



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Zhang Jun/Mr. Dai Bing	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Dame Barbara Woodward
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2021/485)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of welcome on return to the Chamber

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome all members of the Security Council back to the Chamber. This is the first time in the past six months that the Council is convening an in-person meeting. With the improvement of the situation of the pandemic, the United Nations Headquarters and the Security Council are gradually resuming their work. At the same time, we hope that, until the pandemic officially ends, we will remain vigilant and abide by the regulations so as to pave the way for the Council's normal work.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2021/485)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): 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. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in the meeting: Mr. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia; and Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union 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/2021/485, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Swan.

Mr. Swan: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the

situation in Somalia. I am pleased to do so again together with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission for Somalia, Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira. That underscores the importance of the relationship between our two organizations in Somalia. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) continues to play a critical role in Somalia every day, and I commend the bravery and determination of the Somali and AMISOM forces as they advance peace and security in the country. I also very much look forward to the comments of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud.

The political process to implement elections in Somalia has faced many obstacles in recent months. The talks between the Federal Government and the leaders of the federal member states, which began in March, regrettably broke down in early April. Abandoning the 17 September electoral agreement, the House of the People of the Somali Parliament then adopted a special law, reverting to a one-person-one-vote model and extending the mandates of the current office holders for up to two more years. Opposition to such moves led to the mobilization of militias and exposed divisions within the Somali security forces. Violent clashes ensued on 25 April, risking broader conflict.

Since then, Somalia has come back from the brink of that worst-case scenario. Under intense pressure, on 1 May the House of the People reversed the special law at the request of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo. The President subsequently empowered the Prime Minister to lead the Federal Government of Somalia's involvement in the electoral process, including the security arrangements and negotiations with the federal member states. Those measures greatly eased tensions.

I commend all the Somali leaders who sought compromise and consensus during that period in order to de-escalate the situation in the interests of the nation and the Somali people. That spirit of compromise remains an urgent necessity going forward.

Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble convened a new summit between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states on 22 May. That is a welcome return to dialogue after the earlier period of confrontation. Following a series of closed-door confidence-building meetings, discussions are

now centred on resolving the outstanding issues related to the implementation of the 17 September agreement and the proposals of the Baidoa technical committee. We are encouraged that a positive atmosphere prevails so far, and all sides report progress being made in the discussion. And if I may add, the news this afternoon is also highly positive. It appears that the Somali principals are very close to an agreement, but it will for them to announce that. We hope it will be delivered in the coming hours.

The United Nations team has been honoured to support the Office of the Prime Minister in arrangements for the summit and greatly appreciates the contributions of key donors in that regard. We are coordinating closely with the African Union, the European Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other partners in our diplomatic engagements. With regard to those concerted diplomatic efforts, we deeply regret the Somali Government's rejection of the African Union High Representative for Somalia.

I once again urge Somali leaders to find solutions in good faith and to demonstrate the leadership the country requires of them at this historic moment. The signatories to the 17 September agreement must now commit to a clear way forward with the holding of elections. Without that, progress on key national priorities will continue to be hampered — or worse, reversed — in critical areas, including in the security, economic and development sectors.

In proceeding to elections, it is crucial that the women's minimum 30 per cent representation in both houses of the federal Parliament be implemented. The inclusion of women, but also of youth and minority groups, in political decision-making going forward is necessary to ensure the development of the country and sustainable peace in Somalia.

The security situation continues to be of grave concern. Al-Shabaab remains a serious threat, manifesting the ability to plan and execute complex attacks on a range of targets across Somalia. Recent incidents are outlined in greater detail in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/485). Suffice it to say that Al-Shabaab has demonstrated both initiative and resilience in recent months. The operations of the Somali security forces and AMISOM therefore remain crucial in maintaining the pressure on that group.

Some progress has been made in the implementation of the revised Somalia transition plan. Key developments

include the handover of forward operating bases in Awdheegle and Bariirre to the Somali National Army, near the end of 2020, and Afgooye, in March 2021. In early April, Awdheegle and Bariirre came under attack by Al-Shabaab, but Somali forces displayed great courage and held their ground.

