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Statement to the UN Security Council (via VTC)

By

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Chairperson (SRCC) for Somalia

& Head of AMISOM

Mogadishu, 22 February 2021

Madam President,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on Somalia once again. Let me start by congratulating the United Kingdom for its Presidency of the Security Council for the month of February.

Today's meeting is taking place in the aftermath of the 19 and 20 February events which resulted in the eruption of armed clashes in Mogadishu as Somali political leaders struggle to unlock the current political impasse and allow the country to hold peaceful, inclusive, and transparent elections.

The Chairperson of the AU Commission, H. E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, demanded restraint and urged Somali stakeholders to refrain from acts that can escalate tension or lead to further violence. He reiterated the importance and absolute necessity for elections as a means for the renewal and reaffirmation of people's trust and confidence in their leaders and for the consolidation of peace, stability, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country.

The armed clashes of 19 and 20 February have died down and stopped, but the political tension and the underlying causes that led to those clashes have not. It is, therefore, important that Somali stakeholders return to the negotiating table, remain focused, continue with their dialogue guided by the spirit of constructiveness, compromise and consensus to agree on a credible process that can, in a peaceful and conducive environment, deliver a free and transparent election in conformity with the 17 September agreement.

A lot has already been achieved in this regard: The leaders of the FGS and FMS, the two chambers of the national parliament, The Council of Presidential Candidates, the business community and the Civil Society organizations have all recognized and endorsed the 17 September agreement. The 19 and 20 February clashes did not question the validity of the September 17 agreement. The recently held Baidoa Technical discussions to which all the FMS sent experts and participated, came up with proposals which all participants unanimously adopted and recommended the FGS and FMS leaders to meet, endorse and agree on a roadmap for elections.

It is important that the leaders come up with a specific date to meet and look into these proposals which possess the key to overcoming the technical hurdles that have impeded the 17 September agreement from being implemented and elections from being delivered. But the events of 19 and 20 February took place after the Baidoa proposals were already released and a date for a meeting of the leaders to look into them had been proposed. That meeting did not take place. A space must be created to carefully look into this and we, international partners, should support the Somali stakeholders in this endeavour. Maintaining channels of communication and dialogue remain vital tools in this effort.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

Despite the above challenges and delays, AMISOM continues to deliver on its election related responsibilities particularly with regards to the provision of election security, training and technical support.

In delivering these tasks, there has been an enhanced and more complementary collaboration and coordination between AMISOM police and the Somali police, and AMISOM civilian component and their counterparts in Government departments, journalists and the civil society, AMISOM military and the SNA. This multifaceted interaction and collaboration will be very important and necessary during the actual election process.

With regards to security, Generally, the situation remains volatile. AS shabb is strategically positioning itself with the view to maximizing its capacity to thwart the upcoming electoral process. In this regard, it places particular focus on Mogadishu where it continues to unleash its deadly attacks.

Beyond Mogadishu and in AMISOM areas of operation, we continue to observe three emerging tactics of Al-Shabaab, with the obvious goal of destabilising the elections in the federal member states.

First, Al-Shabaab has been mobilising forces, as part of its plans to retake key locations in Lower and Middle Shabelle, so as to facilitate its deadly operations in the Banaadir Region.

Second, particularly in Bay and Bakool, Al-Shabaab has placed emphasis on conducting disruptive operations, targeting humanitarian aid convoys and in some cases, cargo planes carrying goods and supplies.

Third, Al-Shabaab is extending its tentacles and making its presence increasingly felt in Galmudug. This has led to the group intensifying its attacks in

that member state in recent months such as the Galkacyo Stadium attack last December.

However, despite the Covid 19 pandemic and limitations imposed by seasonal rains, we have been able to contain AL shabab activities through enhanced collaboration and Joint operations with the Somali National forces and allow life to evolve in relative security in most population centres across AMISOM areas of operation.

In implementing its transition obligations under OPERATION BADBAADO 1, with the exception of the capture of Basra town, AMISOM has successfully completed its transition tasks in Lower Shabelle. The completion of OPERATION BADBAADO 1, will now allow AMISOM to commence transition operations in Middle Shabelle. This new phase of operations will be greatly enhanced by the recent deployment of four helicopters from the Republic of Uganda.

In accordance with Security Council resolution 2520 (2020), I can report that AMISOM has also commenced implementing its reconfiguration as agreed at the joint AMISOM – SNA Sector Commanders’ conference in October 2020, with key tasks endorsed at the Operations Coordination Committee also in October 2020, and widely welcomed by international partners at the European Union Security Event on Somalia in November 2020.

Madam President

The African Union remains committed to working closely and in coordination and complementarity with the Somali Security Forces with the view to further

strengthening and expediting their taking over of security responsibilities from AMISOM. It is in this context that the African Union Peace and Security Council in its recent Communique took note of the progress of the STP review. In the area of operations, the success of the transition plan will very much depend on our capacity to expedite the generation of a well-trained, well equipped, well supported and capable Somali Army. Without a very clear, resourced and implementable force Generation plan, the discussions we've been having and decisions we have been taking will be compromised.

The African Union strongly believes that the holding of a force generation conference, as soon as practically possible, will address the full range of requirements for the success of the ongoing transition operations. It would also allow international partners to identify resources to ensure that the STP implementation does not suffer further delays.

We also believe, that as we continue to support and implement the transition, it must be our collective responsibility to realistically and transparently assess the conditions on the ground.

In this connection, as this Council is now aware, the African Union is in the process of conducting its own independent assessment to decide on the future of AMISOM in Somalia post 2021. This assessment will also allow AMISOM to further reconfigure to better support Somalia's security and broader stabilisation requirements.

Madam President

Later this week, the Council will review AMISOM's mandate. Since AMISOM deployment in 2007, the mission has continued to achieve its strategic objectives. This has come at a huge human cost. This AMISOM sacrifice together with that of the Somali security forces has over the last 14 years resulted in the creation of a physical space where life evolves in relative safety, political dialogue and reconciliation can take place, governance, humanitarian relief and extension of state authority can become a reality across Somalia.

The renewal of AMISOM mandate must take into account the prevailing political and security realities prevailing on the ground and the need for us all not to put at risk these hard-won gains.

I thank you.