

# Transitioning to National Forces in Somalia: More Than an Exit for AMISOM

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This issue brief was drafted by Fiona Blyth, who currently works for the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia.

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## Introduction

Since December 2006, international forces have provided security for Mogadishu and large parts of Somalia in the absence of state authority and Somali security forces capable of tackling conflict between armed militias and the terrorist threat of al-Shabab. In March 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) deployed to Mogadishu, authorized by the UN Security Council to create the space for peacebuilding and reconciliation in the country. At the time, the African Union (AU) and Security Council expected that the United Nations would begin planning to deploy a UN peacekeeping operation to take over from the AU force.<sup>1</sup> In the years since, the Security Council has requested periodic assessments of the feasibility of a UN peacekeeping operation. On each occasion, it has concluded that the conditions “are not appropriate for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping mission, and request[ed] the Secretary-General to keep the benchmarks for deployment under continuous review.”<sup>2</sup>

While a UN peacekeeping operation remains a theoretical option for the council, its prospects have diminished. Instead, the focus of Somali and international efforts has shifted to planning for AMISOM to transition directly to Somali security forces without an interim UN mission. The convergence of several factors in 2017 led to decisive agreement on this option. First, the administration of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (known as Farmajo) strongly committed to assuming responsibility for security. Second, a shared sense emerged among Somalia, the AU, troop-contributing countries, and other key international partners such as the European Union that after ten years, the time had come to actively implement an exit strategy for AMISOM. Finally, the Security Council had a reduced appetite for deploying peace operations into high-threat environments following the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and the challenges faced in Mali.

Somali ownership of security goes beyond the handover of military forces from AMISOM. If fully implemented, the transition could lay the foundations for the future of the Somali state. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), along with the federal member states,<sup>3</sup> AMISOM and its troop- and police-

1 Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007) initially authorized the AU force for six months.

2 Most recently in UN Security Council Resolution 2431 (July 30, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2431, para. 2.

3 Adopted in 2012, the Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia set out in Article 48 that “the state is composed of two levels of government: (a) The Federal Government Level; (b) The Federal Member States Level, which is comprised of the Federal Member State government, and the local governments.” Between 2012 and 2016 when the last federal member state was inaugurated, Somalia underwent a state formation process. This resulted in the delineation of federal member states’ jurisdiction.

contributing countries, the UN, and international partners agreed on a Transition Plan to enable Somalia to gradually assume responsibility for security, beginning in early 2018. The plan includes not only the operational handover of responsibility for securing various locations from AMISOM to Somali security forces in three phases through the end of 2021, but also supports activities related to stabilization, reconciliation, local governance, access to justice, rule of law, and economic recovery. In addition, it includes capacity building for the Somali security forces and government institutions.

Successful implementation of the Transition Plan will form the basis for Somalia's state structures by building the institutions, processes, and government apparatus to sustain security and resume wider functions of governance, including service delivery. It will also provide lessons for security sector reform and future AU peace support operations. The manner in which AMISOM departs from Somalia will influence how both the AU and the UN mandate and authorize future missions. The precedent of transitioning from an AU operation directly to host-state forces has the potential to be an alternative to transitioning from an AU to a UN mission as in Mali and the Central African Republic. For these reasons, the security transition in Somalia deserves careful observation.

This issue brief outlines the shift in intentions from transitioning to a UN peacekeeping mission to transitioning directly to national ownership of security. It outlines the Somali Transition Plan, its objectives and approach, and the status of its implementation. The Transition Plan is a strong statement of political commitment by the FGS. In the year since its development, there has been steady improvement in many of the processes and structures that will be required for it to succeed, including the biometric registration of forces, recruitment and training, and the roots of a professional security sector.

However, there is still a long way to go. These reforms will take many years to embed and are encountering resistance from those with vested

interests in maintaining the status quo. Combined with the ongoing threat from al-Shabab, any sustainable transition from AMISOM must be a long-term project that includes not just a military handover but also political decisions on security and the structure of the state. This means a final settlement on the Provisional Federal Constitution, the division of power and resources between the federal and state levels of government, and a continuous functioning relationship between the two levels. Successful implementation of the plan will also depend on aligning national priorities and international efforts and require a willingness by all security actors in Somalia to be pragmatic, transparent, and coordinated in their efforts to strengthen state institutions.

## Changing the Plan: From Planning for UN Peacekeeping to Planning for Somali Ownership

Following the collapse of Somalia's central government in 1991 and the creation of an absentee Somali government in Kenya in the early 2000s, al-Shabab emerged as a threat to both regional and international peace and security. Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan in the early 2000s demonstrated the risks beyond national borders of terrorist groups that use ungoverned spaces as a base from which to launch attacks. Therefore, with Ethiopian forces' defeat of the Islamic Courts Union in December 2006, international and regional organizations, as well as Somalia's neighbors, identified the need to support the Transitional Federal Government to restore state authority in the country.<sup>4</sup>

In January 2007, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) decided to deploy a peace operation "aimed essentially at contributing to the initial stabilization phase in Somalia, with a clear understanding that the mission will evolve to a United Nations operation that will support the long term stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction

<sup>4</sup> In 2005, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union explored the deployment of a "peacemaking force" to Somalia to "protect the transitional federal institutions and the civilian population, facilitate disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), and train the security forces." Despite exploring (and mandating) an IGAD-led force in 2005 and 2006, questions of troop contributors, resourcing, and the views of Somali stakeholders meant that an AU-led mission became the preferred option at the end of 2006.

of Somalia.”<sup>5</sup> In the absence of other security options and under pressure from the AU, the UN Security Council authorized the mission under Chapter VII of the UN Charter in Resolution 1744 (2007). It was mandated to assist with the restoration of the transitional federal institutions, provide security for humanitarian assistance, and coordinate with other international partners to build the Somali security forces. The Security Council agreed with the AU PSC that the mission should initially be mandated for six months and requested “the Secretary-General to send a Technical Assessment Mission to the African Union headquarters and Somalia as soon as possible to report on the political and security situation and the possibility of a UN Peacekeeping Operation following the AU’s deployment.”<sup>6</sup>

#### CONSIDERATION OF A UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION

Since AMISOM’s initial deployment, the AU anticipated that a UN peacekeeping operation would follow. The AU viewed this not only as a necessity given its lack of resources to sustain a long-term operation but also as an obligation of the UN under its primacy in the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition, AMISOM was never mandated or configured to deliver on the institution-building remit of a multidimensional peace operation and lacked the components necessary to cohesively support Somali security reform or the Somali-led political process. AMISOM was deployed to provide security and access for others, including the UN political mission—first the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) and then the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)—and other international partners, all of which were required to work in a complementary way to build the capacity of Somali authorities. This was considered a short-term solution to an immediate crisis, with the intention to plan for and implement a longer-term solution once the threat of al-Shabab had been reduced. AMISOM would also enable a handover of responsibility from Ethiopian forces to a

multilateral operation, with the expectation that troops would be sourced from beyond Somalia’s bordering states.

