

Update briefing on the Operations of SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM)

Update briefing on the Operations of SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) Date | 3 March 2024

Tomorrow (4 March), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1203rd session for an updated briefing on the operations of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique.

The session opens with the opening remarks of Emilia Mkusa, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia and the Chairperson of the PSC for March. This will be followed by a statement from Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS). Additionally, a representative from the Republic of Mozambique, as the concerned state and Kula Ishmael Theletsane, the Director of Politics and Security Affairs of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), are also expected to give briefings. The representative of Rwanda, which has deployed troops to Mozambique based on bilateral arrangements, may also deliver a statement.

The SADC Mission in Mozambique also known as SAMIM, was initially deployed in July 2021 following an approval by the extraordinary summit of the SADC that was held on 23 June 2021 in Maputo, Mozambique. The peace support operation was initially intended for a six-month duration, but it has since been extended three times. The first extension came in January 2022, extending the mission for three months, while the second extension in August 2022 extended the mission for a year. The PSC's last discussion on the issue also took place following SAMIM's second extension. The outcome of this meeting ([1119th](#)

[session](#)) held on 7 November 2022 led to the PSC endorsing two significant decisions from the 42nd Ordinary Summit of SADC held in August 2022. The first decision was to extend SAMIM's mandate for another year and the second was to de-escalate the intervention from scenario 6 to scenario 5 and eventually to scenario 4.

The most recent [extension](#), which was officially confirmed on 28 January was a result of the decision made at the 43rd Ordinary Summit of SADC, held on 17 August 2023 in Luanda, Republic of Angola. This summit endorsed the decision of the Organ Troika Summit of 16 August 2023 to extend the SAMIM's mandate by 12 months, making the new end date 15 July 2024. Beyond the extension, the Summit instructed the leadership of SAMIM to initiate a step-by-step drawdown starting from 15 December 2023, with the complete withdrawal to be finalized by 15 July 2024.

The decision to withdraw SAMIM has raised questions, particularly in light of the attacks by the Islamic-State of Mozambique (ISM) resurgence in the Cabo Delgado province since September 2023. This has since escalated in January 2024 following the launch of 'kill them where you find them' campaign by the ISM. Until June 2023, the Islamic-State armed insurgency, which took root in October 2017 in Cabo Delgado province, has resulted in the [death](#) of more than 6,500 people. Additionally, as [reported](#) by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OHCA), the attacks have displaced over a million people throughout the years. By August 2023, a significant number of these internally displaced persons, totalling 571,468, returned to their homes. Notably, 540,958 of these returnees are from Cabo Delgado. The districts that are home to the most returnees include Mocímboa da Praia, Palma and Muidumbe people. However, since January 2024, the attacks have spread to Mocímboa da Praia district and the neighbouring districts of Palma and Muidumbe, including the district of Mocomia coast [stretching](#) to Mecufi.

In the last two months, it is [estimated](#) that more than 67,000 individuals have evacuated the southern districts of Cabo Delgado, according to government officials. These are new developments indicate the security forces deployed in Mozambique including SAMIM are strained.

When the second extension of SAMIM was approved by SADC in 2022, its mandate shifted from an African Standby Force Scenario 6 military only operation (in the words of the PSC ASF based 'peace-enforcement mission to neutralise the terrorist threat and restore state-authority in the affected districts in Cabo Delegado') towards a more comprehensive approach, emphasizing peace building and governance. Despite some of the gains registered by SAMIM, its efforts toward peacebuilding and good governance have faced numerous challenges including funding shortages. Even the progress made through military offensives is put to the test as ISM insurgents adapt their strategies. They now operate in smaller groups, directing attacks on civilians and military targets and integrating into local communities, which makes them more difficult to detect and counteract. This situation casts doubt on the timeliness of the decision to withdraw SAMIM. One [incident](#) that highlights this issue is when Mozambican security forces, who have been struggling with food shortages and months of unpaid salaries, effectively gave up control of the crucial village of Mucojo on January 18. This withdrawal allowed the insurgents unrestricted access to the Macomia coast.

Given the persisting insurgency and the planned withdrawal of SAMIM, it is expected that Kula Ishmael Theletsane's briefing to the PSC will shed light on the preparedness of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (FADM) to step in and address the potential ensuing security vacuum. Furthermore, the briefing may also elaborate on the withdrawal plan of SAMIM. It would also be of interest to the PSC to learn about the plan on how to fill in the potential vacuum that may arise on

the departure of SAMIM and the role of the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF). The role of the RDF is one of the aspects of the [meeting](#) between President Paul Kagame and President Filipe Nyusi held on January 25.

Tomorrow's session is also an opportunity to follow up on the Council's previous decisions with regard to AU's equipment support to the SAMIM. During its 1119th session, the PSC expressed concern over the delayed shipment of the second batch of equipment, which China had pledged to donate and ship directly to Mozambique. This decision was first made during the [1062nd](#) PSC session in January 2022. Due to this lack of progress, the PSC during its previous session on SAMIM requested the AU Commission to continue coordinating with the Chinese Embassy in Addis Ababa to expedite the delivery. The Director for Conflict Management in the AU Peace and Security Department undertook a [field mission](#) to Pemba, Mozambique on 17 November 2023. This action aligns with the PSC's request for the AU Commission to deliver the donated equipment to the SAMIM support operation.

The expected outcome of the session is a Communique. The PSC may express concerns over the resurgence of attacks in Cabo Delgado and the persistence of the insurgency and the threat it poses to the various neighbouring districts of Cabo Delgado. The Council may endorse the communique of the 43rd ordinary summit of SADC that extended the mandate of SAMIM. The PSC may also emphasize the need for ensuring that the exit of SAMIM does not lead to a security vacuum that may lead to the reversal of the gains made by the deployment of SAMIM. The Council may also emphasise on the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation between SAMIM, FADM and RDF. Cognizant of the need to address the structural causes of the scourge in northern Mozambique for lasting peace and stability in the region, the Council may emphasize the importance of enhancing the implementation of peacebuilding and

reconstruction measures for the rehabilitation of affected communities, rebuilding of legitimate local government structures. The PSC may further emphasise the need for strategies for promoting long-term stability in Mozambique, including supporting initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting inclusive development and governance. Lastly, the Council may reiterate its request for the Commission and SADC Secretariat to provide regular progress updates to the Council on the process of drawdown and withdrawal of SAMIM's mandate and the plan for avoiding the emergence of a security vacuum on the departure of SAMIM.