

Cash strapped African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) starts its second year facing uncertain financial future

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This month marks exactly one year since the transition of the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). On 8 March 2022, at its 1068th session, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), in one of the notable highlights of its work during 2022, 'authorized' ATMIS to take effect as of 1 April 2022. Unlike other peace support operations, ATMIS is authorised with a defined expiry date, hence expected to end by 31 December 2024 upon the full assumption of security responsibilities by the Somali Security Forces (SSF). The communiqué of 1068th session is one of, if not, the longest Communiqués of the PSC with 33 paragraphs, capturing various aspects of the reconfiguration and phased implementation of the mandate of ATMIS.

In the work of the PSC in 2022, ATMIS, along with the situation in Somalia, received a lion's share of PSC's agenda. Indeed, as [Amani Africa's](#) review of the PSC for 2022 revealed, out of the 17 sessions dedicated to the East and Horn of Africa region, a region that received the largest percentage of PSC's engagement both in sessions and field visits in 2022, the situation that received the most attention with seven sessions was Somalia/AMISOM/ATMIS. Much of PSC's intense engagement on Somalia/ATMIS had to do with the transition of AMISOM to ATMIS and the reconfiguration and effective operationalization of a reconfigured ATMIS. Within this context, the most recurrent issue, both at the start of ATMIS and subsequently, is the funding of the mission.

Pursuant to the communiqué of the 1068th session of the PSC and the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolution 2628, ATMIS military component maintains current AMISOM size of 18,586 troops during Phase I, and the first drawdown of 2000 troops was expected to take place at the end of this Phase slated for 31 December 2022. As indicated in [Amani Africa's March 2022 monthly digest](#), the phased drawdown of ATMIS forces, as outlined in the communiqué of the PSC's 1068th session, would not be linear but contingent on developments on the ground including security and preparation of the SSF at the requisite number and capacity to take over responsibility. It thus came as no surprise that the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) requested the postponement of the first drawdown scheduled for December 2022. The PSC in the 1121st session convened on 11 November 2022 expressed support for FGS's request to extend the timeline for the drawdown of the 2000 troops from 31 December 2022 to 30 June 2023. Despite this change, the PSC affirmed the timelines for subsequent drawdowns and eventual exit of ATMIS on 31 December 2024.

During the one year period, ATMIS continues to make progress in the execution of its mandate working closely with FGS and

the reconfiguration and incremental transfer of its responsibilities, although it suffers from lack of a Force Commander for unduly prolonged period of time. ATMIS played critical role in securing the presidential election and the peaceful transfer of power to the elected President in June 2022. While it is not taking a lead role in the new offensive launched against Al Shabaab apparently on account in part of the funding problem, ATMIS provides logistical support including air cover and medical evacuation for the local forces and SSF executing the offensive.

ATMIS also faced the worst that such a mission can experience. It sustained its first and one of the worst attacks that the AU Mission sustained in recent years, leading to the death of 30 Burundian soldiers when on 3 May Al Shabaab hit the ATMIS base in the village of El-Baraf, about 150 kilometres north of Mogadishu. As an attack that clearly highlights the heavy price that ATMIS personnel pay in the line of duty, the PSC underscored the need for enhancing 'the capacity of ATMIS, including by availing the Mission with all necessary human, material, technical and financial resources, including force enablers and multipliers, in order to enable it to more effectively discharge its mandate.'

Even in the face of such fatal attacks, ATMIS started its journey and remains with a significant funding shortfall. The seriousness of this shortfall is of such a nature that one of the recurrent themes that featured throughout PSC's sessions on ATMIS is the financing of ATMIS. Its 1075th session was particularly dedicated to the financing issue where PSC noted with 'deep concern' the commencement of the mission without the required resources. Despite the direct funding by the European Union (EU) (€120 million) and the United Kingdom (UK) (€29.6 million), the mission's budget deficit for the year 2022 was around €25.8 million. This funding shortfall has increased further for 2023.

With the aim to address the budget shortfall, PSC sought different options in various of its sessions including an appeal to the UN Security Council to hold a special session on financing ATMIS and the SSF (1075th session); a call on EU and other partners to establish a financial support package (1075th session); and a request on AU Commission and UN, along with IGAD and partners, to jointly organize international pledging conference by March 2023 (1121st session). The PSC also stressed, in all its communiqués adopted at the sessions on ATMIS, the need for accessing UN assessed contributions for sustainable and predictable funding necessary for the effective execution of the mandate of the mission.

While no breakthrough has emerged and many of these options such as the convening of pledging conference are as yet to be tried, the AU Commission along with FGS during the week of 20 March undertook a roadshow in an effort to inject urgency to mobilize funds to make up for the funding shortfall. This involved travels to and holding of convening with partners in New York and Washington DC for soliciting action to resolve the dire funding gap facing ATMIS. These took place during the week leading to the one year anniversary of ATMIS on 1 April. Talking to people who were in these meetings in New York, there was no indication of any new pledges. Those already contributing expressed frustration about lack of engagement of countries such as China and gulf countries for making contributions.

On its part while the AU is set to use the Conflict Reserve Fund (CRF) of the AU Peace Fund towards ATMIS as decided by the AU Assembly, the scale of the shortfall is such that during the PSC session held last month (March 2023), AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye indicated that the AU would be forced to bring forward the June 2023 timeline for the first drawdown of ATMIS. Noting that the mission is in a dire financial

situation, Under-Secretary-General of the UN, [Rosemary DiCarlo](#), warned the situation poses a significant risk to the security transition and could threaten hard-won gains. Although in the words of DiCarlo the common objective of realizing ATMIS mandate depends on predictable, sustainable and multi-year funding for ATMIS and adequate resourcing for the Somali security transition, ATMIS faces very uncertain financial future notwithstanding the heavy price its personnel pay in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is to be seen whether there will be successful follow up to the PSC's reiteration, under its most recent communique of the 1143rd session, of its earlier calls for the convening of a special session by the UN Security Council and the convening of a pledging conference by the UN Secretary General and the AU Commission Chairperson.

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