



# Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

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Thursday, 22 June 2023, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Al Nahyan/Mrs. Alhefeiti . . . . . (United Arab Emirates)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. Moretti
China . . . . .	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. Pérez Loose
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon . . . . .	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
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Japan . . . . .	Mr. Ishikane
Malta . . . . .	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. DeLaurentis

## Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2023/443)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in Somalia**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2023/443)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Somalia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of Somalia, and I request the Protocol Officer to escort him to his seat at the Council table.

*Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.*

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; His Excellency Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia; and Ms. Cindy McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/443, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

I now give the floor to Ms. Laing.

**Ms. Laing:** I am pleased to address Council members for the first time since assuming my duties in Somalia on 5 June. I am delighted to do so alongside the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud; the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef; and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Cindy McCain.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to serve in Somalia and assure Council members of my commitment to implement the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). I am grateful for the warm welcome extended to me by the Federal Government of Somalia, federal member states and the Somali people. The United Nations stands by the people and the Government of Somalia. The recent visit of the Secretary-General to Somalia is testimony to that strong commitment.

I am grateful in particular for the close partnership with the African Union Commission. I pay tribute to the dedicated service and sacrifice of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere condolences to the people and the Government of Uganda for the soldiers who lost their lives and were injured in the attack on the ATMIS forward operating base in Buulo Mareer, Lower Shabelle. While I condemn that heinous attack in the strongest terms, it is a stark reminder of the real and persistent threat Al-Shabaab continues to pose.

My briefing today will cover eight areas: first, an update on my first two weeks in Somalia; second, a political update; third, a security update; fourth, a humanitarian update; fifth, an update on women and peace and security; sixth, observations on stabilization; seventh, observations on the transition of the Missions and, finally, the priorities for UNSOM over the next six months.

My first update briefly summarizes my first two weeks on the ground.

Since my arrival in Somalia — a country I first served in as a young United Nations staff member in the mid-1990s — I have had the opportunity to meet with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the Prime Minister, other ministers and senior Government officials and to visit four of the five federal member states. I have met members of civil society organizations and engaged with international partners, including the ambassadors from ATMIS troop-contributing countries. I have also spoken by phone to President Muse Bihi Abdi of “Somaliland”.

On my way to New York, I stopped in Addis Ababa, where I met with the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, His Excellency Mr. Bankole Adeoye, and the State Minister of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, His

Excellency Ambassador Mesganu Arega. My travels around Somalia have highlighted for me the tremendous progress that the country has made in State-building and peacebuilding. His Excellency the President has rightly set out an ambitious vision for his country, and while many challenges and risks lie ahead, there are also many opportunities. I urge all international partners to lean in and provide additional support to the people of Somalia.

My second update covers the political situation. Somalia has made significant progress in advancing key national priorities. Those include, first, the appointment of the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission; secondly, the passage of 11 pieces of legislation, of which 6 have already been signed into law; and thirdly, the successful one-person, one-vote district council elections in Puntland state.

The March and May meetings of the National Consultative Council (NCC) resulted in three governance proposals: first, the revision of the national security architecture; secondly, a model for fiscal federalism; and thirdly, an electoral model. The proposed electoral model provides for one-person, one-vote elections at all the different layers of Government. That aspect has been well received. Other elements of the NCC electoral proposal, including a shift to a presidential system, a move to two political parties and the alignment of electoral terms have received more mixed reactions. I therefore welcome clarification from His Excellency the President that proposals from the NCC are a starting point for further consultation.

With that in mind, I urge the Federal Government to set out its plans for a rigorous and inclusive consultation process, including precise options for consultation and clarity on how agreements will be reached before decisions are codified into law or fed into the constitution-making process. Puntland remains outside the NCC process but has indicated it will engage directly with the Federal Government. I encourage that dialogue to start urgently to ensure the process is fully inclusive.

Finally, under my political update, I would like to express my grave concern regarding the ongoing conflict in Laascaanood. The violence has resulted to date in 308 civilian casualties, with 36 people killed and 272 individuals injured. I commend the efforts by all parties and, indeed, the Council to bring about a ceasefire. Following press statement SC/15313 of

7 June, UNSOM good offices are at the disposal of all parties to help agree on a peaceful way forward. To that end, I have engaged key stakeholders and held my first phone call with President Bihi to convey messages on the importance of dialogue, the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access.

My third update covers the security situation. The Federal Government-led counter-Al-Shabaab operations have largely been focused on the Middle Shabelle region, eastern Hiraan and Galmudug. During those operations, Al-Shabaab has been degraded militarily and dislodged from a number of areas. That is a notable achievement. But Al-Shabaab remains a significant threat. The remaining operations under the current phase 1 offensive are to be completed in the coming weeks.

Preparations for phase 2 have begun and are also expected to be launched in the coming weeks. Additionally, Operation Black Lion, a Somali-led initiative with the front-line States, is also due to start in the coming weeks. That is intended to place additional pressure on Al-Shabaab.

Three other security challenges regarding the next phase of operations merit attention.

First, operations will take place against a recent resurgence in the scale, tempo and geographic distribution of attacks from Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab's continuing capability and intent were demonstrated by its attack on the Pearl Beach Hotel in Mogadishu on 9 June, which killed nine people, including one member of the United Nations family.

Secondly, the next phase of operations, which moves further south, presents more challenging politics and clan dynamics. It will be essential to plan the next phase carefully to ensure the full integration of military and civilian efforts, including planned stabilization.

Thirdly, operations will occur concurrently with the ATMIS drawdown, putting pressure on planning and logistics.

My fourth update covers the humanitarian situation and the links to conflict and climate change.

The current operation against Al-Shabaab has created opportunities for humanitarian access to people in need. However, insecurity has also contributed to an extremely challenging operating environment for humanitarian agencies. From January to March,

around 430,000 people across Somalia were displaced by conflict and insecurity. Approximately 580,000 people live within territories controlled by non-State armed actors, and most of those displaced are women and children.

Somalia's overall humanitarian situation remains precarious, with 8.25 million people — half the population — requiring humanitarian assistance. While famine has been averted owing to a scale-up of humanitarian assistance and better-than-forecast rain patterns, the rains have also resulted in flooding, affecting at least 468,000 people and displacing 247,000 others. To address critical humanitarian needs, the 2023 humanitarian response plan needs more than \$2.6 billion. Halfway through the year, the plan is only 29.8 per cent funded. I call on all Somalia's friends to increase the much-needed funding urgently.

Droughts and flooding are, sadly, becoming more frequent in Somalia owing to recurrent climate shocks. Traditional pastoral livelihoods are under severe pressure, and we are seeing significant urbanization as a result, including an estimated 800,000 more people now in Mogadishu. That calls for durable solutions, including through urban planning and investments in different forms of livelihoods. Somalia urgently needs to access large-scale climate finance for resilience and adaptation, and that will be a priority for me going forward.

My fifth update is on women and peace and security. The inspirational women leaders of Somalia continue, rightly, to advocate their rightful inclusion in political processes and decision-making. The commitment made by Somalia's political leaders to a 30 per cent quota of women representation in the previous federal elections remains unrealized. In the recent district elections held in Puntland, only 17 per cent of those elected were women, down from 27 per cent in phase 1. Women's participation and representation needs to be codified in relevant legal frameworks, including the Constitution. As the first female Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, I will be putting those issues at the forefront of my work.

For the sixth part of my briefing, I would like to make observations on stabilization. Stabilization activities continue to be implemented in areas recovered from Al-Shabaab. The challenge remains to ensure the sustainability of those gains. That will require ongoing security, the provision of basic services, reconciliation

and long-term political and State-building processes. UNSOM has responded to the request by the Federal Government of Somalia to step up our response on stabilization. A stabilization cell has been created, which will report directly to me. Our shared ambition must be matched with the resources to deliver the necessary stabilization response, and future military operations must be planned alongside stabilization interventions.

For the seventh section of my briefing, I would like to discuss our transition plans. The Council will recall that UNSOM's strategic review (S/2022/716, annex) recommends that the Mission plan for a triple transition. The first is the security transition. The second is the possible drawdown of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and the handover of its mission-support functions to UNSOM. The third transition is the eventual handover from UNSOM to the United Nations country team. Those three transitions are interdependent, and we cannot make decisions on one without carefully considering the consequences for the others. But the overriding driver is the security transition.

As we will hear from President Mohamud and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the planned June drawdown of ATMIS and handover to the Somali security forces is proceeding. My provisional assessment of the transition going forward is that the complexity, constraints and pace of the transition process present risks, which will be challenging. I have started by forming a transition cell to ensure coherent mission-wide planning. That team is now working intensively on transition in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. I would like to reassure the members of the Security Council that we are identifying the questions that need to be addressed, but many of the solutions will demand a collective endeavour.

