project across communities with different relationships to exile and Eritrea.

Ethiopia's Chief of General Staff, Field Marshal Birhanu Julia, accused Eritrea of acting as an intermediary between foreign powers and Ethiopian armed groups, alleging that Eritrea, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Sudan, Egypt, and unnamed external powers were involved in supporting a newly announced alliance opposed to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. The report says Eritrea has previously denied Ethiopian allegations that it backs domestic insurgencies; Julia's latest claims, made through the army's media outlet, are not independently substantiated in the article. The alliance's members include the TPLF, Amhara Fano and the Oromo Liberation Army, but its formation does not itself establish that Eritrea is providing material or operational support.

The come amid renewed fighting in northern Ethiopia and wider deterioration in relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara. By linking the new coalition to Eritrea and external sponsors, Ethiopia's military leadership is presenting domestic insurgencies as part of a regional effort to weaken the federal government—a claim that could reinforce security mobilization and diplomatic pressure on Asmara. The article provides no evidence establishing the alleged chain of sponsorship, so the accusation should be treated as political messaging unless independently corroborated. Still, its timing is significant: renewed Tigray tensions and the growing Ethiopia–Eritrea dispute over regional security and Red Sea access make mutual threat narratives more likely to compound instability.

In an interview with Ethiopian Army media, Chief of General Staff Field Marshal Birhanu Julia said Eritrea was acting as an intermediary between foreign powers and armed groups in Ethiopia, and alleged that Sudan, Egypt and other external actors were backing the newly formed Ethiopian Peoples' Forces Alliance for Survival. His remarks carry weight given his senior position and the Ethiopian military's access to security information; they point to a proxy alignment in which Eritrea is secretly backing forces opposed to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. The alliance includes the TPLF, Amhara Fano and the Oromo Liberation Army, groups with distinct agendas that may complicate sustained coordination.

The interview comes amid renewed fighting in Tigray and worsening Ethiopia–Eritrea relations, including disputes over Ethiopia's pursuit of Red Sea access. Eritrea's support could turn Ethiopia's overlapping internal conflicts into a wider regional contest involving neighbouring states and external powers. Eritrea denies backing Ethiopian insurgencies; nevertheless, the chief of staff's warning underscores Addis Ababa's view that the alliance is part of a coordinated effort to weaken the federal government, rather than a collection of unrelated domestic rebellions.

Eritrea's UN mission said Foreign Minister Osman Saleh met UN Under-Secretary-

General Rosemary DiCarlo on the sidelines of UNGA81 to discuss the Horn of Africa, Red Sea security, and Eritrea–UN relations. The announcement signals Asmara’s effort to sustain high-level multilateral engagement as its regional strategic profile rises, but provides no details on specific initiatives or outcomes; its description of Eritrea’s role in advancing regional peace reflects the government’s framing.

Eritrea’s UN mission said Foreign Minister Osman Saleh met his Omani counterpart, Sayyid Badr, on the sidelines of UNGA81 to discuss bilateral ties and regional and international issues. The meeting reflects Asmara’s continued diplomatic outreach in the Gulf and Red Sea region, though the post offers no details on specific agreements or concrete outcomes.

Eritrea’s UN mission said Foreign Minister Osman Saleh held separate meetings with Swedish Foreign Minister Maria Malmer Stenergard and UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell on the sidelines of UNGA81. The Swedish talks addressed bilateral ties and coordination on shared interests, while the UK meeting covered regional and international issues and prospective cooperation in multilateral forums. The contacts signal Asmara’s continued diplomatic re-engagement with European partners, but the government’s post gives no indication of specific commitments or policy changes.

Eritrea’s UN mission said Foreign Minister Osman Saleh met Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty in New York on the sidelines of UNGA81, continuing a series of recent high-level engagements between the two governments. The meeting is significant in the context of Cairo and Asmara’s shared strategic interest in counterbalancing Ethiopia, particularly as tensions persist over Red Sea access and Ethiopia’s regional ambitions. Their closer alignment could give Egypt additional diplomatic leverage around Ethiopia’s periphery, with Eritrea serving as a pressure point.

5. Djibouti

Aliko Dangote is helping finance a \$660 million fuel pipeline linking Djibouti’s Damerjog port to a distribution facility at Dewele, Ethiopia, with around 400 million litres of storage. The project is expected to begin operating within 18 months and is intended to cut fuel transport times to Addis Ababa from five days to one. Ethiopia’s reliance on Djibouti for petroleum imports makes the pipeline a significant investment in supply-chain resilience, though the timeline and projected efficiency gains remain to be demonstrated.

The project could deepen Ethiopia’s dependence on Djibouti’s corridor even as Addis Ababa seeks greater access to the Red Sea, highlighting the gap between its maritime ambitions and present logistics. For Djibouti, the pipeline may strengthen its role as Ethiopia’s principal gateway and increase port activity and state revenue. Dangote’s involvement also reflects the growing role of major African private investors in strategic infrastructure, while the announcement alone does not guarantee the project’s timely

completion or commercial performance.

UNHCR warned that renewed fighting in Yemen could drive more than 10,000 people across the Red Sea to Djibouti and push internal displacement above 230,000, on top of the 5.2 million already displaced before the latest escalation. More than 3,000 people had reportedly reached Djibouti earlier in September, while the agency said deteriorating humanitarian conditions and an expected easing of sea conditions after mid-October could increase arrivals. The figures are UNHCR projections, and its spokesperson also highlighted severe funding gaps in both Yemen and Djibouti operations.

The displacement reflects how fighting along Yemen's Red Sea coast is generating consequences beyond the battlefield: civilian flight is adding pressure to Djibouti's reception and protection capacity as regional maritime insecurity grows. The humanitarian response is particularly exposed, with UNHCR reporting that its 2026 operations were only 18 percent funded in Yemen and 15 percent in Djibouti. If the fighting intensifies, limited aid capacity could compound the risks facing people fleeing by sea and those already displaced inside Yemen.

At the UN General Assembly on 26 September, Djibouti's Foreign Minister Abdoukader Houssein Omar said several thousand people fleeing Yemen's renewed conflict had recently arrived in Djibouti, placing pressure on the country's capacity to receive and assist them. He appealed for international support, called for a peaceful settlement in Yemen, and warned that disruption to Red Sea shipping could seriously affect supply chains. His remarks underscore Djibouti's exposure to the crisis as both a nearby host country and a state whose economy and strategic position depend on secure maritime traffic.

6. South Sudan

South Sudan moved into a decisive phase of its long-delayed political transition this week, with President Salva Kiir dissolving the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity ahead of the country's scheduled 22 December national elections. The move followed amendments to the electoral framework that removed the requirement for a permanent constitution and national census to be completed before elections. Kiir will remain president throughout the electoral period, while a caretaker administration assumes responsibility for government affairs.

The dissolution has nevertheless intensified concerns over the credibility and inclusiveness of the electoral process. Opposition figures and rights groups have questioned whether elections can be conducted in an environment where political competition and civic space remain constrained. Amnesty International called on the authorities to guarantee freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, while warning against intimidation of journalists, civil society actors and political opponents. The organization also stressed that the legitimacy of the elections will depend not simply

on whether voting takes place, but on whether citizens can participate freely, safely and equally.

The political developments come against a backdrop of continuing insecurity. Earlier violence in Jonglei State, including the August ambush that killed two Ethiopian UN peacekeepers and injured seven others, underscored the persistent risks facing civilians and international personnel. The UN has called for a full investigation and accountability for those responsible. Although the incident predates this week, it remains relevant to the broader security environment in which the electoral process is unfolding.

At the same time, South Sudan continued to deepen its engagement with the East African Community (EAC). On 24 September, Juba launched national consultations on the proposed Constitution of the EAC Political Confederation, a framework intended as a transitional step toward an eventual East African Political Federation. Consultations are scheduled to run through 7 October, with public hearings planned in Juba, Rumbek, Wau and Bor. The initiative gives South Sudan an avenue to participate more actively in the EAC's longer-term political integration agenda despite its ongoing domestic political and security challenges.

Overall, this week marked an important institutional shift for South Sudan: the transitional power-sharing arrangement has effectively given way to an electoral phase. Yet the central challenge remains whether the December elections can provide a credible political transition rather than simply formalize the existing balance of power. The combination of unresolved security concerns, restricted civic space and continuing political uncertainty means that the credibility of the electoral process will depend heavily on whether political participation can be broadened and meaningful safeguards established before voting begins.

