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Seventy-ninth year

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Monday, 24 June 2024, 10 a.m.
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Provisional

President: Mr. Hwang. (Republic of Korea)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Montalvo Sosa
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Mr. Camilleri
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mrs. Chanda
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America.	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2024/426)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 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/2024/426)

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.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. James Swan, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; and 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.

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/2024/426, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Swan.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Somalia.

I am pleased to do so together with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef. I commend the bravery, determination and sacrifices of the Somali and African Union forces in contributing to peace and security in the country.

I congratulate Somalia on its election as a member of the Security Council for 2025–2026. That achievement demonstrates the progress that Somalia has made over the past three decades in its journey from conflict to recovery.

The Federal Government of Somalia continues to pursue its key national priorities, including the constitutional review process, the electoral framework and the fight against Al-Shabaab. Between February

and May, Somalia's Federal Parliament adopted constitutional amendments to the first four chapters of the 2012 Provisional Constitution, which cover, among other issues, the governance system and electoral framework, reaffirming the Government's commitment to a one-person, one-vote electoral model.

During the last National Consultative Council meeting, convened by His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud from 14 to 17 May, and which was attended by the leaders of the federal member states with the exception of Puntland, the leaders welcomed the amendments to the Provisional Constitution and encouraged the rapid adoption of related laws and regulations to facilitate the holding of one-person, one-vote elections. Some opposition figures and Puntland officials criticized the process and outcome, with Puntland's president announcing the state's withdrawal from the federal system pending negotiation of a comprehensive constitutional framework.

Parliament is scheduled to consider the important enabling legislation for universal suffrage elections and the next chapters of the Provisional Constitution during its summer session. The next phase of the constitutional review will address complex issues, such as power- and resource-sharing under Somalia's federal model. Continued engagement of all stakeholders in an inclusive process will be critical to ensure broad-based consensus on those important State-building questions. I call on all Somali stakeholders to work together to resolve their differences and seek consensus.

At the regional level, I remain concerned about the Ethiopia and Somaliland memorandum of understanding announced on 1 January, which has created tensions in the Horn of Africa at a time when the region faces other crises. I recall that the Security Council has repeatedly affirmed respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Somalia. I encourage Somalia and Ethiopia to resolve that matter peacefully in accordance with those principles, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

Security is a top priority for the Government of Somalia, which continues to undertake multifaceted efforts to defeat Al-Shabaab. For its part, Al-Shabaab remains determined to continue terrorist attacks with little regard for the loss of civilian life. The protection of civilians must remain a key priority. I condemn those terrorist attacks and extend my condolences to the families of those killed.

While continuing efforts against Al-Shabaab, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) has also drawn down in accordance with the planned transition of responsibilities to Somali security forces. Since June 2023, 5,000 ATMIS troops have left Somalia, and further reductions are planned in the coming weeks. The United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) continues to provide logistical support to deployed ATMIS forces and to facilitate an orderly drawdown of departing forces.

On post-2024 security planning, the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union continue their discussions on the follow-on security arrangements for 2025. Special Representative Souef will provide further details in his briefing. Financing remains a critical challenge, and I appeal to all partners to ensure predictable and sustainable financing for the follow-on arrangements, as well as the necessary resources for ATMIS, which continues to face critical funding shortfalls.

On women and peace and security, I note the commitments made in the revisions of the Provisional Constitution that enabling legislation should include quotas to guarantee women's political participation and meaningful representation in decision-making. The United Nations will continue to provide technical assistance aimed at enabling a credible and transparent electoral process and to engage the Federal Government and its member state governments on the importance of increasing and codifying women's political participation.

I welcome the finalization by Parliament of the Bill of Rights, which has received presidential endorsement as part of the ongoing constitutional review process. Important guarantees on child rights and protection against female genital mutilation are included. I further welcome Galmudug state's enactment of the first law prohibiting all forms of female genital mutilation as a vital step towards the elimination of violence against women.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia remains dire. While the number of people in need of assistance has dropped from 8.3 million in 2023 to 6.9 million in 2024, climatic events, insecurity and disease outbreaks have continued to exacerbate humanitarian needs. More than 3.8 million people are displaced. The 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan for Somalia requires \$1.6 billion, but as of 23 June, it is only 24 per

cent funded. I urge international partners to provide the necessary funding to ensure assistance for those most in need.

Somalia's humanitarian and development challenges are intensified by climate shocks. To address those challenges, investments to strengthen the longer-term resilience of communities, infrastructure and economic recovery are essential. At the current rate, the impact of climate change is outpacing our ability to support adaptation and humanitarian response. Climate change also intensifies social tensions and conflicts, particularly in rural areas, where livelihoods are highly dependent on natural resources.

Regarding the letters addressed by the Federal Government of Somalia to the Security Council in early May requesting the transition from UNSOM to the country team, the United Nations is in discussions with Somali authorities to determine the modalities and timeline for the transition. Since assuming my duties on 23 May, I have met the senior Somali leadership, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, among others, on this matter in order to hear how the United Nations can best support Somalia's priorities going forward. All have indicated that they seek a collaborative process to ensure an orderly transition. As requested by the Somali authorities, a joint Federal Government of Somalia and United Nations technical committee, led by senior officials on both sides, has been established to take forward the planning process. An initial meeting of the joint technical committee was held on 22 June. While still in their early stages, discussions to date have been cordial and constructive. We are working to fulfil the Security Council's request that the Secretary-General engage with the Somali authorities in order to determine the modalities and timeline for the transition and provide an update by the end of August.

I would like to conclude by reiterating the commitment of the United Nations to continue supporting Somalia in achieving its national priorities.

The President: I thank Mr. Swan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Souef.

Mr. Souef: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Council on the situation in Somalia. Let me start by congratulating the Government of Korea

on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of June.