In March 2007, the UN secretary-general dispatched a multidisciplinary technical assessment mission to the region to report to the Security Council on the possibility of deploying a UN mission. The assessment was based on the view that a UN peacekeeping mission would have a role to play both in supporting a reconciliation process if all parties willingly engaged and in monitoring a cessation of hostilities if the parties could agree on one. The assessment produced varying views on the likelihood of these conditions’ achievement. It noted that “the willingness of all major clans and sub-clans to engage and make progress in a reconciliation process will be the best indicator for the possibility of a United Nations peacekeeping operation,” but that conditions in Somalia remained too unpredictable to judge whether this was likely.<sup>7</sup>

The review presented two scenarios to the council. The first outlined a situation where a political reconciliation agreement was reached and the majority of armed groups and communities agreed to a cease-fire. In that scenario, the UN could deploy to support both, although the review pointed to significant obstacles in terms of logistics and the threat of resurgent violence, warning that the security situation had the potential to deteriorate rapidly. The second scenario envisaged ongoing conflict and a lack of political agreement, in which case the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission would be inappropriate. Under this scenario, the assessment recommended considering peace enforcement options, including Security Council authorization of a coalition of the willing with “appropriate capabilities to deal with the high paramilitary threat.”<sup>8</sup> The secretary-general recommended that the situation be reviewed again in June but that contingency planning for a UN peacekeeping mission begin.

In August 2007, the chairperson of the AU Commission, Alpha Oumar Konaré, wrote to the

5 African Union, *Communiqué of the 69<sup>th</sup> African Union Peace and Security Council*, AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(LXIX), January 19, 2007, para. 9.

6 UN Security Council Resolution 1744 (February 21, 2007), UN Doc. S/RES/1744, para. 9.

7 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia Pursuant to Paragraphs 3 and 9 of Security Council Resolution 1744 (2007)*, UN Doc. S/2007/204, April 20, 2007, para. 56.

8 *Ibid.*, para. 60.

secretary-general urging the deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission. He argued that this was necessary to support the long-term stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction of Somalia—a task beyond the capacity of the African Union at the time.<sup>9</sup> He also emphasized that AMISOM was deployed on behalf of the entire international community and should therefore receive all the financial and logistical support it needed to implement its mandate.

In line with the secretary-general's 2007 recommendation that the UN begin contingency planning for a UN force, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) explored possible troop contributors to a UN peacekeeping force.<sup>10</sup> In September 2008, in agreement with the African Union, the secretary-general proposed an initial international stabilization force and set out its structure, area of operations, and tasks, including monitoring a cease-fire and establishing a secure environment in Mogadishu. This would gradually evolve into a multidimensional peacekeeping mission.<sup>11</sup> However, the high standard of military capabilities required to respond to threats in Somalia limited the pool of potential troop contributors. Despite efforts by the secretary-general to encourage contributions, none of these countries was willing to assume the role of “lead nation,” and DPKO did not receive sufficient commitments to constitute a force.

While the option of a UN peacekeeping mission remained on the table, neither DPKO nor the Security Council actively pursued it.<sup>12</sup> In 2008 and

2009, the focus shifted to how the Security Council could sustain AMISOM's presence through financial and logistical support. Accordingly, the Security Council authorized the creation of the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA) in 2009.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, throughout the following years, AMISOM's concept of operations continued to envisage a transition to a UN peacekeeping mission, though the ultimate exit of international forces was recognized to be dependent on the capability of Somali forces and institutions.<sup>14</sup>

In 2013, a joint UN-AU review established benchmarks “that would pave the way for the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping operation at the right time, as a step towards an eventual complete handover to the Somali security institutions.”<sup>15</sup> The review set out a sequence for the transition if minimum security conditions were met. First, AMISOM's role would gradually transition from combat to oversight and rapid response in support of the Somali national security forces. At that stage, AMISOM could downsize and, subject to a decision of the Security Council, hand over to a UN peacekeeping operation, which would eventually hand over to Somali security forces.<sup>16</sup> The benchmarks for this transition included political agreement on the federal map of Somalia, extension of state authority, degradation of al-Shabab, “a significant improvement in the physical security situation,” and improved capacity of the Somali security forces.<sup>17</sup> The secretary-general emphasized that the capacity building of civilian state institutions must be prioritized alongside military operations.

9 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 4 August 2007 from the President of the African Union Commission Addressed to the Secretary-General*, UN Doc. S/2007/499, August 21, 2007.

10 On January 1, 2019, DPKO was replaced by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).

11 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*, UN Doc. S/2008/709, November 17, 2008. The major tasks for the peacekeeping operation would include creating a safe and secure environment for the rebuilding and restoration of Somalia's state institutions throughout the country; securing key installations, including ports of entry and key routes; providing security for United Nations personnel and assets; creating a safe and secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid; protecting civilians; assisting in the clearance and disposal of explosives; supporting an appropriate form of disarmament and demobilization for former combatants, or related programs, such as weapons control and community reintegration and including, where required, the collection, cataloguing, security, and storage of weapons; supporting reform of the security sector; and assisting in the creation of conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

12 UN Security Council, *Report of the Security Council Mission to Djibouti (on Somalia), the Sudan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire, 31 May to 10 June 2008, 15 July 2008*, UN Doc. S/2008/460, July 15, 2008.

13 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 30 January 2009 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2009/60, January 30, 2009. For more on how UNSOA differed from a UN peacekeeping mission, see <https://unsoa.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unsoa-booklet.pdf>.

