

**Remarks to the
African Union Peace and Security Council
(AUPSC**

(via Zoom)

By

H.E SRCC

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Commissioner Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E Ambassador Bankole Adeoye,

Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to brief the Peace and Security Council on the situation in Somalia and the operations of ATMIS. Let me start by congratulating the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania on assuming the Chair of the Council for the month of March.

Allow me also to express the deep gratitude of ATMIS for the Peace and Security Council's (PSC) strong and continued support of the mission and its enduring commitment to peace and security in Somalia.

Since the last briefing of ATMIS to this Council, Somalia has continued to register significant progress on its key national priorities, particularly those outlined in the Federal Government of Somalia's (FGS) six pillar workplan for the period of 2022 – 2026. Leading these efforts, I am pleased to report that these has been President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who has taken decisive steps, mainly to accelerate inclusive politics and dialogue.

With inclusive politics high on the president's agenda, we have repeatedly witnessed the president visit frontline positions and the federal member states (FMSs) across Somalia, lending his support to various reconciliation processes and encouraging regional leaders to participate in the ongoing offensive. These visits have united local communities and enhanced cooperation with regional leaders to support Somalia's ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab, enabling the country to become more conducive for peaceful coexistence.

In November, following the president's visit to the region of Middle Shabelle, we saw an immediate cessation of hostilities between two local communities. These communities have since played a key role in the Federal Government's removal of Al-Shabaab from the region.

Last month, again, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, together with the Speaker of the House of People (HoP), successfully led a two-phased reconciliation process in South West State (SWS), concluding with an agreement amongst its stakeholders. With the dispute resolved, South West State stakeholders are now seizing the opportunity to focus on supporting the Federal Government's plans to open up a new front against Al-Shabaab soon.

Meanwhile, Somali leaders have continued to pursue dialogue through the National Consultative Council (NCC) to sustain Somalia's political stability. The NCC met in October and agreed on a five-point communiqué advancing Somalia's peacebuilding and state-building efforts. While in December, the NCC met again, bringing together the Federal Government and the federal member states (FMS), except for Puntland, to agree on key outstanding issues of federalism and democratisation.

Despite Puntland's request for more time and later outlining its official position regarding its relationship with the Federal Government, I remain positive of the desire of Somali leaders to reach a consensus on outstanding national priorities and that these will be concluded within the framework of the NCC.

Chairperson,

As I mentioned in my introduction, Somalia is registering significant progress. At ATMIS, we believe this is on all fronts and that there is a genuine cause for optimism about Somalia's future. I am pleased to report that this view is also accurate with regard to the security front in Somalia.

Despite the security challenges that Somalia has been facing, since August, Al-Shabaab has been under immense operational pressure, with the group losing vital terrain. It is failing to maintain its forceful hold on its once centre of gravity – the local community support. This continues to be demonstrated by local communities increasingly joining the Somalia Security Forces (SSF)-led and owned offensive.

As a result of the courageous actions and gallant sacrifices of the SSF, Al-Shabaab is now being disrupted, degraded and will ultimately be defeated. Recent evidence of this has been the group's several losses. These have included operational defeats in HirShabelle and Galmudug, specifically Middle Shabelle, Hiiraan and towns in Mudug, such as the port town of Harardheere, all representing strategic and operational gains for the Federal Government.

Despite the positive security trajectory moving across Somalia, in the ATMIS area of responsibility, we are concerned Al-Shabaab still retains the capability to carry out kinetic offensive operations, including conducting complex Suicide Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (SVIED) attacks, Person Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED) attacks, ambushes, kidnapping, assassinations and Indirect Fire attacks (IDF).

With regard to ATMIS's threat picture, we continue to assess that Al-Shabaab's tactics, techniques, and procedures have largely remained unchanged during this reporting period, but its near-term offensive objective will be to change some of its tactics. A key concern remains Al-Shabaab's current use of commercial drones, which we judge will likely begin to retain an armed capability in the future.

In response to our concern about Al-Shabaab's kinetic ability and its likely shift to armed drones, we are currently working with a wider range of international partners to address these threats.

Beyond Somalia, we are also concerned with Al-Shabaab's transnational activity, particularly its operational reach inside the territory of Somalia's immediate neighbours. This threat capability will require a concerted effort by the region. I am

encouraged so far by recent regional security engagements to address this threat with a unified approach, specifically the recent Summit of the Frontline States, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya, convened by Somalia. In addition to enhancing the security framework that ATMIS serves in Somalia, the Frontline States framework will hopefully make the region a harder operating environment for Al-Shabaab.

Chairperson,

Turning to ATMIS's implementation of this Council's mandate under its Communique of its 1068th meeting in March 2022, despite progress being uneven, there are clear signs that key aspects of the mandated tasks directed by this Council and the United Nations Security Council are receiving the commitment they require. This is both from ATMIS and the Federal Government.

At ATMIS, we have submitted a detailed reconfiguration plan, pending acceptance by the Federal Government and, recently, working with the Federal Government, with support from UNSOS, we have transitioned from the Maslah FoB to meet the emerging demands of force generation.