7. Somalia and Somaliland

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud addressed the general debate of the 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York stating that Somalia is determined to hold its first election by universal suffrage since 1969. He framed this objective within a broader program of constitutional reform establishing universal suffrage, accountable institutions and a multiparty system and declared that differences would be resolved through dialogue, law and elections, not violence. The President also called for predictable and sustainable support for Somalia's security transition, including adequate financing for the African Union mission and for a more accountable UN partnership that reinforces rather than replaces national leadership criticizing parallel and off budget aid structures. He further called for Security Council reform to better represent Africa and for an immediate lasting ceasefire in Gaza with a two state solution while also addressing broader multilateral challenges and Somalia's role as a non permanent Security Council member.

In a separate address to the United Nations General Assembly President Mohamud said most United Nations assistance in Somalia bypasses national systems and called for a change in how it is delivered. He stated that aid was largely delivered through separate structures fragmented projects and arrangements outside the government budget, making it harder for Somali authorities to plan, coordinate resources and measure results. The President stated that Somalia is not calling for the United Nations to withdraw but rather for a partnership in which Somali institutions lead implementation and both sides are accountable for results.

Former Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo called on President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to lead an inclusive national dialogue, secure a political agreement on the electoral process and hold an inclusive election within a short period. Farmaajo outlined three proposals in an open letter addressed to the President saying Somalia is facing sensitive political, security, economic and social circumstances. As a first step, he called for a national dialogue founded on genuine compromise stating that a Somali led dialogue was essential to preventing foreign interference and decisions concerning the country from being made externally. Second, he proposed that Somalia's political stakeholders reach an agreement on the electoral process arguing that a political settlement on the election was fundamental to maintaining a legitimate government and holding a vote accepted by all sides.

On another note Former President Sharif Sheikh Ahmed publicly accused President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of deepening political divisions in the country continuing opposition criticism amid ongoing disputes over constitutional amendments, term extensions, and the electoral process.

Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi issued a public warning to opposition politicians against mobilising or organising armed groups or militias in Mogadishu stating the federal government would take firm action against any attempts to undermine security in the capital. He referenced past sacrifices by security personnel and ongoing political tensions.

Puntland security forces intercepted two military trucks carrying more than 100 recruits who were reportedly travelling to a federal government run facility. The forces detained nearly 130 federal government soldiers and officers with reports varying slightly around 130 to 134 mostly described as new recruits from Galmudug areas en route to a training base such as Hananbuure in Galgaduud plus vehicles, after the convoy entered northern Galkayo on the Puntland administered side of the divided city. Puntland officials cited unauthorised entry amid existing federal Puntland disputes over force movements. Talks followed with Galmudug officials and Puntland later handed the personnel and in some accounts the vehicles over to Galmudug after agreement that the movement was not intentional hostility and that the recruits were primarily local to Galmudug.

On the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly in New York Somali Foreign Minister

Abdisalam Abdi Ali met Moroccan counterpart Nasser Bourita. Talks focused on strengthening bilateral relations, implementing the 2026–2028 cooperation roadmap signed in Rabat in late 2025, capacity building for Somali youth including increased Moroccan scholarships and coordination on regional and multilateral issues. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the quality of high level ties and convergence on shared interests.

UN Secretary General António Guterres met Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in New York. The Secretary General reiterated the UN's continued commitment to supporting Somalia's key national priorities. The two discussed peace and security developments as well as efforts for continued support for the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia.

On the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly in New York President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud held bilateral meetings with Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić, Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. Talks focused on strengthening bilateral relations, cooperation, and mutual interests.

On the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, senior officials from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States held talks focused on supporting Somalia's security and stability as well as protecting its territorial integrity and sovereignty. Somalia was represented at state minister level and discussions also covered political, economic and humanitarian challenges.

A Pakistan Air Force delegation led by Air Marshal Muhammad Sarfraz continued high level talks in Mogadishu on developing the Somali Air Force, training, institutional capacity and broader defence cooperation. Meetings with Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre and other officials formed part of a multi day visit aimed at rebuilding Somalia's air capabilities amid the security transition.

On another front, Türkiye's Directorate of Communications' Center for Combating Disinformation denied circulating social media claims that Somalia had introduced new visa or travel restrictions targeting Turkish citizens. Officials stated the reports were baseless and that no such decision had been taken by the Somali government.

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre confirmed in an interview that Turkish investors would develop a roughly US\$4 billion port, special economic zone and related industrial facilities in the Warsheekh area on the outskirts of Mogadishu under a public private partnership. The project forms part of a broader New Mogadishu vision with related highway construction already begun and the site near a planned satellite launch facility. He also noted early stage Qatari interest in Mogadishu airport.

The United Kingdom announced £5 million in new humanitarian funding to help Somali communities prepare for anticipated El Niño related flooding during the October

December Deyr rainy season. The support part of a wider UK package to benefit up to 600,000 people through early warning systems, temporary relocation, flood protection and essential health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and protection services, including for nearly 100 IDP camps and areas such as Jowhar and Beletweyne. It is channelled via existing programs including Caafimaad Plus and RESTORE. Estimates indicated 2.5 to 3.5 million people could be exposed to flooding.

Reports detailed a deepening dispute between Uganda and Turkey with direct implications for Somalia's security architecture. Uganda's People's Defence Forces had suspended all defence and military cooperation with Turkey announced days earlier. Sources linked the rupture, publicly framed around an extradition dispute, to Uganda's troop presence in Somalia under AUSSOM, roughly 4,500 troops, plus bilateral forces, Turkey's expanding training role with tens of thousands of Somali soldiers trained, and concerns over the future of AUSSOM funding and logistics after earlier U.S. signals on UNSOS support. Sources claimed Somalia had sought an end or reduction of Uganda's deployment given growing Somali force capacity and that Uganda risked losing tens of millions of dollars annually in reimbursements. Turkish commercial interests in Uganda including a major railway contract, were also noted as potentially affected.

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency working with international partners killed a senior Al-Shabaab commander, Omar Siyad Caraaye who was responsible for clan affairs and relations with certain clans in Middle Shabelle plus three fighters and wounded another commander, Abdi Mohamed Nur, also linked to clan affairs. The operation targeted militants leaving a meeting in the Guulane and Al-Furqaan areas of Middle Shabelle region. Two other named leadership figures reportedly escaped.

Somalia's National Intelligence and Security Agency announced that it killed 12 Al-Shabaab members in a planned operation in the Buur Saruur area of Middle Shabelle region about two kilometres southeast of Ali Gaduud. The agency said the operation also destroyed supplies and facilities used by the group with security forces continuing to pursue remaining militants in the area. This formed part of intensified intelligence led operations in Middle Shabelle and Hiiraan.

The Somali National Army particularly the 27th and 17th Ground Forces Brigades conducted a security operation in areas between Sabiid, Caanoole and Bariire in Lower Shabelle region. Officials framed it as part of ongoing efforts to clear remaining militant presence and secure the area. On another front Defence Minister Ahmed Moallim Fiqi stated that national forces with public support are capable of resisting Al-Shabaab even if AUSSOM withdraws claiming the group cannot capture even a single village without the AU mission. He criticised unnamed politicians for portraying Somalia as collapsing or at risk of an Al-Shabaab takeover saying this undermines confidence and ignores progress. The remarks came amid AUSSOM and UNSOS funding uncertainty.

On Maritime Security front Puntland's maritime police force freed the oil tanker MT Sibu 1 on Friday, ending a five-week hijacking off Somalia's northern coast with all 20 crew safe. Nineteen pirates escaped from a convoy of vehicles transporting them to Puntland's regional capital on Saturday, a day after being captured in the SIBU tanker raid.

Somaliland

A high level Somaliland government delegation comprising cabinet ministers, members of parliament, presidential advisors and senior state officials arrived in Minnesota for diaspora engagements. The visit followed President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi high level activities in Washington involving meetings with members of Congress, administration officials, and think tanks. Minnesota hosts one of the largest Somali-speaking communities in the United States, including a substantial Somaliland diaspora active in business, education, and public affairs and the state has been a key centre for diaspora political organising.