I am pleased to be joined by Mr. James Swan, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. Our joint presence here underscores the exceptional partnership and collaboration that exists between the African Union and the United Nations in Somalia.

I take this opportunity to commend the unwavering commitment and dedication of the Somali security forces and the African Union troops and police personnel and pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate price in service of peace and stability in Somalia. Their service and sacrifice in the face of extraordinary adversity shall not be forgotten.

Since my previous briefing, in February (see S/PV.9551), Somalia has continued to foster cooperation and informed decision-making in promoting peace and stability. Under the strong leadership of His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Somalia is uniting and investing in rebuilding international relationships and registering notable progress on many fronts. Its recent election as a non-permanent member of the Council for the 2025–2026 cycle — for the second time since 1971–1972 — reflects the trust and confidence of the States Members of the United Nations in Somalia's gradual and sustained journey towards peace, security and stability. It is further evidence of Somalia's progress, marking a new era of global recognition for its increasing capability and commitment to contribute effectively to global peace and security, which the African Union proudly supports. This historic election came in the wake of significant progress in Somalia's State-building processes, particularly the ongoing constitutional reforms.

I am pleased to report that the Federal Government of Somalia has continued to encourage broad consensus on the implementation of key national priorities, including promoting dialogue among Somalia's leaders. That was recently demonstrated by the convening of the ninth meeting of the National Consultative Council (NCC). Despite Puntland's absence from the NCC meetings, I am encouraged by the Federal Government's intention to re-engage Puntland's leadership. National unity will reinforce the country's stability and pave the way for its development. I am confident that the Government and

the people of Somalia will continue to deliver on their long-term peace and stability.

Similarly, the ongoing efforts to address the dispute between Somalia and Ethiopia are commendable and should be encouraged by the international community. I believe that a peaceful and comprehensive dialogue is the best way to enhance sustainable stability and cooperation in the region.

Turning to the security situation, we continue to assess that the situation remains relatively calm in areas in which the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) are present. The threat of Al-Shabaab remains unpredictable. The recent complex attack on Somali security forces in the Ceel Dheere, Galmudug region, and the mortar attack on the ATMIS camp in Baidoa in South-West state remind us that Al-Shabaab remains resilient. The group still retains the ability to conduct devastating attacks, including by employing asymmetric tactics and organizing complex operations against civilians and security targets.

I would like to report that the group's resilience and propaganda do not affect the courage, resilience and resolve of the Somali National Army to persevere in the offensive against Al-Shabaab. Although the Somali security forces — supported by ATMIS and, increasingly, by local communities — have achieved significant gains in the fight against Al-Shabaab, sustained support from international partners is essential if we are to maintain that momentum. That support is particularly vital as the Federal Government of Somalia works to respond to community conflicts and rivalries. Sustained efforts in that regard will advance ongoing initiatives to deepen national unity, community reconciliation and social cohesion.

Let me now turn to the status of the security transition. I am pleased to report that the joint technical assessment was completed in March under the leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia. Essentially, the joint technical assessment highlighted the persistent threat emanating from Al-Shabaab and the complex security landscape within which the Somali security forces are operating. It commended the Federal Government's robust offensive against Al-Shabaab across multiple regions, which demonstrated the Federal Government's resolute commitment to degrading Al-Shabaab's capabilities and establishing sustainable security and stabilization activities across

the country. I also welcome the decision taken by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union during its 1217th meeting, held on 20 June, to strongly support the Federal Government's request for a phased approach to phase 3 of the drawdown of ATMIS, with 2,000 troops departing by the end of June and the remaining 2,000 exiting at the end of September. That request will provide the necessary time and space to address the operational demands highlighted in the joint technical assessment. It will also ensure that Somali security forces units are adequately prepared to take over security responsibilities from ATMIS while continuing the offensive against Al-Shabaab.

I am therefore pleased to report that, in anticipation of the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the tripartite technical committee, comprising the Federal Government of Somalia, ATMIS and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, agreed on a revised sequencing of phase 3 of the drawdown, with eight ATMIS forward operating bases (FOBs) identified to be handed over to the Somali security forces by the end of June. So far, the Bariire, Horseed — commonly known as Jowhar Town — and Ceel Geelow FOBs have been successfully handed over to the Somali security forces, and the remaining five FOBs are scheduled to be handed over to the Somali security forces by 30 June.

Before the beginning of phase 3 of the drawdown, I undertook a series of field visits to the region in order to engage with local leaders, communities and representatives of civil society organizations. I would like to commend their commitment to supporting the Federal Government's efforts to advance peace and State-building in Somalia. I also noted their concern about the potential increase in pressure on the Somali security forces and local communities owing to a reduced ATMIS presence in Somalia. The concern is that without the generation of sufficient Somali security forces with the necessary capabilities and dedicated stabilization efforts, there will be a need to secure strategic locations and strengthen territorial control.

I am, however, pleased that the African Union's endorsement of a new mission, led by the African Union and authorized by the United Nations, will be aligned with the planned post-ATMIS security arrangements. That will be crucial to preventing a security vacuum that could be exploited by Al-Shabaab, and it will reinforce Somalia's efforts to attain its long-term goal of stability, institution-building and development. I am

confident that to establish lasting peace, security and development in Somalia beyond December, we must focus on key activities. Those activities include building capacity, strengthening security institutions, countering Al-Shabaab and securing critical infrastructure. We must also ensure a smooth and orderly transition.

In the light of that, I urge the Security Council to continue its efforts to promote strong regional and international cooperation so as to ensure that political, logistical and financial support for the African Union-led post-ATMIS mission is tailored to meet the existing security threats and enhance the readiness and capacity of the Somali security forces to assume full security responsibilities. Such an approach would advance our collective interests and further our shared goal of supporting Somalia's security sector plan and exploring and agreeing on the required funding mechanisms for a new mission.