For the eighth and final section of my briefing, I will conclude by highlighting my top five priorities for the UNSOM mission over the next six months. My first priority will be preparing the United Nations for the three transitions ahead, taking account of the challenges I have outlined. Secondly, I will be focusing on positioning UNSOM to play a lead role in bringing together the international community's efforts on stabilization. Thirdly, I will be prioritizing support for the various elements of the State-building process, in particular those related to the elections process, ensuring inclusive consultations, including

with Puntland. Fourthly, I will support the ongoing efforts to bring the conflict in Laascaanood to a peaceful conclusion. Fifthly, I will support the Federal Government of Somalia to reach the completion point under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative and an associated shift from humanitarian into resilience-based development programming, including on climate.

Across all priorities, I will encourage the rightful participation and representation of women. Somalia needs to draw on the full talent of all of its population if it is to tackle the numerous challenges ahead.

In conclusion, the United Nations stands ready to support His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in achieving his vision of Somalia as a country at peace with itself and the world. I thank you, Mr. President, and the Security Council for your continued support.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Laing for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Souef.

**Mr. Souef** (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to address the Security Council today and to share with you my analysis of the main political and security developments in Somalia in recent months, in the run-up to the renewal of the mandate of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), which expires in a few days' time.

Allow me, first of all, to pay solemn tribute to all those soldiers who have lost their lives in the line of duty in Somalia. The contribution they have made to the service of peace in the country by sacrificing their lives will never be forgotten.

(*spoke in English*)

I am also honoured to speak today alongside His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. On behalf of the African Union, I would like to recognize his stellar leadership in steering Somalia towards lasting peace and security.

I commend ATMIS, the Federal Government of Somalia and international partners for their good collaboration in the fight against terrorism and in favour of peace, reconciliation and stability in Somalia.

Speaking before me this morning was Ambassador Catriona Laing, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United

Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. Our joint presence in this Chamber is a reminder of the unique partnership that exists between the African Union and the United Nations.

On 23 May, Somalia marked an important milestone in celebrating the first anniversary of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's return to office. Somalis came together to commemorate the occasion and renew the call for peace, stability and prosperity.

As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that the stability ushered in last May has delivered great dividends and, in many instances, exceeded expectations. The progress made thus far is also a testament to the resilience and determination of the Somali people.

Since my briefing to the Security Council in February (see S/PV.9267), Somalia has continued to focus on building consensus on critical issues that will hopefully lead to a transformative change in the country. I am pleased to note that the vehicle for advancing change remains the National Consultative Council (NCC). In December 2022, the NCC agreed on a federal judicial model, a strategic milestone towards the establishment of an independent federal judicial system in Somalia. In March, we saw a landmark agreement on the national security architecture, and in May, the NCC agreed on returning Somalia to one-person, one-vote elections.

With the national security architecture agreement, we look forward to more work on cascading the agreement to the federal member state level and developing a sustainability and affordability plan. And with Somalia's efforts aimed at holding universal elections, the African Union will continue to offer its expert support as we collectively work towards a more inclusive society in Somalia.

Since the Government's formation last August, I have been impressed by the collaborative working relationship between the executive and legislative branches. Both branches are committed to ensuring that Somalia is governed under the protection of the law. In that context, I applaud the signing into law of several bills.

Encouraging steps have also been taken to signal that completion of the constitutional review process will be finalized during the Federal Government's current term. I welcome the recent announcement by the constitutionally mandated bodies to complete the constitutional review process in 18 months. The



successful completion of that task will significantly impact Somalia's future. It will require a broad national consensus that must include representatives of political institutions, political figures, traditional elders, civil society organizations, and women and youth representatives, including from Puntland.

Turning to the security situation, in our ongoing assessment, security remains relatively stable but fluid across all our sectors. With Al-Shabaab as the main threat to Somalia and, presently, the region, there have been important successes in efforts to degrade the terrorist group. Thanks to the leadership of the Somali security forces during the current offensive, Al-Shabaab has been dislodged from more than 70 locations across Somalia. That outcome also benefited from ongoing ATMIS advisory support on the importance of compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy with respect to United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces and the protection of civilians.

It is clear that the offensive led by the Somali security forces, with support from ATMIS and international partners, has put Al-Shabaab under operational pressure. However, at ATMIS, we are mindful that our campaign against Al-Shabaab is a long-term one, requiring a holistic approach. There will be days of great success, and there will be periods of setbacks.

On 26 May, Al-Shabaab attacked the ATMIS Bulo Mareer forward operating base, resulting in several troops being killed or injured. Since the incident, ATMIS, in joint operations with the Somali security forces, has recaptured the Bulo Mareer forward operating base. The next phase of operations against Al-Shabaab will be significant, as Al-Shabaab attempts to strengthen its weakened command-and-control structure. I welcome the Federal Government's decision to extend that campaign to involve the Frontline States, namely Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

The operation, while military in objective, will have clear stabilization lines of efforts to ensure that our existing military gains can be translated into a strategic success. Currently, ATMIS and the Federal Government are in regular consultation to ensure that proper coordination exists regarding the Frontline States' participation in the upcoming offensive.

Let me take this opportunity to update the Council on ATMIS efforts to implement the security transition. We now have a new leadership in place across the Mission's three components. As mentioned earlier, we have successfully partnered and supported the offensive led by the Somali security forces. In April, we submitted the security benchmarks to the Council, highlighting our effective collaboration with the Federal Government.

I am pleased to report that, with steady progress in the Federal Government's force-generation programme, ATMIS uniformed personnel have increased their mentoring activities for the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force. To continue that activity, we appeal to ATMIS donors to continue supporting our police efforts in training the Somali Police Force.

Turning to a key aspect of the security transition, I can report to the Council that the drawdown of 2,000 ATMIS troops, in accordance with resolutions 2628 (2022) and 2670 (2022), is now being implemented. Marka Ayub was handed over on 18 June and Xaaji Cali on 20 June, while Mirtquo will be handed over on 23 June; Albao on 23 June; Cadale on 27 June; Aljazeera 1 on 28 June and Gherille on 30 June.

I also welcome the strong partnership between Somalia and ATMIS in developing the Mogadishu document for the June drawdown of ATMIS troops. That joint position was accepted at the Summit of the Troop-Contributing Countries to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia and the Federal Republic of Somalia, held in Kampala, following comprehensive deliberations. As a result, the June drawdown has been advancing, with the support of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, and will meet its deadline of 30 June.

With the completion of phase 1, particularly the drawdown next week, ATMIS can create quick reaction forces and mobile forces. We also anticipate the deployment of key enablers, such as attack and utility helicopters and long-range intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and counter-improvised explosive device capabilities. That will enhance the Mission's operational capability, thereby enabling it to better respond to the operational requirements of the Somali security forces on the battlefield.

In the next 18 months, we must collectively agree on the role ATMIS should continue to play as it begins to draw down and finally exit Somalia. We must also

reach consensus on what exactly Somalia should achieve in the next 18 months to ensure that the ATMIS transition is successful.

Another issue that needs our attention is tackling the effects of climate change. I am particularly worried about the alarming rate of flooding and drought. As recently highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/443), they have led to the displacement of approximately 1.4 million Somalis, with women and children being those most affected. In previous years, ATMIS has offered some support to displaced persons, particularly those in its area of operations. With the drawdown, Somalia will need additional support, particularly in finding durable solutions.

Let me conclude with some remarks on the upcoming mandate renewal. I believe we have a chance to improve on past mandates by aligning with the Government's security priorities. We must support the leadership of the Somali security forces in holding liberated areas and taking over forward operating bases. Those forces require resources to fight Al-Shabaab and stabilize newly liberated areas. That calls for the lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia.

*(spoke in Arabic)*

Somalia needs for all its partners and friends to make the dream of peace, stability and security a sustained reality. I therefore commend the determination of the Somali Government and its political will to mobilize all active efforts to guarantee that the transitional process is a complete success and that a new chapter in Somalia's future will be opened. I am convinced that Somalia and the Somali people can always rely on the generosity and support of the Security Council, along with the entire international community, to build a better present and future.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Souef for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. McCain.

**Ms. McCain:** I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council on the dire hunger emergency unfolding in Somalia. This is my first time before the Council since joining the World Food Programme (WFP), and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to its vital work.

I went to Somalia just last month, and I saw for myself how conflict and climate change are conspiring to destroy the lives and livelihoods of millions of

Somalis. I was horrified and heartbroken by what I witnessed — violence, fear and starvation are the daily reality there.

