

Briefing on the situation in Somalia

Automatic Heading TextDate | 13 December, 2019

Tomorrow (13 December) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will receive a briefing on the situation in Somalia and the activities of AMISOM. As Somalia is gearing up to hold elections next year, the PSC is expected to make a thorough assessment of the progress made and the challenges that lie ahead. The AU Peace and Security Department and the Special Representative of the AU Chairperson to Somalia and head of the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), Francisco Madeira, are expected to brief the PSC. During the introductory part of the session, following the practice of the PSC the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), particularly Ethiopia as the Chair of IGAD and African Member of the UN Security Council (A3), the UN office to the AU (UNOAU) and the European Union (EU) will also make their statements at the session are expected to make a statement.

Tomorrow's session is expected to address various issues including the preparations for the 2020 national elections, the recent political and security developments in Somalia and the implementation of AMISOM's mandate under the revised CONOPS adopted in May 2019. The 2020 election is a key milestone in the stabilization and peacebuilding of Somalia and the holding of "one man, one vote" election in the country for the first time in fifty years will be historic. In this regard, finalizing the Constitutional Review, adopting the amended Federal Constitution and the electoral law, allocating the necessary resources for the election and creating a safe and secure environment for the conduct of the election are considered priority areas. At the Somalia Partners Forum held on 2 October 2019, in Mogadishu, Somalia has committed itself

to expediting the constitutional and legislative processes with a view to adopting the electoral laws this month and the Federal Constitution in June next year, while international partners agreed to provide the necessary support in this regard.

However, the prevailing tension between Mogadishu and the regions has been an obstacle in establishing broad political consensus in the country. There is concern that the situation may escalate ahead of elections.

Therefore, easing these tensions will be very critical to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the election and lay the foundation for ensuring democratic and inclusive politics. This requires that constructive dialogue takes place between Mogadishu and the regions to

overcome differences and resolve the prevailing stalemate. Indeed the most recent agreement reached between the Federal Government of Somalia and the leadership of Ahlu Sunna Waljama'a (ASWJ) is a positive step. The meeting between President Farmajo and two former Presidents, Hassan Sheikh Mahmud and Sheikh Sharif was welcomed by international partners as a step in the right direction and further engagement was

encouraged among key stakeholders at national and regional levels to ensure broader consensus on the holding of peaceful and credible elections. In terms of the regional dynamics, tensions were also rising between Somalia and Kenya in relation to their maritime dispute.

The meeting of President Farmajo and President Kenyatta in Nairobi last month to improve strained relations was very much welcomed. This is believed to have positive impact not only for the bilateral relations between the two countries but also the peace and security of the wider region.

The security situation in Somalia remains volatile. Al-Shabaab remains a serious threat continuing to create havoc and mayhem

but, according to AMISOM, there has been a decline in Al-Shabab's activities over the last three months owing to a number of factors, including an increase in the number of lethal strikes against Al-Shabaab by partners, with the arrival of the Somali rains, which made it difficult for the group to operate and the successive operations conducted jointly by Somali security forces and AMISOM. This is said to have forced the group to concentrate its activities in and around Mogadishu. The mortar attack on the Airport zone where AMISOM Headquarters and the UN compound are located is a case in point. Ensuring public security and safety in preparation for the election is absolutely vital and AMISOM is said to have repositioned itself to do that and also strengthen its support to the Somali electoral security task force.

The implementation of the Somali-led Transition Plan has been a matter of priority. The progress made in reforming the Somali security forces and in undertaking joint operations with AMISOM, including the recovery of some territories from Al-Shabab and handover of forward operating bases to the Somalia National Army has been considered encouraging. However, the pace of implementation has been rather slow and there is a long way to go before the Somali National Army is ready to take over full and effective security responsibilities from AMISOM. Therefore, there is need to undertake the necessary assessment to make sure that the drawdown of AMISOM forces in accordance with resolution 2472 (2019) is calibrated with the evolving situation on the ground.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia has also been a cause of concern. According to the UN, heavy seasonal rains triggered floods affecting thousands of people in the southern part of the country. The situation is taking a heavy toll on the people. Farmlands and other infrastructures have been destroyed. There is need for urgent humanitarian response to

reach out to people in the worst affected areas. In terms of Somalia's long-term peacebuilding needs and its development agenda, Somalia is making progress in its discussions with the international financial institutions towards securing a debt relief. The progress in its reform efforts, including in improving public financial management and revenue generation, as well as adopting a new National Development Plan have been recognized as positive steps by international partners. At the Somalia Partners Forum, it has agreed with international partners on "a Mutual Accountability Framework to narrow their joint focus to priority areas for action and resources in order to achieve the expected outcome of the meeting is a communique.

The PSC is expected to take note of the progress made in Somalia and underscore the need to expedite preparations to ensure a peaceful, free, fair and credible election next year. The Council may reiterate its concern over the prevailing tensions between the Federal Government and the regions and urge the Somali stakeholders to exert every possible effort to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue and negotiation with a view to building the necessary political consensus towards election 2020. In this context, it may welcome the meeting between President Farmajo and the two Former Presidents. It may also welcome the easing of tensions between Somalia and Kenya following the meeting of the leadership of the two countries.

The Council may express concern over the volatile security situation in Somalia and the continued attack by Al-Shabaab. In this regard, it may underline the need to create a safe and secure environment for the holding of peaceful election next year. It may also point out the need for a comprehensive assessment of the security situation in the country in light of the conditions-based gradual withdrawal of AMISOM in line with the relevant security council resolutions and the decisions of the AUPSC. The Council could express concern on

the humanitarian situation and call for the mobilization of international assistance in support of people who are affected by the recent flooding. It may, on the other hand, express satisfaction with the progress made in the reform efforts and the positive momentum built in the discussion with the IFIs with regard to debt relief.