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What Can Ireland Achieve During its  
Membership of the UN Security  
Council for 2021-2022?



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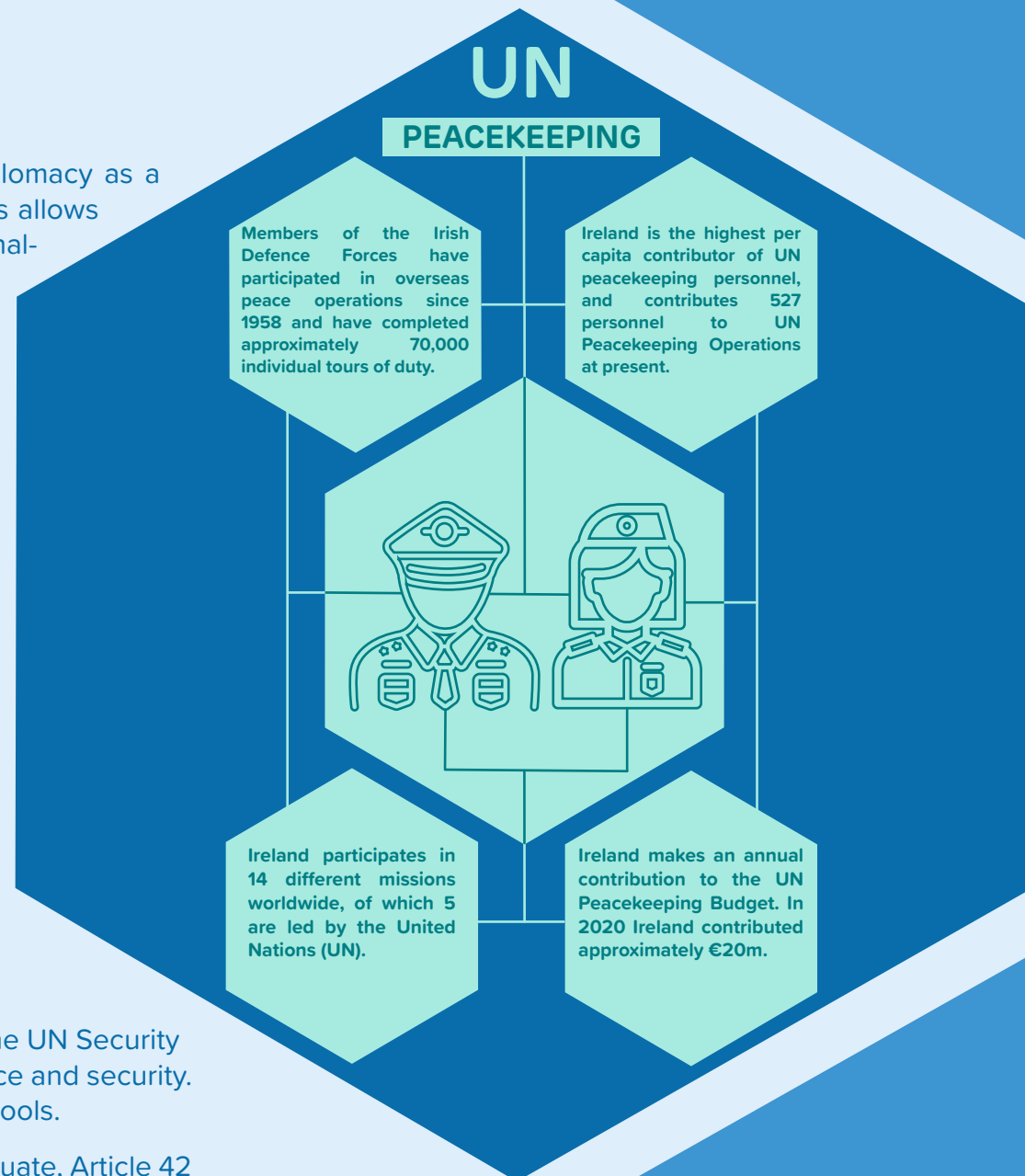
## Background

On 1 January 2021, Ireland took its seat at the top table of global diplomacy as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2021-2022. This allows Ireland to engage with and shape multilateral responses to the key challenges on the global agenda. Ireland's term comes at a particularly challenging time for the Security Council, as the COVID-19 pandemic poses significant challenges to multilateral cooperation. The Irish Government has stated that Ireland will seek to act as an honest broker during its two-year term, seeking to build bridges to overcome divisions and to achieve tangible progress in key policy areas.