I spoke with mothers in a camp for internally displaced people in Dolow. The women told me stories of entire herds of livestock being wiped out in the droughts; terrorists recruiting children as young as 11 and the dangers they faced every day as they fight to survive. One woman I met, Halima, told me she had fled 200 kilometres from her home with her family of 10, to protect her young sons. She said armed groups had been taking boys from their families by force to join their ranks, killing anyone who refused. For Halima, the violence and instability had been even more devastating than the vicious drought. She said to me that even if one has everything one needs, one cannot live in a place with conflict.

I am here today to tell the Council that Halima and her family — and the countless thousands like her — urgently need help and hope. Somalia was hauled back from the abyss of famine in 2022 because the international community saw the warning signs flashing red and raced to respond. Donors funded an unprecedented humanitarian scale-up. But now we are in danger of losing the precious gains we have made since those dark days last year.

The violence and instability that scar the country have destroyed much of the infrastructure needed to support food production and distribution. What has not been wrecked by conflict has been consumed by Somalia's climate crisis, which its people did not cause. The longest drought on record killed millions of livestock and decimated crops. It has recently given way to disastrous flash flooding in the south of the country.

Inevitably, huge numbers of people have been forced from their homes and lands in search of food and safety. Since the start of 2022, conflict has triggered over 1 million internal displacements. Climate disasters have fuelled a further 2.1 million displacements over the past three years. Continually having to move has left people impoverished, traumatized and hungry. The latest food security data shows that food insecurity is spiralling across Somalia. Over 6.6 million people — one third of the population — are expected to face crisis or worse levels of hunger. That includes 40,000 people fighting for survival in famine-like conditions. Even worse, 1.8 million children are expected to suffer acute malnutrition.

We need a five-pronged action plan to address the serious and growing emergency in Somalia. First, I call on all States Members of the United Nations to immediately contribute to the humanitarian response plan for Somalia, which is seriously underfunded. At the World Food Programme (WFP), we are being forced to cut back our life-saving assistance programmes just when they are needed the most. By December 2022, we were reaching a record 4.7 million people per month with food assistance, thanks to donors' efforts to stop famine in its tracks. But at the end of April, we had to reduce our caseload to 3 million per month. Without an immediate cash injection, we will have to cut our distribution lists again in July to just 1.8 million per month — that is almost 3 million women, children and men who will be denied the assistance they desperately need simply because we do not have the money to feed them. If we get the funds we need, we will reverse those life-threatening cuts and continue supporting the millions who rely on the WFP for survival.

Secondly, we all need to work together to ensure life-saving humanitarian assistance reaches the people of Somalia. That means ensuring operations are run with maximum efficiency to stretch every donor dollar as far as possible. The WFP has the largest presence of any United Nations agency in Somalia, with 13 offices across the country. We are working hard with our donors, partners and the Government of Somalia to ensure that our assistance reaches those we know are in greatest need.

Thirdly, food assistance must be matched with investments to rebuild livelihoods, strengthen resilience and support climate-adaptation programmes. Those proven solutions are the only way to finally break the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty that has so many Somalis in its grip.

Fourthly, the Security Council must spearhead efforts to secure unimpeded humanitarian access to all vulnerable communities in Somalia. Too often, civilians living in territories controlled by armed groups are cut off from humanitarian assistance, either because access is denied or because the safety of aid workers is threatened. That has to end. Too many lives are at stake.

Fifthly and finally, we all have to work together to find political solutions to create stability and peace in Somalia. That is what the exhausted people of Somalia want and need above all. The WFP is ready to play

its full part and help Somalia lay the foundations for long-term food security and put an end to the scourge of hunger. Peace requires political will and leadership. We look to the Security Council to please provide it for Halima and all the other people of Somalia.

**The President:** I thank Ms. McCain for her briefing.

I now call on the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

**President Mohamud:** At the outset, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. I also want to thank the briefers — the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme — for their broad explanation of the issues facing Somalia and the current situation in the country.

It is an honour to stand before the Security Council today as the President of Somalia, representing the hopes and aspirations of the Somali people. I would like to begin by expressing our heartfelt gratitude to the Council for its unwavering support for and strategic partnership with Somalia over the decades.

This is a critical moment in our country's history as we simultaneously pursue State-building efforts, combat the menace of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and address the challenges posed by severe droughts. In my statement, I will provide an update on the political and security developments in Somalia and advocate the total lifting of the 31-year arms embargo that has limited our ability to protect our citizens, enforce the rule of law and secure our borders. We recognize that defeating Al-Shabaab requires a multifaceted approach that includes capable and effective security forces, an inclusive State-building process and the ability of the State to provide critical services to the public. My Administration is working diligently on all these fronts to move our country towards durable peace and prosperity.

Let us begin with the progress we have achieved on the State-building front. As Council members may be aware, for over a decade, Somalia has faced significant challenges in reaching high-level political agreements on critical issues, such as the nature of intra-state relations and how to make the transition away from indirect elections. However, since my election in May



2022, we have held six successful National Consultative Council meetings, resulting in consensus agreements with the federal member states on the allocation of power, the judicial model, fiscal federalism, the national security architecture and the electoral model of the country. Those agreements pave the way for a more inclusive and representative governance system in Somalia.

Turning our attention to security and stability, I am pleased to inform the Council that the Somali National Army, in partnership with local communities, has made significant strides in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Over the past year, we have witnessed the recovery of more than 70 towns from the grip of the terrorist group, resulting in the opening of the main north-south transportation routes and vast areas of rich farmland in the country.

We have also taken significant steps to tighten anti-money laundering regulations and combat the financing of terrorist activities, closing over 300 accounts that provided illicit revenue to the terrorist group. Those efforts, along with support given to conferences of religious leaders who contest the ideological strategy of Al-Shabaab, have dealt a blow to its operations and challenged its legitimacy within society.

Through a combination of our military offensive's ability to dislodge and disrupt Al-Shabaab and the considerable advancements in urban security efforts through enhanced intelligence, we are witnessing a notable reduction in terrorist attacks against our capital city, Mogadishu, and many other towns in south-central Somalia. Today our capital is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Mogadishu's housing sector is experiencing a boom, and businesses are opening daily in, inter alia, the retail, hospitality and health-care sectors. That progress not only instils hope in our citizens, but also attracts investment and fosters an environment conducive to growth.

In addition to those achievements, over the past six months, we have carried out over 240 stabilization activities in recently liberated communities in Hirshabelle and Galmudug states. For many of the people living in those towns, Al-Shabaab was the only authority for as many as 15 years in the past. In the next phase of our stabilization programme, we will focus on deepening the extension of State authority to, and the social contract with, recently liberated communities through the provision of critical services, such as policing, social services, governance and reconciliation there.

Looking ahead, the next phase in our fight against terrorism will involve Operation Black Lion, which will be the most critical offensive in Somalia's history, aimed at liberating nearly all the remaining Al-Shabaab-controlled territories throughout the country. With the support of our Frontline States — Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti — we are confident that the campaign will significantly degrade Al-Shabaab and pave the way for sustainable peace and security. Although we have encountered slight setbacks, owing to rainfall and force-generation requirements, operations planning is well under way. A team of multinational planning and operational experts has been deployed to the joint coordination command post in Mogadishu. The Operation holds immense significance in our quest for lasting peace and security. In addition, we will deploy teams to actively monitor the civilian protection component in the upcoming military operations, which demonstrates our commitment to minimizing harm to civilians and upholding human rights throughout the offensive. The resilience of our success against Al-Shabaab is evidenced by the fact the enemy has not taken back an inch of the territory that we have recovered from its forces over the past 10 months.

With regard to planning for current and future operations, we are also concurrently working towards the full withdrawal of the forces of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), in line with resolutions 2628 (2022) and 2670 (2022). The planning and implementation of the drawdown of ATMIS forces is being executed in close coordination with a joint technical committee between Somalia and the Mission in the country. Phase 1 of the drawdown is nearing completion, and the Somali National Armed Forces are assuming responsibility for four forward operating bases, while collapsing three others. Once phase 1 is completed, a joint assessment will be conducted to review the impact of the drawdown. The insights gained from the assessment will guide us through phase 2, which is anticipated to commence in September. I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude for the remarkable support that Somalia has received from the African Union and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The invaluable engagement of AMISOM in our nation has provided us with the necessary room to make significant strides in our peacebuilding and State-building endeavours over the past 15 years. The sacrifices made by the courageous men and women from the troop-contributing countries shall forever be etched in our collective memory in Somalia.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, we have been able to avert famine through our sustained partnership with the United Nations and the generous support of the United States and other donors. However, we remain committed to maintaining an effective and sustained response to the ongoing drought, prioritizing the well-being of our people. I am a strong advocate for a genuine transition from traditional assistance to resilience-based investment. By investing in agropastoral communities and addressing the effects of climate change, such as through water catchment systems, regenerative agriculture practices and feeder roads, we can enable the communities concerned to sustain themselves economically and ensure their long-term well-being.

