

Consideration of the Report on the Independent Assessment on the future of AMISOM

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Tomorrow (30 July) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1015th session to consider the report on the Independent Assessment Team (IA) on the AU's engagement in and with Somalia post-2021. This session is expected to determine PSC's policy decision on the form that the presence of AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) will take post-2021.

The session will have two segments. During the first and semi open segment, it is envisaged that following the opening remark of the Chairperson of the PSC, Victor Adekele, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Somalia, Mohamed Abdirizak, the Chairperson of the Inter- Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Standby Force (EASF), IGAD Secretariat, the Special Representative of the Secretary General to the AU and Head of the United Nations Office to the AU (UNOAU), Hanna Tetteh and Head of the European Union (EU) Delegation to the AU, Birgitte Markussen will make statements reflecting their respective policy perspectives on the agenda of the session against the background of the engagement of each in Somalia and with AMISOM. During the closed segment, the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts of the PSC and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, will make presentation while the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson, Francisco Madeira, will present a briefing on the situation in Somalia.

The working documents that the PSC is expected to use for this

session include the report of the independent assessment team and the report of the two meetings of the PSC Committee of Experts. Other documents that the PSC Committee of Experts proposed to serve as further source of reference are the outcome documents of the recently concluded meetings of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defence, Safety and Security (STCDSS) and the meeting of the Military Operations Coordination Committee (MOCC) of the Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) of AMISOM.

It is to be recalled that the PSC took a decision for undertaking its own independent assessment after the UN undertook its own assessment upon the failure of the AU and the UN to conduct joint assessment. UNSC decided in March this year to renew the mandate of AMISOM until December 2021 through the adoption of resolution 2568 (2021). African members of the Security Council voiced concern over the draft process and advanced the common African position based on the PSC communique of February 2021 emphasizing the need to listen to the host country, the AU and troop contributing countries. Indeed, the AU had appealed to the UN Security Council 'to avail the space necessary for the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), in close collaboration with the AU, to lead the discussions concerning the international engagement with Somalia post-2021, in line with the Somali Transition Plan, after undertaking its internal process and assessment'. That is why it requested the UN Security Council to refrain from pronouncing prematurely on any possible arrangements beyond 2021, including through the use of non-agreed concepts and terminologies that are beyond the existing applicable arrangements.

While the AU agreed with the ten months extension of AMISOM's mandate, it expressed disappointment that its views were not taken into account in the UN Independent Assessment, particularly the request for joint leadership and expanded scope in undertaking the assessment. However, the UN went

ahead and conducted the independent assessment on its own and recommended a reconfiguration of AMISOM post-2021.

Therefore, the AU did its own independent assessment based on the direction given by the PSC. The independent assessment team, set up pursuant to the PSC communique of 9 February 2021, was led by Major General Xolani Mankayi from South Africa. In undertaking the assessment and preparing its report, the IA interacted with troop and police contributing countries, various stakeholders in the AMISOM hosting country, concerned representatives of international organizations including the AU and the UN as well as experts on AMISOM.

During tomorrow's session, the PSC will be briefed on the independent assessment team's report. The issues that the team canvassed to which PSC's attention will be drawn include the political situation in Somalia, the ongoing stabilization and peacebuilding process, the security environment and the threat posed by Al-Shabaab as well as the broader regional geopolitical dynamics. Most importantly, PSC will examine the four options identified in the report.

The options the independent assessment team proposed are the establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Somalia (UNMIS); an AU Multidimensional Stabilization Support to Somalia (reconfigured AMISOM); the deployment of the East African Standby Force (EASF); and finally, an AMISOM Exit and assumption by the Somali Security Forces (SSF) of security responsibilities under the Somali Transition Plan post-2021. In its report, the 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.

The first option is similar to the UN-AU Hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID). The assessment team made this recommendation based on the consideration that it will ensure sustainable and predictable financing from UN assessed contribution and

address the logistical challenges facing AMISOM. This has also been the view of troop contributing countries of AMISOM. However, UNAMID was deployed under unique circumstances and the UNSC may not necessarily agree to replicate such a hybrid mission. It is also worth recalling that the UN Assessment Team opted against this option on three grounds: that the UN doctrine and guidance clearly advise against using UN peacekeeping operations for counter terrorism and enforcement actions; that this option requires the allocation of significant additional resources than are currently committed for international security assistance in Somalia; and that this complex transition to a hybrid mission would distract international attention from focusing on investing in Somali-led security and would risk delaying transferring security responsibility to Somalia Security Forces (SSF). Indications are that this is not the option that the UNSC is inclined to support.

