

Briefing on the Situation in Somalia and the Renewal of the Mandate of AMISOM

Automatic Heading TextDate | 07 May, 2020

Tomorrow (7 May), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold a briefing on the situation in Somalia and consider the renewal of the mandate of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which expires on 27 May. The PSC will base its consideration of this agenda on the basis of the briefings from AU Commissioner for Peace and Security Smail Chergui and the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) and Head of Mission of the AMISOM, Francisco Madeira. It is expected that the representative of Somalia will also share a statement as per usual practice.

Somalia continues to face multifaceted challenges. The global COVID-19 pandemic, the locust invasion affecting east Africa and the massive floods caused by heavy rains in the region are further compounding its situation. The country is expected to hold elections in 2020/2021, which is considered to be a key milestone in the stabilization and peacebuilding efforts of Somalia but in the face of these unprecedented challenges, the future of the election could possibly be hanging in the balance. Progress has been made over the last couple of months in pushing forward the legislative agenda, notably the finalization of the electoral law and the Public Finance Management and Corporate Legislation Act but there is need to enhance dialogue in finalizing the constitutional review process.

Unfortunately, Somalia's politics has been overshadowed by the prevailing tension between Mogadishu and the regions.

Therefore, easing these tensions will be critical in

finalizing the constitutional review and ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the election to lay the foundation for democratic and inclusive politics. This requires that constructive dialogue takes place between Mogadishu and the regions to overcome differences and resolve the prevailing stalemate.

The controversy surrounding the election in Jubaland was one of the contentious and divisive issues between the Federal Government and the Jubaland administration.

The dialogue between the Jubaland administration and the leadership of the Jubaland Council for Change, which culminated in a reconciliation agreement signed on 23 April is welcomed by international partners. Unlike other times, the AU and IGAD are conspicuously absent from the list of partners who endorsed the statement welcoming the reconciliation, which came out on 28 April 2020. The statement welcomed this positive development, which will contribute to de-escalating the ongoing tensions in the region. Similar other initiatives are also said to be underway in South West State and Galmudug to form unified and inclusive administrations.

That tensions have been rising in the larger neighborhood are not helping matters. Somalia has also been a battlefield for competition among other extra regional actors. The need for regional consensus and unity of purpose in support of Somalia is, therefore, deemed critical to preserve the gains made over the past decade.

The deadly crash on Tuesday of a Kenyan cargo plane operated by African Express and chartered by an NGO to deliver medical supplies to Somalia has the potential to exasperate tensions with various speculations circulating on social media. President Formajo is said to have called President Uhuru to express regrets and convey condolences for the loss of lives. He also offered readiness to work with the relevant Kenyan authorities to investigate the circumstances surrounding the

incident.

According to AMISOM, the leadership of Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia have agreed to investigate the incident, which claimed the lives of six people.

In terms of the overall security situation, Al Shabaab remains a potent force capable of causing havoc and mayhem in the country. It continues to perpetrate indiscriminate attacks using IEDs to target civilians, government institutions, AMISOM and humanitarian actors operating on the ground. Defeating Al-Shabab and expanding state authority has indeed been a matter of priority. Nevertheless, the implementation of the Somaliled Transition Plan 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. That is why it is important that the drawdown of AMISOM forces in accordance with resolution 2472 (2019) should be predicated on the evolving situation on the ground. In addition to the military strategy, there is also the issue of putting in place a socio-political strategy involving some form of negotiation, engagement that encourages desertion and surrender of Al Shabaab fighters and deradicalization processes as important component of success in the effort to degrade and end the threat posed by this militant group.

In terms of the security situation, another issue that may be of interest to PSC members is the reports of civilian casualties from the continuing air strike by US forces in Somalia. What steps are taken to avoid civilian casualties, coordination in undertaking strikes with Somalia authorities, investigations into incidents of civilian injury, killings and damage, and the provision of compensation for the affected are matters on which the PSC could seek clarification.

In this context, the High-Level Virtual Meeting on Somalia, which took place on 29 April 2020, underscored the need to take a fresh look at what steps need to be taken by Somalia

and international partners to enable Somalia to assume primary responsibility for security and facilitate the completion of AMISOM's mandate. The communique issued following the virtual meeting emphasized the need for a common, coordinated and comprehensive approach among the Somalia stakeholders on the one hand and with AMISOM troop contributors on the other hand, which would enable the Somali Federal government to pursue the security sector reforms necessary, including force generation to develop the capability needed to relieve AMISOM of security responsibilities for Somalia. Accordingly, the meeting called for the transition plan to be revised and updated with clear defining roles for all key stakeholders. The meeting also recognized the need for a further reconfiguration of AMISOM and called for the upcoming mandate renewal of the mission to consider the realities on the ground.

It is expected that Chergui will provide insights on the implications of the outcome of this meeting regarding the role of AMISOM and indeed the process of its drawdown. Based on this input and indeed the views from the representative of Somalia, the expectation is that the PSC will forward its proposal to serve as the basis for the UNSC decision in this regard. In its communique, the AUPSC may express sympathy and condolence over the loss of lives due the plan crash.

The Council may note the many complex and difficult challenges facing Somalia and call for concerted international effort in support of the country. It may highlight in this regard the looming humanitarian crisis facing the country due to the impact of COVID-19, the locust invasion and the heavy floods. The PSC may wish to note the progress made in terms of the preparations for the upcoming elections, particularly the legislation of important laws. 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 the election. It may also urge further concerted engagement regarding the constitutional review process.

The PSC could welcome the signing of the reconciliation agreement between the Jubaland administration and the leadership of the Jubaland Council for Change and encourage reconciliation initiative currently underway in other regions.

The Council may express concern over the volatile security situation in Somalia and condemn the continued attack by Al-Shabaab. In this context, it may call for reinvigorated efforts in fighting the menace of terrorism in Somalia not only militarily but also through social and political means including processes that encourage desertion of Al Shabaab fighters, deradicalization and reintegration into society. The PSC may also express concern over civilian casualties resulting from US air strikes and urge for investigation and compliance with due process of the law with adequate compensation for affected families and communities. Council may express concern over delays in the implementation of the Somalia-led Transition Plan and welcome the outcome of the High-Level Virtual meeting held recently. It may appeal to the Security Council to consider its decision on the drawdown of AMISOM forces considering the situation on the ground during the upcoming discussion on the mandate renewal of the mission. It may also reiterate its appeal to the United Nations and other international partners for ensuring predictable and sustainable financing for AMISOM.