In parallel Somaliland's representative to the United States, Ambassador Bashir Goth publicly called on the diaspora to gather for a Somaliland Recognition Rally at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza near UN headquarters in New York on September 23 during UN General Assembly high level week. The announcement came during President Irro's ongoing U.S. visit and diaspora engagements aimed at advancing recognition efforts.

President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi Irro delivered an address at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York in which he presented Somaliland's case for international recognition highlighted its democratic governance and stability since 1991 emphasised the importance of Berbera Port and the territory's position along the Gulf of Aden and near the Bab el-Mandeb for maritime security and trade and discussed prospects for closer cooperation with the United States on security, investment, and regional stability. The appearance formed part of his broader U.S. and UNGA period engagements.

At the same Council on Foreign Relations event, Irro accused Türkiye of campaigning across Africa to prevent Somaliland from gaining international recognition stating that Türkiye has been visiting African countries and meeting their presidents. He also identified Egypt as one of the governments opposing Somaliland's recognition and argued that lobbying by influential countries had discouraged some governments that might otherwise have considered recognizing Somaliland. These remarks were published by the Somaliland presidency.

President Irro met Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon in New York on the margins of the 81st UN General Assembly. Talks focused on strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation in regional security, maritime trade and freedom of navigation, economic development, technology, water resources, agriculture, and investment. Irro expressed gratitude for Israel's formal recognition of Somaliland in December 2025 and Danon reaffirmed the value of the partnership and voiced hope that

Somaliland would one day have a vote at the UN.

Engagements with Taiwan continued in the broader context of the multi day visit by Interior and National Security Minister Abdalle Mohamed Arab and accompanying officials. Prior meetings covered security, public safety, disaster preparedness, electoral systems support including the Integrated Electoral Management System and related cooperation and the visit overlapped with Somaliland's role as a founding member of the Taiwan led World Alliance for Disaster Management.

Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia lung received the Somaliland delegation led by Interior and National Security Minister Abdalle Mohamed Arab. Discussions covered expanding bilateral cooperation in coast-guard affairs, healthcare, talent development, and regional security. Taiwan officials described ties as strong and growing; the minister expressed hope of visiting Somaliland. The same period included a welcome for the delegation at Taiwan's International Cooperation and Development Fund, where talks addressed ongoing projects such as the National Data Center under construction in Somaliland and potential further collaboration in police and judicial information systems, technical education, and related areas.

8. Yemen

Fighting in this period centred on the Kahboub Mountains in Taiz and Lahj, the high ground overlooking Bab el-Mandeb and the approaches linking the Red Sea coast (including Mokha) to government-held areas further south and east. Secondary fronts remained active in Marib, al-Jawf, al-Bayda and parts of Hodeidah.

Houthi forces pressed to seize the Kahboub heights in order to sever the Red Sea coast from remaining government positions. Clashes focused on Al-Wazi'iyah district in Taiz and areas near Ras al-Ara. Government forces reported strikes on Houthi supply lines near Bab el-Mandeb and in al-Bayda, claimed to have downed drones, and reported limited advances on the outskirts of Taiz. Saudi airstrikes continued across highland positions and other provinces; Houthis reported civilian casualties, including in Mokha. Diplomatically, reports indicated that the United States had prepared but then cancelled planned airstrikes on Houthi targets following Saudi requests for support. Saudi Arabia explored Oman-mediated contacts aimed at a possible ceasefire. Britain offered limited air-to-air refuelling support for Saudi aircraft. Houthi statements warned against external military involvement.

Government forces reported repelling Houthi attempts on the Taiz–Aden supply route and positions in Al-Maqatirah and Hayfan. Clashes continued in Lahj, Taiz, Hodeidah and Saada. Houthis claimed missile and drone attacks on Saudi targets including Riyadh, Yanbu and Jazan; Saudi Arabia reported intercepting missiles directed at Taif and Yanbu. Saudi airstrikes continued in Taiz and al-Jawf. Oman-mediated contacts persisted in parallel with the fighting.

Contest for high ground near Bab el-Mandeb continued. Government forces claimed to have taken positions on Jabal Naman (Lahij–Taiz border) and struck Houthi vehicles near Jabal Kahbub; Houthis claimed to have repelled some advances. Saudi and government forces targeted Houthi weapons depots and routes in Marib. Houthis reported Saudi airstrikes on bridges and roads in Taiz, Marib, Saada and other provinces. Saudi military chiefs met counterparts from Pakistan and Turkey in Riyadh to review Houthi threats under existing defence arrangements. Iran put forward a broader ceasefire proposal that included Yemen; the United States rejected it.

Government forces conducted multiple air and ground operations across Taiz, claiming advances in southern areas including higher ground such as Jabal Bazel and strikes on Houthi positions in several districts. Houthis reported continued Saudi airstrikes in Taiz, al-Jawf, Marib, Dhamar and Saada. Government statements referred to hundreds of attacks on Houthi positions, personnel and equipment in preceding days. On 28 September, Saudi and Omani delegates arrived in Sanaa for talks with Houthi leaders on a near-final draft peace text. Reported elements included a possible extended truce, direct discussions under UN auspices, a transitional period, easing of restrictions on Houthi-controlled ports and airports, salary payments and road openings. Limited prisoner exchanges were also noted.

Houthis retained their coastal gains (Mokha and positions near Bab el-Mandeb) while seeking to consolidate the Kahboub high ground. Government forces, supported by Saudi airstrikes, focused on containing further advances, protecting supply routes and striking Houthi logistics. Diplomatic activity centred on Oman as mediator, US non-intervention in direct strikes, Saudi outreach to Pakistan and Turkey, and the late-week talks in Sanaa. Displacement continued to rise as civilians left the main fighting zones.

9. Kenya

Kenya spent the week of September 21 to 27 balancing an ambitious foreign policy agenda with increasingly active domestic politics ahead of the 2027 election. President William Ruto used the 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York to strengthen Kenya's international profile, while at home opposition realignments, court decisions, economic pressures and election related tensions dominated the political conversation.

At the UN, Ruto again pushed for reform of the Security Council, arguing that Africa's 54 countries should have permanent representation. He also criticized the unequal global financial system, particularly the higher borrowing costs faced by developing countries, and called for more consistent application of international law. Kenya also became one of the founding participants in the new Partners for Multilateralism initiative alongside countries including India, Brazil, Canada and Australia, as well as the European Union. The grouping seeks to defend the UN Charter while promoting reforms in global governance, finance, trade, climate policy, health and artificial intelligence.

Ruto's meetings in New York also focused heavily on economic and security cooperation. Talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio covered critical minerals, artificial intelligence, nuclear energy, trade and regional security, including Somalia, Sudan and Haiti. The United States also emphasized greater American investment in Kenya's mineral sector and local value addition. Kenya separately signed an artificial intelligence cooperation agreement with Anthropic covering skills development, research, AI safety and possible applications in education and public services.

The government also promoted several major investment proposals. Discussions continued around a proposed \$16 billion refinery in Lamu involving Aliko Dangote and the Africa Finance Corporation. Kenya also announced cooperation in industrial development, clean cooking, hospitals and education, although many of these remain proposed investments or letters of intent rather than completed projects. The Africa Finance Corporation also announced plans to establish a regional office in Nairobi.

Regionally, Kenya's most notable development was its exchange with Uganda over petroleum imports. President Yoweri Museveni criticized the previous reliance on Kenyan intermediaries, while President Ruto defended Kenya's fuel import arrangement as a system that had reduced brokers and improved supply stability. Museveni later softened his position and acknowledged Ruto's role in addressing the issue. The dispute matters because Uganda remains heavily dependent on Kenyan ports, pipelines and transport infrastructure for fuel imports.

Domestically, politics moved further toward the 2027 election. The High Court ruled that retired presidents cannot be prevented from participating in political parties simply because they receive retirement benefits, a decision with direct implications for former President Uhuru Kenyatta and his continued political involvement. Opposition leaders also announced the rebranding of the former Azimio coalition as the Ukombozi Alliance, although disputes quickly emerged over its structure and identity.

Uhuru further stirred debate by repeating his claim that Raila Odinga had won the 2022 presidential election. Government figures rejected the statement, while some opposition figures questioned why the issue was being revived. The exchange showed that the political memory of the 2022 election remains important as alliances for 2027 begin to take shape. At the same time, Deputy President Kithure Kindiki continued intensive political engagement in Mount Kenya, while Kalonzo Musyoka stressed that the next election must be conducted by credible institutions.