(spoke in French)

Allow me to conclude by referring to the ongoing discussions on the renewal of the ATMIS mandate, which will expire in a few days. I would like to call on the Security Council to support the Mission so as to enable it to contribute effectively to consolidating the positive momentum through a mandate that corresponds to the political and security realities and that sets realistic deadlines adapted to Somalia's needs. More than ever, it is necessary to consolidate the Mission's achievements in the long term while firmly tackling the challenges that persist in order to ensure a smooth, orderly and successful transition. Despite the remaining challenges, Somalia continues to demonstrate immense resilience, with very encouraging positive developments. I call on the Security Council and the entire international community to remain engaged and to maintain their continued support for Somalia.

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

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me thank Acting Special Representative Swan and Special Representative Souef for their briefings and pay tribute to the work of their teams and troops. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Somalia in our meeting today.

I would like to make four points.

First, I congratulate Somalia on its election to the Security Council for the 2025–2026 term. Somalia's return to the Council after more than 50 years is a significant milestone. The United Kingdom looks forward to working closely with Somalia on the Council.

Secondly, the United Kingdom notes the progress made on Somalia's constitutional review, with the completion of the first four chapters. We encourage increased consultation and collaboration with all stakeholders in Somalia in order to ensure an inclusive process on political and constitutional reform moving forward.

Thirdly, we are at a critical moment in Somalia's security transition as we reach the final stages of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) drawdown. We welcome the African Union (AU) communiqué on the joint strategic assessment for the post-ATMIS security arrangements for an AU-led mission in Somalia. We also welcome the significant progress made thus far and urge the Federal Government of Somalia to continue its efforts on security sector reform. It is vital that security gains are not lost. Continued support from, and coordination with, international partners is critical, including the United Nations, the AU and troop-contributing countries. We urge Somalia and the African Union to continue to work with the United Nations to advance the design of a follow-on mission.

Fourthly, the United Kingdom welcomes the consultations between the United Nations and Somalia on next steps, including agreement on the timeline and modalities for the transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia.

We do not take the progress made in Somalia for granted. The United Kingdom remains committed to working with the Somali authorities, the United Nations and Council members to ensure that progress is sustained.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representatives, Mr. James Swan and Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their briefings, and I welcome the presence of the representative of Somalia this morning.

I congratulate Somalia on its election to the Security Council for the 2025–2026 term. France looks forward to collaborating with Somalia on the Council and to benefiting from the experience of its

historic partnership with the United Nations. That success illustrates the efforts of the Somali authorities, in particular President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, to respond to the challenges that the country is facing.

First, at the political level, France welcomes the progress made in the constitutional reform process. France encourages all Somali actors to join those discussions in order to pursue those reforms in a peaceful context.

Secondly, on the security front, I would like to underscore the mobilization of the Somali National Army and African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) troops to address the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, despite the challenges on the ground, in an extremely deteriorated humanitarian and climatic context.

Somalia is at a turning point. It is about to begin the process of withdrawing two international missions — the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and ATMIS.

Regarding UNSOM, France would like to thank all the teams deployed over the past 10 years to that special political mission. They have supported Somalia in many regards, ranging from the humanitarian response to support for the political process and the fight against climate change. France is now encouraging the United Nations and the Somali authorities to define the parameters of the forthcoming transition so that it can be carried out in an orderly fashion and its missions transferred to the United Nations country team and the Somali authorities.

ATMIS, for its part, has also played a crucial role in supporting Somalia in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Although its withdrawal started a year ago, France welcomes the work carried out by the Somali authorities and the plan transmitted by the Federal Government on 11 April to the Council, as well as by the African Union, to define the support options that can be provided to Somalia when ATMIS leaves on 31 December.

It is now up to Somalia's partners to support those efforts as quickly as possible. In that regard, France takes note of the communiqué issued by the African Union's Peace and Security Council on 20 June. France continues to believe that only a coordinated response from Somalia's partners will effectively support Mogadishu's efforts to contain the Al-Shabaab threat. That coordination will enable us not only to define

the precise objectives of that future mission and its command, but also its exit strategy, which will need to be identified as soon as it begins. France is ready to define the best way to support that strategy, with the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, troop-contributing countries and — we hope — new partners. I note that the European Union has committed over €4.3 billion to Somalia since 2009 and will continue to mobilize the tools at its disposal, within the limits of its capacities and in conjunction with other partners. It is essential that the entire international community support Somalia in its fight against terrorism.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud can count on France's support in propelling Somalia forward on the road to peace.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Sierra Leone and my own country, Mozambique, as well as Guyana (A3+).

We thank Mr. James Swan, Acting 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, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), for their excellent briefings.

We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Somalia in this meeting. The A3+ wishes to seize this occasion to convey through him our heartfelt congratulations to the people and the Government of Somalia for its brilliant election as a non-permanent member of the Council for the 2025–2026 term. We have no doubt that Somalia will make a positive and constructive contribution to the Council and to the A3+.

We are pleased with the reform measures implemented by the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia during the constitutional review process. The measures are central to the State-building process. The transition to a universal voting-rights model, expressed through one-person, one-vote elections, underscores the commitment of the Somali authorities to enhancing democratic participation, especially for women and youth. The measures represent a significant milestone in Somalia's democratic evolution.

We encourage the relevant stakeholders to engage constructively, in a spirit of compromise, to find consensus to resolve their differences and finalize the process and the electoral framework in order to address all pertinent issues. We urge the international community to continue to support that process so as to ensure its successful and timely completion.

We note that unresolved issues remain. We are of the view that a broad consensus will be needed for the adoption of any necessary constitutional amendments by the Federal Parliament of Somalia and their approval by the Somali people in a referendum.

