STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR SMAIL CHERGUI
COMMISSIONER FOR PEACE AND SECURITY
ON THE SITUATION IN SOMALIA
Madam Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council,
Distinguished Members of the Peace and Security Council,

I am pleased that the Peace and Security Council is meeting once again to discuss the situation in Somalia and our efforts to assist the Federal Government of Somalia to bring about peace in the brotherly country. This is also another demonstration of our determination to deal with the threat posed by the Al Shabaab extremist group against Somalia, the countries of the region and indeed Africa.

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies,

Somalia continues to make progress and remains on the right path towards the attainment of the Vision 2016 agenda. The state formation process is progressing well and only two (2) out of the five (5) states expected are remaining to complete the process in South Central Somalia. Meanwhile the Federal Parliament has passed the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC) legislation and, early this month, the Cabinet approved members of three key commissions, the Judicial Service Commission (JSC), the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Boundaries and Federation Commission (BFC). It is our hope that this positive momentum will be maintained so that we can meet the deadlines set out in Vision 2016. The challenge however remains the form and shape that the elections will take and, in this regard, we are all looking forward to the outcomes of the forthcoming Electoral Assessment Mission.

On the security front, while al-Shabaab has been significantly weakened, it continues nonetheless to pose a serious security threat to Somalia and the
region, as demonstrated by the 2 April attack on the Garissa University in North-eastern Kenya that killed 147 students and wounded many more. Springing from the Middle Jubba region where they have established new bases, they continue to infiltrate newly recovered areas, explore ways of establishing cells in peaceful parts of the country and plot against neighbouring countries.

The situation is further complicated by the war in Yemen and the recent influx of Yemenis refugees in Djibouti, islands of Eritrea and Puntland in northern Somalia. In the case of Somalia, there is no screening mechanism of the refugees arriving in northern Somalia and there are concerns that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQIP) might use this opportunity to infiltrate the region. Even more worrisome, is recent information indicating that the Islamic State is now operating in Yemen, raising fear that more sophisticated attacks might occur in the near future in the region and perhaps in countries that have not be hit so far.

**Madam Chairperson, Excellencies,**

In support of the FGS’s strategy to stabilize Somalia, we must step up our efforts and maintain military pressure on the enemy, because, as you are aware, *"The best defense is a good offense"*. This will require us to resume operations against Al Shabaab in the very near future while redoubling our efforts in the standing up of a credible Somali National Army (SNA), with dependable command and control and reconfiguring AMISOM to the new operational realities on the ground.

It is with this in mind that following consultations with the FGS, the UN and other partners, we agreed to carry out a joint AU-UN Benchmarking exercise,
with a view to provide a proper assessment of AMISOM and the Somali national defence and security institutions. This exercise was carried out from 14 to 25 April in Somalia. I will ask the Special Representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Maman Sidikou to make a presentation on the key findings and recommendations for your consideration on the required measures to strengthen our support to Somalia.

**Madam Chairperson, Excellencies,**

It would be lost on me if I do not mention the challenges relating to the stabilization of the recovered areas. The FGS and AMISOM need continued support in this regard. AMISOM is deploying an increased number of civilian personnel to provide support to the military, especially with regards to the implementation of quick impact projects, local reconciliation and basic social services delivery by the local administrations. It may be prudent at this juncture to review the capacity and capability of UNSOA to both manage and deliver the logistical support package to AMISOM within the context of the stabilization and early recovery phase.

Let me conclude my remarks by once again expressing the AU’s appreciation to all our partners including the UN, the EU, OIC and our bilateral partners for the sustained support to AMISOM. We remain grateful to our troop and police contributing member states, as well as to IGAD for its pivotal role in Somalia. The AU will continue to stand with the people and Federal Government of Somalia as they shape a more secure, stable and peaceful country, which is at peace with itself and its neighbours.

I thank you.