The courts also clarified part of the coming electoral process by upholding the use of a national presidential tallying and verification centre. Political violence remained another concern, with reporting indicating several deaths linked to political rallies during 2026 and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission identifying possible hotspots

ahead of the election period. Church leaders and opposition politicians also warned against intimidation, ethnic mobilization and misuse of security institutions.

Economically, the government received an important legal victory when the Court of Appeal upheld the Affordable Housing Act, allowing the housing levy and the broader housing program to continue. Kenya's oil ambitions also moved forward with the arrival of a drilling rig in Mombasa for the South Lokichar project in Turkana, ahead of planned drilling.

Kenya's short term financial position remained relatively stable. The shilling traded at around Sh129.48 to the US dollar on September 24, while foreign exchange reserves stood at roughly \$15 billion, enough for about six months of imports. However, rising international oil prices remained a concern for an economy heavily dependent on imported fuel. The flower industry also complained that exporters were still owed billions of shillings in VAT refunds, putting pressure on an important source of foreign exchange.

In education, university lecturers issued a seven day strike notice over implementation and funding of their collective bargaining agreement, raising the possibility of another disruption in public universities. The government was also preparing for expected El Niño rains, identifying flood prone areas in Nairobi and making plans for possible evacuations and emergency assistance. In Mombasa, authorities destroyed more than a tonne of methamphetamine valued at about Sh8.2 billion, highlighting the continuing problem of international drug trafficking through the Kenyan coast.

Overall, the week showed Kenya trying to expand its diplomatic and economic influence abroad while facing a much more competitive and unsettled political environment at home. Ruto's government is pursuing ambitious projects in energy, technology, infrastructure and international diplomacy, but it is simultaneously dealing with election tensions, university financing problems, legal challenges, economic pressures and regional instability. The growing contrast between Kenya's international ambitions and its domestic political pressures is likely to remain one of the country's central stories as the 2027 election approaches.

10. The Gulf Countries

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia faced another period of heightened military pressure alongside intensive diplomatic and defense coordination, as Houthi missile and drone attacks continued to target Saudi territory while Riyadh sought to strengthen regional security cooperation. Saudi air defenses and the Coalition to Restore Legitimacy in Yemen intercepted multiple ballistic missiles and drones directed toward Riyadh, Khamis Mushait, and other strategic locations. The security alerts extended into civilian life in the capital, where educational institutions were instructed to shift to online learning for the final week of September.

Saudi forces responded with an extensive air campaign against Houthi military positions across Taiz, Al-Jawf, and Marib, involving dozens of targeted strikes.

The escalation also affected the regional energy environment. Following earlier disruptions to the East-West Pipeline, Saudi Arabia redirected crude shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, contributing to regional exports reaching 12.8 million barrels per day by late September. The development highlighted the relationship between the continuing military confrontation and the security of regional energy routes, particularly as attacks and instability around Yemen and the Red Sea placed additional pressure on established export infrastructure.

Saudi Arabia simultaneously intensified its diplomatic engagement at the United Nations. On September 26, Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan addressed the 81st session of the UN General Assembly, emphasizing the importance of regional stability to international trade and energy security while criticizing attacks by Iranian-aligned actors. Saudi Arabia also received statements of support from Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan affirming its sovereign right to self-defense under international law. Defense coordination developed further on September 25, when military chiefs from Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan met in Riyadh to discuss collective deterrence capabilities and the activation of frameworks under the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement. At the same time, international scrutiny surrounding a prospective civilian nuclear agreement with the United States continued, adding another strategic dimension to discussions over Saudi Arabia's longer-term security and defense posture.

UAE

The UAE concentrated heavily on multilateral diplomacy during the week, using the 81st UN General Assembly to advance positions on conflict resolution, emerging technologies, climate policy, water security, and regional stability. Led by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the UAE delegation participated in the UNGA high-level week from September 22 to 28. Emirati officials also took part in ministerial discussions concerning the implementation of the Two-State Solution, including engagement by Minister of State Khalifa Shaheen Al Marar, maintaining the UAE's involvement in diplomatic initiatives concerning Gaza and the wider Middle East.

The UAE's mediation profile also extended beyond the Middle East. Reports indicated that the United States proposed the UAE as a possible technical-level venue for talks involving the United States, Russia, and Ukraine. Separately, Israeli media reported that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made an unannounced visit to Abu Dhabi on September 27 for talks with President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. If confirmed, the meeting would represent another high-level channel between the UAE and Israel amid wider regional tensions.

Developments concerning Ethiopia also entered the UAE's regional diplomacy during the week. On September 25–26, the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned attacks by the TPLF and allied armed groups against Ethiopian federal forces, expressed solidarity with the federal government, and called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. The statement placed the UAE among regional partners responding diplomatically to the renewed Ethiopian security escalation.

The UAE also expanded its multilateral security engagement by hosting the 15th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice at the ADNEC Centre in Abu Dhabi beginning September 26. The gathering, scheduled to continue through October 1 with delegates from 97 countries, was accompanied by the launch of the global Pledge4Justice initiative, adding international crime prevention and criminal justice cooperation to the UAE's diplomatic agenda.

Qatar

Qatar used the UN General Assembly period to intensify its diplomatic engagement on Gulf security, relations with Iran, international mediation, and wider regional conflicts. Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani addressed the 81st UN General Assembly on September 22, describing the Gulf as facing a dangerous period amid the conflict involving Iran and calling for the development of a regional collective security system. This position complemented remarks by Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani during the Qatar Economic Forum special edition in New York on September 20–21, where he advocated a cooperative security architecture involving both the Gulf states and Iran.

Qatar continued its mediation between Washington and Tehran alongside these broader security proposals. On September 27, Sheikh Mohammed highlighted positive movement in the indirect diplomatic channels facilitated by Doha between the United States and Iran. Qatar also expanded its institutional engagement at the United Nations after being elected Rapporteur of the General Assembly's Sixth Committee on September 21, strengthening its role in discussions concerning international legal affairs.

Doha remained active on other diplomatic tracks during the week. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed Al-Ansari welcomed the restoration of diplomatic relations between Belgium and Rwanda on September 23 following earlier discussions hosted in Doha. Qatar also participated in the high-level ministerial meeting concerning implementation of the Two-State Solution on September 25 and the Global Development Initiative meeting the following day, extending its engagement across conflict mediation and international development diplomacy.

The renewed escalation in Ethiopia also drew a response from Doha. On September 27, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the military escalation against Ethiopian federal forces and called for adherence to the Pretoria Peace Agreement and protection of

civilians. Together with its UN diplomacy and continuing mediation between Washington and Tehran, the statement reflected Qatar's broader effort during the week to position dialogue, negotiated security arrangements, and existing peace frameworks as its principal responses to regional conflicts.

11. Africa and The Sahel Region

Mali

Mali's week, combined independence celebrations, continued insurgent pressure, and diplomatic efforts to strengthen relations with both the Alliance of Sahel States and external partners. On September 22, Mali marked its 66th independence anniversary, with President Assimi Goïta attending a military parade in Bamako and pledging to strengthen the country's armed forces and economy. Despite the government's emphasis on national sovereignty and military capacity, regional assessments continued to identify governance and economic pressures associated with the insurgency, including insecurity approaching areas around the capital.

Diplomatic activity increased around the UN General Assembly. On September 25, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop and other AES representatives in New York to strengthen political dialogue and multilateral coordination. The following day, Diop also held bilateral discussions with Nigerian Foreign Minister Bianca Odumegwu-Ojukwu concerning regional security and political consultations. Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister Karamoko Jean-Marie Traoré meanwhile criticized what he described as the international community's inadequate response to security threats against Mali, reinforcing the political solidarity within the AES framework.

The security situation nevertheless remained difficult. Armed groups continued targeting important transport corridors, creating logistical vulnerabilities around Bamako, while JNIM maintained tactical operations and pressure against government forces in central Mali. The persistence of these attacks continued to place pressure on the government's efforts to consolidate security despite its emphasis on military capacity and regional partnerships.

