

Consideration of the Concept of Operations (CONOPs) of the AU-Led Mission in Somalia Post-ATMIS

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Tomorrow (25 July), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1223rd session to consider the Concept of Operations (CONOPs) of the AU-Led Mission in Somalia post-African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). It is envisaged that ATMIS will be replaced by the AU Stabilisation and Support Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM).

Following an opening remark by Miguel César Domingos Bembe, Permanent Representative of Angola to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month of July 2024, Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), is expected to make a statement. The PSC may also receive briefings from the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia and Head of ATMIS, Mohamed El-Amine Souef, potentially with a focus on the state ATMIS and its drawdown, and PAPS Conflict Management Directorate who worked on the development of the CONOPs.

The last time the PSC held a meeting on post-ATMIS AU support for Somalia at its 1217th [session](#), it chose, among the options presented by the AU assessment report, the option of deploying an AU-led mission. As a follow-up to that decision, the PSC requested the AU Commission, in consultation with ATMIS, the FGS, and all relevant stakeholders, to submit a Concept of Operations (CONOPs). The CONOPs intends to outline the new post-ATMIS security arrangements, including its mandate,

configuration, benchmarks, duration, and transition timelines from the existing mission to the new one. The PSC's request was also acknowledged by UNSC Resolution 2741, which in addition to the request from the PSC, called for clear milestones and progress indicators, as well as a comprehensive exit strategy for the new mission.

In light of these requests, the session tomorrow is expected to provide the Council with an update on its previous request. It is to be noted that the session will be preceded by an informal session on the CONOPs a day before this session. As such the focus of tomorrow's session will be based on the informal session and thus predominantly focus on the progress made by the AU Commission in producing CONOPs with the intended request emanating both from the PSC and UNSC. To develop the new CONOPS, it is reported that nine members from the AU Commission held a four-day consultation with the Federal Government of Somali (FGS) and key partners between 14-17 July. The consultations included discussion among the senior leadership team of ATMIS officials, the Federal Government of Somalia, representatives of ATMIS Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) and international partners who consist of members from the Core Security Partner Groups (CSPG). Based on the press release of the consultations, the consultations covered key elements of the CONOPs and were used for informing the development of the CONOPs.

The draft CONOPs has some 17 major parts: principles; assessment of the situation in Somalia; key assumptions; mandate; political directive; strategic end state; operational end state; exit strategy; major risks; component-specific tasks; mission composition and structure; mission phases; command, control and coordination mechanism; strategic management and control; operational and administrative processes; key performance benchmarks; and Mission support. Among the principles is AU leadership and the central role AU will play in the strategic management and oversight of the new

mission. Under this, the draft CONOPs envisages a comprehensive approach to PSOs focusing on the provision of support to security, stabilisation and state-building processes through a multidimensional AU PSO deployment with civilian, police and military components. Indeed, reducing the mission's role to only fighting and a military component leads to fragmentation and disconnect between military and other stabilisation and political processes key to the success of the mission. Indications are that FGS seems to be insisting to assume greater control over the operation of the mission and to use the mission more like forces contracted by the Government. PSC's reflections on resistance to the multidimensionality of the mission and the scope of mandate as well as AU's leadership role thus require careful consideration.

Not surprisingly as a mission that builds on ATMIS, much of the components of the draft CONOPs for the new mission reflect continuity. As with ATMIS, the exit strategy for the post-ATMIS mission is premised on the effective implementation of the Somalia Stabilisation and Development Plan (SSDP). More specifically, the draft CONOPs for the new mission is predicated on the achievement by Somalia Security Forces (SSF) of a level of capability for assuming security responsibility from the AU mission, the erosion of Al Shabaab's capacity to a point where it no longer poses serious threats and most notably the consolidation of national political cohesion and settlement and the expansion of state authority through enhanced legitimate local governance structures that deliver public services. All of these depend on the capacity of the FGS (and the wider Somalia political and social forces) to shoulder effectively their part of the responsibility much better than they have done over the years.

In terms of composition, the initial draft CONOPs envisaged that the post-ATMIS mission will be made up of 11,911 personnel, comprising 85 civilians, 11,146 military and 680

police personnel, deployed in 4 Sectors. The implementation of the mission envisages three phases and pre and post-mission phases. The pre-mission phase is the transitional phase involving the completion of ATMIS phases and the parallel preparation of the reorganisation of the areas of operations and troop deployments. As such it runs for the duration of the last two phases of ATMIS, namely Phase III and Phase IV which is envisaged to conclude on 31 December 2024. In this context, the PSC may benefit from a discussion of the current progress of the ATMIS drawdown as it will influence the final composition of a new post-ATMIS Arrangement. With regards to the amalgamation of the four phases of ATMIS drawdown and the formation of new missions, the PSC's outcome [document](#) highlighted the need for careful coordination between the exit of ATMIS and the follow-on mission that will replace it.

The other three phases are envisaged to be implemented from 01 January 2025 to 31 December 2026, 01 January 2027 to 31 December 2028 and 01 January 2029 to 31 December 2029. Accordingly, the post-ATMIS mission is expected to run for a period of four years. Then, there is a post-mission phase involving the liquidation of the mission.

Of particular strategic significance for tomorrow's session, in addition to the details of the CONOPS, is the financing of the post-ATMIS mission. Considering the financing shortfalls that frustrated the effective functioning of ATMIS, the importance of finding predictable and sustainable funding for the mission cannot be overemphasised. It is to be recalled that in the communique of its 1217th session, the PSC requested 'that a dedicated funding mechanism, through UN assessed contributions in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2719 (2023) ...be established to guarantee the financial stability of the mission.' The adoption of a CONOPs that has the support of all stakeholders, including the host country and members of the UNSC, will be crucial, if not a sufficient condition, for AUSSOM to be a test case for the

application of 2719. In this regard, the earlier the preparatory processes are thoroughly carried out, the higher the chances for facilitating the processes for the adoption of a UN Security Council Resolution authorising UN-assessed contributions for the mission within the framework of Resolution 2719. Considering that this process may not be completed by 1 January 2025 and that the funding from UN assessed contribution may not exceed 75%, it would be of interest for PSC members to reflect on the mobilisation of funds both for the period until the finalisation of the adoption of UNSC resolution authorising UN assessed contributions (provided that no major UNSC member opposes it) and for meeting the balance beyond the 75 per cent.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. Unless the FGS push for the draft CONOPs to be reflective virtually of its views carries the day, the PSC is expected to welcome the preparation and presentation of the CONOPs as per the Council's request. The PSC may endorse the CONOPs subject to amendments and request the submission of the CONOPs to the UNSC ahead of 2 August 2024. It may press on the FGS the need for it to shoulder its part of the responsibility by ensuring the generation of forces with adequate capacities, at the requisite number and within agreed timelines for the success of the Mission in supporting SSF and in SSF ultimately taking over full security responsibilities. Regarding sustainable funding for the post-ATMIS mission, the PSC may reiterate its previous request for the AU Commission and UN Secretariat to develop options for funding for the new mission within the framework of UN Res 2719. The PSC may condemn the recent attacks in the Lower Shabelle region as well as the attacks on ATMIS and Somali Security Forces over the past month. On the phased drawdown of ATMIS, the PSC may also welcome the efforts by ATMIS and FGS in handing over crucial forward operating bases (FOBS) to the Somali Security Forces. However, the PSC may reiterate the need for ATMIS and the FGS to follow the revised timeline set for the third phase drawdown.