14 Paul D. Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia: A History and Analysis of the African Union Mission (AMISOM), 2007-2017* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 330-331.

15 UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 14 October 2013 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, UN Doc. S/2013/606, October 14, 2013.

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*



## LESSONS FROM RE-HATTED AU OPERATIONS IN MALI AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The deployment and subsequent re-hatting of AU forces in Mali and the Central African Republic (CAR) impacted the debate on a future UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia. The AU authorized the African-Led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) in June 2012 and sought “authorization for the provision of a support package funded by UN-assessed contributions.”<sup>18</sup> In 2013, AFISMA was re-hatted as the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The experience with MINUSMA highlighted the challenges that the UN faces when operating at a high tempo in an asymmetric threat environment, requiring specialized equipment and capabilities.<sup>19</sup> The tragically high number of peacekeepers killed in MINUSMA—though significantly less than the number killed in AMISOM—was evidence to many that the UN was not best placed to deploy in such environments.<sup>20</sup> This view was reinforced by the report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), published in June 2015, which concluded that

United Nations troops should not undertake military counterterrorism operations. Extreme caution should guide the mandating of enforcement tasks to degrade, neutralize or defeat a designated enemy. Such operations should be exceptional, time-limited and undertaken with full awareness of the risks and responsibilities for the United Nations mission as a whole.<sup>21</sup>

In the ensuing debate among UN member states, it became clear that the members of the Security Council were unlikely to agree on deploying peacekeeping missions in environments marked by terrorist activities.

In 2013, the outbreak of violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) resulted in the Security Council authorizing the African-Led International Support Mission to CAR (MISCA) alongside the French Operation Sangaris. The resolution requested the secretary-general to undertake contingency preparations and planning for the mission’s possible transformation into a UN peacekeeping operation.<sup>22</sup> From the initial deployment of MISCA, the AU and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)—“building on the lessons of past experiences”—were clear that they envisaged a transition to a UN peacekeeping operation.<sup>23</sup> The AU’s intention was that MISCA would conduct the initial stabilization, then hand over to a UN peacekeeping mission, with the AU and ECCAS remaining politically engaged in CAR. In September 2014, MISCA re-hatted to become the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA).

The UN’s experience with re-hatting the AU forces in both Mali and CAR highlighted the operational and institutional challenges of such a transfer. It proved challenging to reconcile differences in training, equipment, human rights screening, and resources within the timelines for the transitions. These challenges continued once the troops were re-hatted, with implications for implementation of the mandates, human rights compliance, and the institutional relationship between the UN and AU.<sup>24</sup>

In both Mali and CAR, the Security Council and AU PSC emphasized the centrality of the political process to long-term stabilization. AU forces had limited mandates to deal only with short-term security threats because the AU intended for them to be followed by a UN-led peacekeeping mission with all the political and multidimensional

18 UN Security Council Resolution 2085 (December 20, 2012), UN Doc. S/RES/2085; African Union, *Communiqué of the 323<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the PSC on the Situation in Mali*, AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM(CCXX111), June 12, 2012.

19 For more on the lessons learned from the deployment of MINUSMA, see John Karlsrud and Adam C. Smith, “Europe’s Return to UN Peacekeeping in Africa? Lessons from Mali,” International Peace Institute, July 2015.

20 Between 2013 and 2015, the UN lost seventy-four peacekeepers in Mali. In MINUSMA in 2013, six personnel were killed; in 2014, thirty-nine; and in 2015, twenty-nine. United Nations Peacekeeping, available at [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/statsbyyearmissionincidenttype\\_5a\\_17.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/statsbyyearmissionincidenttype_5a_17.pdf).

21 UN General Assembly and Security Council, *Letter Dated 16 June 2015 from the Chair of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations Addressed to the Secretary-General*, June 17, 2015, UN Doc. A/70/95-S/2015/446.

22 UN Security Council Resolution 2127 (December 5, 2013), UN Doc. S/RES/2127, paras. 46 and 47.

23 African Union Peace and Security Council, *First Progress Report of the Commission of the African Union on the Situation in the Central African Republic and the Activities of the African-Led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic*, March 10, 2014.

24 Further details on the re-hatting of both operations can be found in: UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), *Evaluation of Re-hatting in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic*, Assignment No. IED-18-002, February 2018, available at <https://oios.un.org/page?slug=evaluation-report>.

components necessary to tackle the crises in a comprehensive way.

While the same rationale had applied to Somalia at the outset, a number of factors brought about the rapid deployment of a UN peacekeeping mission in Mali and CAR. First, a “lead nation”—France, with its counterterrorism operations Serval and Sangaris—operated in parallel, as France had the legal authorization, capabilities, and resources to conduct high-tempo, kinetic operations. Second, both peacekeeping missions were able to generate the troop contributions necessary, albeit after a long period of operating well below full strength. In the case of Mali, moreover, some of the troop-contributing countries had the advanced capabilities to operate in an asymmetric threat environment. Third, France pushed hard at the highest levels of government to gain Security Council support and troop contributions for the deployment of peacekeeping operations. The national investment of troops put both countries at the top of France’s foreign policy agenda, and France invested political capital to secure the resolutions authorizing the UN missions.

Lastly, the security situation in both Mali and CAR—while highly volatile in the more remote parts of the country—was permissive enough to enable the UN to deploy a peacekeeping mission. Unlike in Somalia, civilian personnel had some freedom of movement in the capitals and more populated parts of the country. Initial agreements were also in place for the UN to support the political, security, and humanitarian tracks. As the benchmarks for AMISOM set out, had these elements been in place in Somalia, the prospects of a UN peacekeeping mission would have been brighter.