Niger

Niger experienced a particularly severe security deterioration during the week, while simultaneously advancing its economic and regional sovereignty agenda. On September 24, the Ministry of Defence announced that at least 57 security personnel had been killed in two separate attacks attributed to Islamic State militants. Thirty-eight soldiers were killed during an assault on the Dabagu military base in Tahoua, while another 19 gendarmes were killed in an ambush in the Abala-Filingué area. The scale of the casualties highlighted the continuing difficulty faced by the military authorities in

containing militant Islamist organizations despite their efforts to strengthen national and foreign-backed security structures.

Alongside the security crisis, Niger made progress on its uranium sector. On September 24, the government signed an agreement with Madaouela Mining Company to restart a major uranium project in northern Niger. Australian company Atomic Eagle holds a 60 percent stake, while the Nigerien state holds 40 percent. The agreement also resolved an earlier licensing dispute and provided the government with a renewed framework for developing one of the country's strategically important mineral resources.

Niger also used the UN General Assembly period to promote the Alliance of Sahel States with Mali and Burkina Faso, presenting the bloc as part of a broader sovereignty-oriented regional agenda and warning against external interference. At the same time, diplomatic differences with neighboring countries, particularly Nigeria, continued to complicate regional counterterrorism cooperation.

DRC

The DRC faced simultaneous political tensions, diplomatic challenges, continued fighting in the east, and a widening health emergency. Within the M23 movement, an internal leadership crisis emerged during the week. According to reporting published on September 23, M23 security officials reportedly suppressed a conspiracy allegedly intended to remove military commander Sultani Makenga, while senior leadership had previously arrested Théo Binamungu, an adviser to the movement's political wing headed by Corneille Nangaa. At the national level, opposition coalitions continued rejecting President Félix Tshisekedi's proposed national consultations and broader state refoundation plans, amid continuing controversy surrounding constitutional changes and possible referendum initiatives concerning term limits.

The DRC also used the UN General Assembly to articulate its position on the country's wider conflict and resource politics. Prime Minister Judith Suminwa addressed the General Assembly on September 24 and argued that the global transition toward net-zero energy should not depend on minerals originating from conflict zones. She also emphasized that existing regional peace frameworks required implementation rather than the creation of additional agreements. Meanwhile, the Washington and Doha diplomatic processes continued to face implementation difficulties, with the parties reportedly conditioning their commitments on reciprocal measures.

Military confrontation continued across North and South Kivu. Pro-government forces and M23 fighters clashed in southern Masisi and Walikale, while fighting also persisted in the South Kivu highlands. These clashes demonstrated that the continuing diplomatic processes had not yet translated into a sustained reduction in violence in the eastern provinces.

The security situation was compounded by a serious public health emergency. International health updates reported that the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak had expanded into additional health zones in Sud-Ubangi and Haut-Uélé. By late September, reported confirmed cases had surpassed 7,890, with nearly 3,800 deaths, while frontline vaccination trials for health workers began on September 20.

Chad

Chad's political and security environment remained closely tied to the spillover effects of the Sudanese conflict, while the government continued to emphasize diplomatic neutrality and the protection of its territorial sovereignty. During the UN General Assembly on September 25, the Chadian delegation reaffirmed its neutral position toward the Sudanese war but warned against border violations and further cross-border military incidents. Chad also used the Paris Business Forum to pursue international investment, although the country's domestic anti-corruption institutions remained subject to scrutiny over their independence and effectiveness.

The humanitarian situation along the eastern border deteriorated further. UNHCR reported on September 25 that refugee arrivals into eastern Chad had increased dramatically, with more than 400 people crossing daily through border points including Adré and Tiné after fleeing airstrikes and drone warfare in Darfur. The arrivals also included women and girls reporting serious protection violations, including abductions and sexual violence along escape routes. The number of forcibly displaced people hosted by Chad subsequently exceeded two million, placing additional pressure on water, shelter, sanitation, and other humanitarian services at a time when international funding remained severely insufficient.

The humanitarian pressure also coincided with growing domestic political tensions. On September 28, rebel leader Ousmane Dillo intensified efforts to pursue legal action against senior Chadian security officials. The move came as President Mahamat Idriss Déby continued to confront structural tensions within the armed forces and the wider security risks created by the Sudanese war.

Central African Republic

The Central African Republic experienced important legal and diplomatic developments alongside renewed security constraints on humanitarian operations. On September 23, the International Criminal Court convicted former Seleka commander Mahamat Said Abdel Kani on four counts of crimes against humanity, including torture, persecution, and imprisonment related to abuses committed in Bangui in 2013. The court dismissed specific war crimes charges after determining that the armed conflict had legally ended at the time of the particular detention abuses under consideration. Said became the first member of the predominantly Muslim Seleka coalition to be convicted by the ICC.

President Faustin-Archange Touadéra addressed the UN General Assembly on September 24, criticizing what he described as weaknesses in international multilateral institutions and global systems affecting vulnerable countries. He called for reform of the UN Security Council, stronger climate justice, and changes to the international financial system to provide greater fairness for African states.

Security incidents in the east continued to affect humanitarian access. According to an OCHA situation report, armed men ambushed humanitarian workers on the Zémio-Djéma and Mboki-Zémio roads on September 17 and 21. The resulting security restrictions halted humanitarian missions and left more than 20,000 vulnerable civilians facing disruptions in access to assistance in Haut-Mbomou. Meanwhile, reporting on the Russian security presence in Bangui indicated that the Wagner network and Russian Africa Corps had reached a functional division of responsibilities, with established Wagner-linked actors retaining local security and commercial extraction activities while the Africa Corps maintained a more limited operational presence in the capital.

12. North Africa

Libya

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi hosted the Algerian and Tunisian foreign ministers for the trilateral consultation mechanism on Libya. The three countries stressed a comprehensive political solution under United Nations auspices, unification of institutions, simultaneous elections, rejection of foreign interference, and support for the 5+5 Joint Military Commission together with the withdrawal of foreign forces and mercenaries.

Presidential Council head Mohammed Menfi visited Algeria. Discussions covered southern Libya security, potential reopening of border crossings, institutional unification and Algeria's role in national reconciliation. Libyan and Algerian chiefs of staff also reviewed military cooperation and border security arrangements.

Libyan acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour met Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. Talks addressed bilateral cooperation, Sahel developments and coordination in multilateral forums. Additional contacts covered customs anti-smuggling measures and interior ministry security training.

United States-led efforts toward power-sharing and institutional unification continued, focusing on a single budget and military structures. Parallel engagement by Turkey and reports of Russian military activity in the east remained features of the external landscape surrounding the process.

Algeria

Algeria participated actively in the Egypt-Tunisia-Algeria trilateral mechanism on Libya hosted in Cairo. Bilateral security and military talks with Libyan counterparts emphasised southern border stability and regional coordination. Algeria reiterated support for a Libyan-led political process, elections and the complete withdrawal of foreign forces.

Diplomatic fallout from Algeria's severance of ties with the United Arab Emirates continued. Related measures included accreditation issues involving Sky News Arabia. The rupture was linked to differing positions on Western Sahara, Libya and Sahel influence.

Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf held discussions with Libyan acting Foreign Minister Taher Al-Baour on the United Nations General Assembly sidelines. The meeting covered bilateral partnership, African Sahel security and coordination in multilateral settings. Broader Sahel engagement remained part of Algeria's regional posture.

Morocco

Morocco held parliamentary elections. The monarchy-aligned Authenticity and Modernity Party secured 97 of 395 seats, falling short of a majority. The National Rally of Independents took 66 seats, Istiqlal 65, and the Justice and Development Party rebounded to 54. Turnout stood at approximately 38 percent. Final results were confirmed and coalition talks followed.

Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita reaffirmed Morocco's participation in the Gaza International Stabilization Force at the United Nations General Assembly. An advance force of about 500 troops from Morocco and Kosovo was noted as ready to deploy. Morocco's contribution included senior Royal Armed Forces officers, gendarmerie and national security personnel, a field hospital, and support for Palestinian police training.

Protests continued in multiple cities against the upgrading of Morocco-Israel liaison offices to full embassies and the planned exchange of ambassadors. The demonstrations followed the announcement made in New York with United States involvement. Parallel economic, trade, air and defence cooperation with Israel proceeded amid the domestic pushback.

