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PRESS RELEASE

(For Immediate Release)

Update on Operation Jubba Corridor

Mogadishu, 25th July 2015: On 19 July 2015, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) announced the resumption of active military offensive operations against the Al Shabaab. This offensive, code named Operation Juba Corridor is aimed at further degrading the Al Shabaab by removing them from their strong holds in the Gedo, Bakool and Bay regions of Somalia.

Since the start of Operation Juba Corridor, which involves troops from the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) contingents of AMISOM, supporting units of the Somalia National Army (SNA), and acting in collaboration with some of our strategic partners, major towns and villages such as Taraka, Jungal, Duraned, Eel-elaan, Habakhaluul, Meyon, Magalay, Duraned and the major town of Bardhere in the Gedo region have been recovered from the Al Shabaab. In the Bakool region, the operation has resulted in the recovery of Buur-dhuhunle, Kulun-jareer, Moragabey, Legaly and Gelewoyni while Ufurrow, Eesow, Hasanow-Mumin, Llidaale, Makoon, Dhargo and Manaas have been liberated in the Bay region.

The SNA and AMISOM troops were warmly welcomed by the population in these towns and villages and at their request, the local authorities only imposed some limited curfew during the night times to facilitate the necessary clean-up exercise against Al Shabaab elements to further guarantee the security of the population.

The recovery of these villages and towns, especially Baadhere and Dinsoor, is a major boost to efforts at freeing the populations hitherto living in these areas from the tyrannical and savage rule of the Al Shabaab which has been in charge of these towns for the last seven years. The residents of Baadhere, for instance, which is home to vast agricultural farms of sorghum, mangoes, tobacco, bananas, watermelon, oranges and papaya among others as well as livestock are now free from the illegal taxation and extortion burdened on them by the Al Shabaab. Dinsoor, which served as a main base for the leadership of the Al Shabaab since their ouster from Barawe in October 2014, will no longer be available for the Al Shabaab as a recruitment and training centre.

Today, these towns and their key infrastructure as well as the resources generated therein are no longer available to the Al Shabaab but to the local communities and the Somali authorities to facilitate the strengthening of their local economies as part of the government's peace, security and stability efforts.

It is in this regard that the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud in a statement earlier this week reiterated the importance of this operation in the fight against the Al Shabaab, noting: "Let there be no doubt anymore, the fight to secure our country may be hard, but my commitment and those of our partners and the resilience of this nation has never been stronger."

In addition to the recovery of these towns which now places them under the Somali Government control, AMISOM and SNA troops killed 72 Al Shabaab fighters, while 24 were wounded and 9 others were captured. The Al Shabaab camps in Dolono and Elalan including an assortment of weapons and ammunition were also captured. All of the wounded and captured Al Shabaab fighters as well as the weapons and ammunition are being handled in adherence to the African Union (AU) Standard operating Procedures for such matters.

Given the fact that this operation is being conducted in a very difficult terrain and in challenging weather, the AU Special representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Maman Sidikou commends the discipline, commitment and gallantry of all the SNA and AMISOM soldiers. Ambassador Sidikou shares the sentiments expressed in the statement issued by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud and stresses that the actions of the SNA troops in particular attests to the inherent potential of the SNA if the soldiers are well motivated and provided the requisite equipment.

In this regard therefore, as the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and representatives of the international partners gather in Mogadishu for the High Level Partnership Forum to review progress on the New Deal Compact for Somalia, AMISOM would like to reiterate its appeal for more coordinated international support to the SNA to facilitate their preparedness to eventually assume primary responsibility for their country's security.

During this operation, AMISOM troops have also de-mined some roads such as the roads from Baidoa through Manaas to Farnooley; Raxoole and Dinsor route; Baidoa through Barow; Qansax Dheere, Buulo bilaan, Cilaan to Bardhere as well as Bakhtiti, through Faafax duum, Tawakal to Baardhere. These roads had been mined by the Al Shabaab in flagrant disregard of applicable international laws and protocols including the Convention on the prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines. In addition, these mines and improvised explosives devices planted along the roads linking communities have over the years made it impossible for the population to engage in local trade thereby limiting economic growth in these areas.

While this operation has contributed to further degrade the Al Shabaab, it is instructive to note that they still retain the capability to carry out terrorist attacks against innocent citizens, the Somali Government and her officials as well as the international partners including AMISOM. AMISOM is particularly aware that some of the leadership of the Al Shabaab have, in a cowardly manner, fled and are most likely to be in or around the towns of Jilib, Buale and Saakow from where they intend to continue their terrorist and inhumane acts against harmless Somali citizens. The SNA and AMISOM will not relent in their pursuit and will seek them out from hiding.

AMISOM appeals to the community and religious leaders as well as the population across the country to work more closely with the SNA and AMISOM troops on the ground including in providing them with useful information to prevent the remnants of the Al Shabaab who are now disguised as civilians and living amongst them from perpetrating any terrorist actions such as cowardly suicide attacks, whether vehicular or human borne.

AMISOM assures the population that, as indicated in the press statement by the Minister of Information, Honourable Abdi Hayir: "the military operations will continue until we have retaken all areas currently occupied by terrorists. The military operation is going very well and Somali government forces and AMISOM are making advances, liberating town after town. We are very grateful for the support from public and their rejection of the terrorist's brutal, oppressive rule. While we are making significant gains and advancing into Al-Shabaab controlled areas, at the same time the security forces and the Somali people must remain vigilant everywhere and at all times."

This evening's shameful attack on the Jazeera Hotel, a place which among others, symbolizes the determination of peace loving Somalis to rebuild their country, and has come to be used for recreation by Somalis from all walks of life, amply demonstrates the demonic agenda of the Al Shabaab to want to deny Somalia the peace that is beginning, despite such unfathomable acts, to be enjoyed across the country. AMISOM has despatched a team to assist Somali security agencies with the required support including evacuating the wounded to the AMISOM hospital as well bringing out the members of the international community residing in the hotel.