PSC Briefing on Somalia

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Tomorrow (15 February 2018) the Peace and Security Council is scheduled to hold a session on the situation in Somalia and AMISOM. The two part agenda of the session would involve briefing on the political stabilization process in Somalia and update on AMISOM activities and exit strategy. It is expected that the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, would provide the Council a briefing on the issues on this agenda. Others expected to participate and make statements include the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission, Somalia, IGAD Chair and IGAD Special Envoy, the UN and the EU.

In terms of the political stabilization process in Somalia, the briefing is expected to highlight the state of the security situation, political and financial reforms and issues around the stabilization efforts. The security situation in Somalia remains fluid. In this regard, a major focus of interest is the continuing Al Shabaab suicide and car bombings and attacks including those directed at government and AMISOM targets. In the report of the PSC to the AU Assembly during the January 2018 summit described the capacity of al shabaab as 'unprecedented'. Indeed, on 14 October 2017 Al Shabaab orchestrated in Mogadishu the most deadly attack that claimed the lives of more than 500 people. During the deliberations at the summit, the FGS representatives expressed reservations on parts of the PSC report. This is partly important due to its implications on the continuing push for AMISOM exit and transfer of responsibility to FGS.

On political reforms, issues of interest include progress in the federal state formation process, the constitutional review process and intra FGS cohesion and stability as well as relationship between the FGS and FMS. In some areas, positive

developments have been reported. A case in point is the power-sharing agreement signed on Wednesday, between Galmudug state and the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (AWSJ) in December 2018. Despite continuing challenges, the FGS continues to have dialogue with the FMS. Yet, problems continue to persist in other areas. These include infighting in the FGS, disagreements between the FGS and the FMS over some of the details of the national security architecture adopted in April 2017 and the political crisis in some parts of the country. The relationship between the FGS and the FMS experienced further strains as a result of the support that some of the FMS expressed to one of the parties in the Gulf crisis contrary to the neutral position that the FGS sought to pursue. There are fears in the AU that these various differences could re-ignite clan-based conflicts and reverse the political gains so far made.

Another area of interest on which the FGS would also give particular attention to is ongoing financial reforms.

In particular, issue of concern include steps being taken in establishing budgeting and auditing systems within the FGS and capacity for effective management and utilization of funds. Despite efforts in establishing sound financial system including with support from IMF and World Bank, corruption remains a major challenge with Somalia ranked as the most corrupt country in the world. Financial reforms and issues relating thereto have direct impact on the going conversation on transfer of responsibility to Somalia security forces. There have been instances in which non-payment of salaries created security vacuum which Al Shabaab took advantage of.

In terms of transition planning, a Core Group of Transition Planning has been established. Chaired by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), the CGTP has the membership of the AU, EU, UN, FGS and the Federal Member States (FMS). This is a group tasked with the responsibility of developing a transition plan for transferring security responsibility to Somalia security forces.

On the security situation, efforts of AMISOM in gaining territory from Al Shabaab and fending off Al Shabaab attacks would be highlighted. Member states would be interested to know the gravity of the threat that Al Shabaab continues to pose and the security and political strategy particularly on the part of the FGS for scaling down the threat. In security terms, the nature and scale of the continued presence of AMISOM
depends on two major factors: the capacity of Al Shabaab to orchestrate serious attacks and the capacity of FGS for assuming increasing role in security.

Since 2011 Al Shabaab suffered major losses in the hands of AMISOM. It lost control of much of the territory that was under its command. Its commanders and leadership have also fallen victim to some of the drone strikes. While it has as a result lost much of its capacity to engage in direct fighting, it has not completely lost the capacity to orchestrate attacks and cause major damage. Despite AMISOM's gain of 80 percept of the territory of the country, Al Shabaab remains in control of pockets of territory in rural south central Somalia and supply routs between towns. It also continues to show presence in various towns and to infiltrate the capital Mogadishu in pursuit of its suicide and car bombings and other attacks.

In terms of AMISOM activities, issues expected to be addressed include progress being made around AMISOM revised core tasks notably, joint operations with Somalia forces to reduce the threat of Al-Shabaab and to secure main supply routes, building the capacity of Somalia security forces and supporting the early recovery and support extension of state authority. In this respect, the major areas of interest include the
training of Somalia security forces and the operations undertaken against Al Shabaab. It has been recently
reported that a joint operation of AMISOM and Somalia troops have pushed Al Shabaab out of various locations in Lower

Shebelle Region.

Of major interest for PSC members including Egypt, Kenya and Uganda is issues relating to exit plan of AMISOM. Under the AMISOM exit strategy and UN Security Council resolution 2372, AMISOM would focus on building 'a capable, accountable, acceptable, and affordable Somalia-led security sector'. Under Resolution 2372, AMISOM should withdraw 1,000 troops by Dec. 31, 2017, but increase its police component by 500, with more troop reduction anticipated during 2018. The AU reported in January 2018 that between 'October and December 2017, a total of 1,000 AMISOM soldiers returned to their countries.'

Despite the exit strategy and the push for incremental withdrawal of AMISOM troops, implementation of the strategy faces major challenges. As noted above, Al Shabaab continues to pose serious threat. Significantly, the operationalization of the Somalia National Security Forces (SNSF) remains poor, with the operational readiness assessment revealing major weaknesses and lack of capacity of the SNSF. In this context, issues of interest would include verification of the capacity of the Somalia National Security Forces not only at the national level but also at states level and the establishment of a unified framework.
From the perspective of TCCs including Kenya, the chair of the PSC for the month of February 2018, this
session avails opportunity to highlight on-going activities of AMISOM with a focus on the challenges. Apart
from the continuing need for AMISOM to be equipped with the necessary capacity, including force enablers and multipliers, a major area of concern is the need for AMISOM to be provided with a predictable and
sustainable funding. For the FGS and some member states such as Egypt, attention would focus on channeling
support including funds to the Somalia security forces.

It is to be recalled that AMISOM has been underfunded following the European Union (EU) 20 percent cut in its

payment of allowances to AMISOM personnel in 2016. This has affected the morale of AMISOM troops.

While efforts have been underway to make up for this shortfall, the EU, a major source of AMISOM funding, has indicated that it could not guarantee continuing funding of AMISOM from October 2018. In the light of the foregoing, member states would be interested to have information on the on going consultations that the AU and UN Special Envoys on AMISOM Funding have been undertaking. The PSC may in this regard underscore the imperative of finding realistic option for funding of AMISOM.

The expected outcome of this session is a communiqué.