King Mohammed VI condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and stated that the kingdom's security was closely linked to Morocco's. The remarks formed part of broader regional security positioning.

13. Middle East

Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered a speech at the United Nations General Assembly on September 24 rejecting Gaza genocide accusations as the lie of the

century and criticizing Qatar, Turkey, and Iran. Dozens of delegates walked out during the address. The visit lasted only a few hours with no meeting held with United States President Donald Trump.

Netanyahu met Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. Discussions covered bilateral cooperation and regional matters. Additional meetings were scheduled with leaders from Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Panama, Ethiopia, and Papua New Guinea during the brief New York stay.

A week of United Nations General Assembly activity included speeches and hallway meetings with limited progress on Iran and Ukraine issues. Artificial intelligence topics also featured in discussions among leaders. No major breakthroughs on Middle East conflicts were reported from the sessions.

Netanyahu traveled secretly to Abu Dhabi on September 27 and met United Arab Emirates President Mohammed bin Zayed. The visit lasted several hours and was not announced in advance by either side. It followed recent reports concerning pre-October 2023 warnings related to Hamas.

Israeli authorities sealed the home of a Palestinian involved in a West Bank shooting attack near a spring in preparation for demolition. Security forces also conducted raids in several West Bank locations following the incident. Arrests were made in connection with the attack.

Reports stated that Egypt's intelligence chief warned Netanyahu of a potential attack days before October 7 2023 following earlier alerts. The information added to previous accounts involving warnings from the United Arab Emirates. Netanyahu's office has disputed related claims.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called for military action in the West Bank similar to operations in Gaza and proposed annexation of parts of Gaza and southern Lebanon. The statements were made publicly amid ongoing coalition discussions. Other ministers raised concerns over a Board of Peace Gaza plan.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered preparation of an ICC case against Turkish President Erdoğan over alleged attacks on Kurds and government funding of Hamas. This followed Erdoğan's recent approach to Interpol seeking a Red Notice for Netanyahu. Israel rejects ICC jurisdiction.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu posted a video on September 27 quoting opposition figure Yair Golan regarding potential government formation involving Eisenkot, Lieberman, Bennett, and Arab parties. The post highlighted statements from a morning interview amid ongoing political discussions ahead of elections.

Israel reportedly sent a request for assistance to the United States to counter Turkey in the

event of a potential war between the two countries. The development emerged on September 26 amid heightened diplomatic tensions between Israel and Turkey.

Iran

Iran offered to reopen the Strait of Hormuz if the United States ended its naval blockade and reduced military pressure. The proposal was conveyed through mediators ahead of United Nations General Assembly meetings. Iranian officials indicated the waterway could resume normal traffic within days under those conditions.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned they would expand the battlefield and deploy new weapons if United States attacks resumed. The statement followed incidents involving tankers in the Strait of Hormuz. Qatar continued mediation efforts aimed at securing a short-term arrangement to revive talks.

Iran and the United States remained far apart on ending their conflict despite renewed contacts. A senior Iranian official stated diplomacy must continue. President Masoud Pezeshkian told the United Nations General Assembly that Tehran would never surrender to pressure.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian delivered a defiant address at the United Nations General Assembly. He vowed Iran would never bend the knee to the United States and remained open to dialogue without the language of force. The speech responded directly to earlier comments by the American president.

United States and Iranian officials held their first shuttle talks in months on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. The contacts involved Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and American envoys through mediators. Both sides described the exchanges as position-sharing rather than breakthrough negotiations.

Iran presented a seven-day plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz in exchange for the United States meeting specified conditions. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi outlined the proposal during the United Nations General Assembly. The plan called for a halt to hostilities and resumption of broader talks afterward.

Iran hardened its position on the Strait of Hormuz, insisting the United States must first lift its blockade before formal negotiations could resume. Diplomacy at the United Nations General Assembly produced no breakthrough. Approximately eighty countries backed a joint statement demanding restoration of navigation through the waterway.

United States President Donald Trump rejected Iran's ceasefire proposal linked to reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Reports indicated he expected a possible renewal of strikes after the American midterm elections. Iranian officials stated they were awaiting an official response through mediators.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Tehran no longer trusted talks with the United

States. He cited previous experiences during negotiations. The comments followed the public rejection of Iran's latest Hormuz-related offer.

Iraq's Najaf airport suspended all flights to and from Iran. The measure enforced United States sanctions. The airport is a major destination for Shiite Muslim pilgrims.

United Kingdom authorities probed a possible Iran link to a plot near RAF Fairford, an airbase used by United States forces. Police investigated after suspicious activity prompted evacuations. The United States Embassy issued related cautionary guidance.

Colombia's new government cut diplomatic ties with Iran. The decision followed a change in administration with closer alignment to the United States. The move added to Iran's isolation in parts of Latin America.

An Iranian official stated Tehran would make no nuclear concessions. The position was reiterated amid ongoing discussions related to ending the conflict and reopening maritime routes. Nuclear issues remained separate from Hormuz negotiations in Iranian statements.

United States President Donald Trump said he expected new talks with Iran after rejecting its latest proposal. He indicated discussions could resume in the coming days. Iranian officials continued to insist on their conditions for any agreement.

Turkey

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the United Nations General Assembly and called for reform of the Security Council. He stated the United Nations had become unable to fulfill its mission of maintaining peace. Erdoğan urged wider recognition of a Palestinian state and increased international pressure on Israel regarding Gaza.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Türkiye used the United Nations General Assembly high-level week to advance diplomacy on Gaza, regional security and UN reform. Officials held more than forty bilateral and multilateral meetings. Palestine remained the central issue on Ankara's agenda throughout the discussions.

Türkiye responded to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's United Nations remarks through a third secretary at its New York mission. The diplomat rejected what Ankara described as baseless and malicious accusations directed at Türkiye and President Erdoğan. The response reaffirmed support for a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders.

President Erdoğan met United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres and discussed Cyprus, the war in Ukraine and the situation across the Middle East. He also held talks with British Prime Minister Andy Burnham. Erdoğan pressed for de-escalation regarding Iran and safe navigation in the Black Sea.

Türkiye and Iraq reached an understanding on security cooperation during President

Erdoğan's meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in New York. The sides agreed to strengthen Iraqi state authority in Sinjar. Turkish forces are to gradually hand over the Bashiqa-Zilkan base according to a mutually agreed mechanism and timetable.

President Erdoğan stated that foreign-imposed security arrangements have historically deepened instability in the Middle East. He defended Türkiye's role in the Mecca Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Erdoğan also said Türkiye opposes any closure of the Strait of Hormuz to shipping traffic.

President Erdoğan expressed confidence that Türkiye would regain access to the United States F-35 fighter jet programme. He said United States President Donald Trump had expressed positive willingness on the matter. Erdoğan stated Ankara now expected concrete steps from Washington.

President Erdoğan told Newsweek that Ankara would not accept a binary choice between East and West. He emphasized that the Mecca Joint Defense Agreement with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was not directed against Iran, Israel or any third country. The comments came amid shifting global power dynamics.

The foreign ministers of Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan strongly condemned attacks targeting Mecca and civilian facilities in the kingdom. They pledged to convene an urgent meeting of military chiefs to coordinate joint defense assistance under the trilateral pact signed the previous month.

Türkiye's Defense Ministry outlined positions on developments in Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean, Greece and Israel. It provided updates on counterterrorism operations and the Seawolf-I naval exercise involving one hundred ships, fifty aircraft and fourteen thousand personnel held from September 20 to 25.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Kyiv was very open to Türkiye hosting a trilateral leaders' meeting with Russia aimed at reviving peace talks. The comments came during discussions on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

On September 26 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan posted that Türkiye remained determined to unmask what he called the occupying Zionist mentality that considers itself superior and lacks mercy, conscience, morality and principle. He stated that no matter what they do, Türkiye would not take a step back.

14. Global Powers

The central U.S. foreign-policy development remained the confrontation with Iran. President Donald Trump used his September 22 UN General Assembly address to defend the U.S. decision to enter the war and argued that Tehran had delayed negotiations over reopening the Strait of Hormuz. Trump warned that Iran could face further destruction if it does not reach an agreement with Washington.

The diplomatic track remained unsettled through the weekend. Iran presented a proposal under which the Strait of Hormuz would be reopened and negotiations resumed within seven days, but Trump rejected it on September 26. By September 28, Trump was nevertheless saying that further negotiations with Tehran could resume during the coming week.