On relations between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, we echo the words of the Secretary-General, who called “upon all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue, to seek compromise to resolve their differences and to restore consensus on key national priorities” (S/2024/426, para. 78).

In addition, we commend the concerted efforts and commitment of the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia to appoint women to senior government positions. We note, in that connection, that women's political participation and representation remains a challenge. We call on the authorities to prioritize and implement the 30 per cent quota for women in order to enhance women's political participation in the decision-making processes.

We call for enhanced efforts to address the humanitarian situation in Somalia, exacerbated by ongoing conflict and climate events. The international community must scale up its humanitarian assistance in order to address acute needs and support long-term resilience. We stress the importance of a multidimensional approach that addresses every aspect of the humanitarian crisis in Somalia.

The support provided by the United Nations to the Somali authorities has been of paramount importance and deserves to be commended. The request made by the Federal Government of Somalia concerning the future of UNSOM needs to be taken into account during our deliberations on that matter.

On the security situation, the A3+ commends the Government of Somalia for the progress made in the implementation of its security sector plan and the consolidation of the security gains made by the Somalia security forces through their offensive against Al-Shabaab. Continued logistical, financial and training

support is essential to ensure that the security sector forces can maintain and build upon the gains achieved.

We look forward to the completion of phase 3 of the ATMIS drawdown, bringing the total number of troops withdrawn to 7,000. We welcome, in that regard, the handover of numerous forward operating bases to the Somalia security forces, as mentioned by African Union Special Representative Souef in his briefing.

The A3+ looks forward to engaging with the Council regarding the post-ATMIS transition and to taking decisions that will advance the stability and security of Somalia. That is critical for the security of both Somalia and the wider region. We therefore urge the Council to seriously consider an approach to the remaining phases of the ATMIS drawdown that will safeguard against security compromises. In that vein, while mentioning the endorsement by the African Union Peace and Security Council of the request of the Federal Government of Somalia for a staggered phase 3 of the drawdown, we re-echo the request made by the same African Union organ for the African Union Commission to consider, in collaboration with the involved partners, mobilizing the necessary resources to cover the cost of the delayed drawdown of 2,000 troops.

As we engage towards the final phase of the ATMIS withdrawal plan, the transition to the post-ATMIS operation has to be carefully undertaken in order to avoid creating security gaps. With regard to the financing of that African Union-led operation, as endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council, we look forward to receiving the options to be developed through consultations between the African Union Commission and the United Nations Secretariat. We stress, in that regard, that the financing of the post-ATMIS operation must be based on a realistic, balanced and consultative approach that takes into account the hard-won security gains made by the African Union Mission in Somalia and ATMIS, with heavy sacrifices during the past 17 years, as well as the financial capabilities of all actors. It is essential for the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the European Union and the United Nations to maintain their support for the implementation of the Government's security sector development plan.

In conclusion, the A3+ would like to express its thanks and appreciation to the African Union, UNSOM, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia and

United Nations agencies, funds and programmes for their important collaborative efforts in Somalia.

Mrs. Chanda (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Acting Special Representative, Mr. Swan, and the Special Representative of the African Union, Mr. Souef, for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Somalia at this meeting. We congratulate Somalia on its election as a member of the Security Council for 2025–2026.

As we have just heard, Somalia is entering a pivotal phase in the months ahead, as it faces multiple transition processes. Advancing the essential national priorities and reforms and consolidating the progress made to that end requires a close partnership among all the actors involved.

In that regard, I would like to highlight three points.

First, a successful and responsible transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is crucial to peacebuilding in Somalia. We note the Federal Government's request to end the Mission's mandate, following a review of the Government's strategic priorities. We welcome the willingness expressed by the authorities to engage with all stakeholders in preparing for that complex transition in order to address such challenges as the humanitarian, political and economic situation and the impact of climate change. The work of the joint technical team to discuss the modalities and appropriate timing of that transition and to ensure a successful handover to the United Nations country team will be important. We look forward to an update on those matters in August, as requested by the Council.

Secondly, with regard to the transition to democracy, we welcome recent efforts to tackle the delicate task of advancing the constitutional review process. We stress the importance of a transparent, inclusive and consensus-driven process, with the participation of all stakeholders. In that regard, we call on all federal member states, including Puntland, to participate in that process and on all parties to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue. Worrying gaps persist in terms of women's involvement. Switzerland supports various local partners that are working to empower women to participate in decision-making and in the establishment of inclusive political processes. Women's participation is a fundamental pillar of peacebuilding and promoting national cohesion.

Thirdly, as the offensive against Al-Shabaab remains at the forefront of security concerns, the security transition to the drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) must be guided by the situation on the ground in order to prevent a security vacuum. That transition and the mandate of a follow-on mission of the African Union in Somalia, as supported by the African Union Peace and Security Council on Friday, must be guided by respect for international law, in particular international humanitarian law. We recognize the efforts made by the Federal Government and ATMIS to determine Somalia's security needs. In that context, we remain concerned about the continuing threat posed by Al-Shabaab in the near future, including after the withdrawal of ATMIS.

I would like to congratulate the two missions, UNSOM and ATMIS, on their support for Somalia. Switzerland will continue to work together with Somalia and its people during this critical transition phase and in their efforts to build peace and a prosperous future.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Acting Special Representative Swan and Special Representative Souef for their briefings, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia to this meeting.

At the outset, China congratulates Somalia on its election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2025–2026. As Somalia's political and security situation enters a critical stage, the international community should provide more targeted support in order to help Somalia achieve lasting peace and development.

In that regard, I would like to emphasize three points.

First, there is a need to steadily advance the political process. China welcomes the National Consultative Council meeting held by the Federal Government of Somalia with the federal member state governments in May this year to discuss such major issues as constitutional review and the electoral system. China hopes that all parties in Somalia will put the interests of the country and its people first and resolve differences through dialogue and consultation. The international community should adhere to the principle of a Somali-led and Somali-owned process and avoid external pressure and interference or the imposition of any governance model.