## What is the role of the UN Security Council?

The UN Security Council has primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. Broadly speaking, the UN Security Council has three key tools for resolving international disputes:

- **Conflict resolution:** Under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter, the Council has the authority to call on parties to seek resolutions via negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice. UN Peace Operations are the best example of the UN's conflict resolution work.
- **Sanctions:** Article 41 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter authorises the UN Security Council to impose sanctions in order to maintain international peace and security. Sanctions are one of the Security Council's most frequently used tools.
- **Military Force:** In the situation where sanctions are deemed inadequate, Article 42 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter authorises direct military intervention in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.



## What is the composition of the UN Security Council?

The United Nations Security Council is the most powerful organ of the United Nations and is composed of fifteen member states. The five permanent members (known as the P5) are: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and the Russian Federation.

The ten non-permanent members, known as the E10, are elected by the 193 nations who are members of UN General Assembly to a two-year term, and five new members are elected each year. The current E10 members are Estonia, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia and Vietnam. In 2021, Ireland, Norway, India, Kenya, and Mexico are the incoming five (I-5) replacing departing members Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa.

The Presidency of the Security Council is held by each of the Security Council members on a monthly basis. The President is responsible for the conduct of meetings of the Security Council, plans the programme of work for the month and is authorised to represent the Security Council in relations with other organs of the UN and with member states. Ireland will assume the role of President of the Security Council in September 2021 and will be represented by the Irish Permanent Representative to the UN, H.E. Geraldine Byrne Nason.



## What is the difference between the P5 and the E10?

The UN Security Council is charged with maintaining peace and security between nations. Each of the permanent members (P5) has the power to veto any resolution, while the non-permanent members (E10) do not. This limits to a certain extent the ability of the E10 to make an impact on the work of the Security Council. The veto has presented a significant barrier to making progress on the Security Council's most contentious issues in recent years leading to virtual stalemates on Syria and Israel-Palestine.

Although the Permanent Members of the Security Council, the P5, decide on the distribution of responsibilities across a range of subsidiary bodies and committees, the E10 chair all the subsidiary bodies.

## Which responsibilities were allocated to Ireland as a non-permanent member?

In addition to its subsidiary body roles (see image), Ireland will act as co-penholder with Niger on the UNOWAS file on West Africa and the Sahel and with Norway on the Syrian humanitarian file. As a co-penholder, Ireland will lead the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on these items.

Each of these committees and working groups are linked to the key tools for resolving international conflicts and disputes outlined above. The issues dealt with by the subsidiary bodies fall under the 31 geographic and 22 thematic files. Ireland's role as chair and co-chair of the above bodies will be to facilitate discussions in the context of a divided UNSC, where tensions between the P5 can often frustrate efforts at reaching consensus on particularly contentious issues, such as Syria.

During its tenure,  
Ireland will take up the  
following subsidiary body roles:

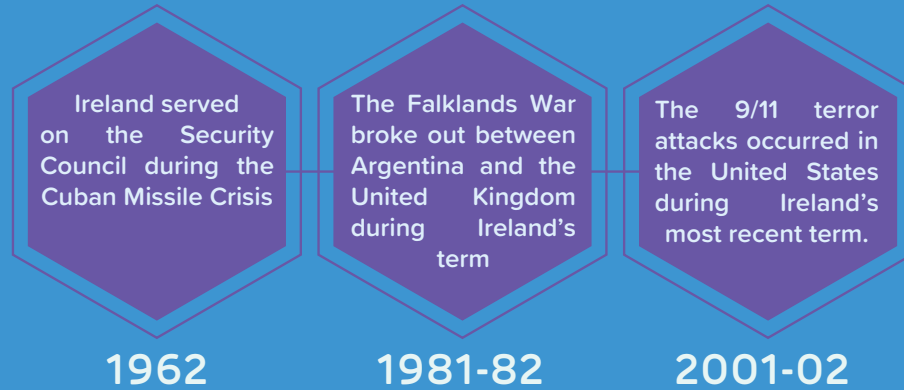
Chair of the 751 Somalia Sanctions Committee  
Facilitator for implementation of resolution 2231 (Iran nuclear deal)  
Co-chair with Niger of Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Climate and Security  
Co-chair with Mexico of Informal Expert Group (IEG) on Women, Peace and Security



Irish Permanent Representative to the UN,  
H.E. Geraldine Byrne Nason.

## Has Ireland previously held a non-permanent seat on the UNSC?

Ireland has held a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council on three previous occasions. Each of Ireland's previous terms has coincided with a major geopolitical crisis.



## What were the values underpinning Ireland's campaign to secure a seat on the UN Security Council?

Empathy, Partnership and Independence were the values underpinning Ireland's campaign to win a seat on the Security Council for 2021-2022. Ireland is a strong supporter of the multilateral rules-based order. As a small state, it relies on the multilateral system, not just to provide stability, but to enable it to engage globally.

During its campaign, Ireland, won the trust of many other smaller states at the UN by acknowledging its struggles to overcome its own domestic experiences of conflict, famine and mass migration. Ireland's proven ability to work in partnership with others during the negotiations on the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015, and its work with the Small Island Developing States (SIDs) to tackle the impacts of climate change has demonstrated that Ireland would be a reliable partner for other nations at the top table of the UN. Finally, as a small state beholden to no one and whose interests are anchored in the multilateral system, Ireland would bring a uniquely independent voice to the UN Security Council.