Trump's September 22 address to the 81st UN General Assembly presented a particularly version of his "America First" approach. He emphasized U.S. sovereignty, military power, border security and opposition to what his administration describes as excessive international institutional authority. The White House framed the speech as evidence of a renewed willingness to use American power directly.

The speech also covered Iran, Ukraine, Venezuela, Cuba, the International Criminal Court and technological competition. Trump argued that the United States should rely on national power rather than international institutions when American interests are at stake. Reuters noted that he also criticized the ICC and called for changes to the UN system.

The most consequential diplomatic engagement outside the Middle East was Chinese President Xi Jinping's September 23–25 state visit to Washington. It was the second meeting between Trump and Xi within six months and was designed to manage tensions across trade, technology, Taiwan, rare earths and Iran.

Washington and Beijing agreed to reduce tariffs affecting approximately \$30 billion in goods and establish a formal dialogue on artificial-intelligence issues. The two sides also continued discussions concerning rare earths, technology and trade.

The summit did not resolve the structural competition between the two countries. Reuters reported that the meetings produced relatively little substantive progress on the most difficult disputes despite the highly ceremonial nature of Xi's visit.

One particularly important U.S. concern was China's relationship with Iran. According to Reuters, Trump warned Xi that Chinese support for Tehran would be unacceptable to Washington.

At the same time, Washington continued reassuring Japan, South Korea and Taiwan that the U.S. security commitment in East Asia remained intact. The U.S., Japan and South Korea also announced a new consultation mechanism on economic security and critical technologies.

Taiwan was one of the issues Beijing wanted to address directly with Trump. Before Xi's visit, Chinese officials were seeking an American commitment to the 1982 U.S.-China communiqué and an end to American arms sales to Taiwan. Beijing regards Taiwan as its most sensitive sovereignty issue.

Xi reportedly urged Trump to maintain what Beijing considers the correct U.S. position on Taiwan and oppose Taiwanese independence. But there was no public agreement that

changed U.S. Taiwan policy. Taiwan's deputy foreign minister said on September 27 that Washington's policy remained unchanged after the summit.

Washington's trade confrontation with Canada also continued. The Trump administration had already imposed additional measures against Canadian goods after Ottawa introduced retaliatory tariffs. The White House said some new import bans would take effect on September 29, while other tariff modifications became effective earlier in September.

Trump also met Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on September 22. It was their first meeting since the political transition that followed Nicolás Maduro's capture.

Trump subsequently said that he expected the United States and Cuba could eventually reach an agreement, suggesting that Washington's policy toward Havana could also move toward a negotiated arrangement despite continuing pressure.

Regarding the Saudi- Houthis confrontation, Washington faced direct pressure from Riyadh to intervene. President Trump reportedly considered U.S. strikes against the Houthis but ultimately decided against launching them. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had repeatedly sought American military assistance. Washington instead continued providing intelligence and targeting assistance to Saudi Arabia.

On September 23, the U.S. Embassy issued a security alert concerning Tigray and Afar following the renewed military escalation and the reported takeover of the airports in Mekelle, Axum and Shire. The Embassy said Ethiopian Airlines had suspended flights to the three airports and warned U.S. citizens against travel to the affected areas.

More significant was Massinga's direct political statement the same day. He said he was disappointed that the TPLF leadership, which Washington had sanctioned earlier in 2026, had launched a large-scale offensive. He characterized the renewed fighting as an “unwinnable fight,” criticized the rejection of AU-sponsored dialogue under former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and warned other armed groups against joining the conflict. Massinga also stated that Washington had tools available to sanction additional leaders involved in pushing Ethiopia toward renewed conflict.

Trump also met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the UN General Assembly. The discussions focused heavily on the possibility of an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. The proposal would seek to stop attacks against energy infrastructure as a first step toward broader de-escalation. French President Emmanuel Macron also discussed the concept with Trump.

Trump publicly said that he and Zelenskyy needed to find a solution and expressed confidence that one could eventually be reached.

The other most significant developments outside the Middle East and China was the signing of a U.S.-Denmark-Greenland security agreement on September 22. The

agreement allows an expanded U.S. military presence in Greenland and provides for additional U.S. defense infrastructure. It also restricts the establishment of military facilities by non-NATO powers. The agreement effectively moves the Greenland dispute away from Trump's earlier demand to acquire the territory and toward a negotiated expansion of U.S. strategic access.

One of the more important developments for the Middle East and Red Sea was Putin's September 22 telephone conversation with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The two leaders emphasized the need for safe and unrestricted maritime passage through both the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb and discussed the deteriorating situation in Yemen. They called for an end to hostilities and a political solution.

The European Union renewed sanctions against approximately 3,000 Russian individuals and entities, but removed billionaires Alisher Usmanov and Mikhail Fridman from the sanctions list. The decision exposed differences among EU members over sanctions policy. Ukraine criticized the delistings, while France and Luxembourg supported them for different reasons. The broader sanctions regime therefore remains intact, but the episode illustrates the political difficulty of maintaining a completely unified European sanctions policy after more than four years of war.

15. European Countries

Prime Minister Andy Burnham travelled to New York for his first major multilateral engagement since becoming prime minister. His September 22 UN General Assembly speech presented his government's foreign-policy approach around three themes: restoring Britain's international role, rebuilding economic strength and working more closely with international partners. He explicitly framed Britain as a country seeking to re-engage globally after the disruptions associated with Brexit.

Burnham also met President Donald Trump. Their September 22 meeting focused on the UK-US relationship, trade, Ukraine and wider international security. Downing Street described the relationship as close and constructive, while Burnham emphasized the economic importance of existing trade arrangements.

On September 22, Britain announced that it would provide an RAF Voyager air-to-air refuelling aircraft to support Saudi defensive operations following renewed Houthi attacks. The UK already had personnel and air-defence equipment deployed in Saudi Arabia.

London justified the decision partly in economic terms. The government argued that continued Houthi attacks could disrupt energy supplies, raise prices and impose additional costs on British businesses. It also stated that Saudi Arabia and Yemen had the right to defend themselves.

Burnham met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the UN General Assembly

and discussed the possibility of an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine.

Burnham said Britain remained firmly behind Ukraine and agreed with Zelenskyy that Russia needed to face continued pressure to participate in meaningful negotiations. The two leaders also discussed the difficult winter ahead for Ukraine.

Burnham met European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in New York. They discussed preparations for the next EU-UK summit, cooperation against Russian hybrid warfare and disinformation, illegal migration, unfair competition and industrial overcapacity. They also discussed AI safety and Britain's preparations for its 2027 G20 presidency.

President Emmanuel Macron addressed the UN General Assembly on September 22, in what was his final appearance at the UN as French president. He presented France as a defender of multilateralism and argued that Europe must be capable of acting collectively when international institutions fail to produce effective responses. France is also serving as president of the UN Security Council during September.

Macron's speech placed Ukraine and the Middle East at the centre of France's foreign-policy agenda. He emphasized the French-British-German-led "coalition of the willing" supporting Ukraine and also promoted the multinational effort to restore freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

France issued a specific statement on September 24 concerning the deterioration in Tigray region. Paris said it was deeply concerned about the situation in northern Ethiopia and called for restraint, civilian protection and humanitarian access. France also explicitly warned about the possibility of regional escalation and endorsed the AU mediation process led by Olusegun Obasanjo and implementation of the Pretoria Agreement.

On September 24, 2026, President Emmanuel Macron announced that France would deploy troops, radar systems and air-defence systems to Yanbu, Saudi Arabia, to protect the Saudi energy infrastructure there from Houthi missile and drone attacks. Yanbu is particularly important because it is the western terminus of Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline and provides an export route that bypasses the Strait of Hormuz.

One of the week's most significant French initiatives was the preparation of a new UN Security Council resolution on Hormuz.

French diplomats began drafting a resolution, in coordination with the United States, that would establish an international mission to protect freedom of navigation through the Strait. The proposed framework was intended to focus on maritime security and avoid turning the initiative into an explicitly anti-Iran operation.

