

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3+1 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia) and
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

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VTC Briefing on the Situation in Somalia

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Check Against Delivery

Madam President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Kenya, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Tunisia, the A3+1.

At the outset we would like to convey our thanks to the UN Secretary-General and to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for their respective reports on the situation in Somalia. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Mr. James Swan, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Mr. Francisco Madeira and the Managing Director for Africa at the European External Action Service, Ms. Rita Laranjinha, for their briefings.

We also would like to recognize the participation of H.E. Mr. Balal Cusman, State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia to this meeting.

Our statement will focus on the political developments and the preparations for the elections, the security situation, with a particular attention to the role of AMISOM, and the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

(Political developments)

Madam President,

The A3+1 reaffirms its full support to a safe, peaceful and orderly transition in Somalia based on constitutional order; the rule of law and human rights; and unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Somalia.

The A3+1 regrets that the electoral agreement reached by the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States on 17 September 2020 which was subsequently adopted by both Houses of Parliament is yet to be fully implemented.

As a consequence, the parliamentary elections that were expected by the end of 2020 as well as the election of the Speakers of Parliament and the President that were to be held by 8 February 2021 are yet to take place, leading to heightened tensions and political uncertainties.

We deeply regret the violent incidents and the reported casualties last Friday in Mogadishu. While reaffirming the right to peaceful demonstration we call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and to avoid any escalation.

We encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States to continue with their ongoing dialogue, guided by the spirit of consensus and readiness for compromise with a view to reach an agreement on the remaining outstanding issues.

In this regard we welcome the formation for that purpose of a technical team at ministerial level between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States that convened its first meeting on the 15th of this month.

We underline the vital importance of holding free, fair, timely, transparent and credible elections in Somalia to realize the legitimate aspirations to security, stability, democracy, good governance and development. In this regard we call upon all the relevant Somali stakeholders to refrain from

undertaking any unilateral or non-consensual measures that might further complicate the situation.

At the same time, we call for the renewed commitment of Somalia's partners to providing timely and adequate support to the Government of Somalia in order to ensure that the electoral process is conducted in a successful and peaceful manner.

We also hope that the agreement reached between the leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States on the 30 per cent quota for women will be upheld and that it will pave the way to a stronger women representation and participation in the future. We welcome in this regard the endorsement by the Federal Government of the Somali Women's Charter which set a 50 per cent women representation target.

We also welcome the formation by the Federal Government of Somalia of a technical committee to prepare a road map for one-person one-vote universal elections in 2024-2025 and encourage thorough consultations with the Federal Member States and other stakeholders for its rapid adoption.

(Security situation)

Madam President,

The A3+1 remains deeply concerned about the volatile security situation in Somalia. We strongly condemn the latest terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al Shabaab and express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and to the Somali people and Government.

We also profoundly regret the loss of civilian lives and pay tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by AMISOM and Somali Security Forces personnel in the fight against terrorism.

The A3+1 shares the view that Al Shabaab remains the most immediate threat to the stability and security of Somalia, having evolved over the years from a primarily military threat to the survival of the Somali state, to a terrorist, hybrid and asymmetric threat.

We also agree that despite the progress achieved so far, Somalia still needs international support to fight against Al Shabaab and to help build state capacity until it is able to take full responsibility for its own security. In particular, given the hybrid terrorist threat posed by Al Shabaab, increased resources should be devoted to developing and enhancing capabilities such as counter IED, counter-terrorism intelligence and counter-terrorism operations.

The A3+1 further believes that Al Shabaab can not be defeated solely by military means. More efforts should be made to diminish Al Shabaab's access to finance, tackle its ability to recruit and radicalize and counter its extremist propaganda. The promotion of the rule of law, justice and Human rights, state building, governance, economic development, institutional capacity building, and the extension of state authority through inclusive politics and reconciliation are also necessary for the eventual permanent defeat of Al Shabaab.

In this regards, the A3+1 encourages the Federal Government of Somalia to expedite the finalization of the revised Somali Transition Plan (STP) as a Somali-owned and led inclusive process between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States and looks forwards to its consideration and endorsement by the Peace and Security Council as the basis for

the AU continued commitment and contribution to the Peace and Security of Somalia with the support of the international partners.