The pace of implementation of the Somali transition plan has been impacted negatively by the political impasse. Major commitments are behind schedule, and significant efforts will be needed to accelerate progress. The United Nations Support Office in Somalia continues to provide logistical support to AMISOM and stands ready to continue to furnish non-lethal support to the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force using voluntary contributions to the trust fund in support of the Somali security forces, as authorized by the Security Council. I note with great concern that the trust fund will be depleted by the end of June. Without urgent contributions, that vital operational and life-saving support to the Somali security forces will cease.

Meanwhile the United Nations and the African Union continue to engage on the way forward in relation to the Somali security transition and a future reconfigured AU mission. The AU and United Nations are in the initial stages of those discussions at Headquarters level, and further updates will be provided to the Security Council as preparations advance in line with the relevant resolutions of the Council.

The humanitarian situation is still dire, with 5.9 million Somalis, or more than one third of the population, in need of humanitarian assistance this year. Of those, over 3 million are in acute need of life-saving assistance. While 80 per cent of the country is impacted by drought conditions, heavy rains are at the same time causing seasonal flash flooding in some riverine areas. Erratic climatic shocks have led to greater displacement and increased food insecurity. Regrettably only 19 per cent of the humanitarian response plan for 2021 has so far been funded. That will not be enough to respond to the life-saving needs of Somalis across the country. I appeal to Member States to make further contributions.

On a more positive note, Somalia received the first batch of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccines through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility in March. The United Nations has worked closely with Government counterparts to ensure the effective distribution and administering of the vaccines to

front-line workers. As of today, Somalia has been able to administer 42 per cent of the 300,000 doses of the vaccines it received. Going forward, it is essential that the international community continue to support Somalia's needs for achieving optimal vaccination coverage.

Let me conclude by underscoring the opportunity now before Somalia's leaders. It is imperative that the ongoing summit in Mogadishu yield an implementable agreement to hold elections in the shortest time possible. Without such an agreement, along with the goodwill and sincerity to implement it, the gains that have been made in Somalia in recent years may be reversed, risking further instability and insecurity. I therefore greatly appreciate the close attention the Council continues to pay to the situation in Somalia.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Swan for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Madeira.

Mr. Madeira: Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your country, China, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. I thank you, Sir, for inviting me to brief this organ on the situation in Somalia.

In the period under consideration, localized floods, below-average rainfall and a desert locust infestation are adversely impacting populations in various regions of Somalia. In Jawhar and its environs, the Hirshabelle River burst its banks, and many villages have been submerged. There were 338,000 people directly affected by those floods. On the other hand, Mataban, Bulu-Burte, Mahaday and Balcad received below-average rainfall and will need humanitarian assistance

Huge swarms of desert locusts landed in Middle Shabelle, devastating pasture and farms. Areas such as Gambole, Fido, Ceel Dhere and Ceel Qoxle, in Middle Shabelle, and Ferfer and Decor, in the Hiraan region, have been particularly hit. Government efforts alleviate the plight of the affected populations. Clearly, it needs to be boosted by continued and dedicated support from the international community.

The months of February, March and April were months of very concerning political tension in Somalia. National political stakeholders could not reach a compromise on how to approach the outstanding issues and take the country to elections at the earliest time possible. That tension threatened to drive the country to the brink, but Somali wisdom prevailed and averted the

tension from deteriorating into widespread violence. We congratulate the Somalis on that.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo addressed the people of Somalia. He requested the Lower House of Parliament to reverse the decisions of 12 April and reinstate the indirect election model as enshrined in the agreement of 17 September. The Prime Minister assumed full responsibility over implementing the electoral process and ensuring the security of the elections, thus easing the prevailing political tension. He subsequently entered into intense engagement with the members of the Council of Presidential Candidates, opposition leaders, women's organizations, elders, the business community and other representatives of civil society organizations and generated tremendous consensus among Somali stakeholders on how to successfully approach the situation.