Macron had already discussed the issue with Trump in New York. He said the two leaders discussed reopening Hormuz, restoring cargo traffic, protecting oil-production facilities and avoiding further escalation in the Red Sea.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot met Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in New York on September 22. Barrot called on Tehran to return to diplomacy and reiterated France's willingness to contribute to a diplomatic settlement, particularly concerning Iran's nuclear program. He also demanded reopening of Hormuz and emphasized freedom of navigation and international maritime law.

The September 20 elections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania produced another serious setback for Chancellor Friedrich Merz's CDU. The CDU received only 4.9%, falling below the threshold required to enter the state parliament for the first time since the Second World War. The AfD emerged as the strongest party with approximately 38%. In Berlin, the CDU also lost ground, while Die Linke became the leading party.

The results followed the AfD's major victory in Saxony-Anhalt earlier in September. Merz rejected calls for his resignation and said he intended to continue his economic reform agenda. His coalition partner, the SPD, also indicated that it intended to remain in government despite disagreements over policy.

16. International and Regional Organizations

United Nation

On 23 September, UN Secretary General António Guterres issued a statement expressing grave concern over the rapidly deteriorating situation in northern Ethiopia, including the seizure and occupation of the airports in Mekelle, Axum and Shire by Tigrayan forces, intensified fighting in and around Tigray and the spread of hostilities into neighboring areas. He called on all parties to exercise maximum restraint immediately de-escalate tensions, protect civilians, ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access and avoid actions that could lead to a broader and more devastating conflict. The Secretary-General also reiterated his support for African Union efforts, including the engagement of former President Olusegun Obasanjo aimed at reengaging the parties to resume talks in good faith under the framework of the Pretoria Agreement.

At the daily press briefing on 25 September, UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric reiterated the Organization's grave concern over the continued deterioration of the security situation in northern Ethiopia with fighting expanding along multiple fronts. He highlighted particular alarm at reports of drone use and incidents causing harm to civilians while again urging all parties to exercise maximum restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Guang Cong is actively engaging national and regional interlocutors and coordinating closely with the African Union and IGAD to support a resumption of talks under the Pretoria framework. On the humanitarian side OCHA warned that the escalation risks deepening already substantial needs including among people previously displaced by fighting in Tigray. The affected areas are also facing below average rainfall linked to El Niño. Insecurity is already disrupting operations a drone strike the previous Sunday hit a truck

carrying critical food assistance for internally displaced people while road closures have delayed or diverted planned aid movements.

Leaders from Horn of Africa countries addressed the General Debate. Ethiopian President Taye Atske-Selassie 23 September spoke of Ethiopia's progress and immense restraint despite foreign interference, urged respect for the right of Horn of Africa peoples to peace and prosperity called for stronger multilateralism and UN Security Council reform to give Africa a meaningful voice and reaffirmed commitment to regional peace and a Sudanese-led solution for Sudan. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud 24 September called for Security Council reform supporting the African common position/Ezulwini Consensus for permanent African seats stronger Somali ownership of international assistance, sustained support for the security transition and addressed regional security and political issues. Other regional voices, including Kenya's, participated amid broader African calls for equitable representation. The Secretary General and Assembly President highlighted the unjust absence of permanent African seats on the Security Council.

The Seventh Trilateral Meeting of the African Union, European Union and United Nations held on 20 September at UN Headquarters in New York, brought together AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, European Council President António Costa, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, reaffirming shared commitment to multilateralism while expressing deep concern over the evolving situation in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea disruptions affecting global navigation and supply chains . The leaders explicitly supported AU efforts to advance dialogue in Ethiopia and implement the Pretoria Agreement, reaffirmed backing for AUSSOM and an orderly security transition in Somalia and addressed South Sudan and Sudan through coordinated approaches including the Quintet mechanism . They called for operationalizing Security Council resolution 2719 on predictable financing of AU-led peace support operations, stressing regional ownership while acknowledging that the framework has yet to fund a single mission since its adoption in 2023. The meeting also highlighted Africa's development financing needs, food security concerns linked to disrupted fertilizer and grain supply routes and the importance of strengthening Africa's voice in global governance structures with follow up planned on the margins of UNGA 82 in 2027 .

Africa Union

AUSSOM continued supporting Somali-led operations against Al-Shabaab during the week, with Somali intelligence reporting at least 12 militants killed in a joint operation in south-central Somalia though the mission remained under significant financing and logistical pressure . The United States agreed to support a 12-month drawdown of the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) which provides food, fuel, medical, aviation and transport support to AUSSOM beginning in January 2027 rather than an abrupt end after the current mandate expires on December 31, 2026 giving Somalia, the AU, troop-

contributing countries and partners temporary breathing space to develop alternative arrangements while leaving longer-term sustainable financing unresolved . The UNSOS budget is approximately \$500 million annually and its support covers roughly 85 percent of resources utilized by AUSSOM making any reduction in logistical capacity a direct threat to troop sustainment in areas where infrastructure and supply chains remain limited. At the 81st UN General Assembly in New York, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud held discussions with UN leadership on security and international support, calling for predictable and sustained financing for the security transition while emphasizing that Somalia seeks a more accountable, strategic partnership rather than an end to international engagement. AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf met Uganda's Foreign Minister Adonia Ayebare on the margins of UNGA 81, with both underscoring the importance of sustainable and predictable financing for African-led peace support operations.

As fighting intensified in northern Ethiopia in late September 2026, the African Union moved quickly to activate its diplomatic channels. AU Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf specifically asked former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo the AU's High Representative for the Horn of Africa to step in and engage the parties urgently. Obasanjo who had already played a central role in brokering the 2022 Pretoria Agreement and had made earlier visits to the region in 2026 was tasked with helping reduce tensions, encourage restraint and bring the sides back to talks under that same structure. Both the UN Secretary General and IGAD publicly backed these AU efforts with the Secretary General explicitly welcoming Obasanjo's engagement as a key part of the push to prevent a wider conflict and protect the hard-won gains of the Pretoria peace process.

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development issued a statement on September 23, 2026, from Djibouti expressing grave concern over the rapid military escalation in northern Ethiopia, including reports of renewed hostilities, the seizure of civilian airports in Mekelle, Axum and Shire by Tigray forces and the resulting disruption of air services. IGAD called on all parties to cease hostilities immediately, exercise maximum restraint and refrain from actions that could further endanger civilian lives or undermine the peace process while reaffirming that the Pretoria Agreement signed on November 2, 2022, remains the agreed framework for resolving outstanding issues. The escalation follows the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) seizing control of the three airports and declaring a "defensive war" against federal forces with fighting spreading into the neighboring Amhara and Afar regions as Tigrayan forces reportedly fight alongside the Fano militia and a local Afar armed group. African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf stated that the airport seizures are inconsistent with commitments under the Pretoria Agreement and requested former Nigerian President Olusegun

Obasanjo to urgently engage the parties. UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk reported that airstrikes hit five schools in Tigray on September 22, causing civilian casualties, while internet and telecommunications have been disrupted in Mekelle and parts of Amhara and roads blocked in Afar. The renewed fighting puts the 2022 Pretoria Agreement under severe strain and raises fears of a wider regional conflict that could draw in armed groups from across Ethiopia.

IGAD launched its 2026 Global Report on Food Crises in Nairobi on September 24, revealing that 40.3 million people across six member states Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda are facing high levels of acute food insecurity, representing 34 percent of the analyzed population. Although the figure declined from 43.3 million in 2025 due to improvements in Sudan and Uganda conditions worsened in Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan. Sudan remains the largest crisis with 19.5 million people affected and 14 areas at risk of famine while South Sudan has the highest prevalence at 55 percent with 7.8 million people in need. Somalia's situation deteriorated sharply with 6.5 million people affected an increase of 1.9 million from 2025 following the worst cereal harvest on record. Kenya recorded 4.1 million people facing acute food insecurity a 46 percent increase from 2025, while Djibouti has 300,000 people at crisis levels. Across the region 10.3 million people are in Emergency and 208,100 in Catastrophe, with more than 9 million children requiring treatment for acute malnutrition and 19 million people living in forced displacement. IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary Mohamed Abdi Ware stressed the need to shift from reactive crisis response to anticipatory action, prevention and resilience-building, warning that "food crises do not stop at national boundaries" and urging greater investment in early warning systems, resilient food systems and regional trade.



HORN **REVIEW**

IDEAS CONNECTIONS SYNERGY

Ideas



Connections



Synergy