## GROWING PRESSURE FOR A TRANSITION PLAN

While the Security Council and General Assembly debated the limits of UN peacekeeping, AMISOM continued to face the realities of operating in an

environment with a high level of terrorist activity. The exact figure of AMISOM’s fatalities is unknown, but it is significantly higher than in any UN peacekeeping mission; it is not in doubt that AMISOM personnel have paid a heavy price for the gains they have made in Somalia.<sup>25</sup> Since 2007, there have been difficult discussions between the AU and UN on the UN’s support to the force in the absence of a handover to a UN mission—a debate that continues today. The provision of logistical support through UNSOA and, subsequently, the UN Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), which replaced it in 2015, remains one of the most creative and innovative decision by the Security Council. However, as the lessons in Mali have demonstrated, there are significant challenges to the provision of UN support in asymmetric threat environments.<sup>26</sup>

Against this background, in 2015, the UN and AU conducted a second benchmarking review, which again concluded that deploying a UN peacekeeping mission would be a “high risk undertaking.”<sup>27</sup> Instead, the council endorsed the recommendation of the secretary-general to revise the benchmarks, which included reaching political agreement on the “federal vision” for Somalia, extension of state authority, degradation of al-Shabab, and a significant improvement in physical security in key urban areas.<sup>28</sup> The secretary-general also recommended a gradual handover of responsibilities to Somali security forces, an aspiration echoed by the AU PSC, which noted indicative timelines for an exit strategy for AMISOM, with some troop contributors suggesting this could be as early as October 2018.<sup>29</sup>

This shift converged with planning for the European Union’s negotiations on the African Peace Facility (APF), which has allocated the majority of its funding to supporting AMISOM since 2007.<sup>30</sup> The EU signaled that in order for its member states to continue funding AMISOM

25 According to Paul Williams, the number of casualties was “probably more than 1,500” between March 2007 and 2017. Paul D. Williams, *Fighting for Peace in Somalia*.

26 For more on the innovations and limitations of UNSOA, see Paul D. Williams, “UN Support to Regional Peace Operations: Lessons from UNSOA,” International Peace Institute, February 2017.

27 UN Security Council, “Despite Gains against Al-Shabaab, Setting Up Peacekeeping Mission in Somalia Still ‘High-Risk Undertaking,’ Top Peacekeeping Official Tells Security Council,” Meeting Note S/11972, July 16, 2015.

28 UN Security Council Resolution 2232 (July 28, 2015), UN Doc. S/RES/2232.

29 African Union, *Communiqué of the 608th Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council on the Situation in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)*, AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(DCCXLI), June 29, 2016.

30 To date, this has totalled 1.7 billion euros. This covers troop allowances, salaries and allowances for the police component of the mission, international and local

stipends, it would require a more realistic exit strategy that could give EU member states confidence that AMISOM funding was not open-ended and Somalia was committed to assuming responsibility for security. In 2015 many EU member states argued that there were competing priorities across the continent and the time had come to diversify the fund's focus, including to the states of the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin. In addition, the EU Political and Security Committee expressed concern that 90 percent of APF funds were allocated to peace support operations, with relatively low investment in capacity building and institutional development. It requested a more balanced use of funds "to move beyond crisis driven financing towards a more sustainable institutional solution."<sup>31</sup>

In January 2016, given the lengthy support to AMISOM and unanswered calls for others to contribute funding, the EU rebalanced the APF to shift from supporting troop costs to supporting requirements such as housing, the operations of AU headquarters, and the training of Somali security forces. Without the option of troop reductions and in the absence of additional funding contributors, the EU capped stipend payments at \$822 per soldier per month.<sup>32</sup> This was less than the UN peacekeeping rate of \$1,028 per soldier per month, which the troop-contributing countries had requested.<sup>33</sup> The decision met with strong opposition by the AU Commission and AMISOM's troop- and police-contributing countries, which were already frustrated by the lack of resources provided through UN channels, lack of progress in the development of Somali security forces, and lack of international recognition of AMISOM's sacrifices.

The decision revived the question of AMISOM's exit strategy, prompting a proposal by Uganda for

the withdrawal of AMISOM by October 2018. The AU PSC noted the proposed timelines for withdrawal at its meeting later that year,<sup>34</sup> but agreement was reached that AMISOM's presence was critical while a Somali transition plan was developed and implemented.

## A DECISIVE YEAR IN THE TRANSITION

The impetus to shift from the objective of transitioning to a UN peacekeeping operation to actively transitioning to Somali security forces came from the convergence of a number of factors in 2017. President Farmajo took office in February 2017, promising "a new beginning" for Somalia.<sup>35</sup> He made security one of his top three priorities, along with political reconciliation and tackling corruption.<sup>36</sup>

Just three months after Farmajo assumed office, the federal and state governments reached agreement on a National Security Architecture. This included the number of Somali military and police personnel, the civilian oversight role of the executive over the armed forces, and the distribution of forces at the federal and state levels. It did not, however, address the constitutional questions of resource allocation, federal versus state-level command arrangements, or any requirements for force composition and balance. The architecture was supported by a security pact, agreed on in May 2017 by forty-two international partners at the London Somalia Conference. Signatories of the pact agreed that "security provision will begin to transition from AMISOM to Somali leadership" and set out "the key elements and political commitments facilitating Somalia's ability to transition from a situation of insecurity and dependence on AU forces, to one where it is able to take responsibility for protecting its citizens and maintaining security."<sup>37</sup>

civilian staff salaries, operational costs for the mission's offices in Nairobi and Mogadishu, the AMISOM General Dhagabadan Training Camp in Mogadishu, and quick-impact projects. See European Commission African Peace Facility, "Factsheet on the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)," 2019, available at [www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/apf\\_factsheet\\_-\\_amisom.pdf](http://www.africa-eu-partnership.org/sites/default/files/apf_factsheet_-_amisom.pdf).

31 James Mackie, Volker Hauck, Leon Kukuk, Abebaw Zerihun, and Matthias Deneckere, "Evaluation of the Implementation of the African Peace Facility as an Instrument Supporting African Efforts to Manage Conflicts on the Continent, April-December 2017," European Centre for Development Policy Management, Cardno, and Particip GmbH, December 1, 2017.

32 Paul D. Williams, "Paying for AMISOM: Are Politics and Bureaucracy Undermining the AU's Largest Peace Operation?" *IPI Global Observatory*, January 11, 2017.

33 The UN rate of reimbursement has since increased to \$1,428 per soldier per month.

34 African Union, *Communiqué of the 608<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the PSC on the Situation in Somalia and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)*.

35 Jason Burke, "Somalis Greet 'New Dawn' as US Dual National Wins Presidency," *The Guardian*, February 8, 2017.

36 During Farmajo's tenure as prime minister (2010–2011), he had prioritized payment of salaries of the armed forces—an important step in building professional forces.

