

Briefing on the situation in Somalia/ATMIS

Briefing on the situation in Somalia/ATMIS Date | 19 June 2024

Tomorrow (20 June), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1217th session to discuss the situation in Somalia and the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

Rebecca Otengo, Permanent Representative of Uganda and Chairperson of the PSC for June will start the session with opening remarks which will be followed by a statement from Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). It is expected that PAPS will introduce the 'Report of the African Union Commission on the Strategic Assessment for the Post-ATMIS Security Arrangement for an AU-led Mission in Somalia. Abdullahi Warfa, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Somalia is expected to deliver a statement. A representative of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is also expected to make a statement.

As per the drawdown plan, ATMIS is expected to complete the drawdown of 4,000 personnel by the end of June. Over the weekend, the mission started handing over its forward operating base in Lower Shabelle to the Somali Security Forces (SSF) as part of this drawdown process. However, the Somali government requested a revised timeline in a letter to the PSC dated 16 May, proposing a phased drawdown with 2,000 troops leaving Somalia by the end of June and a second batch exiting by September.

Data available on Amani Africa's [ATMIS Drawdown Tracker](#)

With ATMIS expected to complete its drawdown and exit by the

end of the year, discussions on a post-ATMIS arrangement have also picked up. The Somali government requested a follow-on mission at the Somalia Security Conference in New York in December 2023. Subsequently, it submitted a proposal to the PSC in March and the Security Council in April. The mission's mandate includes providing stabilisation support, facilitating state-building priorities, and securing strategic population centres and critical infrastructure. Initially, the proposal intended to retain the remaining 10,000 ATMIS personnel after the third phase of the drawdown process. However, the discussion has evolved since then.

In the communiqué of its [1205th Session](#) of 3 April, the PSC welcomed Somalia's proposal for post-ATMIS security arrangements and requested the AU Commission to undertake comprehensive and detailed planning based on the situation on the ground. It also emphasised the need for adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing for the post-ATMIS mission, including through Security Council [Resolution 2719 \(2023\)](#) on the financing of AU-led peace support operations (AUPSOs). Following this, an AU delegation led by General Cheikh Dembele, head of the Peace Support Operation Division (PSOD), visited Somalia from 24-30 April to conduct the assessment in line with the PSC decision. While a technical report was prepared on the basis of data collected and consultations held, the PSC was unable to consider the report as Somalia objected to some contents of the report that it found politically unpalatable. The AU also developed a strategic concept of operations for the follow-on mission. Based on the assessment of security threats and the necessary tasks that should be carried out, including offensive operations against Al-Shabaab rather than just securing critical infrastructure initially proposed by Somalia, the AU revised the troop strength, arguing that the new mission requires more personnel. Following discussions with Somalia, an agreement appears to have been reached to revise the number of troops to 11,900. In an informal meeting on 21 May, the AU

delegation gave the PSC an oral briefing on its assessment and the strategic concept of operations developed for the follow-on mission. Accordingly, during tomorrow's meeting, the PSC is expected to consider the version of the report 'updated' following Somalia's objection.

Tomorrow's PSC meeting takes place against the backdrop of these developments and its deliberations will be crucial in outlining the next steps for the ATMIS drawdown process and the security arrangements beyond December. The meeting will be informed by the chairperson's report circulated to members, which incorporates elements from the strategic assessment, including the threat analysis, progress in joint operations by ATMIS and the Somali Security Forces, the implementation of the security transition, the ATMIS drawdown process, and proposal for the post-ATMIS security arrangements.

Particularly, the Chairperson's report identifies options for the follow-on mission and its financing arrangements. In terms of the former, the first option proposed in the report is an AU-led mission which appears to be the most favoured option given the AU's longstanding engagement in Somalia and the experiences gained over the past 17 years of AMISOM/ATMIS deployment. While it is thus anticipated that the post-ATMIS Mission would principally be made up of the ATMIS troops with any additional capabilities that the mandate of the mission requires, there are indications that the leadership of the FGS would like to see a change in the composition of the post-ATMIS mission. Despite the fact that an AU-led mission is the first and most favoured option, the report states that its implementation requires the provision of predictable, sustainable, and adequate funding. The second option is a regional security framework which would involve an intervention force from countries of the region but the report notes the challenges it presents in ensuring accountability and transparency. It also states that this option may not qualify for the UN logistical support package or the

requirements set out in Resolution 2719. The third option is an AU-UN hybrid mission, which the report says, could be challenging to implement due to issues of command and control.

Not surprisingly and considering the funding challenges that afflicted ATMIS, financing is a major issue in the policy discussion on post-ATMIS. The Chairperson's report further outlines four options in terms of the financing arrangements for the follow-on mission. The first option is to finance the mission under resolution 2719, including through the UN support office package. This is also the option that Somalia included in its proposal submitted to the PSC in March 2024. The second option is the hybrid model which represents the current support arrangement for ATMIS through the provision of the UN logistical support package. But the report indicates that this option does not include troop and police reimbursement, and death and disability compensation. The third option is the trust fund option which depends on voluntary contributions from partners and does not ensure predictable and sustainable funding. The fourth and last option is securing support through 100% UN-assessed contribution which is considered ideal. Understandably, this is proposed not within the framework of Resolution 2719 but as an exceptional case for preventing the emergence of a vacuum and risk of relapse, which is a possibility. It is interesting to note that the options did not include the funding of the post-ATMIS mission on the basis of the funding mechanism used for AMISOM.

