

Situation in Somalia and Operations of ATMIS

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Tomorrow (11 November), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is expected to consider as an agenda item of its 1121st session, the request submitted by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to extend Phase 1 of the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) CONOPS and to delay the drawdown of 2000 troops from December 2022 to June 2023.

The session will have two segments. In the first, open segment, opening remarks will be delivered by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for the month, Emilia Ndinealo Mkusa, to be followed with statements by the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Bankole Adeoye and the Representative of the Federal Republic of Somalia, as the concerned country. In the closed segment of the session, Interim Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Somalia and Acting Head of ATMIS, Fiona Lortan will present a briefing to the Council.

It is to be recalled that Council last discussed the situation in Somalia and operations of ATMIS at its 1112th session which took place on 10 October 2022. The session served to consider the report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the situation in Somalia and implementation of ATMIS's mandate. At the session, Council drew attention to the fast approaching deadline of the drawdown of 2000 ATMIS troops which according to PSC's decision outlined in the Communiqué of its 1068th session, is expected to take place by 31 December 2022. Tomorrow's session is being convened in the context of this

approaching deadline and the request submitted by FGS to extend the timeline of Phase 1 of ATMIS CONOPS which envisages the reduction of 2000 uniformed personnel by the end of December 2022.

Despite the registration of notable success in degrading Al-Shabaab, the terrorist group not only continues to maintain presence in multiple parts of the country, but is also continuing to plan and orchestrate its devastating attacks. As recent as 29 October 2022, Al-Shabaab carried out two major bombings in Mogadishu. The death toll from these attacks has reached over 120 people and continues to increase as many of the hundreds of people injured from the bombings are under intensive care and in critical conditions. The intensity and resulting death toll from these bombings is said to make the attack the second deadliest attack in Somalia's history after the 14 October 2017 attack which claimed the lives of 587 people and injured hundreds more. Days after the attacks in Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab fighters carried out another bombing targeting a Somali military base in central Galgaduud region. In addition to killing several soldiers, the fighters reportedly stole multiple weapons and military vehicles.

It emerges from these and other recent Al-Shabaab attacks that the terror group has the ability to carry out consecutive and at times, simultaneous attacks and is in possession of explosives that can cause heavy and wide-range damage to both human life and infrastructure. In the AU Commission Chairperson's report submitted to the PSC's 1112th session, it is also noted that not only is Al-Shabaab proving to be highly adoptive, it is also acquiring new capabilities in terms of both means and methods of carrying out attacks. It is noted for instance that the terrorist group has been able to acquire commercial drones, foreign fighters and snipers while also enhancing its ability to rapidly mobilise its forces and conduct swift intelligence-led targeted operations. These realities on the ground, along with the need to avoid any

vacuum that may result from reduction of ATMIS at a time when the government affiliated forces are engaged in heavy fighting against the group, are likely among the factors informing FGS's request to delay the envisaged drawdown of 2000 ATMIS uniformed personnel by the end of December 2022.

On its part, ATMIS has been able to carry out multiple successful operations against Al-Shabaab, jointly with the Somali Security Forces (SSF). As observed in the AU Commission Chairperson's report, the mission has been engaged in key initiatives that have made significant military gains for SSF including the use of local community defence groups fighting alongside the national security forces, to liberate villages in the Hiraan region of Hirshabelle state and Galmudug. It has also been playing a significant role in providing operational support to the Somali Police Force in addition to its other multiple contributions. ATMIS however faces considerable challenges, mainly related to the absence of predictable funding and limitation of human resources – the last one being a major factor in overstretching existing ATMIS forces. This issue is also directly related to the slow progress obtained in Somalia's force generation and integration, as an adequate generation of force under SSF would have lessened the existing burden on ATMIS. Speedy force generation and timely implementation of the Somali Transition Plan (STP) therefore remain key for the gradual handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to SSF. It may hence interest Council to hear about the specific factors that continue to constrain the FGS in the implementation of the STP and the force generation and mobilisation process, in order to reflect on ways to address these challenges.

Phase 1 of ATMIS drawdown (reconfiguration) is also well underway but continues to experience delays due to the lagged process of force generation and mobilisation by the SSF. While ATMIS has already proposed prioritising reconfiguration of forces to reinforce Forward Operating Bases (FOB) and

requested FGS to avail the agreed number of troops to take over the FOBs, FGS is clearly facing difficulties in availing the required forces. At its 1112th session, it is to be recalled that the PSC called on the international community and member States to provide support to the FGS in its force generation and integration efforts, in order to avoid delays being faced in the transition of security responsibilities from ATMIS to SSF. Council may wish to reiterate its call at tomorrow's session.

On the political front, Somalia continues to register notable progress in terms of efforts aimed at strengthening both internal reconciliation (between FGS and Federal Member States (FMS) in particular) as well as external/foreign relations. Following his inauguration in June 2022, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has been advancing the agenda of reconciliation and building an inclusive federal system in Somalia, in addition to being actively engaged in expanding diplomatic relations with multiple countries. In terms of priority areas, the FGS has adopted a four-year work plan, which has been endorsed by the FMS, envisaging activities within six major areas including security, justice, reconciliation, economic development, social development, and foreign relations. For the AU and other key partners of Somalia including UN and EU, it is critical to take note of these priorities and align their support along these lines.

Tomorrow's session may also serve to reflect on the concerning humanitarian situation in Somalia. The current drought in Somalia is said to surpass the historic droughts of 2010/11 and 2016/17, both in its severity and duration. According to the UN, 7.8 million people in Somalia are affected by the drought as at end of October 2022. Among these are 1.1 million people who have been displaced due to the impacts of the drought. Of the affected people are also 1.8 million children who face acute malnutrition – accounting for over 50% of the total child population in the country – and 301,000 people

facing phase-5/catastrophic level Acute Food Insecurity. In multiple of the drought affected areas, 10,440 cholera cases and 59 deaths were also recorded by the UN since January 2022. Added to these figures is the continuing displacement of people due to insecurity and intensifying conflicts between Al-Shabaab and government forces. In the month of September 2022 alone for instance, 101,000 people were newly displaced due to insecurity and conflict.

The expected outcome of the session is a Communiqué. Council may commend the government of Somalia for political milestones achieved particularly in advancing engagement with FMS and setting national priorities. It may commend ATMIS for its perseverance and its continued support to the SSF in degrading Al-Shabaab. It may also condemn in strongest terms the recent consecutive attacks carried out by the insurgent group in various parts of the country and pay condolence to the families of those who lost their lives in these attacks. Having deliberated on the request of FGS to extend Phase 1 of ATMIS CONOPS and to delay the drawdown of 2000 troops to June 2023, Council may underscore the importance of fortified efforts of partners and international community to support the government of Somalia in carrying out all necessary tasks for the gradual handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to the SSF, particularly in the area of force generation and integration. In this regard, it may accept the request on extension. Considering the implications of the extension on resources and logistics as well as the overall exit plan, the PSC may request the AU Commission to hold consultations with all the stakeholders to achieve consensus on the adjustments to the exit plan and the mobilization of the resources for implementing the adjusted plan. Council may further emphasise the importance of securing predictable, sustainable and flexible financing in order to ensure the mission's continued effective and impactful operation and to maintain the security gains ATMIS and Somali forces continue to register. The Council may also urge the need for concerted efforts in the

force generation and integration of SSF to ensure timely progress in the transfer of security responsibilities from ATMIS. Noting the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the country and particularly the grave impact of the current drought, Council may call on the international community to mobilise timely humanitarian assistance to avert further suffering.