

Ministerial session on the situation in Somalia and operations of ATMIS

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Tomorrow (27 July), African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to convene its 1094th session at ministerial level to consider the situation in Somalia and operations of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS).

The session will start with the opening remarks of the PSC Chairperson for July, Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, followed by remarks of the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye. PSC is then expected to receive a briefing by the Interim Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission (SRCC) for Somalia and Head of ATMIS, Ms. Fiona Lortan. As a country of concern, the representative of Somalia is also expected to make statements. In addition, the representatives of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), as well as United Kingdom (UK) may deliver statements.

The session is expected to take stock of recent developments in Somalia and the progress made in the implementation of the mandates of ATMIS as envisaged in PSC communique 1068 (2022) and UN Security Council Resolution 2628 (2022), which authorized the new mission. This will be the third time for the PSC to discuss ATMIS since the Mission's launch on 1 April 2022. It is to be recalled that PSC decided the reconfiguration of AMISOM into ATMIS during its 1068th session held on 8 March 2022. Tomorrow's session is also convened

within the framework of the PSC's request in the communiqué of its 1068th session for the Chairperson of the AU Commission (AUC) to submit quarterly reports on the implementation of ATMIS mandate, including the steps taken by the FGS and international partners in implementing the new Concept of Operations (CONOPs). The session also comes at the backdrop of Council's field mission to Somalia that took place from 19 to 22 July. As such, the session will greatly benefit from the delegation's assessment of the situation on the ground and the outcomes of its engagement with various stakeholders.

On the situation in Somalia, the conclusion of the protracted parliamentary and presidential elections is one of the political developments since PSC's last session that will receive attention during tomorrow's session. On 15 May, the electoral process culminated in the election as President of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who served as Somalia's President between 2012 and 2017, defeating the incumbent, Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo'. On 16 May, AUC Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, welcomed the outcome of the election, noting the crucial role played by the Somalia Security Forces (SSF) and ATMIS to guarantee security for the election processes. In a statement issued by his Spokesperson on 16 May welcoming the conclusion of the election, UN Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres expressed his hope that **'the new president would move swiftly to form an inclusive Cabinet, and that the new Government and federal member states will work closely together to advance critical national priorities** and address the challenges Somalia faces.'

During his inaugural address on 9 June, President Mohamud outlined that national reconciliation, improving relations between the central Government and federal member states, addressing the security threat from Al-Shabaab, and attending the dire drought conditions are among his national priorities. Given the difficulties the AU mission faced in the relationship with the previous administration, for the PSC

maintaining a healthy relationship with the host country authorities would be of interest, considering in particular the dependence of the execution of the mandate and timeline of ATMIS on the cooperation of the FGS. On 16 July, Interim Head of ATMIS, Lortan, along with ATMIS Force Commander, met with Somalia's new Prime Minister, Hamza Abdi Barre for fostering close relationship. During PSC's field visit on 19-22 July, Prime Minister Barre, expressed commitment for 'closer collaboration and effective coordination with ATMIS and the AU PSC.'

In the light of President Mohamud's priorities particularly that of national reconciliation, a key process of the constitution of the new government being followed with interest is the composition of the new cabinet, as hinted in Guterres's statement mentioned above. On 25 June, the Parliament approved Hamza Abdi Barre as new Prime Minister. Although he had a 30 days period until 25 July to announce cabinet, Prime Minister Barre requested for extension and Parliament gave him 10 more days to form the government.

On the security front, Al Shabaab has continued wreaking havoc even after the reconfiguration of AMISOM into ATMIS. In his 13 May report on the situation in Somalia, covering the period between 1 February and 6 May, Guterres noted an increase in Al Shabaab attacks where 236 security incidents were recorded, most of which were attributed to the terrorist group. Apart from its infiltration in and attack on the ATMIS base camp in Mogadishu in late March, it orchestrated one of the deadliest attacks on AU Mission targeting the ATMIS base in Middle Shabele region that killed several forces of the Burundian contingent. Highlighting the terror group's regional ambition and willingness to exploit real or perceived fragilities, on 21 July, the group crossed into the Somali region of Ethiopia and suffered loss after several days of fighting. On 21 July, during the interaction between PSC members and Prime Minister Barre as part of the field mission, the later expressed the

determination of the government to 'launch a forceful and comprehensive fight to counter Al-Shabaab, ISIS and other terrorist organizations through military and non-military means.'

