

# **ATMIS FOB HANDOVER CEREMONY**

**REMARKS**

**BY**

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**MOGADISHU,**

**29 JANUARY 2024**

**Your Excellency, Minister of Defence of the Federal Government of Somalia,**

**Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission,**

**Ambassadors, Representatives of Troop Contributing Countries,**

**Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations**

**Assistant Secretary-General of UNSOS,**

**Excellencies,**

**Generals,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me start by welcoming you all here today.

On behalf of the African Union (AU), I am honoured to be present here to commemorate the successful completion of the second phase of the ATMIS drawdown. The drawdown marks a significant milestone in Somalia's positive

trajectory. It is also a testament to the critical progress made by Somalia since May 2022 under the visionary leadership of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

As part of sustaining security sector development, Somalia security forces (SSF) have demonstrated incredible courage and resilience in degrading Al-Shabaab.

Their efforts and successes have been made possible through a realistic and comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that has been implemented effectively. Similarly, the security gains we have witnessed since last year have enabled stabilisation efforts to take place in newly liberated areas in HirShabelle and Galmudug.

Before I continue, I want to take this opportunity to express the African Union's deep appreciation to our ATMIS forces, the Troop and Police Contributing Countries, and our United Nations partners, particularly the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS).

Our collective efforts have enabled us to carry out an orderly and smooth transition of 2000 troops last year and, this month, 3000 ATMIS troops through the handing over of seven key Forward Operating Bases (FoBs).

The orderly transition, I should note and commend, has been due to the strong efforts of the Tripartite Committee of ATMIS, FGS and UNSOS. In this Committee, with the support of our international partners, I am pleased to note we have all worked harmoniously to ensure the security transition remains on course – and that we have so far avoided a security vacuum for Al-Shabaab to exploit.

The successful completion of this drawdown Phase, notwithstanding significant challenges, including the El Nino, is a testament to the will of the Federal Government of Somalia to an orderly transition.

As further success is achieved in this Somali-owned and Somali-led process of security, I wish to extend profound appreciation to SSF and AU forces for their dedication, sacrifice, and bravery in advancing peace in Somalia. We must always remember and highlight the sacrifices made by our brave men and women, who offered far from their homes to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Somali people.

For our part at the African Union, we are fully committed to completing the security transition on time, in particular, beginning preparations for the Phase 3 drawdown of 4000 ATMIS troops by 30 June.

We are also equally supportive of implementing the Somalia Security Development Plan (SSDP) under the FGS's leadership, recently endorsed in New York in December 2023, which has come in the wake of other remarkable achievements, including the admission of Somalia into the East African Community (EAC), the debt relief and the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia.

In this Plan, we have agreed with the Federal Government to explore modalities for a post-ATMIS security arrangement to be submitted to the AU and UN Security Councils by 31 March 2024 for endorsement. We believe this is a critical step towards achieving long-term peace and stability in Somalia, and we urge all stakeholders to support this effort.

To conclude, I wish to reaffirm that the African Union remains committed to aligning its efforts and providing support towards Somalia's priorities. In this respect, our aim will remain facilitating Somalia's progress towards greater stability, prosperity, and regional peace.

I thank you.