

Briefing on the situation in Somalia and Operations of ATMIS

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Tomorrow (07 March), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1143rd session to assess key developments in the situation in Somalia and operations of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

Following opening remarks by Innocent Eugene Shiyo, Permanent Representative of Tanzania and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of March, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye, is expected to make a statement. Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of ATMIS, Mohammed El-Amine Souef may also brief the PSC. The representatives of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) are also expected to deliver statements.

The last time the PSC considered the situation in Somalia and operations of ATMIS was at its 1121st meeting held on 11 November 2022, when it approved the Somali government's request to extend Phase I of ATMIS operational timelines for six months. Tomorrow's meeting will afford the PSC the opportunity to deliberate on the security situation in Somalia, including the ongoing offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. The meeting is also expected to assess the status of force generation and integration and efforts being made to meet the extended deadline of 30 June 2023 for ATMIS Phase I drawdown. It will also follow on the request it made for the AU Commission to submit a joint report, including a technical assessment of progress made and compliance with agreed

benchmarks, in order to guide the PSC on the next steps in the transition including proposals on revisions of the CONOPs and force generation requirements.

The Somali National Army (SNA) together with allied local militia have succeeded in dislodging Al-Shabaab from some of its strongholds in Galmudug and Hirshabelle regions in central Somalia. New operations have also been launched against the group in South West State and Jubaland in southern Somalia. President Mahmoud hosted a regional leaders' summit on 1 February in Mogadishu to mobilize support for the ongoing offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. This was attended by the presidents of Djibouti and Kenya and the prime minister of Ethiopia. The leaders agreed to develop joint operational strategy against Al-Shabaab. In addition to their soldiers serving under ATMIS, these three countries are expected to deploy troops in Somalia in a matter of few weeks to support the offensive operations, according to media reports.

While under intense pressure, Al-Shabaab still continues to carry out heinous attacks using improvised explosive devices and other asymmetrical tactics. The group continues to carry out such attacks repeatedly in Mogadishu, sometimes in areas of the city meant to be protected from access to the group. Last month, ten people were killed in Mogadishu in an attack perpetrated by Al-Shabaab targeting military officials and militia fighters involved in the ongoing offensive operations. The possibility of Al-Shabaab acquiring commercial drones to enhance its capabilities seems to have also become a major concern.

In terms of the role of ATMIS in the current Somali led offensive against Al-Shabaab, at the recently held meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on Somalia, SRCC Souef explained that ATMIS has been providing support to the offensive operations by SNA and allied militia including through close air support, casualty evacuation and medical evacuation, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance,

indirect fire support and combat service support such as ammunition, water, drugs and field accommodation.

At the PSC meeting on 7 March, SRCC Souef may explain the status of progress in terms of the implementation of Phase I of ATMIS drawdown which hinges on the progress made by the Somali government in terms of force generation and integration. At the UNSC meeting, SRCC Souef said that Somali is on track to meet its target of training 15,000 new forces this year but called on the UN to enhance its support package to the Somali security forces (SSF) beyond the mandated 13,900 forces. He also underscored the need to undertake more detailed planning on a sector-by-sector approach to identify which areas that ATMIS should continue to hold and which areas the Somali government is ready to take over or accept the risk of some ATMIS troop drawdowns.

Only three months are left for the expiry of the extended deadline and, once again, there seems to be a need for consultation on the way forward not to allow a reversal of the gains made as a result of the recent offensive operations. This is expected to be raised at the UNSC meeting which is going to be held later this month to discuss the transition in Somalia with the participation of Representatives from Somalia, the AU, the EU, and ATMIS troop-contributing countries. Two reports to be presented by the end of April pursuant to resolution 2670 (2022) will also inform future UNSC discussion and action over the coming months. These include a sector-by-sector assessment of the security situation in Somalia and ATMIS performance to be presented by the AU as well as a progress report on the implementation of the Somali transition plan, including an updated force generation plan to be presented by the Somali government.

One possible way forward could be a further extension of the ATMIS timeline to facilitate more progress with the ongoing offensive operations, sustain the gains made recently and allow the Somali government to accelerate the force generation

and integration process to pave the way for ATMIS drawdown. Like what happened in November last year, the request may have to come from the Somali government itself if there is a need for a further extension of the timeline. It is to be recalled that the PSC and UNSC in their joint communique of their 16th annual consultative meeting pointed out 'the need to ensure ATMIS Force protection and to conduct the security transition in Somalia in a manner that does not lead to a security vacuum to be exploited by Al-Shabaab.' However, such adjustments also require sustaining international support and finding a way of addressing the funding shortfall that ATMIS is facing. When the timeline for its Phase I drawdown was extended by six months, the expectation was that bilateral and international partners will continue supporting the mission financially. A very positive development in this respect is the announcement by the EU of additional funding on 2 March last week. According to the statement from the EU, the EU Political and Security Committee approved additional Euro 85 million in support of both SSF and ATMIS. While this may not cover the funding shortfalls facing ATMIS, it would help in narrowing down the current funding gap.

The AU during the summit last month also reiterated its longstanding appeal to the UNSC to provide support to ATMIS and other AU peace support operations from UN assessed contributions. This is likely to be raised later this month when the UNSC meets to discuss the transition in Somalia. The issue of financing of ATMIS from UN assessed contributions cannot be separated from the broader discussions on the financing of AU peace support operations. This broader discussion will take place in the UNSC based on the upcoming report of the Secretary-General prepared pursuant to a 30 August 2022 Presidential statement and will be submitted by the end of April. The report is expected to provide updates on progress made by the UN and the AU to fulfill the commitments set out in resolutions [2320 \(2016\)](#) and [2378 \(2017\)](#), including recommendations on how to move forward on the financing of AU

peace support operations that reflect good practices and lessons learned with the view to secure predictable, sustainable and flexible resources. The AU consensus paper on predictable, adequate, and sustainable financing for AU peace and security activities which has been under discussion by the PSC has now been adopted by the 36th AU Summit. This could also contribute to the discussion over the coming months.

Tomorrow's session can also serve as an opportunity for the PSC to follow up decisions from last year including from its 1075th session and the joint communique on the 16th consultative meeting of the PSC and the UNSC which invited 'the UN Secretary General and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to consider jointly convening an international pledging conference for ATMIS operations, by March 2023.'

The expected outcome of the session is a Communiqué. The PSC may welcome the ongoing offensive by the Somali government to degrade Al-Shabaab and commend ATMIS for its continued support. It may further welcome the joint operational strategy against Al-Shabaab planned by Somalia and its neighboring countries and encourage their continued efforts in this regard. The PSC may emphasize the need for consultations between the AU, UN, EU and the Somali government to determine timelines and exact areas for ATMIS drawdown ahead of the expiry of the fast approaching extended timeline for Phase I drawdown of ATMIS. It may also reiterate its earlier call for joint assessment and submission of report by the AU Commission. The PSC may welcome the announcement by the EU on the provision of additional funding to ATMIS and SSF. It may also echo the call made at the 36th AU Summit, for the UNSC to provide support to ATMIS and other AU peace support operations from UN assessed contributions.