37 Security Pact, London Somalia Conference, May 11, 2017, paras. 7 and 18, available at [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/613720/london-somalia-conference-2017-security-pact.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/613720/london-somalia-conference-2017-security-pact.pdf).

Somali security forces' capacity was still low when President Farmajo took office, despite the capacity-building efforts of AMISOM, successive Somali governments, and various international actors since 2007. In 2017, the FGS took the bold step of conducting an operational readiness assessment of the Somali National Army to catalog the number of troops, to assess their ability to fight, their equipment, and training standards, and to determine where ten years of international support had been invested.

The result was sobering, not only for the Somali authorities but also for international actors that had spent millions of dollars on the Somali security forces over the years. The assessment found severe shortfalls across the criteria examined; while the National Security Architecture set a ceiling of 19,000 troops, the assessment found only 16,000, of which around 9,000 had fighting capability. There was insufficient equipment, no common training, localized command and control, and low sustainment capabilities.<sup>38</sup> For international partners, the results of the assessment were stark, if not surprising. Many years of investment and benchmarks had yielded little return. The US paused its assistance to units it was not directly mentoring to allow time for accountability measures to be put in place and for more systematic security sector reforms to be implemented.

The ten-year milestone also prompted reflection by the AU and AMISOM's troop contributors and partners, as the mission's deployment was not intended to be open-ended.<sup>39</sup> AMISOM held a lessons-learned conference in March 2017 to recommend options on the way forward, including the exit strategy.<sup>40</sup> The report from the conference noted that despite the AU's initial vision for AMISOM, there was no political agreement on transitioning to a UN peacekeeping operation and that the issue still clouded UN-AU relations.

Nonetheless, it set out an exit strategy based on three factors: troop-contributing countries' "interest in drawing down the mission starting in October 2018; the growing likelihood of dwindling resources from AMISOM's partners; and the minimal prospect of a UN peacekeeping operation taking over."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, conference participants agreed on the need for a conditions-based exit strategy tied to the capacity of the Somali national security forces to take over.

Following a joint AU-UN review later that year, the Security Council adopted Resolution 2372, welcoming President Farmajo's objective of greater ownership of security and the federal government's commitment to becoming the primary security provider in Somalia.<sup>42</sup> The council agreed with the joint review that "a gradual and phased reduction and reorganization of AMISOM's uniformed personnel [should be undertaken] in order to provide a greater support role to the Somali Security Forces as they progressively take the lead for security in Somalia."<sup>43</sup> Language on the possibility of a UN peacekeeping mission remained in the resolution to allow UNSOS to continue receiving congressional funding from the US, whose initial support to the office was contingent on it being a temporary arrangement before the eventual transition to a UN peacekeeping operation. Nevertheless, the council now made it clear that AMISOM would transition its responsibilities to Somali security forces, not a UN peacekeeping mission.

In December 2017, Somalia hosted an international security conference in Mogadishu. In the resulting communiqué, the participants agreed that one of the priorities for immediate action was the "urgent development of a realistic conditions-based transition plan with clear target dates to transfer responsibility for security from AMISOM to Somali security forces."<sup>44</sup> At the end of that same

38 Somali National Army, "Operational Readiness Assessment," 2017.

39 AU Peace Support Operations Division, *AMISOM Report on the Ten-Year Lessons Learned Conference*, March 9-10, 2017, available at [www.peaceau.org/uploads/ll-eng-1.pdf](http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/ll-eng-1.pdf). For more on AMISOM's exit strategy, see Paul D. Williams and Abdirashid Hashi, "Exit Strategy Challenges for the AU Mission in Somalia," Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, February 2016.

40 African Union, *Communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 622<sup>nd</sup> Meeting on the Consideration of the Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on Somalia*, AU Doc. PSC/PR/COMM.(DCLXXXIV), September 6, 2016.

41 Ibid.

42 UN Security Council Resolution 2372 (August 30, 2017), UN Doc. S/RES/2372, para. 4. In 2016, Resolution 2297 (2016) referenced the handover to Somali authorities, but the focus of the Somali authorities in 2016 was on the electoral process rather than on the security transition. Therefore, President Farmajo's strong statement of intent upon assuming office marked a new determination by the FGS to assume ownership of security.

43 UN Security Council Resolution 2372.

44 Federal Government of Somalia, "Mogadishu Security Conference Communiqué," December 4, 2017, available at [https://unsom.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/somalia\\_security\\_conference\\_communique.pdf](https://unsom.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/somalia_security_conference_communique.pdf).



month, the FGS circulated a framework document setting out the timelines and process for the Somali-led development of a transition plan that would not just be a military exercise but would also include “stabilization and state-building activities as well as military, police and justice plans, in order to ensure a lasting peace.”<sup>45</sup> Transition planning would include implementation of the National Security Architecture and would cover the whole country, including some areas where AMISOM was not present (such as Puntland and most of Galmudug).

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOMALI TRANSITION PLAN

In the first three months of 2018, the FGS chaired a drafting group comprised of representatives of federal security ministries, the security forces, AMISOM, troop- and police-contributing countries, the UN, and international partners. Based on the framework document, the FGS developed a plan for Somalia’s transition to ownership of security. The process included field visits to each of the five federal member states to understand their current security capacities and

priorities and to ensure that local contexts were taken into account. Each of the states reported that the Somali National Army’s capacity was low and policy capacity was emerging but inadequate to face the threat of al-Shabab. However, there were existing capable, willing, and effective local forces.<sup>46</sup>

In March 2018, the federal government presented the Transition Plan, which sets out the objectives, priorities, and vision for the transition to Somali ownership of security (see Box 1). Divided into three phases—Phase 1 up to June 2019, Phase 2 from June 2019 to December 2020, and Phase 3 from January to December 2021—the plan articulates tasks up to 2021, when elections are due to be held, though it acknowledges that many institution-building tasks would take decades to conclude.<sup>47</sup> The Somali National Security Council, cabinet, and AU Peace and Security Council endorsed the Transition Plan, and the Security Council welcomed its development.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the plan received widespread international support in Mogadishu and at high-level meetings in Brussels in May and July 2018. In Mogadishu, the federal government consulted civil society and