Let me share an example of the impact that such investment can have. The completion of the 30-kilometer Mogadishu-Afgoye road alone has not only improved economic livelihoods for farmers in the area, but has also made certain food staples more affordable for the residents of our capital, Mogadishu.

On the economic front, we are nearing a significant milestone in achieving the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) completion point by the end of this year. Over the past decade, we have undertaken extensive macroeconomic and fiscal reforms to position ourselves for that achievement. As we plan for a post-HIPC environment, we are focusing on policies that promote revenue generation and strengthen our public financial management systems. Furthermore, we recognize that our most valuable asset is our people. Therefore, we are committed to scaling up access to quality education and health services, especially for women and youth. As a former educator, I know how education can break the cycle of poverty. I grew up in a small rural community, and, after my dad passed away, my mother struggled to ensure that I get an education. She was unable to read or write. Yet she checked my homework regularly by checking for any red marks in the teacher's notes. Thanks to her determination, I went on to contribute to the establishment of one of the premier educational institutions in our country. I want all Somali children to have the same kind of opportunity in the future. To that end, my Administration has already undertaken a massive teacher recruitment campaign, which will add 10,000 new teachers — 20 per cent of whom will be women — to the system during my term. Already, 3,000 teachers have been recruited and are currently undergoing training. Those teachers

have been dispatched throughout the country and have been allocated to the education system of the federal member states.

However, despite those remarkable achievements, our journey towards a peaceful and prosperous Somalia is facing a formidable obstacle — the prolonged arms embargo imposed on our nation since 1992, which is the longest arms embargo in the history of the United Nations. Let me state clearly that the Somalia of 2023 is not the Somalia of 1992. That must be duly considered. It is essential to highlight the challenges that the arms embargo measures and notification processes present for the Somali security forces. Acquiring the necessary lethal capabilities has become an arduous task, thus hindering their ability to effectively combat Al-Shabaab and achieve lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

The arms embargo is in no way serving the short-term or long-term interests of Somalia. While we acknowledge the importance of international efforts to maintain peace and security, we believe that it is crucial to reassess the situation in the light of the progress that we have made towards establishing an effective weapons and ammunition management system, guided by the benchmarks proposed by the technical team of United Nations Support Office in Somalia and reflected and endorsed in resolutions 2607 (2021) and 2662 (2022). Somalia's national weapons and ammunition management strategy has been effectively implemented through results-based action plans. We have made substantial progress in registration, record-keeping and stockpile management thanks to the establishment of a comprehensive and centralized national weapons and ammunition management database in Somalia today. We have worked tirelessly to strengthen our legal and regulatory frameworks, including the introduction of a firearms bill to control the possession, manufacture, storage and use of firearms in Somalia. Those crucial undertakings have substantially mitigated the risks associated with the trafficking, illegal possession and improper use of weapons and ammunition in Somalia. Those initiatives serve as a testament to our Government's unwavering commitment to improving weapons and ammunition management frameworks in a coherent manner in accordance with international standards.

Considering those significant developments, I implore Council members to support our call for the complete lifting of the arms embargo on Somalia. By doing so, they will empower us to assert our sovereignty,

effectively combat terrorism and build a peaceful and prosperous future for our nation. The menace of terrorism in Somalia is not limited to risks in Somalia only; it is a menace to the region, the continent and the world at large. Together, let us seize the opportunity to unlock the full potential of Somalia to create an inclusive and prosperous society and to build a world where peace and security prevail forever.

**The President:** I thank His Excellency President Mohamud for his statement.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Minister of State of the United Arab Emirates.

I want to begin by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to today's meeting. I also wish to thank our briefers today, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing, Executive Director McCain and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Souef. Their briefings gave well-informed, high-level insights on the complex challenges that Somalia faces.

The address of His Excellency President Mohamud reminded us that Somalis themselves have the resolve and the vision to own the solutions to those challenges and pave the way towards a society that reflects their aspirations. The United Arab Emirates offers its full support to Somalia in the spirit of partnership and its long-standing support to the country and its people.

To that effect, today I want to make three points.

First, it is important to support Somalia's national vision. In recent months, the Federal Government of Somalia has shown commitment to building State institutions that articulate a forward-looking strategy, beginning with a focus on reconciliation and on revamping its electoral system. We are encouraged by the fact that the Government has taken steps, through negotiation and dialogue, towards reaching the needed agreements and compromises on all those processes.

We commend in particular the focus on improving cooperation and exchanges between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states through the National Consultative Council. Inclusive discussions geared towards reaching a political agreement on power-sharing and other outstanding issues of federalism, are welcome, especially within the context of the constitutional review process. By adhering to the principles of mutual respect, dialogue

and compromise, and by putting in place mechanisms for reconciliation, it is possible to build a Somalia that reflects the aspirations of all of its people.

Despite those advances, the ongoing violence in Laascaanood and the resulting civilian casualties are of great concern. The United Arab Emirates strongly supports all efforts to de-escalate the tensions through dialogue. We commend the efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia in that regard.

Secondly, greater emphasis should be put on supporting efforts to counter Al-Shabaab.

Today we can all agree that Somalia's most significant challenge to achieving its political and socioeconomic ambitions is international terrorism on its soil. The United Arab Emirates is deeply concerned about the increase in attacks by Al-Shabab against civilians and security actors, including those targeting the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) personnel and facilities. In the first quarter of 2023, the number of terrorism-related incidents surpassed all previous quarterly averages on record since 2016.

Countering Al-Shabaab is already an international effort, and in recent months, the Government of Somalia has undertaken steps that strengthen its security institutions and send a clear signal that dismantling Al-Shabaab is a priority. Those also include the progress made in the implementation of the arms embargo concerning Al-Shabaab, strengthening its weapons management system and holding regular exchanges in the context of the weapons and ammunition mechanism working group. Much more still needs to be done. The best chance of success will arise from striking a balance between advancing offensive operations and consolidating the hold on areas that have been liberated from Al-Shabaab.

In addition, there is a need to secure support from local communities while making further advances, in order to prevent Al-Shabaab from exploiting security vacuums. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to be vigilant with regard to Somalia's needs at this critical juncture. That means ensuring that the tools the Council uses are fit for purpose and that measures adopted to constrain nefarious actors in the interest of a State seek to help and not hinder the security needs of its people.

As discussions around the drawdown of ATMIS progress, coordination among all parties must remain front and centre to ensure synchronicity among the United Nations, Somalia's regional partners and front-line State neighbours during the transition.

Thirdly, the international community must support the scale-up of humanitarian and climate change responses in Somalia.

Moments ago, we heard in detail about the deeply distressing situation facing millions of Somalis each day. The situation is leading to regional spillover and instability as the drought has driven hundreds of thousands of Somalis to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. As always, women and children are hardest hit and make up more than 80 per cent of the displaced population. Scaled-up and coordinated assistance should be put in place to tackle the twin humanitarian and climate crises.

The United Arab Emirates is working with the Somali Government and its partners to help to alleviate the humanitarian needs on the ground. During the period from 2018 to 2023, the assistance of the United Arab Emirates to Somalia amounted to \$194.6 million. The United Arab Emirates remains a trusted partner of Somalia and shares a strong message of support. We will continue to stand by the Somali people in their pursuit of sustainable peace and prosperity.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Dame Barbara Woodward** (United Kingdom): I want to start too by welcoming President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to our meeting today and thanking him for his important briefing. I want to thank also to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Souef, and Executive Director McCain for their valuable briefings.

Somalia, as we know, faces many interconnected challenges, and we welcome and commend progress that it has made.

Let me make three points.

First, on the humanitarian side, we are relieved that the system-wide scale-up averted famine and that the arrival of rains has ended the protracted drought. But climate shocks and continued conflict will leave

millions displaced and facing crisis levels of food insecurity. So, we cannot afford to be complacent about the scale of humanitarian need. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General said, it affects 50 per cent of the population.

Secondly, we welcome President Mohamud's commitment to and progress in advancing political reforms and, if I may say, education reforms as well. The United Kingdom supports State-building efforts in Somalia, including the process of democratization, and recent local elections in Puntland represent an important milestone on that journey. An inclusive, consultative process, in line with the constitutional review, is necessary for those reforms to succeed. We encourage all the parties, including Puntland, to engage constructively to that end. Inclusive politics at all levels will also be important in the fight against Al-Shabaab.

That brings me to my third point, on security and counter-terrorism. The United Kingdom commends the momentum gained from Somalia's operations against Al-Shabaab. As President Mohamud made clear, enduring progress will be measured by the ability to hold and stabilize those liberated areas. I therefore encourage Somalia to continue working with the United Nations and partners to coordinate the stabilization efforts and prioritize investment in reconciliation as a foundation for long-term progress.

