

# Briefing on the situation in Somalia and the renewal of the mandate of AMISOM

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Tomorrow (11 May), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to consider the situation in Somalia and the implementation of AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) mandate based on the report of the Chairperson of the Commission. Although the focus of the discussion is supposed to be on AMISOM, the meeting will likely pay closer attention to the political crisis in Somalia. The country finds itself at crossroads following serious disagreement over the organization of elections. This latest development will also have enormous implications on the future of AMISOM.

Opening remarks are expected to be delivered by the PSC Chairperson of the month and Permanent Representative of People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Salah Francis Elhamdi. Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye, is also expected to address the PSC. The Council is expecting to receive a briefing on the recent developments from Francisco Madeira, the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) and Head of AMISOM. Representatives of troop contributing countries, the UN and the EU may also make statements in the partially open segment of the session.

It is to be recalled that the AUPSC met on 22nd April to discuss the political and security situation in Somalia following the decision by the lower house of the Somali Parliament, the House of the People, to extend the mandate of the President and the Parliament. The Council condemned this unilateral decision and reaffirmed its support to the 17

September agreement as the only viable way forward to ensure the holding of timely, transparent, and credible elections in Somalia. In this regard, it underscored the need for Somali parties and other stakeholders to return to dialogue and reach a political compromise. Reaffirming the AU's readiness to support such a process, the Council requested the Chairperson of the Commission to appoint a Special Envoy who will work with the parties and assist them in reaching a mutually acceptable political compromise. Accordingly, Former President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama, has been appointed as the AU Special Envoy and he is expected to visit Somalia over the coming days to discuss with the country's political stakeholders on how to resolve the prevailing impasse and pave the way for the holding of elections in the shortest possible time. The Somali Opposition Alliance, Somali National Salvation Forum, in its letter addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission welcomed this decision, while expressing reservation on the inclusion of the Head of AMISOM's Political Affairs Division as part of the Special Envoy's team.

Based on the decision of the AUPSC, the 32nd Meeting of the Coordination Committee (MOCC) of the Troop and Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs) of AMISOM was held on 28 April 2021 at the level of Ambassadors, and Chiefs of Defense Staff and Chiefs/Commissioners of Police. The meeting reflected on the political crisis in Somalia and its serious ramifications for the country's security situation. Particularly, the MOCC looked at the implications in terms of the implementation of both the Somali Transition Plan (STP) and UN Security Council Resolution 2568 (2021). This resolution, in its paragraph 39, requested the AU to report to the Security Council through the UN Secretary-General on a number of specific issues, including progress on joint operations in support of the STP including the use and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms; progress against revised objectives and functions set out in paragraphs 11 and 12; accountability measures taken to address underperformance, including command and control, and conduct

and discipline; measures taken to protect civilians; equipment review outcomes and use of force assets; and staffing of the civilian component.

The Report of the Chairperson provides specific updates on progress made in these areas over the past three months. The report acknowledges, however, the slow progress made in the implementation of the resolution 2568 (2021). In this regard, it emphasized the serious ramifications of the current political impasse in the effective implementation of the milestones set out in the resolution against the specified timeframes. Particularly, it put into question the viability of the STP in the face of the prevailing factionalism and divisions within the Somali Security forces, which was manifest during the recent incident in Mogadishu. This, the report says, is a matter of serious concern for AMISOM, making it difficult for the mission to facilitate joint operations in a divided and factionalized Somali Security Forces (SSF). Most importantly, the report argues that this situation is likely to undermine the ability of the SSF not only to assume security responsibilities from AMISOM but also plan, agree, and conduct joint operations with AMISOM in line with the operational timelines, objectives and functions identified in the STP and UNSCR 2568 (2021). The AU is doing its own independent assessment and it is expected to highlight the AU perspective on the future of AMISOM in view of this serious challenge.

One of the things underlined during the MOCC meeting was, in fact, the need for AMISOM to prepare contingency plans in light of the latest developments in Somalia and take the necessary steps to ensure the capabilities for its implementation. There was also indication of the possible T/PCC Summit, which could likely provide the necessary strategic guidance to AMISOM. In this connection, the Chairperson's report emphasized that sustained progress in the implementation of the AU's objectives and mandate in Somalia

is largely dependent on the availability of appropriate logistical and financial support to AMISOM. Therefore, it once again underscored the need for continued mobilization of support for AMISOM, including through predictable, sustainable, and flexible financing mechanisms to ensure successful implementation of the AMISOM's mandate.

In the meantime, things have moved in a positive direction in Somalia since the last meeting of the AUPSC. President Farmaajo, who came under increased pressure both from within and outside, addressed the nation in a televised speech on 26 April 2021, following which the House of the People reversed its April 12 decision and reinstated the 17 September Agreement as a basis for the organization of the upcoming elections. The Prime Minister has also been given the lead role to prepare for peaceful, credible, and transparent elections and ensure its security. This decision, which rescued the country from the brink, was welcomed by IGAD, the AU, and indeed the rest of the international community. Prime Minister Roble met with members of the international community in Mogadishu and assured them of his commitment to hold inclusive & transparent Federal elections. He expressed his intention to invite the Federal Member States to attend the National Consultative Forum to finalize the electoral process in line with the Sept 17 and Feb 16 Agreements. Following his meeting with the opposition, soldiers who rebelled against the term extension are said to have started withdrawing from the capital, Mogadishu. The Prime Minister also inspected the reopening of streets and the removal of barricades to restore normalcy and calm in the city.

The other major development is the announcement made by the Federal Government of Somalia to restore diplomatic relations with Kenya. The relations between the two countries had been strained over the past six months in relation to their maritime dispute and accusations by Somalia against Kenya of meddling in its internal affairs. Qatar is said to have

provided good offices in facilitating the restoration of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The Spokesperson of President Formajo announced that "In [the] interest of good neighborliness, the Federal Government of Somalia resumes diplomatic ties with Kenya based on mutual benefit and respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-external interference, peaceful co-existence and equality". The Kenyan Foreign Ministry in its statement noted this announcement and looked forward to further normalization of relations by the Somali authorities including with regard to trade, communication, transportation, people to people relations and cultural exchanges.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. The PSC is expected to welcome the reversal of the April 12 decision by the House of the People and the reinstatement of the 17 September agreement as a basis for the holding of elections. It may wish to reiterate the need for inclusive dialogue among Somali stakeholders leading to broad political consensus and compromise on the electoral processes within this framework. In this regard, it may welcome the appointment of Former President John Dramani Mahama as the AU Special Envoy and call upon Somali stakeholders to work with him in the search for finding a solution to the political impasse and pave the way for the holding of elections within the shortest time possible. The PSC may also welcome the restoration of diplomatic relations between Somalia and Kenya. With respect to AMISOM, the PSC may express concern over the serious implications of the political crisis in the country for the implementation and timelines of both the STP and UN Security Council Resolution 2568 (2021). It may also echo the call by the MOCC on AMISOM to avoid being drawn into partisan politics in Somalia. The PSC may underscore the need for coordinated efforts with other international partners, including IGAD, UN and EU to address the current situation. It may look forward to the outcome of the ongoing AU independent assessment of AMISOM and once again reiterate the need for continued

mobilization of support for the mission to ensure the successful implementation of its mandate. The PSC is expected to renew the mandate of AMISOM with its current troop levels until 31 December 2021.