This has led to all soldiers and armed groups that were behind the armed confrontations in the city accepting and returning to their bases. It also led to all the federal member state leaders and the Governor of Banaadir agreeing to return without preconditions to the negotiating table on 20 May to finalize discussions on the outstanding issues and move in earnest towards the implementation of the 17 September agreement.

Today's meeting of the Security Council is taking place at the moment when the Somalia national consultative meeting is in its fourth day of consultations. We are informed that there is like-mindedness, firm commitment to let the higher interests of the country prevail, and engagement in a frank and open dialogue capable of leading to consensus and compromise on all the contentious issues regarding the implementation of the 17 September agreement, including the 16 February recommendations of the Baidoa technical committee for the holding of indirect elections.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union welcomed those very important and encouraging developments. It commended the Somali political stakeholders for the great show of leadership, commitment to the welfare of their people and profound sense of national unity and solidarity. Accordingly, the African Union, in close cooperation with Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United Nations and the European Union, encouraged the continued engagement among key stakeholders, invited them to refrain from actions that might delay or obstruct the ongoing negotiation process, highlighted

the need for the establishment of an appropriate follow-up mechanism to sustain the implementation of the summit outcomes and further reiterated the previous decisions not to support any parallel process, partial elections or new initiatives leading to any extension of prior mandates.

From the way things are going at the hangar at the airport, we feel that there will be no need for us to appeal again for any extension or other type of parallel process. We are really encouraged by the news that things are going very well at the hangar in Mogadishu.

AMISOM has continued to deliver on its election-related responsibilities, particularly with regard to the provision of election security, training and technical support. In this respect, AMISOM has continued to provide operational support, strategic advice and institutional capacity-building to the Somali police and sustained coordination between its civilian component and their counterparts in Government, both at the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member state levels, and with Somali civil society organizations. This enhanced cooperation, coordination and partnership are essential, both in building the relevant capacities and in supporting the ongoing electoral efforts.

With regard to security, the situation over the past four months remained relatively unpredictable. Al-Shabaab has continued to operate asymmetrically by launching attacks, including vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices-initiated complex attacks, probing attacks, grenade and mortar attacks, sniping, ambushes, targeted attacks and the assassination of senior Government officials, security forces and civilians.

The militant-enabling activities include, among other things, the infiltration of Amniyat operatives into major cities, with special emphasis on Mogadishu; the extortion of civilians; aerial drone reconnaissance surveillance of friendly forces' positions; and the recruitment and training of militants. In the short to medium term, the security situation is likely to remain volatile as Al-Shabaab attempts to disrupt the electoral process and take advantage of any perceived political tension to prepare and launch operations and attacks, both in Mogadishu and in the federal member states.

In line with resolution 2568 (2021), AMISOM, jointly with the Somali security forces, made significant progress in the process of planning, coordinating and conducting joint operations to disrupt, degrade and

deny Al-Shabaab and armed opposition groups freedom of movement and action. Key among those operations in the period under consideration was the opening of the Xuddur-Buulobarde main supply route to facilitate the safe movement of people and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Xuddur community. The handover of the Afgooye forward operating base to the Somali National Army, counter-attack operations against Al-Shabaab at Barire and Awdheegle on 3 and 4 April, as well as stepping up operations in Ceel Marka on 3 April, were some of the other activities and joint operations with the Somali National Army during the period under consideration.

In the same vein, I can report that tremendous efforts have been made in the implementation of the revised objectives and tasks set out in resolution 2568 (2021). In that regard, AMISOM held the first quarter sector commanders' conference on 14 and 15 April, also attended by the Somali National Army leadership, United Nations and other partners. It enabled key security and stabilization stakeholders to work together towards agreeing a harmonized operational plan, including the establishment of joint operations coordination cells at the sector level, whose implementation will be assessed and ensured through, *inter alia*, the resumption of joint sector visits and improved coordination with relevant partners through the mission coordination group and the quarterly activities implementation review.

