STATEMENT BY H.E. AMB. SMAIL CHERGUI, AU COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING SESSION OF THE THIRD MINISTERIAL HIGH-LEVEL PARTNERSHIP FORUM ON SOMALIA-
ISTANBUL (TURKEY)- 23 FEBRUARY 2016.

Your Excellency, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of the Republic of Turkey;
Your Excellency, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia;
Your Excellency, Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations;
Your Excellency, Omar Sharmarke, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia;
Excellences Minister, Heads of Delegation, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I join the previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkey for the warm welcome and the excellent conditions gathered for the success of this important event for Somali People and Africa.

I bring you good tidings and felicitations from the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, who because of scheduling challenges, could not be with you today. She eagerly awaits the outcome of this high-level meeting as the countdown to the 2016 epoch-making Somali elections gathers momentum each day, week and month.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In all fronts of our endeavors in Somalia, be it political, diplomatic, military, economic, security, constitutional or humanitarian, we have come a long way, we at times cannot believe it ourselves.
Way back in 2007, there were so many skeptics, who rightly at that time, could not believe AMISOM could make a positive difference in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government was confined to Villa Somalia. It did not control the capital city Mogadishu, let alone the rest of the country. It did not have any political and military reach on its territory.

**Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

You all know that since 2007, AMISOM grew from strength to strength. Al Shabaab was ejected from Mogadishu. The entire territory of south and central Somalia was liberated from Al Shabaab. So effective was AMISOM, supported by the Somalia National Army (SNA), that Al Shahab, for its survival, has had to resort to asymmetric warfare and heinous crimes in neighboring Kenya.

We will never forget nor forgive, or be intimidated by the terrorist crimes at Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, the cold blooded murder of innocent students at Garissa University, Mtokepeni in Lamu, the ambush of our gallant forces at Lego, Janale and El Adde and the continuing murder and abduction of political figures and civilians alike.

The good news is that as AMISOM and SNA we are on top of the situation. Why? Because we have enabled the Federal Government of Somalia to extend its authority over the entire territory of South and Central Somalia. The federal state formation process is nearing completion. So is significant progress being made in all the peace building and state building goals, as well as in cross-cutting issues. In particular, the electoral model has been agreed to and the road to the holding of elections by end of September this year has never been clearer. Thanks to the Somali leadership committed to honoring its executive and legislative obligations.

I have deliberately caused you to reflect on where we have come from, if only to highlight and remind that the positive results achieved so far have been realized at the
cost of blood, limb, life and treasure. That this road we have traversed has had its formidable trials and tribulations. That more needs to be done, and can still be done, to enable AMISOM and SNA deliver on their mandates.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In view of the recent and continuing attacks on AMISOM by Al Shabaab it has reinforced our long-held view that the terrorist group maybe down but is certainly not out. In this regard it has not been lost on us that we need to constantly and persistently be adapting AMISOM’s operational modalities to respond to the asymmetric insurgent-type of conflict that is being waged by Al Shabaab.

In this response, I am pleased to inform you, we are seized with and interrogating three key pillars to counter Al Shabaab. And this is being conducted on a daily basis.

First, we are re-organizing our AMISOM forces to be more robust, more mobile and above all, operations to be intelligence driven.

Second, delivery across operational sectors has been effected with significant results. This has of course meant the reorganization of Force Headquarters, in terms strengthening its mandate (command and control), and strengthening coordination with and between sectors. It is now a standard operational procedure.

Thirdly, we are continuously exploring ways of enhancing operational coordination with our SNA partners.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It will never be lost on us that in order to win the fight against Al Shabaab, it will only be possible, as it has been before, through deliberate collaborative efforts involving all the stakeholders right from the strategic level, through the operational down to the tactical levels.
During this month, I gathered the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the TCCs and also met with our partners, friends of Somalia/AMISOM, if you will, on 18 February, for the sole purpose of wanting to better coordinate and enhance our support to the Federal Government of Somalia and AMISOM. The Summit of the TCCs when it holds in Djibouti on 28 February 2016, will make important decisions on the way forward.

I want to reiterate that all issues are being addressed holistically, be they related to human rights protection, sexual exploitation and abuse, which AMISOM has a very firm zero tolerance approach, as well as the equally important imperative of tracking civilian casualties. We also pay particular attention to the contribution of Quick Impact projects (QIPS) in sustaining lives in liberated areas, as well as win hearts and minds against Al-Shabaab. Here, I want to fully support the appeal made by President Hassan Shaikh Mohamed on the five critical sectors that have been identified.

**Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Although there is abundant political support to AMISOM and Somalia from all stakeholders, there are critical resources that need to be availed to get the job done. For AMISOM, financial support is still required, particularly in light of the EU’s 20 percent reduction in troop allowances. Coming at a very critical time, you can figure out the impact of this reduction on the morale of the troops. Our guess is that it can only be negative.

I can also report to you that significant progress has been made in sourcing force enablers and force multipliers from within TCCs. Letters of assist from UNSOS should be ready anytime soon. We will very soon have helicopters.

AMISOM can only speak of a mission accomplished, if it were to exit Somalia able to stand on its own. One of the critical requirements for such an end-state is a fully functioning Somali national security forces establishment. The standing-up of a fully
equipped, motivated national army with a clear and respected command and control, demands the urgency of now. AMISOM is reinforcing its training component and it is my fervent hope that as with EUTM, Turkey and USA, other partners will coordinate with AMISOM so that effort and resources are not dissipated.

In conclusion, I believe that if all the stakeholders put their shoulders to the wheel and fully support AMISOM and the Federal Government through effective coordination and complementarity of effort, Al Shabaab can be defeated and Somalia stabilized.

It is for this reason that the international community, all stakeholders, be they civil society organizations, humanitarian actors and indeed governments, have coalesced to make peace happen in Somalia. This third high-level ministerial forum on Somalia is ample testimony of your faith in a stable, peaceful and prosperous Somalia.

Thank you.