On the implementation of ATMIS mandate, tomorrow's session may focus on three issues. The first is how reconfiguration of ATMIS is unfolding as key component of Phase I of ATMIS mandate, critical to creating the offensive and agile posture of the mission. Efforts are underway to generate mobile forces to conduct targeted offensive against Al Shabaab and to increase engagement with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to enhance their Counter-IED capabilities. As part of the reconfiguration, ATMIS has started rolling out various joint operations with the SSF against Al Shabaab and other armed groups. Yet despite the plan as part of Phase I of the CONOPs, to handover or collapse two to three FOBs per sector (total of 12 to 18 FOBs), only two FOBs (20% of the plan) have been collapsed so far. The FGS has as yet to formulate plan on how to proceed with the taking over or collapsing of FOBs. Of interest to the Council is also progress made in strengthening the command-and-control structure of the mission.

The other is the capacity of the SSF to gradually assume full responsibility based on the force generation benchmarks as envisaged in the ATMIS CONOPs. Accordingly, when ATMIS drawdowns 2000 troops at the end of phase I by December 2022, the FGS is expected to generate 3,850 security forces (more details in Amani Africa's [Monthly digest](#) for March). As the Deputy SRSC observed in a recent interview with a newspaper, 'despite over a decade of training, we still haven't reached a point where we have sufficient Somali forces to be able to take control'. She further stated that the mission 'can only succeed if the government is a viable partner. ... This has been the missing link.' Prime Minister Barre assured the PSC during its field visit that this will change, expressing the full

commitment of the government of Somalia to developing the capacity of its security institutions to take over completely security responsibilities from ATMIS by December 2024.

The third key issue is about the financial and logistical support provided to ATMIS as well as the SSF. The PSC highlighted the necessity of predictable, adequate, and sustainable financing for ATMIS at its 1075th session that took place on 12 April. Although the funding shortfall of ATMIS has come down, the mission has a deficit of 70 million USD, which is one of the issues to be discussed in the session, including with partners, such as the UK, expected to propose. In a recent ATMIS-UN Support Office to Somalia (UNSOS) meeting, ATMIS Force Commander Lt. Gen. Diomede Ndegeya emphasized that 'to maintain a military advantage over Al-Shabaab, ... the mission requires efficient acquisition, supply, and delivery of critical material during combat operations.' The PSC at its 1068th session requested the UN to realign UN Logistics Support with the new CONOPs. During the deliberation between ATMIS and UNSOS that took place earlier this month to align the logistical support the mission receives in line with the new CONOPs, the Head of UNSOS, Assistant Secretary General Lisa Filipetto, indicated that 'plans are underway to decentralize logistics to the ATMIS sectors to facilitate quick response and provide better support for troop mobile operations.' How this would be followed up and the pace of such follow up would be of interest to PSC members.

The other issue deserving PSC's attention is the grim humanitarian situation in Somalia, marked by one of the worst droughts in the country in at least four decades. The four consecutive failed rainy seasons, food price spikes, and underfunded humanitarian response has left 7.1 million Somalis, close to 50 % of the population, facing crisis-level food insecurity or worse, according to a statement issued by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia on 7 June. Humanitarian agencies have already raised the alarm over the

risk of famine. Despite the 'dire and grim' situation, the funding for this year's Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia remains low at 15.7 % as of 20 May. The recent uptick of violence by Al Shabaab remains the other major impediment to address the situation.

The expected outcome of tomorrow's session is a communique. The PSC may welcome the successful conclusion of the elections in Somalia and the peaceful transfer of power to newly elected President Mohamud. Also welcoming the priorities that the new President announced during his inauguration, the PSC may urge the government to focus on mobilizing its efforts in delivering on these priorities and avail AU's full support in this respect. Council is expected to condemn Al Shabaab's increased deadly attacks, including its recent attacks inside the Somali region of Ethiopia, and to underscore the need for a more robust collective effort at addressing the threat posed by the terror group. Considering the scale of the humanitarian crisis, created by the drought affecting Somalia, the PSC may call on the AU, working with IGAD, to initiate measures for supporting Somalia, while appealing to international partners to redouble the humanitarian assistance to avoid famine in the country. Regarding ATMIS, Council may welcome the commitment of FGS to closely work with ATMIS and UNSOS's plan to align the logistical support that the mission receives in line with the CONOPs, and the unanimous adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2632 that extended the mandate of UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) until 31 October. Echoing its 1075th session, Council may emphasize the imperative of predictable funding and logistical support attuned to force mobility for the success of ATMIS, and may call on the partners to help address the funding deficit including through UN assessed contributions. In relation to strengthening the capacity of Somalia security forces, Council may reiterate its call on the FGS to 'meet its commitments towards achieving the benchmarks and timelines' as outlined in the CONOPs by capacitating SSF and strengthening local security & law and order institutions.