Al-Shabaab remains a potent and ruthless enemy. There is continued need to protect the populations from Al-Shabaab attacks, secure the main supply routes and maintain and extend the physical space in which the Government can establish its presence and extend its authority. There is a need to continue to hold and protect areas liberated from Al-Shabaab and to preserve the gains accumulated.

The continuation of our concerted and complementary efforts to generate, help rebuild, capacitate, empower and bring cohesion and unity of purpose to the Somali security forces remain a crucial necessity if we are to maintain the achievements I mentioned and successfully realize the transition plan, as approved by the Government, and the contents of resolution 2568 (2021).

I wish to reaffirm the African Union's continued commitment to peace and security in Somalia and to welcome the ongoing partnership and collaboration in our quest for peace, stability and development in the

country. Somalia is a member of the African Union and will remain so. As such, we will continue to make concerted efforts towards the completion of the constitutional review and to promote our joint initiative to encourage the resumption of the dialogue between the Federal Government of the Somalia and the federal member states in order to support Somalia's efforts to hold national elections, on the basis of the 17 September agreement and the Baidoa recommendations, without further delay.

In order to sustain progress in the implementation of the African Union objectives and mandate in Somalia, AMISOM requires appropriate logistical and financial support. In that vein, I wish to extend my appreciation to all partners for their continued financial and logistical support to AMISOM.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Madeira for his briefing.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia.

Mr. Mohamud (Somalia): At the outset, Somalia warmly congratulates China, a true friend with whom we have a long history of relations and cooperation, on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of May. I commend you, Mr. President, for the outstanding manner in which you have been guiding the work of the Security Council since the beginning of the month. I also express my thanks and esteem to the outgoing President, the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam, for his able guidance of the Council's work last month.

I furthermore thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2021/485) and thank Mr. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, and Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, for their briefings.

Following President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo's speech at the beginning of the month to the Somali Parliament and an agreement in principle to go back to an indirect election model, the Federal Government of Somalia and its federal member states, as well as the Banaadir region, came together on 22 May to discuss and agree on the election implementation modalities of the 17 September agreement. The meeting was chaired by His Excellency

Mr. Mohamed Hussein Roble, Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia. The three key outstanding issues that needed to be addressed in order to complete the agreement were all discussed and agreed upon in principle. Those issues are the status of elections for the Somaliland representatives, election arrangements in the Gedo region and the election committees.

On the issue of Somaliland, the key actors, including the Speaker of the Upper House, His Excellency Mr. Abdi Hashi Abdullahi, and the Deputy Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid, met and are in the process — as we speak — of finalizing that agreement.

On the issue of Gedo region elections, a full agreement has been reached. That will be reflected in the meeting communiqué, which will be released on Thursday at the conclusion of the meeting.

On the issue of the election committees, an agreement has also been reached. That will also be reflected in the communiqué to come. The parties will have a break tomorrow and will resume on Thursday in order to issue the communiqué and hold a closing ceremony. As was pointed out by the previous speakers, the negotiation process has not been easy. Consensus therefore remains vital. Without it, peace and Government institutions in Somalia are fragile.

Fortunately, we have now reached an agreement that will lead Somalia to free and fair elections. Going forward, Somalia needs to have predictable political transitions based on elections that are inclusive, credible, free and fair. This is a challenge and an opportunity that the Somali people, the Government and their partners must capitalize on in order to ensure sustainable development in the country.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Security Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

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

Dame Barbara Woodward (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, for bringing us back to the Security Council Chamber. I would like to start by thanking the briefers — Special Representative

Swan, Ambassador Madeira — as well as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud.

The United Kingdom welcomes the opening of a new round of talks in Mogadishu and their ongoing positive progress aimed at reaching a consensus on an electoral model. We give our full support to Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble as he chairs that process.

I would like to make three points.

First, as talks in Mogadishu continue — and we very much welcome the updates we received — we continue to urge the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to continue their constructive dialogue based on the 17 September agreement and the recommendations of the Baidoa technical committee to ensure that inclusive, credible elections can take place as soon as possible and that we can break out of the political impasse that risks exacerbating insecurity and instability in Somalia.

