

Briefing on the situation in Somalia and the status of consultations in the Independent Assessment Report on AMISOM post-2021

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Tomorrow (07 October), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected convene its 1037th session to consider the situation in Somalia and the status of consultations in the Independent Assessment Report on the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) post-2021.

The session is expected to have two segments. In the first segment which will be open to invited guests, opening remarks will be delivered by the PSC Chairperson of the month and Permanent Representative of Mozambique to the AU, Alfredo Nuvunga, to be followed with a statement from the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye. The representative of the Federal Republic of Somalia, as the country concerned, and representative of the Republic of Sudan, Chair of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will follow with their statements. In the second segment of the session in which only PSC members and the AU Commission will participate, Francisco Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission in Somalia will make a presentation.

It is to be recalled that the PSC considered the report on Independent Assessment Team on the AU's engagement in and with Somalia post-2021 during its 1015th session, which was held on 30 July this year. The Independent Assessment Team recommended

the establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilisation Support to Somalia as the most appropriate option for the future of AMISOM post-2021 while proposing an AU Multidimensional Stabilisation Support to Somalia (reconfigured AMISOM) as the second preferred option. No outcome document has been issued for the meeting.

The AU Commission subsequently sent a delegation led by Fiona Lortan to engage with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in August, to discuss among others, the new AMISOM mission post-2021. The two days meeting between the AU Commission and FGS resulted in a breakthrough agreement that culminated in a joint statement outlining the major issues they agreed on. Most notably, the two sides agreed to jointly consider the 'AU Transition Mission' as the post-2021 Somalia mission. Moreover, the AU Commission and FGS, together with UN and international partners, agreed to develop a joint 'workable', 'realizable', and 'game-changing' CONOPS, which forms the basis for the future 'AU Transition Mission', within the timeline for submission of no later than 31 October 2021. The PSC convened another session on 31 August to receive briefing about the meeting between the AU Commission and FGS from 18 to 19 August, but with no outcome document.

As a follow up to the August meeting, a joint steering committee meeting was held between the AU Commission and FGS from 21 to 23 September in Mogadishu, to develop the joint CONOPS for the 'AU Transition Mission'. The meeting was convened specifically to work on the details of the CONOPS including the end state, objectives and tasks of the new transition mission; its composition and structure; sector alignment; command and control; joint operations and coordination with Somali National Army (SNA); force generation; and logistic requirements of the mission. It was agreed to review the zero draft of the CONOPS by 28 September and complete for the consideration by the PSC and subsequently submit to the UN Security Council by 31 October 2021. In

tomorrow's session therefore, the PSC is expected to receive update on the progress made towards the development of the joint CONOPS, which remains critical in shaping the envisaged transition mission in Somalia post-2021.

In addition, the Council may also hear about the activities of AMISOM particularly in the areas of joint military operations with SNA, the support provided in the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan (STP), as well as electoral assistances. One major development likely to be highlighted in this respect is the recent (22 September) launch of a Joint Operations Coordination Centre (JOCC) in Mogadishu, marking the establishment of such centres across all sectors of AMISOM. The August, AUC-FGS agreement emphasized the importance of joint operation between AMISOM and SNA and develop strong tactical cooperation and coordination to effectively degrade Al-Shabaab. In this context, the establishment of the centres is a step forward in bridging the existing gap in the areas of joint planning and coordination for military operations against Al-Shabaab. The financial, operational and technical support being provided to the elections in Somalia based on the PSC decision at its 994th session, are also likely to be highlighted.

It is also important to note that tomorrow's session comes at the backdrop of deepening political tensions between Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo. There is concern that the ongoing disagreement within the government may affect the electoral process and the ongoing fight against Al-Shabaab. The elections have already been delayed even before the disagreement between the two principals. Upper house elections, which were scheduled to take place from 25 to 28 July started after some delays. Lower house elections, which were supposed to start on 10 September, have been postponed. As the lower house delegates are the ones who will subsequently elect the president in an indirect voting model,

the postponement will also affect the timeline for the presidential election, which was initially scheduled to take place on 10 October. There is so far no indication of when it will happen. Hence, there is growing call for the parties to resolve their differences through dialogue. They are being urged to work towards the successful organization of peaceful, inclusive, transparent and credible elections and focus on the fight against Al-Shabaab.

On 2 October, International partners, including AMISOM and IGAD issued a statement expressing concern that the core issues of disagreement between the President and the Prime Minister have not yet been resolved in spite of the ongoing mediation efforts over the last couple of weeks. They indicated that the prevailing political uncertainty might have the risk of further delaying the elections and the ongoing dispute over the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Security (MoIS) and NISA, which will undermine the fight against Al-Shabaab. Therefore, they urged the two principals to resolve their differences and redirect their efforts towards implementing the 17 September 2020 and 27 May 2021 agreements on the holding of elections and agree on the appointment of the leadership of key security institutions, which will be critical for the holding of peaceful elections.

It is against this backdrop that the future of AMISOM post-2021 is being discussed. The mandate of AMISOM is due to expire in December 2021. The UN has already done its own independent assessment and recommended a reconfiguration of the mission. The AU Independent Assessment Team's recommendation for establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission was rejected by the Somali government, which necessitated further consultations between the AU and the Somali government to resolve differences and chart a way forward.

From what appears, the discussion is not over yet and December is fast approaching. Obviously, there is a need for the host

country, AU, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) to agree on a common way forward on the future of AMISOM. This may require some time and there appears to be a request for an extension. The fact that elections are going to be delayed also makes it all the more logical. The Secretary-General, upon the request of the AU, is said to have made the request to the UN Security Council (UNSC). However, this is being met with opposition by some of the permanent members. What this all means is that the mandate renewal process over the coming months will not be a smooth sailing.

The outcome of tomorrow's session is not clear at the time of finalizing this 'insight'. However, the PSC may take note of the progress made towards the development of joint CONOPS for the 'Africa Union Transition Mission' and commend the efforts of AU Commission, FGS, and international partners in this regard. Council is also likely to welcome the positive steps taken by AMISOM and the SNA towards enhancing joint planning and coordination of military operations against Al-Shabaab including through the establishment of JOCC. Cognizant of the need to transfer security responsibilities progressively to the FGS, Council may underscore the importance of AMISOM's continued support to strengthen the capacity of Somali national security forces. In relation to the election, the Council is likely to reiterate its request for AMISOM, during its 994th meeting, to 'continue providing technical support to the political and governance processes of Somalia at federal and regional levels, including technical assistance to the planning and conduct of the elections once an agreement has been reached'. On the political situation, Council is expected to express its deep concern over the feud between Prime Minister Roble and President Farmajo, and in this connection, it may echo the call of the latest joint statement by international partners to resolve their differences through dialogue, prioritize the implementation of the 17 September 2020 and 27 May 2021 electoral agreements, and ensure the 'key security institutions (MoIS and NISA) are headed by able and

legitimate leaders given the electoral season of the country. PSC may also request the AU Commission to use all available tools at its disposal with the view to supporting Somalia conduct peaceful and credible election, as well as preventing electoral violence.