

Briefing on the joint AU-UN proposal on the reconfigured mission to replace AMISOM

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Tomorrow (8 March 2022), the African Union (AU) Peace Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1068th session to consider the joint AU-UN proposal on the reconfigured AU mission which will replace the current African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM).

Following the opening remark by Mafa M. Sejanamane, Permanent Representative of Lesotho to the AU and the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of March, Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), is expected to make statement. Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chair of the Commission for Somalia and Head of AMISOM will also make a presentation. The Representative of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) is also expected to make a statement. Others that are expected to make statement include the representatives of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), United Nations (UN) Office to the AU (UNOAU), and European Union (EU) Delegation to the AU.

The timing of the meeting cannot be more opportune in light of the fact that the first AMISOM contingent from Uganda started to deploy in Somalia in March 2007. Fifteen years later, the AUPSC is set to decide on a successor mission to AMISOM with a view to sustaining the gains made over the past decade and half.

The AUPSC meeting tomorrow will be held in accordance with the timeline set out by the quartet technical team composed of Somalia, AU, UN and EU to submit the final versions of the new

Concept of Operations (CONOPs), the joint AU-UN report and the logistical support option for endorsement by the AUPSC and subsequently by the UNSC. Accordingly, the AUPSC is expected to receive a comprehensive briefing on the finalization of the three important documents which will help facilitate its decision on the reconfiguration of the mission.

It is to be recalled that on 15 February 2022, the AUPSC had received an update on the consultations that have been going on between the AU, Somalia, the EU and the UN on the new African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The Commission explained the nine principles agreed with Somalia to guide the work of this new successor mission to AMISOM which include national ownership and leadership, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, respect for African leadership and the central role of the AU, retention of the African identity and AMISOM's legacy, acknowledge the evolving threat of Al-Shabaab, ensuring adequate, predictable and sustainable funding, transparency and mutual accountability, enhanced partnership and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

ATMIS is expected to undertake joint operation with the Somali Security Forces (SSF) to degrade Al-Shabaab and recover areas identified by FGS. It will also jointly hold recovered areas and provide protection for the communities, UN personnel and installations, secure main supply routes, facilitate humanitarian assistance and assist the FGS in its stabilization efforts. Most importantly, it will support the Somali security forces in terms of force generation and enhance their operational and logistical capabilities so that they will be able to gradually takeover security responsibilities.

The mission is expected to consolidate the gains, legacies and progress achieved by AMISOM and handover security responsibilities to the Somali Federal government by the end of December 2023 in line with the objectives set out in the

revised Somalia transitional plan (STP). The gradual drawdown and exit of the mission hinges on the successful implementation of the STP and the capacity of the SSF to take over security responsibilities from the mission and maintain the security of recovered areas. The joint AU-Somalia proposal outlines key objectives to facilitate the effective implementation of the STP, including support to SSF in terms of force enablers and multipliers, ensure effective command and control, share risks and opportunities across sectors, support force generation, align sector boundaries with the Somali National Army sector boundaries, support the establishment of policing services in recovered areas and assist in vetting, recruiting, training, advising and mentoring the Somali police force, among others.

The joint proposal also outlines four phases for the new reconfigured mission. The first phase will allow a transition from AMISOM to ATMIS. In the second phase, ATMIS and SSF are expected to conduct joint shaping and clearance operations to create conditions for a decisive operation which will take place in the third phase with the objective of facilitating the transfer of security responsibilities to SSF. The last phase will see the gradual drawdown and exit of ATMIS. The FGS, the AU and UN will be conducting joint strategic assessment to monitor progress towards achieving the agreed timelines and benchmarks.

ATMIS will be a multidimensional mission with its military, police and civilian components. The new arrangement envisages the Force Commander to come from the largest troop contributing country (TCC) unlike the practice of rotation in the past. All TCCs are expected to be under the full operational command of the force commander but sector commander will have tactical command of the forces in their assigned sector. According to the joint proposal, it will be the FGS which makes the proposal for the appointment but it is not very clear how that would work practically. It remains to

be seen whether this arrangement will be agreeable to the troop and police contributing countries (T/PCCs). The current AMISOM T/PCCs and civilian personnel will form part of ATMIS but the agreement envisages the possibility of new T/PCCs from other AU member States. The name of some countries which could possibly join the new mission was circulating on social media.

At the 15 February meeting, Council members were said to have emphasized the importance of aligning the mandate of the new reconfigured mission with the STP. The joint AU-Somalia proposal bases its assumptions on the effective implementation of STP which will allow ATMIS to handover security responsibilities to the SSF and winddown its operations in a matter of thirty-three months. But there seems to be a fair amount of skepticism about the prospects of implementation given the experiences of the past and the overall security, political situation and the state of the SSF.