In addition, following an operational understanding between ATMIS and the SSF, we are currently in the final stages of deploying to the Bariire FoB and have recently collocated with SSF at the Hawaadley Bridge FoB. We have also continued, as part of our strategic objectives, to degrade Al-Shabaab, which is in line with the agreed joint FGS – ATMIS CONOPS of 2022. This effort, we further believe, has greatly contributed to the success of the ongoing SSF-led offensive.

Beyond ATMIS's joint kinetic operations, our involvement in the ongoing offensive operations remains: (1) using ATMIS helicopters to provide close air support, (2) provision of Casualty Evacuation (CASEVAC) and Medical Evacuation (MEDEVAC) of SSF troops from the battlefield, (3) provision of Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), (4) provision of indirect fire (IDF) support, and (5) provision of combat service support, such as ammunition, water, drugs, and field

accommodation, and provision of advisory support on International Humanitarian Law and issues related to protection of civilians, to mention but a few.

Chairperson,

In recent months, it has become clear that the SSF has become more capable, resulting in their fast-pacing success against Al-Shabaab. In response, ATMIS is mindful that it must increase its operational tempo to support the offensive, which will require UNSOS to be more flexible. For this reason, I want to acknowledge the support and commitment of ATMIS TCCs in offering to do more to disrupt and degrade Al-Shabaaab alongside our brothers and sisters in SSF.

In the coming weeks, my mission is expected to be in a position to deploy critical force enablers, such as attack and utility helicopters, robust long-range ISR capabilities into the theatre. When feasible for the SSF, we also look forward to them taking over agreed FoBs, allowing ATMIS to generate Quick Reaction /Mobile Forces.

In addition to ATMIS deploying critical force enablers, more support will be required to ensure the SSF can continue leading the offensive. This is particularly as Somalia is likely to meet its target of 15,000 newly trained forces this year. In this context, I welcome the recent return of 3,500 Eritrean-trained SNA troops, some of whom are already operational on the frontlines in HirShabelle, and the ongoing training of SNA troops in Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Turkey and Uganda.

To continue advancing the successful campaign against Al-Shabaab, the SSF will require additional equipment, especially the appropriate firepower and adequate ammunition supplies, and for the Security Council to seriously consider the Federal Government's request for an increase in the UNSOS support package beyond the mandated 13,900.

More urgently and taking note of Security Council resolution 2662 (2022), including its pathway to completely lifting Somalia's arms embargo, Somalia's ability

to defeat Al-Shabaab ultimately will increasingly become contingent on its ability to acquire lethal support without hindrance.

Chairperson,

Let me take this opportunity to revisit key aspects of Security Council resolution 2670 (2022), particularly the adjustment of the timeline of Phase 1, as we believe that this extension should provide the Federal Government and ATMIS space to complete important mandated tasks.

As I have indicated earlier, there has been progress registered both from ATMIS and the Federal Government, but there remains a need for further consultations on two critical mandate issues, namely: (1) a "strategic sector-by-sector approach to drawdown and (2) funding of the six-month delay.

Regarding the initial drawdown of 2000 ATMIS troops by June, ATMIS has been looking at various options. For a successful sector-by-sector approach, there is a need to undertake more detailed planning with the Federal Government to understand where they would want ATMIS to continue to hold and where Somalia would be willing to take over across ATMIS sectors. In this regard, I am grateful for the support and direction of the African Union Commission, which will soon be dispatching an assessment team to assist in implementing this mandated task.

As this Council will also recall, Security Council Resolution 2670 (2022) agreed to the Federal Government's request to delay the drawdown of 2000 ATMIS troops to June of this year. In doing so, it was anticipated by the African Union that ATMIS partners would financially support a delay of the drawdown.

Regrettably, Resolution 2670 (2022) does not provide the funding modalities required to support the six-month extension and key partners, including the European Union (EU), have indicated no new funding. This is despite the recent announcement of the European Union last week on its intention to release additional funding of €85million to ATMIS to support mainly the allowances of ATMIS troops.

As this Council has heard eloquently from Commissioner Bankole Adeoye in the open session, there is great concern about the shortfall in the funding available for ATMIS. We assess that this could jeopardise our ability to implement the Security Council's resolutions.

While we await this Council's guidance, I would like to welcome the initiative of Commissioner Bankole Adeoye in launching the ATMIS roadshow for predictable and sustainable financing, which held its inaugural event in Addis Ababa last November and will hold its second event in the United States this month.

Chairperson,

With this Council's strong support, I took over the leadership of ATMIS in November 2022, and I am proud to be able to work with a team of truly dedicated and talented Africans who take great pride in being able to contribute to the rebuilding of Somalia.

Under my leadership, ATMIS shall remain a reliable partner and a dependable ally, supporting the work of this august body. And as my mission continues with the complete onboarding of the Police and Military leadership, ATMIS will require a strong civilian component with a clear sense of purpose. To ensure this, with the support of the African Union Commission, I plan to begin the recruitment of national staff to enhance ATMIS effectiveness.

In closing, **Chairperson,** I would like to reiterate, on behalf of ATMIS, our gratitude for the continued support of this Council to Somalia and ATMIS. Your unwavering support for peace and security in Somalia will be vital for Somalis as they continue to navigate this period of opportunity.

I thank you.