## What are the principles that will guide Ireland's two-year membership of the UNSC?

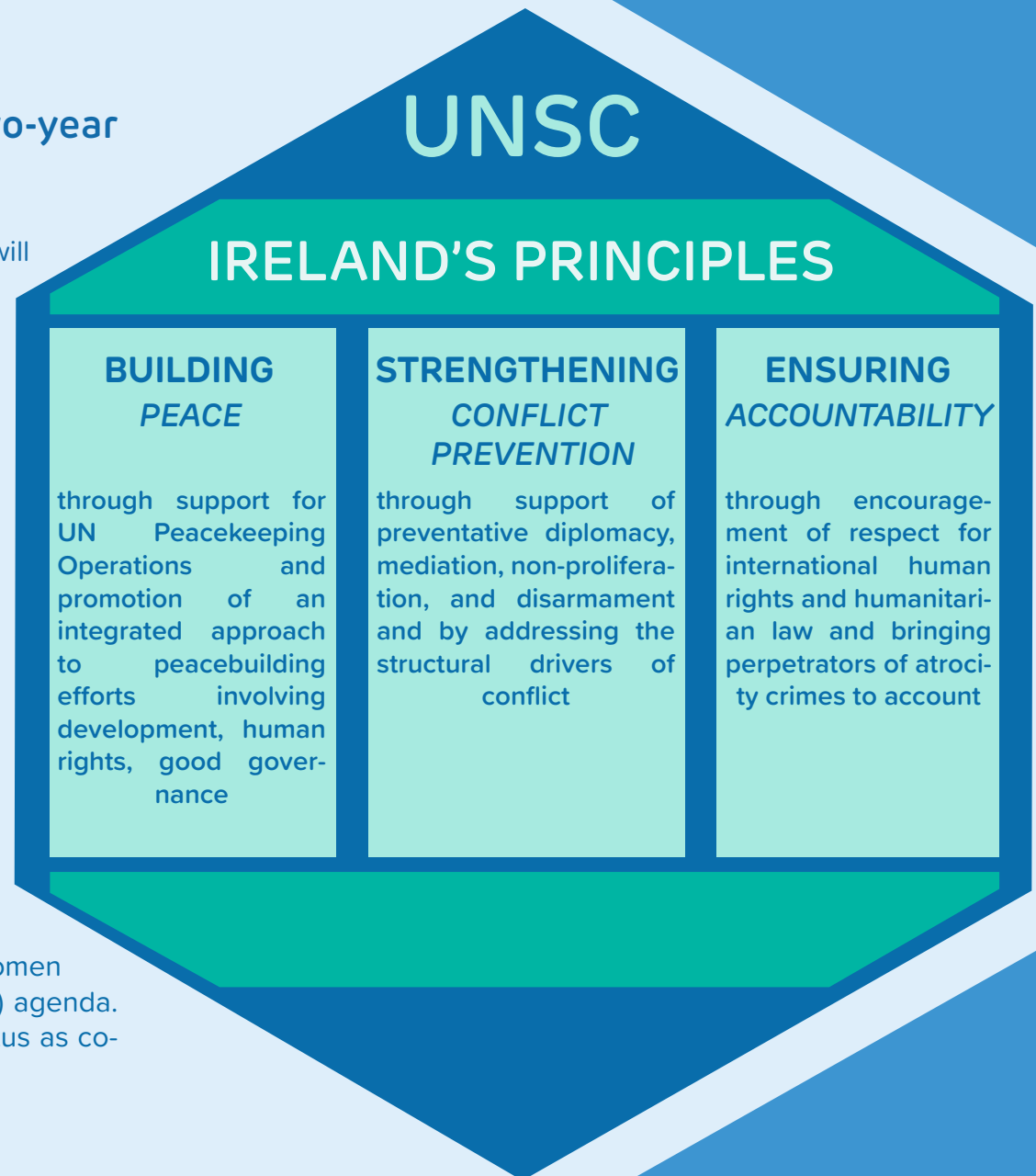
Ireland has signalled that its membership of the UN Security Council will be guided by three overarching principles: building peace, strengthening conflict prevention and ensuring accountability.

## What challenges face the UN Security Council at present?

Apart from the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the constraints on the working environment of the Security Council, which have led to all meetings of the Security Council being conducted in an online virtual setting, division over emerging threats to international peace and security, such as climate change, have exacerbated tensions among the P5.

## What does Ireland hope to achieve?

Ireland hopes to contribute to the mitigation of humanitarian crises in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen; facilitate humanitarian access in Syria; counter attempts by Russia and China to push back on human rights; work towards an integrated approach to UN Peace Operations in conflict and post-conflict countries in Africa; and focus on inclusivity of women and girls as decision-makers in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It also hopes to deepen understanding of the climate and security nexus as co-chair of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security.



## How will Ireland ensure that it makes a concrete impact at the top table of the UN?

According to UN Secretary General, António Guterres, effective global governance based on “network multilateralism” will prove essential in tackling the most serious issues of international peace and security in the coming years.