#### Box 1. The FGS Transition Plan’s three areas of activity<sup>49</sup>

1. **Operational activities:** This involves identifying and prioritizing locations that Somali security forces will be fully responsible for, AMISOM handing these over, and Somali forces (either military or police) deploying as agreed in the National Security Architecture. This will mean that the security of towns, key roads, and national infrastructure can be transferred progressively, enabling Somali security forces to lead operations as AMISOM scales back its presence.
2. **Institutional capacity building:** This involves implementing institutional capacity-building programs and plans, including the National Security Architecture, recommendations from the operational readiness assessment, and policing, justice, and civil service reform. It also includes payroll reform, policy and doctrine development, force generation, training, and the passage of key legislation.
3. **Supporting activities:** This involves undertaking non-military efforts to create the conditions for sustainable peace, including support to stabilization, local governance, reconciliation, mediation, the rule of law, socioeconomic activities, and preventing and countering violent extremism. Activities should be based on consultations with local communities in order to meet their needs but could include road rehabilitation, provision of health or education services, district council formation, and job creation.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> These were effectively militias, but they fit the Somali security concept of Darwish (armed resistance fighters against colonialism) who have been part of Somalia’s security landscape for over 100 years. In February 2019, the FGS—with the support of AMISOM—conducted an assessment of forces in each state and concluded that there are 19,948 available. For more information on Somalia’s non-state security providers, see Ken Menkhaus, “Non-state Security Providers and Political Formation in Somalia,” Centre for Security Governance, April 2016.

<sup>47</sup> Federal Government of Somalia, *Transition Plan*, March 22, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2408 (March 27, 2018), UN Doc. S/RES/2408.

<sup>49</sup> Federal Government of Somalia, *Transition Plan*.

began implementing activities in a number of pilot areas to trial a joint planning approach and demonstrate the effectiveness of aligning Somali-led efforts with international support.<sup>50</sup>

Many plans have been developed in Somalia in the last ten years, and the Transition Plan was intended to draw them all together into a coherent document. Combining the elements of the National Security Architecture, National Development Plan, National Stabilisation Strategy, and many others, the Transition Plan targeted priority areas. The federal government has emphasized that the Transition Plan differs from previous plans because of its comprehensive approach to security and its consideration of local contexts.<sup>51</sup> This approach is intended to take into account Somalia's "micro-conflicts," including those driven by long-running tensions among clans and communities, lack of mechanisms to resolve land ownership or legal disputes, and private militia independent of federal or state security forces. At the same time, there is a need to codify the nascent federal architecture on the roles and responsibilities of regional and federal security forces and how each is resourced, trained, equipped, and commanded.

## Progress in the Transition

The scope of the Transition Plan and its timelines are ambitious, requiring not only strong political commitment and the willingness of all Somali security stakeholders to achieve common objectives but also active implementation by international partners. This shift from international leadership to Somali ownership of security requires effective coordination, flexibility, and significant resources. Early implementation has highlighted how progress is dependent on political cooperation between federal authorities and federal member-state administrations as well as between the federal government and international partners. International partners' confidence in and willingness to accept Somali leadership are still emerging. Shifting from support for national and organizational priorities to common objectives has also

brought coordination challenges and a need for greater transparency in international support for the Somali security sector.

## OPERATIONAL AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

The Transition Plan's objectives are divided between those specific to a location or region and those related to Somalia's longer-term state-building goals. The locations agreed for handover in Phase 1 of the Transition Plan include a mix of emblematic national monuments such as the stadium in Mogadishu, main roads linking major towns in south and central Somalia, and strategic population centers throughout the country. Initially they had included the main road between Mogadishu and Baidoa, but a volatile local election period in South West state made progress in this area difficult. Therefore, the focus moved to the areas surrounding Mogadishu (Lower Shabelle) to strengthen the security of the capital, and to the first locations likely to be handed over by AMISOM units drawing down in Hirshabelle.

For each location, operational and support activities require joint planning between uniformed elements and civilian-led entities to sequence reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives with security operations. The necessity of joint planning is clear, as al-Shabab has reoccupied locations that AMISOM forces have vacated without effective coordination with the Somali National Army or planning support activities required to sustain a handover.<sup>52</sup> To avoid this scenario, joint planning groups with Somali security forces, AMISOM, and key international partners were established for each location to fold civilian projects into operational planning. In practice, this has proven challenging.

To address the need to incorporate local requirements into the planning process, the federal government and federal member states have agreed that the detailed plans for each location will be devolved to the regional security councils in each state. The councils comprise the key security stakeholders in each location, including AMISOM sector commanders, state police and federal army personnel, and representatives of key ministries.

50 Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Roundtable: Taking Stock of Somalia's Security Landscape," October 17, 2018, with Somali National Security Adviser, Abdisaid Ali, available at <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/somalia-security/>.

51 Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Q&A: Somalia Charts Security Transition with Somalia's National Security Advisor Abdisaid Ali," July 17, 2018, available at <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/qa-somalia-charts-security-transition/>.

52 On March 4, 2019, a forward-operating base at Faxfaxdhuun was vacated by Kenyan AMISOM forces. Shortly thereafter, it was retaken by al-Shabab.

They were envisaged in the National Security Architecture but are only just beginning to become operational. The success of the Transition Plan will depend heavily on their ability to plan and implement local security initiatives and to link their work to the National Security Council at the federal level.

In August 2018, the stadium in Mogadishu was handed over from AMISOM to Somali security forces, and renovations have begun to return the stadium to being a sporting venue after many years of use as a military assembly point and barracks. This is a tangible sign of progress for the Somali people; it signals that their national pride and monuments are being prioritized and restored.<sup>53</sup> The stadium's security is now the responsibility of Somali police—rather than the military—as part of a wider objective of transferring urban security to police. On February 28, 2019, AMISOM handed back the next in the series of Mogadishu locations to be transitioned back to Somali authorities: the Jaalle Siyaad Military Academy.