Alongside its hard-won security gains, Somalia has continued to take critical steps to prepare for its security transition. We encourage the international community to continue to support Somalia so that a sustainable, affordable and accountable security sector will be able to take full responsibility for Somalia's security as the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) draws down by the end of 2024. The Security Council has an important role to play, supporting ATMIS in delivering its critical functions and planning a strategic drawdown, and meeting Somalia's needs as the country assumes responsibility. We welcome the Federal Government of Somalia's commitment to strengthening weapons and ammunition management. The benchmarks in resolution 2662 (2022) were recommended by technical experts to prevent weapons from reaching Al-Shabaab. We urge all partners to join us in supporting Somalia in making further progress against those benchmarks in order to enable the arms controls on the Government to be lifted.



We support President Mohamud's efforts to degrade Al-Shabaab militarily, financially and ideologically. Through the Council, and as a committed long-term partner and friend to Somalia, the United Kingdom will continue to stand with Somalia on its journey to peace and prosperity.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's participation in today's meeting and thank him for his statement to the Council at this critically important time for his country, Somalia. We would like to thank Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), for their information on developments in the country. We also thank Ms. Cindy McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for her briefing.

Russia fully supports Somalia's efforts in combating extremism and in the areas of State-building and national reconciliation. There has been positive momentum in those processes in the past few months. The National Consultative Council has been meeting regularly. The Federal Government and federal member states in Somalia were able to reach a power-sharing agreement last year. This year, significant understandings have been reached regarding the federal fiscal policy, the future electoral model and the constitutional review process. The strengthening of the national security forces is under way. We hope that all the participants in the Somali political process, including the leadership of the states of Puntland and Somaliland, will continue working together to develop a sustainable model for a federal system in the country. At the same time, we unfailingly support the need to ensure the territorial integrity and unity of Somalia.

We note that the humanitarian situation throughout the country remains fragile. Despite the prevention of famine, the numbers of people in need remains very high.

The security situation is deeply worrisome. The extremist group Al-Shabaab still has significant influence in the country, carries out regular raids in the capital and on the periphery and has continued to shell Mogadishu airport. According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/443), the number of improvised explosive device attacks in the first quarter of this year

has exceeded the statistics for recent years. We strongly condemn all terrorist attacks and pay tribute to African peacekeepers and the Somali National Army, including those who have given their lives in line of duty. We extend our condolences to Uganda in connection with the deadly attack on 26 May by Al-Shabaab on an ATMIS forward operating base in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia. However, we note that offensive operations of the Somali National Army have made it possible to push back the extremists' positions in Galmudug and Hirshabelle. The federal authorities have also facilitated a settlement for the situation in South-West state. And we welcome the launch of a regional initiative by Somalia's neighbours aimed at combating Al-Shabaab.

The situation in Laascaanood has been another flashpoint in recent months. We support the mediation efforts of the Federal Government, clan elders and Ethiopia aimed at resolving that armed conflict. We believe that in accordance with resolution 2592 (2021), UNSOM has the necessary mandate to coordinate and support inter-clan reconciliation efforts. We hope that the situation will be resolved swiftly.

ATMIS remains a critical deterrent to extremist and other illegal activities in Somalia. We believe it is important to base decisions regarding ATMIS on the actual security situation on the ground and to take into account the priorities of the Federal Government and the other States in the region. We believe that the Mission's drawdown should be carried out in accordance with the plan adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Federal Government of Somalia, and based on the ability and willingness of Somalia's armed forces to independently ensure the security of the country and its people. We commend the activities of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, which has been providing significant material, technical and logistical support to ATMIS, UNSOM and the Somali National Army.

In our view, the current priority should be to focus the international community's efforts on increasing the effectiveness of the federal law-enforcement bodies in Somalia so that by the time ATMIS withdraws from the country, the national authorities will be able to assume full responsibility for maintaining security throughout the territory of Somalia. We call for those considerations to be at the forefront in guiding our decisions as we approach the renewals of the ATMIS and UNSOS mandates at the end of the month.

**Mr. Zhang Jun** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I welcome President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to today's meeting. His participation will help the Security Council gain a better knowledge of the realities in Somalia and its concerns so as to give the country more targeted support in its efforts to achieve stability, development and security. I also welcome the very first briefing to the Council by Ms. Laing, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I listened attentively to the briefings by Mr. Souef, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Executive Director McCain of the World Food Programme.

While Somalia has continued to register important progress in its political process, security transition and national reconstruction, among other things, it is still facing major challenges. When Secretary-General Guterres visited Somalia in April, he called on the United Nations and the international community to stand with the country. In the light of the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/443), I would like to stress three points.

First, we must continue to advance the political process in Somalia. President Mohamud recently presided over multiple meetings at the National Consultative Council and actively discussed major issues with federal member states regarding the federal system and the national security architecture, among other things. China calls upon the Federal Government of Somalia to enhance mutual trust through dialogue with federal member states in order to find solutions for lasting peace and stability in the country.

The international community must respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia, uphold the Somali-led and Somali-owned principle and provide constructive support. We oppose any actions that undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia and lead to disunity in the country. In Las Anod, clashes continue to break out between the security forces of Somaliland and local militia. We urge the parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities, withdraw their forces, engage in dialogue and effectively protect the security of the people.

Secondly, the security transition must be accelerated. The terrorist threat posed by Al-Shabaab is far from having been eliminated. China strongly condemns the recent attacks by Al-Shabaab on the Pearl Beach Hotel in Mogadishu and the camp of the African

Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), inter alia, and offers its condolences for the peacekeepers killed in the attacks, including Ugandan peacekeepers.

At present, Somalia's security transition is at a critical phase. The Somali Government should accelerate the capacity-building of its security forces and enhance its independent counter-terrorism capabilities. China welcomes the Frontline States initiative reached between Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya, and the deepening of regional counter-terrorism cooperation to safeguard common security. In the light of developments in the situation, the Security Council should review and adjust the arms embargo measures on Somalia and support the country in strengthening its defence capabilities.

China appreciates the significant contributions made by ATMIS to the security and stability of Somalia. The Security Council is discussing the issue of the ATMIS transition. We hope that the Somali Government will step up coordination and cooperation with ATMIS, steadily advance the ATMIS drawdown plan and ensure the steady and orderly handover of security responsibilities. Pending the withdrawal of ATMIS, the European Union and other relevant financial contributors should provide ATMIS with adequate, sustainable and predictable funding support.

Thirdly, we should promote development and achieve lasting peace. During his visit to Somalia, Secretary-General Guterres appealed for help to be provided Somalia to strengthen social resilience and enhance security and stability as it carries out counter-terrorism operations. In areas recovered in military operations, the Somali Government should meet the basic needs of the people, promote a stronger sense of national belonging and maintain lasting stability.

At present, the humanitarian situation in Somalia is grim, with half of the population in dire need of humanitarian aid and 6.6 million people facing food security issues. The international community should step up humanitarian assistance and ensure the timely disbursement of humanitarian funding. Somalia should also improve humanitarian access and support international humanitarian operations. Special Representative Laing should play a coordinating role, mobilize international resources and create enabling conditions for the development and stability of Somalia.

The future of Somalia should be in the hands of the Somali people. As a good friend and good partner of Somalia, China has always firmly supported Somalia

in its efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace and development and national reconstruction, improving its capacity to counter terrorism and maintain stability. Since last year, we have provided two batches of emergency food aid, engaged in practical cooperation in such areas as agriculture, education and fisheries, inter alia, and contributed to the reconstruction of Somalia. China stands ready to work with the international community to contribute even more to the achievement of lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

**Mr. Afonso** (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique (A3).

We highly commend the United Arab Emirates for its leadership in convening today's important briefing on Somalia, our sister country.

We wish to recognize, first of all, the presence in this Chamber of His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia. We welcome his participation in today's meeting and attach great importance to the briefing he just delivered.

The A3 welcomes the appointment of Ms. Catriona Laing as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). We are confident that Ms. Laing will build on the commendable work done by her predecessor, Mr. James Swan, and effectively deliver on her mandate as Head of UNSOM.

We thank the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, His Excellency Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef and Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Cindy McCain, for their in-depth and informative briefings.

We commend the Government of Somalia under the able leadership of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for the ongoing efforts to combat Al-Shabaab and restore peace and stability across the country. The success achieved so far in the fight against the terrorist group bears testimony to the Somali Government's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of its citizens.

The A3 remains deeply concerned that Al-Shabaab militants continue to pose a significant threat to innocent people and critical infrastructure and property

in Somalia and neighbouring countries. Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique condemn in the strongest terms the repeated attacks by Al-Shabab against the civilian population, humanitarian actors, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and Federal Government forces.