Secondly, political turmoil has direct consequences for Somali security, as we saw as recently as last month. The United Kingdom strongly condemns the violence that took place in Mogadishu on 25 April. We urge all sides to continue to show restraint and engage in dialogue to avoid a repeat of those scenes. Tragically, that instability leads to loss of life and threatens the transition towards Somali-led security, as laid out in the Somali transition plan and endorsed by the Security Council through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) resolution — resolution 2568 (2021).

The United Kingdom encourages all parties, in spite of current challenges, to continue to deliver the Somali transition plan and to work constructively to determine the nature of a new mission from 2022. On this note, I welcome the engagement between the Security Council and the African Union to renew the AMISOM authorization and look forward to further close engagement over the coming months as we discuss the shape and mandate of a new mission.

Unfortunately, this division and instability also benefits Al-Shabaab. While political leaders focus on the elections, Government reserves are dwindling, and Al-Shabaab is growing its profits and its influence. Resolving the current impasse will enable everyone

to focus on common challenges, namely, defeating Al-Shabaab and supporting development in Somalia.

That brings me to my third point. The ongoing political instability risks exacerbating Somalia's already dire humanitarian outlook. The 25 April clashes alone displaced tens of thousands of Somalis, and we are deeply concerned about the risk of further violence, especially if the talks fail.

Respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians is paramount for Somali State legitimacy. Political violence only compounds the impact of the existing threats of the coronavirus disease, flooding, drought, food insecurity and locust swarms, which all pose a substantial risk to the long-term stability of Somalia. Somali leaders should continue to work to address the impacts of these issues.

Finally, the United Kingdom will maintain its support for Somalia both in mitigating the impacts of these events and in working to build longer-term resilience against these problems. We call on the international community to do the same. A long-term approach to alleviating these problems is the only way to break the cycle of dependency on international humanitarian aid. And fundamentally, the Somali people need and deserve effective and inclusive governance to support this. There must be a political settlement on how to share power and resources in a federated Somalia. Somalia's leaders need to be able to turn their attention to managing these problems, which affect the lives of millions of Somalis.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I am echoing the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom when I express thanks to the Chinese presidency for bringing us back to the Security Council.

I thank Special Representative of the Chairperson Madeira, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Swan and Foreign Minister Mohamud for their briefings.

First and foremost, Norway welcomes the revitalized dialogue under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble. We are encouraged by reports from Mogadishu that the atmosphere in the negotiations is positive and that a solution can be expected within a short time. But we call on the Federal Government and federal member state leaders to continue to engage constructively, without preconditions, based on the 17 September agreement.

There is no more time, energy or goodwill to lose. The current political impasse has severe consequences for the Somali people, and we note from the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/485) that poverty continues to increase.

We are fully behind the efforts of Prime Minister Roble to get all relevant stakeholders on board. His ability to build trust between the parties will be crucial. Norway encourages the Somali leaders to make full use of the good offices of the United Nations and the African Union (AU). We applaud the active role played by the AU Peace and Security Council in contributing to getting the electoral process back on track. Through its firm and effective involvement, it has helped prevent the situation from spiralling out of control.

While our return to dialogue based on the September agreement is a welcome step, we believe that active involvement by the AU continues to be important, including in breaking the cycle of distrust between the Federal Government and federal member states. A key measure will be supporting mechanisms for constructive and inclusive dialogue in the implementation phase of the agreed electoral model.

A significant flaw in the dialogue thus far has been the lack of inclusion, particularly of women, but also of a wider segment of Somali society, including civil society. We strongly encourage the inclusion of women in the resumed political dialogue. They are important Somali political stakeholders and are key to finding consensual electoral arrangements and sustainable solutions for the future of all of Somalia.

We also appeal to Somali political leaders and stakeholders to commit to and work towards defining a clear mechanism for implementing the 30 per cent quota for women in both Houses of Parliament. We hope the AU and the United Nations will be able to continue to provide support to ensure the fulfilment of this part of the 17 September agreement.