Over the years, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has made great efforts to support Somalia in advancing the political transition process and security sector reform. China supports UNSOM in formulating, as soon as possible, a scientific and reasonable transition timetable that corresponds to the development of the situation and is in accordance with the requirements of the Somali Government so as to ensure a smooth and orderly transition from UNSOM to the United Nations country team.

Secondly, a smooth and safe transition must be ensured. Recently, the terrorist group Al-Shabaab launched attacks in the capital, Mogadishu, and other places, causing a large number of civilian casualties. That indicates that the security situation in Somalia is still facing challenges. The international community should continue to support Somalia in building up its security forces, carrying out counter-terrorism operations and gradually taking over security responsibilities independently. The African Union (AU) has long made important contributions to peace and stability in Somalia. Last week, the Peace and Security Council of the AU issued a communiqué on the future arrangement of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). China supports the Security Council in making appropriate adjustments to the ATMIS drawdown plan in accordance with the relevant decisions of the AU and in proactively exploring how to continue to provide support to Somalia in future so as to avoid a security vacuum. Currently, ATMIS and the follow-on arrangements are facing a funding shortage. In his report (S/2024/426), the Secretary-General calls on donors to increase their contributions. China hopes that the traditional developed-country donors will respond to the Secretary-General's appeal and actively close the funding gap.

Thirdly, overall regional stability must be maintained. Somalia is an important country in the Horn of Africa. Peace and stability in Somalia and good neighbourly relations among the countries of the region serve the interests of all countries there. We have consistently advocated upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and supported the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia to safeguard national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In 2022, China put forward an initiative for peaceful development in the Horn of Africa in support of the countries of the region in achieving long-term

peace, stability, development and prosperity in an independent and autonomous manner and joining hands in addressing the three challenges of security, development and governance. Today China held the senior officials meeting of the second Horn of Africa peace conference in Beijing. China is ready to work with the countries of the Horn of Africa to jointly make it an area of peace and cooperation with development and prosperity.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Swan, and the Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their briefings. We welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia, Mr. Abukar Dahir Osman, to this meeting. We would like to congratulate him and the entire Somali delegation on having been elected to the Security Council as a non-permanent member for the period 2025–2026.

We have been closely following the developments in the friendly Federal Republic of Somalia. We are concerned that the security situation in the country continues to be characterized by a significant terrorist threat, deep-rooted territorial and clan-based fragmentation of society and an extremely acute humanitarian situation. We commend and support Mogadishu's efforts to stabilize the domestic political situation. We note the revitalization of the National Consultative Council's work, thanks to which important agreements have been reached between the federal leadership and the federal states on implementing key national priorities. Those priorities include preparing a plan to transfer responsibility for security in the country from ATMIS to the Somali National Army, forming an independent drafting commission to draw up the federal constitution, improving the electoral system and adopting an electoral timetable.

A landmark event in terms of achieving State-building goals was the Parliament's approval on 30 March of constitutional amendments that considerably strengthened the role of the central authorities. We hope that all participants in the political process, including the leaders of the states of Somaliland and Puntland, will continue to work with Mogadishu to stabilize the domestic political situation and to establish a sustainable model for the federal structure. We believe that it is necessary to ensure the territorial integrity and unity of Somalia.

Somali national security forces and African Union peacekeepers are playing a key role in the fight against terrorism and in stabilizing the situation. We pay tribute to all those who are fighting and giving their lives for that cause. We support the efforts of the international community to strengthen the capacity of the national forces and of ATMIS. We trust that the staffing of the Mission will not be affected by political differences between the Somali Government and troop-contributing countries. As a matter of principle, we are convinced that the drawdown of the ATMIS contingent should be carried out in accordance with the plan adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Federal Republic of Somalia as the country's army becomes ready to fully protect civilians, State institutions and infrastructure throughout its territory. In that regard, we express our support for the principles set out in the 20 June communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on the step-by-step implementation of the third phase of the ATMIS drawdown.

We count on the coordinated work of the United Nations presence in the country. We hope that the process of reconfiguring the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia into a United Nations country team will proceed in an orderly manner and in accordance with the timetable agreed upon during consultations between Mogadishu and the leadership of the United Nations.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Mohamed El-Amine Souef for their informative briefings. I also would like to welcome the presence of the representative of Somalia and to congratulate Somalia on its successful election as a member of the Security Council for the term 2025–2026. We look forward to Somalia's contribution to the Council.

Let me extend a warm welcome back to Acting Special Representative Swan. His vast knowledge and expertise will be a great asset to United Nations efforts in Somalia, which are in the middle of a critical transition. Japan will continue to work closely with him.

The third phase of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) drawdown is getting closer to its end. We pay tribute to all ATMIS personnel and the Somali security forces for their sacrifice to

build peace in the region. The Federal Government of Somalia's strong commitment to its security transition plan is commendable. We respect its strong will and support its ongoing efforts.

The joint technical assessment report on the lessons learned from phases 1 and 2 of the ATMIS drawdown indicated heightened challenges in handovers of remote ATMIS forward operating bases and an insufficiency of Somali force generation. The sufficient deployment of Somali security forces must keep pace with the ongoing ATMIS drawdown in order to mitigate any negative impacts on local communities. As offensive operations against Al-Shabaab advance into its remaining strongholds, security sector reform should be further accelerated. To support the effort of the Federal Government of Somalia, Japan has been supporting the capacity development of the Somali Police Force in newly recovered areas. The support from the neighbouring ATMIS troop-contributing countries is playing a vital role in the Somali security transition. Any regional tensions risk further complicating the already difficult path towards stability and must be addressed through constructive dialogues in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

We note the proposal from the Federal Government of Somalia and the ongoing discussions in the African Union (AU) on the post-ATMIS security configuration, with an AU-led mission that is expected to be limited in size, scope and time frame. The mandate of such a mission should be duly prioritized and implemented in a steadfast manner. We welcome the region-led deliberations on securing peace and stability in Somalia, and the Security Council must engage constructively with the regional efforts by examining every possible option.

