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OPENING REMARKS

TO THE

SOMALIA SECURITY CONFERENCE

BY

DR. ALHADJI SARJOH BAH

**DIRECTOR,
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
DIRECTORATE**

NEW YORK,

12 December 2023.

His Excellency President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia

H.E Rosemary Di Carlo, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

H.E Linda Greenfield United States Ambassador to United Nations

H.E Sheikh Shakhboot Nahyan Al Nahyan: State Minister of Foreign Affairs, United Arab Emirates

Partners of Somalia,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Bankole Adeoye, it is an honour and a privilege to co-chair this security conference. I would also like to express the gratitude of the African Union Commission to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) for inviting the African Union (AU) to co-chair this important event.

Allow me to start by congratulating H.E. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for hosting what is a timely and welcome event. At a time when Africa is witnessing the multiplication of conflicts, the African Union Commission (AUC) is pleased to note that in Somalia, we are experiencing a “wind of change” – where a positive transformation is taking place at different levels.

The AU recognises President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's strong leadership, which has been instrumental in Somalia's positive progress. Under his stewardship, Somalia is uniting and investing in rebuilding international relationships. The fact that this conference is taking place here at the United Nations Headquarters is a testament to Somalia's commitment to peace, security and international cooperation.

The AU is proud of its longstanding collaboration with Somalia over the last sixteen years, as it is a key member state in the Horn of Africa. We have supported Somalia in various areas, reflecting some of the AU’s broader continental priorities.

Our most significant investment to date has been in Somalia’s security sector, at great cost to our Troop/Police Contributing Countries (T/PCCs). I salute our men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace in Somalia.

With the sacrifices of the Troop/Police Contributing Countries, combined with the bravery of Somalia Security Forces (SSF), Somalia has conducted three successive elections with peaceful power transfers since 2012. They have jointly provided space for the deepening

of federalisation across Somalia that we see advancing today. They have also enabled key priorities such as achieving debt relief by the end of this month, advancing the constitution review process, and the recent historic lifting of the arms embargo to allow Somalia to occupy its rightful place in the community of nations.

Our collective efforts in providing further space to allow institutional building and wide-range legislation have helped Somalia attract regional and international confidence. Somalia's admission to the East African Community (EAC) is a significant endorsement of the continued progress the country is making under the leadership of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. This step supports Somalia's Centennial Vision 2060 for long-term prosperity. It also brings Somalia closer to the AU, supporting our master plan for transforming Africa into a global powerhouse of the future through Agenda 2063.

Beyond the AU's ongoing security assistance to securing peace and security in Somalia, our solidarity has extended to Somalia through financial support. In operationalising the Crisis Reserve Facility of the AU Peace Fund, we have contributed US\$2 million in 2023 towards ATMIS costs and will contribute an additional US\$1.5 million before the end of 2023. This will bring the AU Peace Fund's total contribution to Somalia in 2023 to \$3.5 million.

In recognition of the importance African Union member states also attach to supporting the peace efforts in Somalia, African Union member states will contribute US\$19 million to ATMIS's budget in 2024 to partially cover the ATMIS budget gap.

Returning to the theme of today's meeting and given that Somalia's key security partners are co-chairing here, the African Union has four key messages to share that could shape our discussions.

First, we thank the Federal Government for developing the 'White Paper' on security and security sector development and for its inclusive process, which included the African Union's participation.

We believe it is essential that Somalia begins to outline its vision for security and identify what future support will be required from international partners, including the African Union.

As a key supporter of Somalia's peace and security, the African Union will continue to offer its unwavering support towards its efforts – and not abandon one of its founding members in its hour of need.

In this context, we also welcome the resolve of Somalia's immediate neighbours to continue supporting its peace efforts. As we have all learned, a security vacuum is unworkable in Somalia. The African Union believes this conference is a starting point for engagement on Somalia's post-conflict reconstruction and stability.

Second, it is clear that the Federal Government is taking a bold step towards state-building, and the African Union supports this move. The expectation is that this will speed up Somalia's ability to take full responsibility for its own security.

However, to achieve this, the African Union urges Somalia to maintain its tradition of reaching a political consensus. In this context, we look forward to seeing closer relations between the Federal Government and Federal Member States, particularly through the National Consultative Council (NCC) under President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's leadership. This forum, we believe, will ensure that all Somalis share a strong and united vision.

Third, as we focus on Somalia's longer-term security and development, we must maintain sight of the 'now' phase as articulated in the 'White Paper' by the Federal Government. We must sustain the progress made by the Somali Security Forces (SSF) in liberating over eighty (80) locations from Al-Shabaab by investing more in stabilisation efforts and non-military approaches.

The Federal Government must take more ownership of security, and we should collectively continue to support the SSF in maintaining pressure on Al-Shabaab. Although Al-Shabaab is proving resilient, it is not resurgent. At the African Union and the SSF, we are doing everything possible to ensure that Al-Shabaab cannot exploit the preparations for the phase 2 drawdown.

Fourth, as mentioned earlier, the African Union has made significant investments in the security sector in Somalia. We have played a critical role in maintaining security in Somalia, and this has been possible due to the unwavering support of our strategic partners such as the United Kingdom, United States, United Nations, and particularly the European Union, who have all stood by Somalia since 2007.

But as we approach 2024, we must shift our discussion to post-ATMIS - a topic we will discuss in the afternoon session. It is also a top priority issue for the African Union, and we believe that ATMIS's exit strategy must be orderly and coordinated. It will require the African Union to carefully listen to the Federal Government on what future security framework can best respond to Somalia's security needs from January 2025.

Before today's afternoon session on post-ATMIS, let me share some mutually supporting points on a post-ATMIS security framework.

In reaching a consensus on what comes following ATMIS's departure in December 2024, the African Union is convinced this must be realistic, learn from the lessons of AMISOM's transition, be inclusive, and have the full support of the African Union Peace and Security Council (AU PSC).

I thank you.