We also note with concern the continued attacks against and harassment of journalists and media workers. We urge Somali authorities, in particular the security sector, to facilitate press freedom in the preparations for an electoral process.

Drought, desert locusts and the coronavirus disease represent three looming threats to large parts of the Somali population. The full attention of the Somali Government is needed to manage these crises and

other climate-related security risks. The high number of civilian casualties caused by armed conflict is also alarming and has increased in the last reporting period, and we are very concerned by reports of the unlawful detention of children associated with Al-Shabaab. We reiterate that children recruited or used in armed conflict, including children associated with armed groups, must be treated first and foremost as victims.

The overall effect of the political impasse on reforms is of great concern. The impasse's implications for the security situation and especially the transition process must be assessed. We acknowledge the steps taken by the AU to map out options to address and mitigate the possible security implications of the impasse.

The timelines in resolution 2568 (2021) for transferring responsibility for security to the Somali authorities and for the reconfiguration of the African Union Mission in Somalia are clear. We now need to do our utmost to prevent significant delays.

Mr. Ladeb (Tunisia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

At the outset, we would like to convey our thanks to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his report on the situation in Somalia (S/2021/485) and to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for his report on the same subject.

We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, Mr. James Swan, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Mr. Francisco Madeira, for their comprehensive briefings. We would also like to acknowledge the participation of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, in this meeting.

In this statement, we will focus on the political developments, security situation and humanitarian situation in Somalia.

The A3+1 joins others in welcoming the decision of the Lower House of Parliament on 1 May to rescind the 12 April 2021 special electoral bill on federal elections. We hope that the return to the 17 September

2020 agreement and the 16 February 2021 Baidoa technical committee recommendations will contribute to reducing tensions.

In that regard, we welcome the resumption of dialogue among the Federal Government of Somalia, the federal member states and other stakeholders, and urge all parties to be guided by a spirit of compromise in order to reach as soon as possible an agreement on the outstanding issues regarding the organization of the elections. We underline the vital importance of holding free, fair, timely, transparent and credible elections in Somalia so as to fulfil the legitimate aspirations of the people of Somalia to security, stability, democracy, good governance and development. We hope that the agreement on the 30 per cent quota for women will be upheld and that it will pave the way for stronger representation and participation of women in the future. We also reiterate our support for the objective of holding one-person one-vote universal elections in 2024-2025 and encourage the continuation of efforts to that end.

The A3+1 shares the concern over the potential grave implications of the political crisis for the security situation in Somalia and for the implementation of the Somali transition plan, as demonstrated by the recent fighting that broke out in Mogadishu between members of the national armed forces along factional and clan lines.

While welcoming the disengagement agreement reached on 5 May, we underline the importance that all Somali stakeholders refrain from any new and unilateral action that might again exacerbate the situation and join efforts against Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups, which continue to represent the main threat to peace, security and stability in the country. We are alarmed by the increased ability of Al-Shabaab to generate revenue through illegal taxation, which could be used to intensify their terrorist activities in the region. There is a need for urgent and decisive measures to disrupt the illegal financial sources of the group, including enhancing the capacity of the Somali Government to regulate its public financial management, which remains susceptible to infiltration by Al-Shabaab. We also call for continued international support to Somalia in its fight against Al-Shabaab and for its State capacity-building until it is able to take full responsibility for its own security. That should be buttressed by stringent weapons and ammunition management practices in

order to ensure that weapons meant for Somali security forces do not fall into the hands of Al-Shabaab.

In that regard, we pay tribute to the unwavering dedication, courage and sacrifice of AMISOM in the promotion of peace, security and stability in Somalia. We look forward to the finalization of the report by the African Union (AU) independent assessment team on AMISOM and its recommendations on the AU's engagement in Somalia after 2021. If a reconfigured AMISOM is confirmed by all partners as the most viable option for Somalia after 2021, it will be crucial to ensure that it is sufficiently, predictably and sustainably funded, including through United Nations assessed contributions.