Al-Shabaab's recent attack on the Pearl Beach Hotel in Mogadishu serves as a sobering reminder of its ability to elude security personnel and carry out deadly attacks. We strongly urge the Government of Somalia, with the support of the international community, to step up its efforts to combat that threat and further strengthen the ability of its security forces to prevent attacks of that nature. We urge the Council and the international community to continue supporting Somalia so as to ensure that its Government is able to effectively combat the threat of terrorism within its borders and promote peace, security, stability and development in the country.

We hold the view that the ATMIS mandate, which is currently under negotiation, must be clear, realistic and tailored to Somalia's security needs, which will enable the Mission to work with Somalia to ensure peace and security in the country. We are equally concerned about the renewed conflict in Las Anod, particularly in the Sool region, where violent clashes between Somaliland forces and local Dhulbahante clan militia have resulted in significant casualties, the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of civilians. In the light of that, we welcome the progress made towards implementing the agreement reached at the reconciliation conference in South-West state. We urge all parties to continue working towards the full implementation of the terms of the agreement as a means to fostering peace and stability in the region. In order to ensure that the people of Somalia can continue to live in peace and make progress, it is necessary that the democratic space, the freedom of expression and openness be preserved.

With regard to the withdrawal of ATMIS, the current security situation in the country remains a significant concern. Therefore, the drawdown of ATMIS troops needs to be conducted in a coordinated manner, based on the force generation by the Somali security forces, so as to avoid the creation of new security challenges. In that context, the A3 fully supports the calls by the Somali Government for the total lifting of the arms embargo. It is critical that Somalia be able to raise a robust army to take over its security responsibilities, which can

be achieved only if the arms embargo is lifted, as the President of Somalia said earlier. The sovereign right of self-defence against terrorist attacks must not be denied to the Somali people and Government. We urge the Council to heed the repeated calls and support the measures taken by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his Government to liberate the territories and ensure the safety and security of the Somali people. We welcome the news of the completion of the ammunition storage facility in Jazeera, Mogadishu, which is a major step forward in the efforts being made to improve the management of Somalia's self-defence.

We applaud the Federal Government of Somalia for its consistent efforts to advance its national priorities, particularly with regard to the State-building process through political dialogue, as evidenced by the productive meetings of the National Consultative Council. Achievements in State-building include the agreement on a model for fiscal federalism, amendments to the national security architecture and an agreement outlining a one-person, one-vote electoral model. They are important achievements in our view. In the same vein, it is encouraging to note that attempts are being made to further dialogue between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states. The commitment to finding a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution to the protracted conflict has been demonstrated by the selection of Mr. Abdikarim Hussein Guled and Ms. Edna Adan as special envoys for the negotiations. The stability and development of the region depend on such efforts to resolve the dispute peacefully. We note with regret, however, the failure of the Puntland authorities to participate in the meetings of the National Consultative Council. We encourage President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to continue his reconciliation efforts to bring Puntland back to the negotiating table. We urge the Puntland authorities to prioritize the interests of Somalia. It is imperative that all stakeholders engage constructively and work towards a peaceful and successful Somalia.

Somalia's determination and resilience in the face of challenges in its pursuit of economic progress and development are inspiring. Key legislation has been enacted and fiscal federalism has advanced, putting Somalia on schedule for the completion of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative by late 2023. Despite that achievement, the detrimental effect of climate change on economic activity and the low-level domestic revenue mobilization are just two of the many

remaining obstacles that the country must overcome. In that regard, we encourage Somalia to continue moving forward on the path to economic growth and development, with a focus on taking steps to strengthen macroeconomic stability and increase domestic revenue mobilization. In addition, we urge the international community to maintain its support for Somalia's numerous economic development programmes. That objective can be achieved through increased funding, technical-assistance and capacity-building initiatives and quick-impact projects. By helping Somalia in its efforts to strengthen its economy, the international community will contribute to the country's peace and prosperity.

Millions of Somalians continue to be impacted by the drought, conflict and flooding, despite the intensified humanitarian efforts. While there has been some success in alleviating suffering among the people, high levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and disease persist. The humanitarian community has estimated that more than 7.6 million individuals are in need of aid. But it has only been able to finance 28 per cent of the 2023 humanitarian response plan. In order to help in Somalia's recovery, the international community must continue to provide both humanitarian aid and long-term climate-sensitive development assistance. We urge the continuation of the vital collaboration between the Government of Somalia and humanitarian actors, which is necessary for the mitigation of risks and the alleviation of suffering.

The A3 wishes to express its gratitude to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia for its support to the Somali Government in its pursuit of peace and security, despite difficulties confronting the Mission in terms of finances and logistics.

Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique strongly encourage the international community at large and the Security Council in particular to provide assistance to ATMIS and the Somali security forces, including through United Nations-assessed contributions, to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

The A3 extends its gratitude to all those who are contributing to the stabilization efforts of Somalia. We urge them to continue with their support of the country and its people. Together, we can end Al-Shabaab's reign of terror in Somalia and usher in a period of peace and wealth for Somalia and its people.



Gabon, Ghana and Mozambique reaffirm their solidarity with the people and the Government of Somalia and their commitment to defend the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of that country. The A3 is ready to accompany Somalia on that journey.

**Mr. Moretti** (Brazil): As other delegations have done, I warmly welcome His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. I thank Special Representative Laing, Special Representative El-Amine Souef and Executive Director McCain for their valuable briefings.

We acknowledge the work undertaken by the Federal Government of Somalia towards the advancement of key national priorities, including strengthening dialogue with federal member states. Political unity and effective cooperation in favour of the Somali people are critical for further State-building, peace and sustainable development.

We commend Somalia's efforts to advance the implementation of its national security architecture in parallel with the ongoing phases of the drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). A proper security handover is a key challenge that the Security Council and all relevant parties must help Somalia to overcome in a sustained manner.

As the Secretary-General highlighted in his latest report (S/2023/443), regional cooperation remains essential to addressing regional security concerns. We commend the efforts undertaken to establish the Frontline States initiative. We welcome the commitment shared by Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia to expand operations against Al-Shabaab, in full compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and fully coordinate actions to consolidate security gains.

Brazil reiterates its appreciation for the brave work undertaken by ATMIS personnel and the Somali security forces in support of peace and security in the country. While we commend their gains in the fight against Al-Shabaab, the increase in terrorist-related incidents is nothing but alarming, especially with the growing use of improvised explosive devices. In that regard, we recognize the work carried out by the Mine Action Service in delivering threat-mitigation services. And again we condemn in the strongest terms the appalling attack on the ATMIS forward operating base that Ugandan troops staffed in Lower Shabelle. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims.

Brazil shares with other Council members serious concerns about violence in Laascaanood. We reiterate our full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of the Federal Republic of Somalia and call on all parties to reach a ceasefire agreement urgently.

We support further efforts by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) within its mandate to foster inclusive dialogue, promote peaceful dispute resolution and engage with all parties to the conflict.

We commend the vital work being carried out by the World Food Programme and the humanitarian agencies in Somalia. At the same time, as indicated by the Executive Director, the humanitarian situation remains acute. A significant part of the population is on the brink of famine, and for many, life is a daily struggle simply to eat. Additional and flexible funding for food security is critical for preventing conflict.

We call on Somalia to redouble its efforts to strengthen governance, foster community reconciliation and provide essential services in areas deeply affected by food insecurity. If coupled with increased humanitarian assistance, those resources will be critical to consolidate security gains.

In conclusion, Brazil reiterates its continued support for Somalia and underscores the importance of fully implementing the mandates of ATMIS, UNSOM and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

**Ms. Dautllari** (Albania): Since this is the first time that Ms. Laing is briefing the Council, I would like to congratulate her on the assumption of her duties as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and wish her the best of luck. She can count on our support. I also thank the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Cindy McCain, for their briefings. Albania welcomes the President of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, to this meeting.

We welcome the efforts that Somalia has made to advance the implementation of its key national priorities since President Mohamud took office last year. In political terms, despite the restricted cooperation

between Puntland and the Federal Government, we are encouraged by the outreach between the Federal Government and the federal member states, resulting, among other things, in the creation of the national revenue authority and the planning and allocation agency.

In addition to that, the decision to adopt a one-person, one-vote electoral model for Somalia and the historic elections held on 25 May in Puntland were a democratic milestone, allowing the voice of its citizens to be heard. That progress should be followed by a constitutional review process that is more inclusive for women, youth and marginalized groups and that widens and is more protective of its civic space.

Turning now to the security situation, the fight against Al-Shabaab has been notable in terms of liberating territories and targeting its finances. In that vein, the agreement reached between Somalia and its neighbours to create the Frontline States initiative could be crucial for advancing that fight while the security transition continues. Nevertheless, the international community should spare no efforts in assisting Somalia with services in the liberated areas.