Somali society, especially in areas newly liberated from Al-Shabaab, needs to develop resilience to counter any influence by negative forces. That requires a whole-of-society approach, based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) has been serving as a vehicle to complement related national efforts for a long time, through various support activities, including those that advance the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas.

Now, in responding to the request from the Federal Government of Somalia, we must deliberate on how best

we can achieve a successful and orderly transition from UNSOM to the United Nations country team. To that end, the joint technical team of the Secretariat and the Federal Government of Somalia must build a common understanding regarding the impacts the transition will have on ongoing Somali State-building efforts. Building upon that, the team should determine the appropriate modalities and time frame for the transition. We cannot lose the hard-won gains in that transition process.

Japan remains committed to contributing, together with all our partners, to the collective endeavour of advancing sustainable peace and stability in Somalia and the region.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I would like to thank Ambassador Swan and Ambassador Souef for their briefings. We are grateful for Ambassador Swan's return to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

I would like to congratulate my colleague from Somalia on his country's election to membership in the Security Council next year. My delegation welcomes him to this meeting. We look forward to working closely with Somalia and the other newly elected members of the Council.

UNSOM plays a critical role in supporting the Federal Government of Somalia's reform and reconciliation priorities. That is an essential part of the overall package of security assistance authorized by the Council to help Somalia achieve peace and security. UNSOM's presence and mandate are all the more important as Somalia, the African Union (AU) and the international community prepare for the transition of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). The United States welcomes the intention to establish a joint technical team to look towards future modalities and timelines for UNSOM's transition. It is critical that we regularly measure progress towards important benchmarks and ensure that the international presence in Somalia is fit for purpose — effectively supporting Somalia's progress towards good governance, rule of law, constitutional review, federalization, stabilization and democratization.

At the same time, reaching an agreement on a post-ATMIS force is urgent. There is frankly very little time to finalize the size, scope and mandate of a new mission that can be operational by 1 January 2025. We welcome the international consensus in support of a follow-on mission to ATMIS and urge stakeholders to complete

initial planning steps as soon as possible. Doing so is critical to maintaining stability while Somalia continues to develop its security sector.

The United States remains deeply concerned about political tension between Ethiopia and Somalia and the negative impact it is having on shared security interests. We join the AU and other international partners in reiterating our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia. Diplomatic dialogue is the way to de-escalate tensions, and the only way forward. At the same time, it is vital that regional tensions not set back Somalia's efforts on critical State-building initiatives or the Government's campaign to degrade Al-Shabaab. It is also critical that regional tensions not interfere with planning for and the deployment of a post-ATMIS mission. We cannot risk the creation of dangerous security gaps or the additional expenses that would be associated with entire changes in troop contributors.

I want to raise one more issue today, and that is the issue of impunity. Let us be clear — individuals and entities who fuel conflict in Somalia and the region must be held accountable. To that end, we were happy to see the recent designation of three Al-Shabaab operatives in the Al-Shabaab sanctions regime. We must support all efforts to hold bad actors to account, and just as importantly — if not more importantly — we must lift up change-makers across Somalia who are helping to build a better future for all. That must be our charge.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Swan and African Union (AU) Special Representative Souef for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia to this meeting.

I also take the opportunity to congratulate Somalia on its election to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. We look forward to working together next year.

Before coming to my points on Somalia, let me congratulate all our colleagues in the Council and the United Nations on the International Day of Women in Diplomacy. Today we celebrate and honour women who are significantly contributing to making this world a better and more peaceful place.

I would like to make the following remarks.

First, we offer our full support for the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), and we commend the substantial contribution made by the Mission and its staff. Slovenia takes note of

the request for the termination of UNSOM and transition to a United Nations country team. We recognize the consent of the host country as a key ingredient of UNSOM's mandate. At the same time, we encourage a collaborative process towards transformation, and we underline the need for any transition to be gradual, planned and carefully managed — a transition that safeguards the gains achieved by the Mission in the years since its inception.

Secondly, we urge Somalia to continue with constitutional and other political reforms, and we call on Puntland to return to the National Consultative Council and participate meaningfully in its work. Furthermore, we reiterate our call for a full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of Somali women in political and public life. A step forward would be passing legislation and codifying the minimum 30 per cent quota for the political participation of women. We welcome the announcement of a climate action investment programme by the Green Climate Fund, and we urge Somalia to use all available resources to achieve its climate goals.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the general security situation in the country. More than 3.8 million people are displaced, the majority of whom are women and children. Increasing numbers of civilian casualties remind us that the fight against Al-Shabaab is far from over. We condemn in the strongest terms all grave violations and abuses committed against children by Al-Shabaab and other parties to the conflict. We strongly urge Somalia to do its utmost to prevent and punish such violations, regardless of the perpetrators. We call on Somalia to enhance its cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the country task force on monitoring and reporting on the ground. We furthermore condemn sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. We call for accountability for those violations. We reiterate the importance of adopting legislation to protect women and girls and to end harmful practices.

As the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) continues its planned drawdown, we should avoid a security vacuum. We take note of the AU Peace and Security Council communiqué supporting the phased approach to phase 3 of the drawdown of ATMIS and endorsing the establishment of a new AU-led mission for Somalia. Slovenia supports in principle the

plans for a new AU-led multilateral mission to replace ATMIS. Somalia should continue to engage with the African Union and its security partners, including the European Union, as the main donor to ATMIS. The new mission should have adequate, predictable and sustainable financing, a clearly defined mandate and an exit strategy.