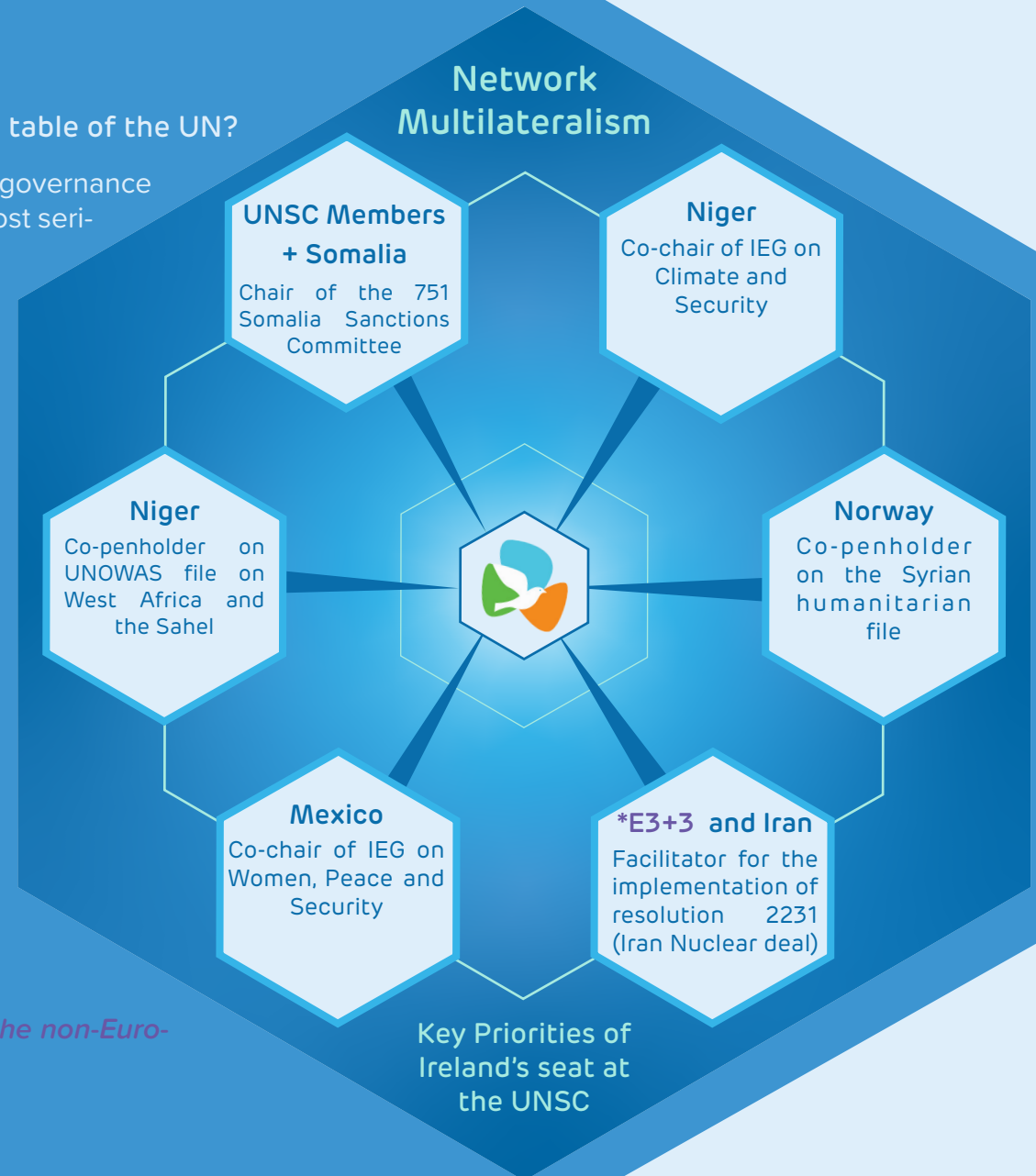
Ireland’s track record on alliance building and networking at bilateral, regional and EU level can be leveraged to build on regional alliances and coalitions around particularly contentious issues at the Security Council.

The division over Iran has threatened relations among European powers at the UNSC. As the incoming facilitator of the 2231 list (Iran nuclear deal), Ireland could play a key role in fostering greater international cooperation on a historically contentious issue by acting as an honest broker in discussions between the P5 and E10.

As co-chair of the Informal Expert Group on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) with Mexico, Ireland can play an important role in ensuring the voices of women and girls are heard at the top table of the UN.

Despite concerns of certain Member States as to the relevance of discussing climate at the UNSC, Ireland can draw attention to the climate and security nexus as a serious emerging threat to international peace and security as co-chair of the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security.

*\* E3+3: “E3” includes France, UK and Germany, and the “3” includes the non-European countries, the United States, the Russian Federation and China.*



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