Therefore, PSC members are expected to examine these options at their meeting tomorrow and chart out the way forward. The outcome of their deliberation will likely inform the upcoming discussions at the Security Council in New York. The UK, the penholder on Somalia, has already shared a draft resolution with some Council members, including the African members, in anticipation of the PSC meeting. Among other provisions, the draft resolution requests the Secretary-General to conduct a

joint strategic assessment with the AU Commission, building on the work already done by the AU, and submit the outcome by the end of August. According to the draft text, the joint strategic assessment should also include options for financing the new follow-on mission, including through but not limited to, resolution 2719 (2023).

The joint strategic assessment is expected to be conducted in consultation with Somalia and its partners some of whom have already outlined their positions on the implementation of resolution 2719 and the post-ATMIS arrangement through their respective non-papers. The US, in particular, does not seem keen to support the financing of the follow-on mission under resolution 2719 and this might pose a particular challenge during the upcoming negotiations. The US has clearly stated that '[t]he first AUPSO authorised under UNSCR 2719 ideally would not re-hat or be a successor to a previous UN, AU, or African regional mission, so as to avoid preconceived notions from previous missions while enabling the establishment of a new AU-UN partnership.' In this regard, it has been making demarches to various stakeholders to explain its position.

On the other hand, the UK has expressed full support for a new AU follow-on mission authorised by the Security Council to succeed ATMIS. The UK believes that '[t]his is the option identified by the FGS and its core security partners to be most effective in addressing their needs, as set out at the Somalia Security Conference in December 2023.' It also maintains that this is 'the option best equipped to support Somali-led counter al-Shabaab operations, protect the security gains of the last 16 years, and enable continued humanitarian and stabilisation efforts.' The UK also shared its views on the various options proposed for the post-ATMIS arrangements which appear to align with the AU Chairperson's report.

The EU has been a major partner to Somalia and the AU in supporting AMISOM/ATMIS. It backs a new follow-on mission with a limited scope, size, and timeframe, and agrees in principle

on applying resolution 2719. However, it argues that this decision depends on the framework and mandate to be agreed upon. The EU prioritises burden-sharing and supports the potential use of the AU Peace Fund, including the Crisis Reserve Facility, or other relevant AU facilities. It also emphasises the need for Somalia's other bilateral partners to share the burden.

The French non-paper aims to unpack resolution 2719 to foster a collective understanding of its implementation and argues that the first PSO authorised by the Security Council under resolution 2719 should serve as a baseline for future operations. In this context, France appears to have a different stance from Brussels on the post-ATMIS security arrangements and wants to be convinced of the need to apply resolution 2719 on Somalia as a first test case.

In light of these developments, tomorrow's PSC meeting will be crucial in clearly outlining the AU's position on the ATMIS drawdown process and plans for the post-ATMIS arrangements. This will be the key to determining the financial and logistical needs of the mission for the rest of the year and beyond, given the ongoing UN peacekeeping budget discussions in New York and the upcoming discussions in Brussels in July on the allocation of the EU Peace Facility. If the situation requires extending ATMIS beyond December, further discussion on financing options with the UN and other donors might also be necessary. The other pressing issue seems to be that Somalia will assume its seat on the Security Council in January as a non-permanent member for the 2025-2026 term. Therefore, the above-mentioned discussions must be finalised by the end of December. The upcoming US election in November and the possibility of another Trump presidency also add to the urgency.

Politically, tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia appear to be further complicating the situation. The Somali national security advisor was recently quoted in the media stating that

Somalia will ask Ethiopian troops to leave the country unless Ethiopia revokes its memorandum with Somaliland to gain access to the sea and set up a naval base. Ethiopian troops are deployed in Somalia under ATMIS and through bilateral arrangements. Whether what the national security advisor said is the official position of the Somali government remains unclear, but some regional states such as South West State and Jubaland have voiced strong opposition. Externally, there are also concerns that the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops could leave a security vacuum that Al-Shabaab might exploit.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. The PSC is expected to welcome the commencement of the third phase of ATMIS troop withdrawal while emphasising the importance of ensuring that the drawdown is conducted in a manner that avoids creating a security vacuum in Somalia. The PSC may also endorse the request from Somalia for stratifying the planned drawdown while expressing the need to avoid adding further strain on ATMIS. On the post-ATMIS security arrangements in Somalia, the PSC is expected to welcome the AU Commission report on the joint strategic assessment for the post-ATMIS security arrangements for an AU-led mission in Somalia. Echoing the recommendations of the report, the PSC may decide that ATMIS is followed by an AU-led, UN-authorized multilateral mission, limited in size, scope and timeframe, as the most viable option for post-ATMIS security arrangements. The PSC may also affirm that the proposed AU-led mission is constituted on the basis of the ATMIS troops to ensure continuity. Regarding the financing arrangement, the PSC may reiterate the imperative of securing predictable, sustainable and adequate funding for the post-ATMIS mission. In this context, the PSC may propose accessing UN-assessed contributions within the framework of UNSC resolution 2719 the funding modality for the mission, backed by a UN-mandated logistical support package or 100% use of UN-assessed contributions as an exceptional case.