SPEECH OF DR. ALHAJI SARJOH BAH, DIRECTOR OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE, DURING THE OFFICIAL HANDOVER CEREMONY OF THE FORWARD OPERATING BASES,

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA, 6 JULY 2023
Your Excellency, Minister of Defence of the Federal Government of Somalia,  
Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission  
Ambassadors, Representatives of Troop Contributing Countries  
Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations  
Assistant Secretary-General  
Excellencies,  
Generals,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  

On behalf of the African Union Commission, I am delighted to welcome you all here today for a truly historic occasion.

We are here to mark the successful conclusion of the first phase of the ATMIS drawdown from Somalia.

ATMIS has now implemented the drawdown of 2,000 troops in compliance with the timetable set out by Security Council Resolutions 2628 (2022) and 2670 (2022). This is no mean achievement.

I am pleased to note that the agreed Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) have been handed over to reinvigorated Somali Security Forces (SSF).

This is a moment of pride for all of us, and we should reflect on the progress made, particularly by the Somali Security Forces (SSF), who are gradually assuming full security responsibilities. This drawdown represents a significant achievement in our joint efforts to bolster peace and stability in Somalia.

It takes place because of the determined efforts of all those represented here today and the hard work of our courageous and dedicated servicemen and women across the country.

First, I would like to deeply pay tribute to our ATMIS forces, Troop and Police Contributing Countries, the Somali Security Forces, and our United Nations partners, particularly the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS).

I also want to extend the AU’s appreciation and great admiration to the brave men and women on the frontline of the struggle to provide the peace and stability the Somali people yearn for and deserve.

Let me emphasise that this drawdown is a shared success.

It could only happen because of meticulous planning and dedication by the Tripartite Committee – ATMIS, FGS and UNSOS – and a determination to honour our commitments.

Today is not the end of our mission here, not at all. But it is a giant stride along the long road towards realising our mission.
At the African Union, we look forward to the next phase – a Somali-led offensive which will further degrade Al-Shabaab, bolster stabilisation and anchor the gains made so far, bringing peace and liberation to even more communities.

I want to assure you all that ATMIS will continue working closely with the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations, and international partners to undertake a joint technical assessment by 31 August 2023 to evaluate and plan for Phase Two of the drawdown. This will contribute to lessons learnt, assess the security situation and inform planning for the drawdown of 3,000 ATMIS troops.

ATMIS’ campaign against Al-Shabaab is a long-term initiative requiring a holistic approach. We will therefore ensure that stabilisation efforts go hand in glove with military operations to ensure maximum realisation of strategic gains.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the AU’s commitment to ensuring an efficient and effective transition process that does not compromise the security of the people of Somalia and consolidates the benefits of hard-earned security gains.

Thank you all for coming today. Thank you for your continued support and commitment.