Al-Shabaab remains a threat for the security of the country. Albania condemns in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on the base of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) on 26 May. We express our condolences to the families of the victims and the people and the Government of Uganda. We pay tribute to ATMIS troops, who continue to serve and contribute to peace in Somalia. We also recognize the progress made by Somalia on assuming security responsibilities and force generation, as well as its positive efforts in strengthening its weapons and ammunition management capacity, which need to be continued.

My delegation is also concerned about the ongoing conflict in Laascaanood. We encourage the Government to continue its de-escalating efforts in coordination with multilateral and bilateral partners and call on the parties to conflict to reach a ceasefire to put an end to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences, the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of civilians.

That leads me to my final point. Despite Somalia's progress under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and the measures mitigating the risk of famine, we are seriously concerned about

the humanitarian situation and the number of people affected by conflict and climate change. We join the urgent call of Somalia and the Secretary-General to fill the funding gap for the 2023 humanitarian response plan, in addition to calling for the development initiatives that are required to build community resilience.

Unfortunately, women and children remain the most affected group of displaced people, as they are the most common targets of human rights violations, sexual violence and recruitment. We call on all the parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and for the authorities to hold accountable those responsible for violations of human rights.

**Mr. Ishikane** (Japan): I thank Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and Ms. Cindy McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), for their insightful briefings. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia and thank him for his participation in today's meeting.

This month, Somalia reaches an important inflection point in its security transition. As the first phase of the ATMIS drawdown continues, the Somali security forces now shoulder greater responsibility to protect their own land and people. I would like to pay tribute to all the personnel of ATMIS and the Somali security forces for their dedication to peace and stability in Somalia and the region. We condemn the recent terrorist attack on the ATMIS forward operating base in Lower Shabelle. We offer our heartfelt condolences to those who made the ultimate sacrifice and wish a speedy recovery to the injured.

We welcome the continued operational advancements by the Somali National Army, with the help of community defence forces. While further expansion of the Somali National Army's operations to the south-west is expected, consolidating the Government's security control in the newly liberated areas is also an essential task in degrading Al-Shabaab so as to prevent any recurrence of its intrusion. Developing sufficient holding forces in such areas is of the utmost importance, and accelerating the country's

security sector reform should remain a priority for that purpose. We commend the neighbouring countries contributing troops to ATMIS for their continued support in force-generation for the Somali forces and in building capacity. We further commend the essential role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia in supporting ATMIS.

The Somalia transition plan is a long-term endeavour that requires constant efforts aimed at achieving good governance through institutional capacity-building. In that regard, Japan highly appreciates and stands by President Mohamud's strong leadership under challenging circumstances.

The extension of State authority should be derived from the assurance of better social welfare through the reliable delivery of basic services. That will help garner the trust of the population, which is paramount for degrading the capacities of Al-Shabaab throughout the country.

United Nations entities and humanitarian organizations need to promote holistic and coordinated assistance. The emphasis that President Mohamud himself placed on the education of the Somali people is critically important. In that regard, the impact of climate change should also be properly considered and addressed.

For its part, my country has contributed to the capacity development of local government officials by providing training programmes in Japan to help Somalia's institution-building efforts. We have also provided emergency food assistance in the region through the WFP to alleviate food insecurity and address immediate needs. The resident coordinator system should be effectively utilized, and it should be at the centre of our efforts. The Peacebuilding Commission, with its unique advising-bridging-convening capacity, can also play an important role in the transition, to complement Somali-led State-building.

Inter- and intra-clan conflicts are another security challenge in Somalia. Complex clan dynamics are deeply embedded in national politics, and peaceful coexistence among different clans should be the very foundation of the country's stability. The ongoing violence in Laascaanood, which has resulted in large number of civilian casualties and displaced people, is a serious concern. We commend the ongoing Somali-led national dialogue. All the parties need to exercise maximum restraint in order to create an environment conducive to reconciliation.

A successful transition in Somalia is essential for peace and stability in the entire region. It requires the continued support of the international community, and Japan remains committed to playing its part to that end.

**Mr. DeLaurentis** (United States of America): I thank Mr. Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, and Ms. McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their excellent briefings. We extend a warm welcome to Ms. Catriona Laing as she assumes her position as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia. She has arrived at a critical time, and her leadership will be vitally important in the coming months. We also extend a warm welcome to His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and thank him for his contribution to today's meeting.

We commend Somalia for its demonstrated commitment to fighting Al-Shabaab and restoring security and stability in the country. That is a visible demonstration of the Somali people's desire for peace, stability, prosperity and good governance. Overcoming Somalia's remaining challenges requires sustaining positive momentum on security, political reconciliation and economic development. Liberating the remaining Al-Shabaab-held territory in central Somalia and ensuring that local communities receive the support they need to recover is vital for creating the conditions necessary for successful operations further south. An inclusive discussion of the National Consultative Council proposals on the constitution and elections is critical to ensuring that such changes have broad popular support.

Much is needed to achieve a ceasefire to halt the violence in Laascaanood, allow and facilitate unhindered humanitarian access and initiate constructive dialogue to resolve the dispute. We welcome the Federal Government of Somalia's recent efforts in that regard.

Strengthening public-sector financial management, conducting thorough, credible investigations of corruption allegations and holding perpetrators accountable are imperative for building public trust and confidence in the Government. We also must continue our collective efforts to respond to the ongoing humanitarian emergency that, as we all heard this morning, threatens nearly half of Somalia's population.

We are particularly encouraged by Somalia's commitment to leading efforts to restore security and stability in the country, and the United States remains

committed to partnering with Somalia to achieve those shared goals. We continue working to finalize our contribution to the United Nations trust fund for the Somali security forces, and we encourage other donors to support the Somali National Army's efforts through that mechanism. Despite the significant assistance efforts that are under way, there are still gaps. We must work together and think creatively about how to address those gaps to enable long-term stability, economic growth and good governance in Somalia.

Finally, we welcome Somalia's continued progress on the benchmarks outlined in the Secretary-General's September 2022 report (S/2022/698) in assessing the country's request for fully lifting the arms embargo on the Federal Government. We look forward to further progress and working closely with our partners on the Security Council on this issue when the sanctions regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 751 (1992) concerning Al-Shabaab, is renewed in November.

**Mr. Pérez Loose** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome Ms. Catriona Laing, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and wish her every success in her work. We appreciate the work done by Mr. Swan and take note of the information provided by Mr. El-Amine Souef and Ms. McCain. I also acknowledge and welcome the presence of the President of Somalia at today's meeting.

We deplore the clashes that occurred between security forces and forces loyal to the opposition in the town of Garoowe, where some 20 people, including civilians, died as a result. We call for a de-escalation of tensions and a return to calm. We encourage the continuation of the constitutional review process on the basis of an inclusive consensus, in order to ensure the effective participation of women, young people and marginalized communities with a view to achieving lasting peace, which requires the political will of Somalia's leaders. That is the only way it will be possible to overcome the recurring violence in several parts of the country. The situation makes it difficult to create an environment that is conducive to effectively combating the threat posed by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group to peace and security in Somalia and in the region. Ecuador condemns its attacks on the civilian population and on the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), including the 26 May attack on an ATMIS forward operating base, in which several Ugandan soldiers lost their lives and others were seriously

wounded. The recurring violence, made exponentially worse by Al-Shabaab's acts of terror, which we condemn, has resulted in many casualties and tens of thousands of people displaced. That has been compounded by droughts and floods that have in turn further aggravated an already precarious humanitarian situation.

According to the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/443), approximately 6.6 million people in Somalia will face crisis-level food insecurity or worse in the coming months. Al-Shabaab's worrisome and continued serious threat to peace, security and stability in Somalia and the region makes securing a ceasefire and starting a national dialogue conducive to stability and political and economic recovery urgent. The efforts and initiatives of the Federal Government of Somalia, Ethiopia and clan elders are crucial in that regard. Besides that, it will be important to advance the progress made by Somalia at the National Consultative Council in Baidoa, where agreement was reached on a model for fiscal federalism and amendments were made to the national security architecture.

We reiterate the need to preserve the civic space without restrictions on freedom of expression and the work of journalists. Ecuador considers the human rights violations and abuses perpetrated against hundreds of children during the reporting period very serious. We condemn the attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as the recruitment, abduction and displacement of children, whose safe and voluntary return must be ensured. We call on the international community to continue supporting efforts to protect civilians in Somalia, including with regard to the ATMIS transition process. We want to highlight the key role of the African Union, subregional organizations and regional mechanisms in the peace operations. Ecuador welcomes their efforts and endorses any initiative that supports the efficiency and effectiveness of peace operations with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. We also believe that systems that enable responsible and transparent resource management and guarantee accountability and the rule of law are essential to addressing security challenges.