In closing, let me reiterate our continued support to UNSOM and ATMIS as they continue to execute their mandates.

Mr. Camilleri (Malta): I thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General Swan and African Union (AU) Special Representative El-Amine Souef for their remarks. We also welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia to the Chamber today and avail ourselves of this occasion to congratulate Somalia on being elected to serve as a member of the Council in 2025–2026.

Malta welcomes Somalia's determination to forge a stronger, unified, peaceful and prosperous future for its people. That should also serve as momentum for cooperation, including with the Security Council and its subsidiary bodies, to find solutions together to the many challenges to securing peace and security.

On the political front, we recognize the milestone achieved through the adoption of the first four chapters of the Provisional Constitution. We support the legitimate call of women parliamentarians for the inclusion of a minimum 30 per cent quota for women in elections. We trust that that quota will be incorporated into upcoming legislative electoral frameworks to ensure an inclusive process. Additionally, we welcome the role of the United Nations in strengthening efforts on human rights and standards, particularly regarding female genital mutilation and the age of majority. Those aspects, along with an open dialogue and genuine engagement, remain necessary pillars.

We take note of Somalia's request for the closure of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and emphasize that a smooth transfer of tasks to the country team is of paramount importance. An exchange of views between the Council and the Somali authorities is also useful.

We commend UNSOM's role since its inception. That includes its support for political processes, launching of a new programme to finalize constitutional review and strengthening of dialogues with all societal

groups and federal member states. Recently, UNSOM coordinated a four-week training of 10 Somali Navy and Coast Guard personnel. We recognize UNSOM's significant role in supporting the Federal Government in preventing violent extremism.

Al-Shabaab continues to pose a serious threat to Somalia's peace and security, with the recent rocket attack launched in Mogadishu and the use of improvised explosive devices, resulting in 300 casualties. We strongly condemn Al-Shabaab's offensives and the number of violations attributed to the group, including the continued abduction of children for recruitment. We wholeheartedly support the efforts of the Somali Government to address these challenges.

The Council is tasked with adopting a resolution outlining the next steps towards the closure of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the definition of a new security framework. That will see Somalia assume the primary responsibility to protect its people. While Malta is fully aware that the United Nations Secretariat and the secretariat of the African Union require time to adopt joint guidelines, resolution 2719 (2023) can play a key role in addressing gaps for the AU-led component of the upcoming Somali security framework, while maintaining the logistical support provided by the United Nations Support Office for Somalia under United Nations assessed contributions. We recall that the European Union has provided more than €2.6 billion in support of the African Union Mission in Somalia/ATMIS military, police and civilian components since the deployment of the Mission in 2007.

We are deeply concerned that Somalia remains vulnerable to climate change, which induces further humanitarian suffering. Malta welcomes the launch of the Somalia Humanitarian Fund Reserve allocation for 2024, which will also help to mitigate the impacts of anticipated heavy rains and floods.

Within the last four months, 17 incidents involved violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities, with three aid workers reportedly kidnapped and later released. Ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian personnel is paramount and non-negotiable.

To conclude, we are convinced that through strengthened coordination among stakeholders, we will take significant steps towards the goal of transferring

the baton to Somalia for its security. We reiterate our steadfast support to that end.

Mr. Montalvo Sosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Swan, and the Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, Mr. Mohammed El-Amine Souef, for the information provided. I recognize the presence of the representative of Somalia in the Chamber, and I would like to convey to him Ecuador's congratulations on his country's election to the Security Council for the period 2025–2026. We wish him every success in that important role.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2024/426) alerts us that Somalia continues to face complex security challenges. In that area, despite the efforts made, it has not been possible to counteract the violence of Al-Shabaab, which continues to undermine the country's stability and claim innocent lives. The fight against terrorism must be approached from several fronts. One of those fronts — and perhaps the primary one — is attacking the root causes of violence, which entails the need to provide the people with decent livelihoods to prevent the tentacles of terrorism from recruiting new followers. Al-Shabaab's use of improvised explosive devices is reprehensible, as are the ongoing human rights violations, including the recruitment of children, perpetrated by that terrorist group. Those actions attest to the destructive nature of those groups and underscore the need for concerted action to eradicate the threat that they pose.

The guidance of United Nations specialized agencies such as the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate, among others, would be very useful in ensuring that the Somali forces wage their fight against terrorism within a framework of respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

We note the recent communiqué of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on Somalia supporting a phased approach to the ATMIS drawdown to avoid security gaps and endorsing the establishment of a new AU-led mission to support Somalia post-ATMIS, focused on security and counter-terrorism and with predictable, sustainable and adequate funding, through resolution 2719 (2023).

Regarding the political arena, I would like to make three points. First, there is a need for constructive and inclusive dialogue in the process of revising the

Provisional Constitution. Secondly, the reform aimed at the holding of one-person, one-vote elections constitutes a significant advance that strengthens democracy. Thirdly, women's full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in political life is crucial. In that regard, efforts to meet the 30 per cent quota for women's participation must continue.

In terms of the economy, I will highlight three important points. First, under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, the country must reach the milestone of reducing external debt to 6 per cent of its gross domestic product. Secondly, it requires successful access to climate finance — something of which countries adversely affected by that human-made phenomenon are in dire need. Thirdly, as the humanitarian situation in Somalia remains critical, international assistance must not stop.

The transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia must be carried out in an orderly manner so that the United Nations country office can continue to monitor and report on human rights violations. That orderly and gradual transition should also apply to ATMIS, avoiding security gaps and prioritizing the protection of civilians.

The stability of Somalia and the region is compromised by the Somaliland issue. The parties must resort to peaceful means to resolve their differences, within the framework of international law.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Republic of Korea.