The A3+1 deplores the civilian casualties recorded in the latest report of the Secretary-General, a large majority of which are attributed to Al-Shabaab. We condemn the arbitrary detentions, including of journalists, the sexual and gender-based violence and the abuses against children reported by the Secretary-General.

We encourage the Somali authorities to take the necessary steps to prevent such violations and further promote and protect human rights, in particular the rights of women and children, freedom of speech and access to information. The humanitarian situation in Somalia also remains deeply concerning, with approximately 6 million people in need of assistance and an estimated 2.7 million people projected to be at risk of crisis or emergency levels of food insecurity by mid-June, including more than 800,000 children under five who are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition, as stated in the Secretary-General's report.

In the particular context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and climate challenges, including drought, floods and locusts, which exacerbate the already volatile humanitarian situation, we reiterate our call on all international partners to scale up funding in order to support the humanitarian response plans for Somalia and alleviate the suffering of its people. We commend AMISOM's humanitarian assistance efforts, including its support to health workers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and renew our call for additional international support to enable AMISOM to fulfil its humanitarian action more effectively in all the Mission's sectors.

To conclude, the A3+1 would like to reiterate its appreciation for the continued efforts of the

United Nations, the AU, the European Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and all international partners in support of Somalia and to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the sovereignty, unity, political independence and territorial integrity of Somalia.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, I wish to say that today is of course a very special day for the Security Council. For the first time since 8 December 2020, the Council is convening an in-person meeting. We thank the Chinese presidency for making that possible. That was our consistent position, and we have long urged that we return to the Security Council Chamber. In our view, we could have done it much earlier, or we should perhaps not have left the Chamber at all. Our meetings were in fact suspended for almost half a year. We trust that subsequent Council Presidents will consistently maintain the same position and that the number of meetings in the Chamber will increase until the Council finally moves fully from the virtual format, which we have had for the past year and a half, to an in-person format.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Swan, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, Mr. Francisco Madeira, for their informative briefings. We welcome the participation in this meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud.

We have carefully studied the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/485). The Russian Federation continues to closely follow the evolving situation in Somalia, which is experiencing an acute internal political crisis. We welcome the convening of a nationwide conference in Mogadishu, with the participation of representatives of the Federal Government authorities and the heads of regional administrations in order to resolve outstanding issues. We note that the Federal Government of Somalia, which continues to demonstrate its flexibility and willingness to negotiate, significantly contributed to organizing that conference. We welcome the positive signs that some agreement as to the electoral model has been reached.

We would particularly like to emphasize that the violence must not reoccur. In that regard, we welcome

the role played by Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble in de-escalating tensions in the capital and in the withdrawal of opposition-controlled armed security units and militias. We also welcome the announcements regarding the resumption of diplomatic contacts between Somalia and Kenya. Like the Secretary-General, we hope that this will lead to a full restoration of good-neighbourly cooperative relations between the two countries.

We call on the United Nations and regional stakeholders to continue assisting Somalia, while strictly respecting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence, and without interfering in its internal affairs.

We agree with the conclusion contained in the Secretary-General's report — that the security situation in Somalia remains complex. Increasing Al-Shabaab attacks with vehicle-mounted improvised explosive devices, as well as their shelling of the capital's airport with mortars and their military pressure in Lower Shabelle demonstrate that the group is attempting to use the internal political crisis to strengthen its positions. We call on the Somali authorities and AMISOM to maintain their efforts to fight extremists.

We continue to believe that the African peacekeeping mission remains a key element in ensuring the security of Somalia. We expect that the African Union will take the necessary decisions regarding the parameters of transferring security responsibilities in the country from AMISOM to the Somali National Army. The crisis has convincingly demonstrated that all decisions in that regard must be carefully considered and that forcing through a drawdown of AMISOM is unacceptable.

In conclusion, allow me to once again express the hope that Somali political forces will become cognizant of national priorities and specific tasks for restoring stability to the country. That would enable them to expeditiously organize and conduct elections. Russia intends to facilitate that to the best of its ability.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting in the Security Council Chamber. I would like to thank Special Representatives James Swan and Francisco Madeira for their informative briefings.