Lastly, I agree with the Secretary-General that sustained dialogue will achieve progress on the State-building agenda. We firmly believe that the only way the persistent challenges in Somalia can be overcome is through an institutional presence, the strengthening of the peace and reconciliation processes and the support of the international community in implementing comprehensive solutions.



**Ms. Gatt** (Malta): We join others in welcoming President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to today's meeting. I thank Special Representative Laing for her briefing and wish her every success in her new role. I also thank Mr. El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, and Ms. McCain, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings.

Malta is pleased to note the positive engagement of Somalia, which signals the country's sustained progress, and we are encouraged by the recent agreement led by the National Consultative Council on a model for fiscal federalism and the amendments to the national security architecture. As preparations are under way for next year's local and assembly elections, we reiterate that it is only through inclusive, free and fair elections and a safe civic space that all voices can be heard and represented. We call for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the political, electoral and constitutional processes. We commend the efforts being made to implement the Somali Women's Charter and the national women and peace and security action plan, including the ongoing multi-stakeholder conversation among federal ministries, civil society and women leaders supported by UN-Women. Nevertheless, Malta remains concerned about the security situation in the country, especially the ongoing violence in Laascaanood, which has resulted in more than 300 casualties so far. We welcome the ceasefire efforts by the Somali Government, Ethiopia and clan elders, while reminding all the parties of their obligations under international law.

Malta strongly condemns all the offensives carried out by Al-Shabaab, which continue to represent a serious threat to the peace, security and stability of Somalia, with the surging use of improvised explosive devices and complex attacks, of which the most recent hit a forward operating base of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in Bulo Mareer on 26 May. We will remember the peacekeepers who were injured and those who lost their lives, as well as their families.

We welcome the commitment displayed by Somalia and its neighbours, with Somalia's Frontline States initiative bringing together Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Those efforts should encourage further progress by ATMIS in the security transition, as well as coordination between the Frontline States, ATMIS and partners. Malta remains supportive of ATMIS

and its intended tasks to be completed by 2024. It will be crucial to diversify its financial support, while acknowledging that the European Union has supported the mandated Mission with more than €2.2 billion since its inception.

Somalia remains heavily affected by climate shocks. We commend the role of the Climate Security Adviser within the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), whose work has enabled a better understanding of how prolonged drought and flash floods have exacerbated farmer-herder conflicts and civilians' susceptibility to radicalization and recruitment by Al-Shabaab. While famine has been averted thanks to sustained humanitarian assistance from donors, 6.6 million are still projected to be food-insecure and approximately 1.8 million children under five are likely to face acute malnutrition and waterborne diseases such as cholera.

We are gravely concerned about sexual and gender-based violence against internally displaced women and girls, who make up more than 80 per cent of Somalia's internally displaced persons. The perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable. In that context, we welcome UNSOM's support in addressing impediments to accountability and incorporating a gender-sensitive humanitarian response. Humanitarian partners should ensure close collaboration between agencies to address those dire protection needs. Malta is also alarmed by the large number of grave violations committed against children, including killing and maiming and their recruitment and use as soldiers. We call on all parties to cease and prevent such violations, while we reiterate that child protection can be effectively ensured only through legal frameworks and relevant action plans and road maps.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates its support for UNSOM and Special Representative Laing. The crucial work of UNSOM continues to contribute towards lasting peace and security in Somalia. We remain encouraged by the multiplicity of voices engaged in advancing Somalia's State-building and security goals, and the people of Somalia should remain at the heart of such efforts.

**Mr. Hauri** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to express a heartfelt welcome to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia, whose presence attests to his commitment to working with the Security Council to

ensure that Somalia can live in peace with its neighbours and within its own borders. I thank Ms. Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, and Ms. McCain, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, for their briefings. I would also like to congratulate the Special Representative on her recent appointment and wish her a successful term in the important current political context.

The preliminary political agreement reached by the National Consultative Council on adopting a one-person, one-vote electoral model is a important decision, and we welcome it. In that regard, a historic step was taken in Somalia with the elections in Puntland. Switzerland supported the local authorities, particularly the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission, in educating and organizing voters. With a view to advancing national priorities, including closer cooperation between the federal member states and the Federal Government, we will touch on three major points.

First, respect for international law must be at the heart of the response to insecurity throughout the country. We condemn the ongoing attacks by Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, including Al-Shabaab fighters' recent attacks on the forward operating base of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in Mareer, Shabelle Hoose, and on the Pearl Beach hotel in Mogadishu. We acknowledge the efforts of the Government and ATMIS to counter them. We call on all the parties to respect international human rights law and international humanitarian law and ensure the protection of civilians, including children. In that regard, we remain concerned about the ongoing conflict in Laascaanood. We call on all parties to facilitate and guarantee rapid and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need, agree on a ceasefire and engage in dialogue with a view to peacefully resolving that conflict.

Secondly, a coordinated, comprehensive and inclusive approach should guide the efforts related to early recovery, the restoration of State presence and peacebuilding in the areas taken back from Al-Shabaab. That will be vital to restoring and cementing the social contract. In collaboration with the United Nations and non-governmental partners, Switzerland supports promoting forums for dialogue and strengthening local district councils so that they can deliver basic services.

We also encourage the active engagement of Somali society as a whole in strengthening inclusive local governance and giving a voice to women, young people and minority clans, all of whom should be heard and included in decision-making processes.

Thirdly, we note the cumulative impact of the threats posed by climate change and armed conflict to Somalia's stability. Although humanitarian aid and the recent rainfall have provided relief to populations in need, recovery will take time, particularly in view of the currently severe and widespread droughts, which, together with the recent floods, have contributed to displacement. We must therefore invest in humanitarian response and peacebuilding programmes that take climate adaptation into account. Otherwise, the next extreme-weather event caused by climate change will again leave the country on the brink of famine and exacerbate displacement and conflict. Finally, the risk of famine must be reduced by breaking the vicious cycle of violence and acute food insecurity, in line with the provisions of resolution 2417 (2018).

I would like to congratulate the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) on the critical role that it is playing. Switzerland will continue to support UNSOM, Somalia and its people in their efforts to build peace and a prosperous future.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank the briefers for their interventions. I welcome the participation of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia in this meeting. I want to congratulate Ms. Catriona Laing and Ms. Aisa Kirabo Kacyira on their appointments as Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and Head of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS), respectively, and to assure them both of France's full support in their work. I would like to revisit three points.

First, Somalia's institutional reforms and fight against Al-Shabaab must continue. France welcomes the new dynamic that has gathered momentum over the past year in the work of implementing several national priorities. That especially includes the federalist system, which has been strengthened through renewed dialogue between the Federal Government and the federal member states. Strengthening institutions and finalizing the draft constitution must become a reality, and the participation of women and young people must be ensured in all those processes. France reiterates its firm condemnation of Al-Shabaab's terrorist attacks, including against the

African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and welcomes the Somali Government's successful efforts to combat that group. That work should continue with the support of the Frontline States' initiative, while respecting international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The restoration of State authority and access to basic services in the recovered territories will help to build peace. France is also concerned about the ongoing violence in Laascaanood and welcomes the Somali Government's efforts to restore dialogue and de-escalate the situation. It is imperative to protect civilians and ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access.

Secondly, the most vulnerable Somalis must be protected. In particular, the violence against children must cease. France supports all efforts of the Somali Government to continue to implement the action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children. We also encourage the establishment of civic space that gives a voice to civil-society actors and enables the full participation of women in the country's governance. The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with more than half of Somalis in need of assistance. With a view to meeting the needs of the populations that have been affected by the drought since December 2021, I would like to remind the Council that the European Union has provided €170 million in humanitarian aid to Somalia. France calls on all international partners to step up their contributions to the United Nations humanitarian response plan.

My third and last point is that the security transition must be accelerated. The Security Council is preparing to renew the ATMIS mandate. The objectives of resolution 2628 (2022) must continue to guide the support we provide so that the Somalis can take responsibility for their own security in the medium term and so that we can enable the definitive withdrawal of ATMIS by 31 December 2024. To that end, preparations for the next phases of the withdrawal are critical and should be stepped up. I should point out that the European Union has been the largest direct contributor to the African Union missions in Somalia, with a total contribution of €2.5 billion since the first was established in 2007. Other partners must also contribute to that effort. The European Union will pursue its commitment, which will continue to grow for the benefit of the Somali security and defence forces. At the beginning of the year, the European Union accordingly approved an additional €25 million in aid for the Somali National Army for the period from 2022 to 2024. The aid will provide them with non-lethal equipment and support infrastructure work in close coordination with the European Union Training Mission in Somalia.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and his Government can count on France's full support in helping Somalia advance on the road to peace.

*The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*