

PSC VTC Session on the situation in Somalia

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Tomorrow (24 September) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to have a session on the situation in Somalia. The PSC is expected to consider the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the situation in Somalia. It is envisaged that the meeting will take place through VTC.

The Chairperson's Report, prepared in accordance with the communique of the 848th and 923rd sessions of the PSC and para 36 of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2520(2020), is expected to be introduced by Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. Francisco Madeira, the Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson (SRCC) and Head of Mission of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), is also expected to provide update to the Council. As per the practice of the Council, it is expected that the representative of Somalia will also make a statement during the partially open segment of the session.

The last time the Council met to discuss the situation in Somalia was in May 2020, when it decided to renew the mandate of AMISOM and requested the Commission to review the AMISOM CONOPS, by September 2020, in order to align it with urgent priorities. The AU Commission is also expected to work closely with the United Nations, and the Government of Somalia to conduct, by 15 November 2020, an independent comprehensive assessment of the security environment giving due attention to broader and comprehensive stabilization and security requirements, with a view to presenting options for consideration to the PSC and UN Security Council on the role

of the AU, UN and international partners in Somalia post-2021. Discussions are said to be currently underway in this regard.

Tomorrow's session will be taking place against the backdrop of intense political engagements to address the political tensions among Somali political forces, which, among others, led to a vote of no confidence by Parliament in the Prime Minister and his resultant resignation. As Somalia gears up to hold elections, intense discussions have been underway between the leadership of Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States on the conditions and terms for the holding of the election sanctioned under Somalia's Constitution. Agreement was reached between the Somalia Federal Government and three of the five regional leaders of Somalia at the meeting held on 21 August in Dhusamareb.

The outcome of the Dhusamareb meeting, which led to the establishment of a technical committee to come up with the election modalities, was very much welcomed. Accordingly, agreement has been reached on a revised national election model known as the "Electoral Constituency Caucuses" with some changes to the outcome of the Dhusamareb meeting. This indirect election system is now expected to replace the one person one vote election envisaged under the Constitution. While the new election model is similar to the past clan-based indirect voting, attempt has been made to try to make it more inclusive by increasing the number of MPS casting the vote. However, this new model has as yet to be approved by the two chambers of parliament. The term of the parliament is to expire in November and President Formajo's term will end in February next year. While the agreement on the model for the election helps in easing the political tensions, it remains to be seen if this would completely settle the power tussle that fuels the tension both among federal institutions and between the Federal Government and some of the regional governments.

Although members of the UNSC expressed regret that the agreed modalities fall short of the longstanding goal of direct

voting for members of parliament in this election cycle, they acknowledged that the agreement was reached on the basis of a Somali led and Somali owned dialogue. Somalia's international partners also underscored the need for the 2020/21 electoral process to be free, fair, transparent, and inclusive. They also called for a roadmap with clear milestones, agreed among Somali political leaders, to ensure decisive democratic progress going forward. Furthermore, the Partners appealed to the leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia and Federal Member States to continue meeting regularly in a spirit of dialogue and compromise to address urgent national priorities, including security and economic reform as well as inclusive politics.

Having reached agreement with the leaders of the Federal Member States, President Formajo appointed Hassein Roble as his new Prime Minister. This was following the resignation of Former Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire from his position after a vote of no confidence against him. Not surprisingly, the Khaire has already announced his candidature to run for the Presidency.

Tomorrow's meeting is also coming against the background of mounting security threats, and increasing humanitarian challenges and the briefings will provide update on developments since the last PSC session in May. The security situation remains very concerning. Al-Shabaab attacks have intensified lately, giving rise to fears that the terrorist group may elevate its attacks ahead of national elections in the country. Series of deadly terrorist attacks have been perpetrated by the group recently in Mogadishu and several other regions claiming the lives of many innocent civilians. A number of factors have allowed the group to intensify its attack, including the prevailing tension between the center and the region, its exploitation of local dynamics, and issues surrounding delivery on the benchmarks in the Somalia Transitional Plan (STP) including slow pace of progress in the

building of the Somali security institutions. The COVID pandemics and heavy rainfall and flashfloods, which coupled with the problem of dessert locusts, have also exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

In terms of the role of AMISOM, its support to the Somali National Forces (SNF) in degrading the activities of Al Shabaab remains absolutely critical. It is to be recalled the PSC has been expressing concern over the security implications of AMISOM's drawdown. In this regard, in its communique of the 923rd session, it has stressed the imperative need for a halt in further reduction of AMISOM uniformed personnel to ensure the safe holding of elections and the successful implementation of the Somali Transition Plan leading to 2021. The briefing from SRCC is expected to provide update on the activities of AMISOM and issues of command and control and the operationalization of the force enablers including air assets specifically raised in the previous session of the PSC.

Another issue in respect of which tomorrow's session will provide update is the request the PSC made in its 923rd session communique regarding the revision of the STP. The AUPSC in particular called for a comprehensive review of the Somali Transition Plan and its implementation modalities, led by the FGS, with full participation of the AU, UN, EU and key FGS bilateral partners by July 2020, in order to provide a solid basis for the reprioritization of critical elements in the Transition Plan leading to 2021, which would also inform AMISOM's CONOPs review and guide the confirmation of Somali priority initiatives for post-2021, as well as support by the international community. There has however been inadequate progress. With the very little time left before the election and the end of the year, there is now a pressing need for finalizing this work.

At its meeting tomorrow, Council is expected to take note of the progress made in the discussion between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States and

welcome the agreement reached on the modalities for the upcoming elections. It may also wish to encourage the Somali Political Stakeholders to continue their dialogue and cooperation to ensure conditions propitious for the holding of elections and promote greater stability in the Country. The AUPSC may also strongly condemned the upsurge of terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab which claimed the lives of many innocent civilians, paying tribute to the Somali Armed Forces and AMISOM for their continued efforts in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Underscoring the continued critical role of AMISOM, the PSC may also urge for the mobilization of support for AMISOM. With respect to the STP, the Council may reiterate its previous decisions for its comprehensive review and urge that this process is completed without further delay to recalibrate the priority areas for AMISOM's support and updating its CONOPS. It may also urge the Federal Government and the Federal Member States to speed up the process of recruitment and deployment of SSF and the integration of the regional forces into the SSF. The AUPSC may also express concern over the serious humanitarian situation because of the multiple challenges facing Somalia and appeal to the international community for enhanced support to the country to reach out to those in urgent need of life-saving assistance.