Planning is underway for the more complex handovers, including of the main roads linking Mogadishu with the main towns in South West state and Hirshabelle. In these locations, Somali security forces, likely jointly with local forces, will need to degrade al-Shabab's ability to attack both security forces and the local population in order to clear and hold the ground effectively. In the areas surrounding Mogadishu, this means they need the capability to detect and defuse improvised explosive devices (IEDs), which al-Shabab transports into Mogadishu (predominantly from Lower Shabelle) and uses against Somali National Army convoys. The complexities of local politics and reconciliation also present challenges. To be sustainable, these operations must be carefully sequenced and coordinated with local authorities and with stabilization initiatives to ensure that, along with military operations, the transition brings the rule of law, job creation, and state services along with protection.

Keeping the focus on agreed priorities, regardless of the political currents between the federal and state governments, will be important to ensure international support. So far, the federal govern-

ment has been pragmatic about the priority locations; when implementation faced political hurdles in South West state, it shifted the focus to areas where there was greater political space to engage with state authorities. However, this shift presented a challenge for international partners that could not change locations as rapidly. Regular dialogue and joint planning between the Somali authorities and international partners would help mitigate these challenges.

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING

There has been some significant progress toward implementation of the National Security Architecture, even in the absence of broader political settlements. It is commendable that the federal government took the step of conducting the operational readiness assessment and confronting its findings. This created a necessary baseline for a credible and realistic plan for security sector reform. It also highlighted key challenges the federal government will face in rebuilding the state: corruption and vested interests. Since the civil war, many commanders have run the Somali National Army as private fiefdoms and diverted its resources to enhance their personal wealth. Reform has thus required new accountability systems to ensure that soldiers are paid without commanders taking a cut, rations reach their intended recipients, and ammunition reaches units engaged in operations.

Despite strong resistance to these accountability systems, there has been significant progress in implementing them. March 2019 saw the conclusion of a two-year process of biometric registration of soldiers. Salaries will now be paid directly to each soldier's personal bank account, which is a vital step toward professionalizing the military. This will also remove checkpoints erected by soldiers to collect fees from civilians in transit in lieu of salaries—a practice that communities deeply resent. The federal government has also put in place accountability measures for the distribution of ammunition and weapons. Soldiers receiving stipends from international partners are now required to have undergone human rights training, and the chief of defense forces is standardizing basic military training.

In January 2019, the prime minister personally

53 Presentation by national security adviser to the high-level meeting on Somalia in Brussels, May 2, 2018.

conducted a competitive interview process for key logistics and finance posts in the Somali National Army. This was the first time there was a rigorous, merit-based process, resulting in recruitment of the best-qualified young officers and setting the standard for future appointments. This is a significant step away from appointments based on personal relationships and will further professionalize the army. Linked to this, the federal government has put in place oversight and accountability mechanisms to ensure the proper scrutiny and review of all government contracts, including in the Ministry of Defense, and to remove the previous practice of individual officers awarding or canceling contracts. This is part of wider public financial management reforms under Somalia's third Staff-Monitored Program with the International Monetary Fund. These reforms not only provide more revenue for tackling insecurity and violence, but can also address perceptions of inequality, combat corruption, and improve trust in the state.

Institution-building projects are also being trialed in the locations handed over to Somali security forces. Somali security forces taking over these locations require greater capacity for force generation and human resources management, more training and equipment, and human rights screening. These long-term institutional activities are being implemented first for those forces involved in the security transition before a gradual rollout to all Somali security forces.

Gradually, the federal government is also taking greater responsibility for security sector expenditures. Domestic revenue collection has steadily increased, reaching \$274.6 million in 2018. Under the principles set by parliament, the security sector is prioritized over other government expenditures. As a result, \$60 million (21.6 percent of the total budget) is allocated for defense and national security, \$1.5 million (0.5 percent) for justice and discipline in the military, and \$0.1 million for support to needy orphans of fallen soldiers.<sup>54</sup> In addition, the federal government's first priority for 2018 was to complete the biometric registration and direct payment of all security sector personnel, including cash for fresh rations.

While changing the mindsets of those who have benefited from the opaque methods of the past is a daily and often dangerous challenge, it will be more important to the success of the Transition Plan than the handover of military operating bases. Both the Security Council and the AU should avoid seeing security handovers as indicators of success and instead recognize and support the state building and political settlements that will enable them. This will require international partners to gain a deeper understanding of the reforms underway, which the federal government has emerging capacity to communicate effectively and regularly.

### COORDINATION OF THE TRANSITION

Somalia's national security adviser has highlighted that previous attempts to transition responsibility for security to Somali forces were disjointed and lacked a common vision, and the Transition Plan seeks to remedy that.<sup>55</sup> The involvement of all Somalia's security stakeholders in developing and implementing the plan was intended to channel the efforts of all Somali and international partners to agree on the priority locations to hand over and where activities and resources should be prioritized. For some Somali and international partners, the priority locations may not be where they have existing projects, have national or organizational interests, or will receive political credit for implementation.

Aligning efforts requires greater transparency and coordination—historically a challenge among security stakeholders in Somalia. Security assistance is often highly sensitive, and previous efforts to encourage partners to disclose the nature and extent of their support have encountered resistance. The solution is not to create parallel external mechanisms that replace the functions of the state, but rather to strengthen the ability of state institutions to track, monitor, and disperse the support it receives. This means channeling support through national systems while tackling corruption, increasing accountability, and providing for independent oversight. For the federal government to allocate resources to its security sector, it needs to have a clear and complete picture of what

<sup>54</sup> Federal Government of Somalia, "Citizens' Guide to the 2018 Budget," available at <https://mof.gov.so/sites/default/files/2018-10/Citizens%20Guide%20to%20the%202018%20Budget.pdf>.

<sup>55</sup> Africa Center for Strategic Studies, "Q&A: Somalia Charts Security Transition with Somalia's National Security Advisor Abdisaid Ali."



assistance is being provided, by whom, and where. There are early signs that international partners are more willing to align their training, stipend payments, and support with each other, but there are still wide divisions in standards and methods of training among units, and the equipment and weapons systems provided are often not interoperable.

In the short to medium term, there is a role for mechanisms that track and coordinate assistance on behalf of the federal government, allowing it to identify gaps and align resources with common priorities. There has been some success in increasing coordination through the Comprehensive Approach to Security, which has sought to combine all the components necessary for sustainable security into interlinked “strands” of work under the oversight of an executive group chaired by the prime minister.<sup>56</sup> Each strand is co-chaired by a federal ministry and an international partner or partners and includes representatives from key federal ministries, federal member states, and international partners. These strands have made some progress in implementing the National Security Architecture and Transition Plan. Greater federal leadership of the strands could help steer their work toward achieving the agreed priorities.