The second option, an AU Multidimensional Stabilisation Support to Somalia (or reconfigured AMISOM) is also what the UN independent assessment recommended. This is the second preferred option that may receive AU's support if the first option fails to work out. This option would entail change in the mandate, force size and composition of AMISOM. It would also require logistical and financial support. As such, this would entail agreement between the AU and the host state on AMISOM's roles and parameters for transfer of security responsibilities to SSF, the adoption of new concept of operations and consultations with the UN and the EU.

The AU seems to be interested in demonstrating its commitment to the operationalization of the African Standby Force (ASF) and the third option could be looked at from that perspective. It envisages that the EASF could be deployed in Somalia in the context of a reconfigured AMISOM. This would entail a complete transition rarely tried in earlier experiences and could also limit the broad continental scale contribution to and make up

of AMISOM.

The fourth and final option for an AMISOM Exit and assumption by the SSF of security responsibilities under the Somali Transition Plan post-2021 may not appear to be feasible given the actual situation on the ground and the slow pace of STP implementation. But this appears to be the option supported by the FGS.

In tomorrow's session, the Council is likely to pay attention to the first two options (the hybrid arrangement and reconfigured AMISOM). On this, the PSC is expected to rely on the presentation of the outcome of the discussions on the IA report during the two meetings that the PSC Committee of Experts and the Military Staff Committee held on 7 & 23 July. The Chairperson of the Committee of Experts is expected to highlight the conclusions of the meetings underscoring the need for maintaining the role of the AU, preserving the legacy of AMISOM, ensuring predictable and sustainable financing, addressing the logistical as well as command and control challenges along with taking on board the views of the Somalia government.

One of the difficult issues for tomorrow's deliberation is Somalia's hostile position towards the independent assessment report. It is reported that the government rejected 'the report's finding and recommendations.' This is indicative of the need for the AU and Somalia to agree on a realistic option that avoids any risk of reversals of the gains achieved with the support of AMISOM and guarantees smooth and successful transfer of responsibilities to SSF.

Apart from the IA report, the PSC is also expected to discuss the current state of the situation in Somalia and AMISOM, among others based on Madeira's briefing. The last time the AUPSC met to discuss the situation in Somalia was in April 2021 against the backdrop of the political crisis in the country following the unilateral decision of the lower house

of parliament extending the term of the government for two years. This led the PSC to request that Somalia actors abide by the 17 September 2020 agreement on the holding of elections and the Chairperson of the AU Commission to appoint a Special Envoy to work with the Somali stakeholders with a view to helping resolve the political impasse. Although Former President John Mahama of Ghana was appointed as Special Envoy, in unprecedented move, the FGS rejected the appointment.

Meanwhile, after months of political stalemate, the Somali political stakeholders were able to renew their commitment to the implementation of the 17 September 2020 agreement on the conduct of elections and resolve outstanding issues after having undertaken series of consultations under the leadership of Prime Minister, Mohamed Hussein Roble. They also agreed on a new electoral calendar to hold indirect parliamentary and presidential polls. Accordingly, elections were set to start on 25 July in the various regions for the election of members of the upper house but they had to be postponed, reportedly because of technical and logistical delays. It is in this context that the PSC will be meeting tomorrow. The PSC will also review the security situation including the continuing threat that Al-Shabaab poses as demonstrated by the attacks it continues to orchestrate.

The expected outcome of the session is a communique. The PSC may commend the work done by the IA team for the work done. Based on exchange views focusing on Option 1 (AU-UN joint mission) and Option 2 (reconfigured AMISOM), it is possible that the PSC may welcome the recommendation for the establishment of an AU-UN Multidimensional Stabilisation Support to Somalia as the most appropriate option. The PSC is expected to indicate next steps including reaching at common understanding with the Somalia government, the plan for engagement by the AU Commission and African members of the UNSC with members of the UNSC and the commencement of planning to implement the option finally agreed on. The PSC is expected

to welcome the agreement of Somalia parties for holding the elections in accordance with the 17 September 2020 agreement and urge them to ensure the successful and peaceful conduct of the elections. It may express concern about the continuing threat that Al-Shabaab poses and commend AMISOM for its roles and the UN and the EU for their partnership.