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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321
Email: situationroom@africa-union.org

**Remarks to the
ATMIS TCC Summit – Ministerial Meeting**

By

Dr. Alhaji Sarjoh Bah

Director of Conflict Management

African Union

26 April 2023

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda,

Your Excellency, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Government of Somalia,

Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and Defence Ministers of ATMIS TCCs,

Distinguished Representatives of the IGAD, UN, EU, UK, and US,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you at this Ministerial meeting in preparation of the ATMIS TCC Summit to be held tomorrow. Let me take this opportunity to thank H.E. Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda. We salute his leadership and wisdom on this and other matters on the continent. I wish to also express my sincere gratitude for the excellent hospitality accorded to us since our arrival in the majestic city of Kampala.

We meet at an important time to discuss the next steps regarding progress in implementing the ATMIS-FGS CONOPs. Within this context, I would like to underscore two key points of appreciation.

First, I would like to acknowledge the continued commitment of the TCCs. I am proud to say you have all been part of the driving force behind efforts to deliver peace and security in Somalia. We thank you for your steadfast commitment.

Second, I would like to pay tribute to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his strong leadership. Under his leadership, we have seen concerted efforts to advance peace and security for the people of Somalia. As we have heard from the Somali delegation, today, Al-Shabaab is being degraded and defeated - thanks to the brave sacrifices of the Somali security forces (SSF).

Excellencies,

Despite the commendable progress, we note that Al-Shabaab continues to pose threats to peace and security in Somalia and across the region, and to undermine the efforts of any credible government in Somalia.

However, since August 2022, we have seen the Somali security forces lead a robust and sustained campaign against Al-Shabaab. This campaign has been with the support of the local communities across various ATMIS sectors – and with the continued support of ATMIS. As a result of the SSF-led campaign, several Al-Shabaab strongholds continue to be liberated, notably in HirShabelle, Galmudug, and recently in parts of Jubaland. For the first time in many years, Al-Shabaab is now being degraded.

What is evident since the beginning of the SSF-led offensive in August is that the SSF have become more capable. This remains a positive step towards lasting stability in Somalia. It is also evident that Somalia's investment in security sector reform is yielding positive dividends.

In this regard, the African Union welcomes the strong commitment of Somalia to generating its security forces and welcomes the ongoing contribution of the recently trained SNA forces by its bilateral partners, including the Republic of Uganda. As a key partner of Somalia, the African Union stands ready to support these efforts. We also call on international partners to do the same and consider increasing their support to the SSF, including possible UNSOS support to the SSF beyond the current mandated 13,900 SSF personnel.

Equally important is the imperative to sustain the collective gains made by the SSF. In this vein, the AU reiterates Somalia's call for the complete lifting of the arms embargo. This is not only a timely request but a moral one, given that Somalia continues to make progress on the sanction benchmarks outlined in Security Council resolution 2662 (2022).

Excellencies,

As we have witnessed progress with the SSF's campaign against Al-Shabaab, I am pleased to note that ATMIS continues to implement Phase 1 of the CONOPS. Implementing the joint FGS – ATMIS CONOPS is part of the African Union's commitment to the decisions of AU PSC and the United Nations Security Council.

To date, under Phase 1, ATMIS, in addition to handing over FoBs, has accomplished the following tasks:

- i. A joint equipment review;
- ii. The establishment of Joint Operation Centers (JOCs) and Joint Logistic Operation Bases (JLOBs);
- iii. Conduct of various CIMIC activities;
- iv. Carrying out of combat mentoring of SSF across its sectors; and
- v. Carrying out joint targeted operations with the SSF.

With regard to ATMIS's outstanding tasks, I can confirm the mission remains committed and will continue to endeavour to ensure the urgently needed new capabilities such as attack and utility helicopters are deployed in a timely manner. In this respect, I want to thank the efforts of the Government of Burundi that is expected to deploy its helicopters soon.

With respect to other tasks, notably the drawdown of 2000 troops in June, I welcome the recent engagement between Somalia and ATMIS at exploring modalities to implement a drawdown plan. I also welcome the efforts and commitment of TCCs shown throughout this week to ensure that the June drawdown materialises.

Excellencies,

The African Union is committed to the effective implementation of this within the spirit and context of the AU PSC and United Nations Security Council decisions. For this to happen in a coordinated manner and to ensure there are no risks to the protection of civilians, there must be consensus. In this context, we urge both the Federal Government and TCCs to continue their collaborative

consultations on the modalities of the drawdown in June as well as Phase 2 in September this year.

As this meeting is fully aware, the delayed drawdown of the 2000 ATMIS troops from 31 December to 30 June has had financial implications, both for the African Union but more so for the TCCs. The African Union's inability to meet the cost of US\$10.6 million for the delayed drawdown has meant an increase in the financial deficit of ATMIS, which continues to rise.

Due to the rising deficit, it remains imperative that discussions on the Phase 2 timeline be assessed in the broader context of the funding challenges of the African Union. As we continue to discuss how to fund the current drawdown, I want to assure you we will continue our ongoing efforts to ensure funding for ATMIS can be broadened beyond the current support frameworks. We commend the EU., UK, UN and other partners for their continued support.

In closing, **Excellencies**, as demonstrated by the ongoing successful offensive against Al-Shabaaab led by Somalia, I want to acknowledge emerging efforts to forge a regional security consensus on eliminating Al-Shabaab.

The ongoing initiative of the Frontline States (Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya) together with Somalia is a welcome effort and one that will complement the efforts of ATMIS and help support the implementation of the transition plan.

I thank you.