The experience thus far shows that the implementation of the STP leaves a lot to be desired. Despite some progress made, the formation of a unified and cohesive security forces capable of fighting Al-Shabaab, holding to liberated territories and taking over responsibilities from AMISOM remains riddled with major gaps. There is accordingly expectation that the transition plan should be realistic, pragmatic and conditions based to ensure its effective implementation. There is also expectation that the Somali government will lay out clearly how it will generate the necessary force and capabilities to implement its transition plan and gradually take over security responsibilities so that the gains made by AMISOM can be sustained and the evolving threats posed by Al-Shabab can be addressed.

In the political front, the situation in Somalia remains volatile. This is mainly due to the slow progress in and the disputes over the electoral process, the infighting among various centers of power within the FGS and the contestation between the FGS and the Federal Member States (FMS). In terms

of the security situation, during 2021 and the past few months Somalia has experienced intensification of attacks by Al-Shabaab. Without addressing these challenges in the political and security situation, ATMIS will face the same difficulty as AMISOM to deliver on its mandate within the assigned time.

The other important issue raised by members of the AUPSC is the need to take into account the views of T/PCCs in the development of the CONOPs. The T/PCCs are considered a major stakeholder in this process and they had their own views on the reconfiguration of the mission. It is to be recalled that the T/PCCs are the ones that pushed very hard for an AU-UN multidimensional mission which was proposed by the AU independent assessment and later endorsed by the AUPSC. It was one day before the AUPSC meeting that the Chiefs of Defense and Inspector-Generals of AMISOM T/PCCs met at the AU Headquarters and received an update from the Commission on the CONOPs, the AU-UN joint proposal and logistics options for the new reconfigured mission. At this meeting, the Commissioner for PAPS, Adeoye, reassured the T/PCCs about the multidimensional nature of the reconfigured mission and the importance of addressing the longstanding issue of adequate, predictable and sustainable funding for the mission. The Commissioner also underscored this point during his recent visit to Somalia and his engagement with the FGS, the T/PCCs and other partners.

The UN is expected to continue providing logistical support package to the reconfigured AU mission. The UN acknowledges the progress made in the technical discussions on the CONOPs; the joint AU-UN proposal on a reconfigured Mission; and the UN logistical options. The UN is of the view that progress in the implementation of the STP is critical in determining the success of the reconfigured mission in the transfer of security responsibilities to the SSF. The UN is, therefore, calling on the FGS to urgently convene the next STP steering committee meeting to advance this objective.

On the other hand, the EU has been a major financier of AMISOM and it welcomes the recent positive progress in terms of the joint efforts by Somalia and the AU in developing the proposal for a reconfigured mission. The EU representative in New York maintained that “the EU is willing to support the continued security presence of a reconfigured AU mission in Somalia, but there is no support for more of the same. This is precisely because the context has evolved, which requires a fresh, holistic approach to addressing the challenge posed by the mutating threat, which sees a number of actors working more closely to deliver such a comprehensive and integrated solution”.

The other emerging challenge for the EU could possibly be the new priority in its immediate neighborhood in relation to the unfolding situation in Ukraine. It remains to be seen how this will likely impact the EU’s commitment to continue financing the reconfigured AU mission in Somalia. The EU has already decided to provide support to Ukraine from the European Peace Facility which has replaced the African Peace Facility. The EU was also very much hoping that Somalia will request the Security Council for the renewal of the anti-piracy measures off the coast of Somalia to allow its Operation Atlanta to continue operating at least for the next nine months. However, the country has made its position clear that it will not do so as the anti-piracy measures have already achieved their objectives and there has been no record of piracy attacks or armed robbery off the coast of Somalia over the past four years.

The expected outcome of the meeting is a communique. The PSC is expected to welcome the work done in developing the various documents for implementing the transition of AMISOM to ATIMS as expected by end of the month. The PSC is expected to underscore the need for Somalia to finalize the long delayed electoral process. The PSC is also expected to commend AMISOM and the T/PCC for the sacrifices that AMISOM personnel made in

pursuit of the stabilization of Somalia and for the achievements it has registered since its deployment in 2007 as well as the partnership with the UN and EU that played critical role in the implementation of AMISOM. The Council may also endorse the new CONOPs, the joint AU-UN report and the logistical support option and authorize the transition of AMISOM to ATMIS upon the end of the current mandate of AMISOM on 31 March 2022. The PSC may also reiterate its position on the imperative for predictable and sustainable multi-year financing for ATMIS. The PSC may also call on the EU to provide financial support for ATMIS. It is also expected that the PSC will call on the UNSC to endorse the transition of AMISOM to ATMIS and to authorize the contribution of the provision of UN logistics support for ATMIS from UN assessed contributions.