

PSC session on Somalia and AMISOM

Automatic Heading TextDate | May 7, 2019

Tomorrow (May 7), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will hold its 847th session. The session will focus on the situation in Somalia and renewal of the mandate of AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Acting Director of AU Peace and Security Department, Admore Kambudzi and Special Representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira are also expected to brief the council on the situation in Somalia and AMISOM. Ambassador of Rwanda, Hope Tumukunde Gasura, will deliver a statement as the PSC Chair of the month. The representative of the UN is expected to make an intervention. The representatives of Somalia and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are also invited to make a statement in the opening segment of the session.

During the session, the PSC is expected to consider two reports: the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Somalia and the 5th AU-UN Joint Review of AMISOM. Based on these reports, the PSC is also expected to renew the mandate of AMISOM for another twelve months.

Pursuant to the UN Security Council resolution 2431 (2018) and PSC 782 communiqué, AMISOM's mandate has been renewed until May 31 2019 with a minimum of 1,040 AMISOM police personnel including five formed police units, and with reduced level of uniformed AMISOM personnel to a maximum level of 20,626 by February 2019. As per the requirement of Resolution 2431 and to meet the reduced force size of AMISOM, 1000 troops from the Burundian contingent have been withdrawn. Although the drawdown is in line with the UNSC decision, the withdrawal of a particular Troop Contributing Country has created tension

between Bujumbura and the AU Commission and has also been challenged by Hirshabelle state where the forces are located. All these efforts are geared towards the gradual handover of responsibilities to Somali security forces by December 2021.

The PSC is expected to review the political and security situation in Somalia, including the implementation of the Somalia Transitional Plan (STP) and the National Security Architecture (NSA) FGS. Also of interest to the PSC is the three phase strategy in the transition plan that identifies the necessary steps leading up to the 2021 national elections by focusing on operational activities, supporting activities and institution building. In line with the first phase of the plan which spans up to June 2019, AMISOM has handed over to the government of Somalia the national stadium and the Jaalle Siyaad Military Academy, both have been used as military bases. More difficult handovers are also expected to follow later in the year including the main roads linking Mogadishu with the main towns in South West.

As a follow up to the above decisions of the UNSC and the PSC, the AUC Chairperson has already presented his report at the 806th PSC meeting. The report has particularly indicated the political challenges due to the increasing rivalry between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS). Since then, while there have been some positive developments in the relationship between the two levels of government, the centralization push of the FGS continues to fuel tension. It is reported that a meeting of President Abdullahi Formajo and the leaders of FMS has convened in Garowe to resolve disputes between the two levels of government.

In terms of the security situation, as recurring incidents of Al Shabaab attacks attest and highlighted in the Chairperson's report, security also remains a major challenge. On 23 March, Al-Shabaab fighters detonated a suicide car bomb storming a government building, killing 15 people including the country's

deputy labor minister. On 18 April, a car bomb exploded in Mogadishu, killing five people. The following day, five family members of the deputy minister for fisheries were fatally shot. There are

concerns that attacks would escalate during the Ramadan fasting season. Against the background of the above observation of the communiqué of the 827th session, these recurring attacks and the continuing gaps in capacity of national institutions, there is continuing concern of great risk of a security vacuum particularly with the ongoing transition and reconfiguration of AMISOM and if the necessary capacity is not met by the Somali Security Forces (SSF).

It is to be recalled that the PSC at its 827th session has adopted the 2018-2021 AMISOM Concept of Operations (CONOPs). Developed based on the Somali Transition Plan (STP), the Operational Readiness Assessments (ORA) of AMISOM and of the SSF, the CONOPs provide a roadmap towards the complete withdrawal of AMISOM troops and handing over of responsibility to Somalia authorities. The communiqué of the session emphasized that the effective implementation of the CONOPs and the STP highly depends on the 'generation of the Somali Security forces...continued provision of required trained and equipped personnel by Police and Troop Contributing Countries and availability of required and predictable resources for AMISOM's sustainment to support the FGS'.

The UNSC 2431 (2018) has extended the mandate of AMISOM to pursue three strategic

objectives: to facilitate gradual handing over responsibilities to (SSF), to reduce the threat of Al-Shabaab and other armed groups and to assist SSF to provide security for the political processes at all levels. For PSC members it would be of interest to inquire on the 10-months progress and challenges in fulfilling the key assignments by AMISOM and to receive update on the reconfiguration of the peacekeeping mission. One notable development has been the initiative by

the AU for developing an AU political strategy for Somalia.

The Chairperson's report is expected to provide update on the reconfiguration that took place in the military, civilian and police component. On the military aspect, the capacity of SSF in taking over from AMISOM is expected to be highlighted and the need to enhance coordination and information sharing among the various security actors will be a key factor to enhance protection and security. For the police component, the reconfiguration looks into the increased police presence in the various AMISOM sectors and to support the roles of the military and civilian components as well engage in trainings of national police personnel. This will also be accompanied by the reconfiguration of equipments. The civilian component has increasingly been involved in the implementation of the STP particularly in the political analysis and human rights monitoring.

The expanded role of the police and civilian components is also in line with the 782nd ministerial meeting of the PSC that calls for AMISOM's mandate in 'political and stabilization role into all sectors, including ensuring international humanitarian law and human rights compliance and accountability, progressive training and mentoring of Somali National Army, Somali Police Force and Darwish forces required to successfully implement the STP'. The session, in addition to the ongoing efforts may also provide an overview of the planned implementation of phase two and three of the STP and the AMISOM CONOPs and key recommendations on next steps.

In terms of determining the outcome of the session, it may be of interest for the PSC to review developments in light of these benchmarks set in the communiqué of its 827th session. In this respect, a major consideration is the serious threat that Al Shabaab continues to pose and the security risk that arises from the implementation of the withdrawal of AMISOM without the presence of trained and prepared Somalia forces to take effective control of responsibility from where AMISOM withdraws.

If the risk of reversal of the security gains is to be ensured, the situation seems to warrant that more effort is made into putting in place effective SSF able to take over from AMISOM and the pace and timeline of the drawdown of AMISOM is reviewed accordingly. It is also important that AMISOM is provided with the resources and support that are necessary for reinforcing its effectiveness as it implements the process of withdrawal.

The expected outcome of the session is a communiqué. Tomorrow's meeting is expected to extend the mission's mandate until 2020 and to specify the deliverables to be undertaken under the new mandate in line with the 2018-2021 CONOPs and STP. It is also expected to highlight the adjustments that should be made in terms of the pace of withdrawal of AMISOM and the deployment of the requisite force enablers particularly in terms of aviation capacity. This decision will be followed by UNSC resolution that is expected to be passed at the end of this month.