Greater coordination of assistance by international partners will be essential to building the capacity of the Somali security forces to assume responsibility. Operational readiness assessments of Somalia’s military and police forces have highlighted the need for extensive restructuring, professionalization, and equipping to enable them to take over from AMISOM.

## Looking Forward

The Transition Plan is a strong statement of the federal government’s political commitment to assuming responsibility for security. It represents Somalia’s desire to shape its own future and take ownership of state building. The locations prioritized for handover in the Transition Plan represent places that, before conflict and insurgency took hold, were thriving areas, key arteries, or national monuments. The transition of these locations goes

beyond security; it represents a step toward rebuilding Somalia’s pride and sense of national identity.

## POLITICAL AGREEMENTS

Beyond the specific context in each location, progress is needed on a number of outstanding political agreements between the federal and state governments. Long-term security sector reform will require agreement between the federal and state governments on how security responsibilities are divided and paid for. These issues get to the heart of the constitutional review process, which is running in parallel to the implementation of the Transition Plan. While this process is ongoing, the National Security Council will need to make interim decisions. While technical planning has continued, some of the more complex objectives in Phase 1 have not yet been achieved, and the window for political engagement is narrow (and shrinking) before federal elections are scheduled to take place.

Successful transition of security responsibility to Somali authorities will only follow once the state apparatus is in place and security forces have the capability to secure the majority of the country. Civilian oversight and political decisions on the roles and responsibilities of the security forces and institutions will need to be in place to ensure they are accountable and supported to conduct their duties effectively and in accordance with the provisional constitution. There are encouraging signs, including the establishment of human resources systems, civil service pay, increased transparency, and critical reforms to tackle corruption and increased oversight. Continued progress will require agreement on the constitutional division of power and the resources necessary to institute deep reforms of the Somali state.

In order to take these decisions, there will need to be a working relationship between the federal and state governments and a regular rhythm of National Security Council meetings. Elections in the federal member states, combined with tensions between the federal and state administrations, slowed implementation of the Transition Plan at the end of 2018, though the beginning of 2019 has

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<sup>56</sup> These strands include military, police, justice, rule of law, maritime, stabilization, local governance, reconciliation, and preventing and countering violent extremism.

seen dialogue resume, with a National Security Council meeting planned for the end of April. There is a narrow window for agreement. The cycle of state elections will run up to the start of campaigning and positioning for the federal elections in 2020 and 2021, so the coming six months will be decisive. Progress will require all Somalia's political actors (the federal government, federal member states, and parliament) to focus on the passage of legislation, constitutional reform, and political agreements on fiscal federalism and power and resource sharing.

As Somali authorities have acknowledged, the transition to Somali ownership of security will take decades. President Farmajo's administration, which runs up to the elections in 2020 and 2021, is an opportunity to lay the foundations. The initial plan and list of locations for the transition were ambitious. However, it will be necessary for the transition to happen gradually and comprehensively. A hasty handover between military forces without attention to politics, reconciliation, and economic recovery will be short-lived.

#### AMISOM'S CONTINUED PRESENCE

AMISOM's presence will remain essential while the reform process is underway and at least until the next elections. The focus of subsequent mandates should be on ensuring that the Somali authorities can continue to build their capabilities with the help of international partners and that AMISOM's tasks align with priorities set by Somalis and agreed upon by all security stakeholders. However, the pace of reform is likely to be significantly slower than aspired to by international partners eager for AMISOM's drawdown.

As planning and implementation of the Transition Plan continue, the Security Council has set requirements for the drawdown of AMISOM personnel. Resolution 2431 (2018) welcomed the "gradual and phased reduction and reorganization of AMISOM's uniformed personnel in line with the implementation of the transition plan." It also requested a technical review of progress in implementing the resolution by January 31, 2019 (delayed until March), including how AMISOM is reconfiguring to support the Transition Plan.<sup>57</sup> The

review takes into account progress in implementing the Transition Plan and the implications for AMISOM's exit strategy. Questions over how fast and from which locations AMISOM should draw down will be difficult to settle. The initial decision by the AU Commission that all 1,000 troops withdrawn from AMISOM would come from the Burundian contingent has been challenged by both Burundi and Hirshabelle state where the forces are located. The review is likely to raise both political and operational questions among AMISOM's troop contributors alongside continued pressure from international partners to maintain the steady pace of the drawdown.

Successful implementation of the Transition Plan could make Somalia a template for future AU operations to transfer security to national forces rather than a UN peacekeeping operation. This may be particularly appealing due to the downward pressure on UN budgets, the growing leadership of the African Union in the political and stabilization arenas of peace and security in Africa, and the political will of host nations to manage their own security. Though Somalia's ambitious agenda and strong political commitment to reform will continue to need the support of all partners to implement, it could leave a strong legacy for the AU in Somalia. Somalia's transition is not only a new way of doing business for Somalia, but a new way of doing business for the Security Council.

The Transition Plan is also being implemented against the enduring and adaptable capability of al-Shabab. They have retained the ability to target Somali security forces, AMISOM, and civilians in both Mogadishu and south-central Somalia. While Somalia is attempting to undertake the significant demands of state building, an active insurgency is attempting to undermine its efforts. Al-Shabab will only be defeated through a comprehensive and inclusive approach, but doing so will take many years and will extend beyond AMISOM's mandate. Nevertheless, the reform agendas set out by the federal government represent the most effective and sustainable way to defeat the terrorist movement: an interlinked program of representative politics, legitimate governance, security, and socioeconomic development.

<sup>57</sup> The review took place from March 4 to 19, 2019. As of April, the report has not yet been published, however, and the Security Council will need to decide which elements it incorporates into the resolution due for May.



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**777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017-3521, USA**

TEL +1-212-687-4300 FAX +1-212-983-8246

**Freyung 3, 1010 Vienna, Austria**

TEL +43-1-533-8881 FAX +43-1-533-8881-11

**52-52 Harbour House, Bahrain Financial Harbour**

**P.O. Box 1467, Manama, Bahrain**

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