I thank Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan and African Union Special Representative Mohamed Souef for their informative briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of Somalia in today's meeting and congratulate Somalia on its election to the Security Council.

Somalia stands at a critical juncture in its State-building process, with Al-Shabaab's expansive activity raising concerns about the impending transition of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), persistent regional tensions and recurrent humanitarian crises that are increasingly driven by climate change. In the light of those circumstances, I would like to make three points.

First, we welcome the efforts made on the constitutional review process and the commitment by

the Somali authorities to conduct one-person, one-vote elections at both the national and the subnational level. That progress should continue to proceed in an inclusive and consensus-based manner, particularly regarding the relationship between the Federal Government and Puntland. Throughout that process, ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and maintaining a safe and inclusive civic space are crucial. Against that backdrop, a successful and orderly transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is vital to consolidate progress on Somalia's path to peace and stability. We encourage UNSOM and the Somali authorities to engage closely to determine the modalities and timelines in that regard.

Secondly, Al-Shabaab's continued threat to Somalia and the region's peace and security is deeply concerning. Recent reports of Al-Shabaab's heavy recruitment and takeover of the Somali National Army's hard-won gains in central Somalia present a serious risk of security gaps amid the drawdown and transition of ATMIS. That is why the international community should focus on establishing an effective post-ATMIS mission led by the African Union (AU) and authorized by the Security Council. It is imperative to avoid further risk of sliding back and allowing opportunistic expansion by Al-Shabaab. In that regard, we take note of the communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council adopted last week. Among other factors, predictable and sustainable funding for the post-ATMIS phase is essential. We acknowledge the AU's request for access to United Nations-assessed contributions in accordance with resolution 2719 (2023). As demonstrated in the joint declaration of the 2024 Korea-Africa Summit, which was successfully held earlier in June with the participation of 34 Heads of State or Government, Korea reaffirms the importance of strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture through supporting the deployment of peace support operations. In that regard, Korea will contribute \$5 million to the AU's peace and security activities in 2024.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation, increasingly driven by climate change, remains dire, with 7 million people needing assistance and 4 million facing acute food insecurity. The crisis disproportionately affects women and children, who comprise 80 per cent of Somalia's almost 4 million displaced people. Last year, Korea contributed \$2.3 million to support humanitarian needs in the Horn of Africa region, and it plans to continue that support to Somalia this year as well.

In conclusion, we reiterate our unwavering support for UNSOM, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, ATMIS and key organizations in the region. Korea stands ready to support a successful transition in Somalia and hopes that the Council will gather the consensual wisdom and political will to preserve and build on the legacy of its decades of engagement in the country.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June and to wish you and your delegation every success. I also commend the Permanent Representative of the brotherly country of Mozambique for his leadership at the helm of the Council last month. I welcome the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Swan, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their valuable briefings.

Regarding the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) mandate, we welcome the appointment of Acting Special Representative Swan and look forward to working with him on the transition from special political Mission to United Nations country team. The joint technical team has commenced its engagement in planning for the transition's modalities and timeline.

Inclusive politics are at the heart of all meaningful change as Somalia strives to attain good governance, community cohesion and sustainable development, underpinned by common ownership and joint responsibility. We are working towards inclusive dialogue and broad-based consensus in building on issues of national priority, including preparations for the upcoming one-person, one-vote elections and the constitutional review process. The Federal Government of Somalia is committed to effectively delivering free, fair and credible elections that provide representation for all the people of Somalia. We are cognizant that our goals will not be met without the cooperation and engagement of the federal member states. They are a vital component of governance in Somalia, and it is essential that all Somalis work in partnership in realizing national objectives.

Regarding security developments, defeating Al-Shabaab remains Somalia's key security priority. We have been engaged in a successful offensive operation against Al-Shabaab. Owing to the courage and sacrifices of the Somali National Army and troop-contributing countries, Al-Shabaab has been reduced to carrying out opportunistic attacks on soft targets and broadcasting doctored propaganda videos and images. In the past two years, many plots to kill innocent people have been foiled and many Al-Shabaab operatives have been neutralized. Despite the courage and sacrifices of our gallant Somali security forces in the ongoing offensive operations, we continue to develop our security forces to protect our citizens and take over full security responsibility from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). We are grateful to all those friends who are actively assisting us to accomplish this fundamental goal: that only Somalis can defend Somalia and its citizens. Yet adequate, sustainable and predictable funding to address the shortfalls of Somali national forces remains a challenge to the fast-tempo offensive operations against Al-Shabaab.

The Government of Somalia is extending local governance to the liberated areas to address the priority needs of the population swiftly and sustainably and to build their confidence in lasting peace and good governance. In that context, last Saturday, we resumed 12th grade national exams for 37,000 students throughout Somalia. That is major progress towards the consolidation of peace and development, in particular for the city of Laascaanood in the northern region, which last year suffered eight months of brutal

terror, indiscriminate killings and bombardment, causing the destruction of schools and disruption to all academic activities.

Regarding the security transition, we have completed phases 1 and 2, while phase 3 is under way and should be finalized by September, despite the unnecessary disruptions caused by Ethiopian forces. They have unilaterally altered handovers and withdrawals from forward operating bases situated on the front lines of the Al-Shabaab fight without prior coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia. Meanwhile, in the past few weeks, non-ATMIS Ethiopian troops illegally crossed our border from different locations, engaging in confrontations with the Somali security forces. In the light of those circumstances, the Somali Government must postpone the transition to September and engage with the African Union on the timely and orderly drawdown of phase 3.

The Somali Government cautions the Council about the implications of those destabilizing actions in Somalia and the wider region. Somalia reaffirms its commitment to respecting the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and good neighbourliness, and we expect Ethiopia to do the same by reconsidering its memorandum of misadventure without any further delay.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.