Madam President,

While renewing our appreciation for the sustained contributions of the United Nations, through UNSOM, the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), and of the international partners to bringing peace, security and stability in Somalia, we would like to focus more specifically, as the A3+1, on the role of AMISOM and Somali Security Forces.

We note that the “Independent Assessment of International Support to the Whole Security Environment in Somalia Post-2021” that was submitted to the Council by the Secretary General in January 2021 concluded that a reconfigured AMISOM is the most viable option for providing an international security operation, capable of protecting the Somali State and international partners, disrupting Al Shabaab and other threats, and operating in support of the Somali Security Forces.

Confirming what the A3+1 and the African Union have been stating for a long time now, the Independent Assessment underscored that AMISOM is underfunded, compared to similar-sized UN stabilization operations, and that the continuation of the UN support package via UNSOS and additional support via the EU and other willing donors, and the AMISOM trust fund should be a minimum prerequisite. It added that the optimal solution would be UN assessed contribution funding for a reconfigured AMISOM.

The report also pointed to a sense of unfairness due to the fact that the African troops deployed to AMISOM receive only 70% of the stipends of those deployed in UN peacekeeping operations where they face considerably less risk. It concluded that the current situation undermines the morale and effectiveness of the mission.

Madam President

The African Union Peace and Security Council, in its communiqué of 9 February 2021, welcomed the envisaged reconfiguration of AMISOM, in collaboration with the Somali Security Forces. It urged the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States to expedite the force generation processes to enhance Somali Security Forces capabilities to the required levels that will enable AMISOM’s reconfiguration to be completed to adequately support the key priorities of the Somali Transition Plan.

At the same time the Peace and Security Council appealed to the international community, and in particular the UN Security Council, to avail the space necessary for the Federal Government of Somalia, in close collaboration with the African Union, to lead the discussions concerning the international engagement with Somalia post 2021, in line with the Somali Transition Plan.

The A3+1 believe that the Security Council should heed this appeal from the African Union and refrain from pronouncing on any possible arrangements beyond 2021 until the finalization of the AU-led Independent Assessment expected in May 2021.

Accordingly the A3+1 is ready to support the proposed 10 month renewal of the AMISON authorization only on the understanding that no change to the mandate of the Mission or the current troop ceiling would be made for the time being.

(Promotion of Human Rights and Humanitarian situation)

Madam President,

We welcome the efforts made by the Government of Somalia to promote the justice system and fight corruption through the establishment of the Judicial Service Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission and we encourage it to take the necessary steps to further promote and protect human rights, in particular women and girls rights, freedom of speech and access to information.

We strongly condemn reported incidents of civilian casualties, conflict-related sexual violence, which continues to disproportionately affect women and girls; grave violations against children including abduction, recruitment and use, killing and maiming, that have been registered during the period under review.

We reiterate that more effective measures must be taken to prevent these violations, consistent with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We underline the importance of identifying and holding accountable the perpetrators of these crimes.

Madam President,

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains deeply concerning. The interconnecting challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, devastating floods and other hazards of climate change, and the desert locust infestation have resulted in increased displacements and people in need of humanitarian assistance. The rise in acute food insecurity and malnourishment, including amongst children, is particularly troubling.

With 5.9 million people projected to require humanitarian assistance in 2021, we call on international partners to scale up funding in order to support the humanitarian response plans and alleviate the suffering of the Somali people.

We regret that the security situation remains a major constraint to humanitarian operations and we strongly condemn the continued violent incidents against humanitarian operations and providers.

We commend AMISOM for its humanitarian assistance efforts, including its assistance to health workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it imposes on population movements in Somalia. We call for additional international dedicated support, including funding and required resources to enable AMISOM to more effectively support humanitarian efforts in all its Sectors.

To conclude, Madam President, the A3+1 would like to reiterate its appreciation for the continued efforts of the UN, the AU the EU, IGAD and all the international partners in support of a Somali-led and Somali-owned security, reconciliation and peace building.

I thank you