The situation in Somalia, without a doubt, continues to evolve. The political electoral panorama continues to be uncertain and the security situation remains

troubling. We have taken note of the decision to rescind the extension of the presidential mandate and the special electoral law. We therefore welcome in particular the return to, and preservation of, the 17 September agreement as the basis for the next elections. We hope that the resumption of high-level talks, led by Prime Minister Roble, will be productive.

In that regard, the creation of a conflict resolution committee is encouraging as a measure to promote the resumption of dialogue among the primary political actors. However, we express our concern about the reservations of some parties to return to dialogue. Amid the growing tensions and protests in Mogadishu and elsewhere, we call on political and social leaders to abstain from inciting communities to violence. We need leaders to promote de-escalation and genuinely guide people towards the best interests of the Somali people.

In the current situation, it is critical that the international community, including the Security Council, send timely and appropriate signals to promote the urgent resumption of dialogue as a mechanism to settle differences, and avoid taking unilateral actions that could derail the political process.

The 17 September agreement continues to be the only consensual basis for ensuring an inclusive electoral process. That is why it is backed by the Security Council, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development. Regional and subregional mediation are fundamental.

As we warned in our most recent analysis of the situation in Somalia, the electoral impasse has had security consequences throughout the country. Al-Shabaab and other groups have taken advantage of the situation to increase their power and influence, as attested by the attacks on the Aden Adde airport complex and in the vicinity of the Waberi Parliament.

We urge political leaders to commit to preserving peace and stability in the country in the face of the real threat posed by Al-Shabaab. Fractures in the security sector, based on clan affiliation or support for members of the political opposition, pose an imminent risk to the viability of the transition plan. A trend towards a deterioration of the fragile prevailing conditions and the impossibility of consolidating the security forces is unlikely to translate into a reconfiguration of the African Union Mission in Somalia. On the contrary, the desired transfer of security responsibilities would be jeopardized.

The humanitarian situation also requires special attention, all the more so as the pandemic continues to affect several fronts. We welcome the first delivery of vaccines under the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility, but in addition to vaccines being insufficient, the prevailing security situation limits their effective distribution, let alone their delivery to the most remote locales, which are beyond State control.

While the first quarter of the year saw a decrease in the number of incidents affecting humanitarian operations, humanitarian access, in general, remains a challenge. We reiterate our condemnation of attacks on humanitarian and medical personnel and call on all actors to respect and protect them. Efforts must be redoubled to secure the necessary vaccines for the entire country and to strengthen security for humanitarian access to all locations.

Finally, we welcome announcements of a possible restoration of diplomatic relations between Somalia and Kenya. As the Secretary-General rightly notes in his report (S/2021/485), such a relationship is central to cooperation and stability in the wider region and, in particular, to the support needed for the political process and the containment of Al-Shabaab.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I thank you, Mr. President, for bringing us back to the Security Council Chamber. I would like to welcome His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Somalia, and I thank him for his statement. I would also like to thank Mr. James Swan, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia United, and Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, for their insightful briefings and for their work on the ground at this very challenging time.

It is encouraging to see the positive developments in the dialogue and collaboration between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, the security and economic conditions and the preparations for the upcoming elections. We are encouraged by the improvements in the relations between Somalia and Kenya, and we hope that the two countries will soon fully normalize relations for the sake of peace, stability and development in the two countries and in the region as a whole.

At the same time, we acknowledge that Somalia will still face many challenges in the days to come.

We share the concerns of the international community, including those expressed by the Secretary-General and the observer of the African Union, about the electoral impasse that might send the country into a constitutional vacuum and further political instability. In that context, we commend the decision of the House of the People for the rescission of the 12 April Special Electoral Bill for Federal Elections and the restoration of the 17 September agreement. We also underscore the importance of Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble's initiative for convening a summit in Mogadishu between the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states on the electoral process. We hope to see the commitment of all federal member states leaders to participating in the summit.

In the pursuit of peace, security and development in Somalia, the implementation of a Somali-led and Somali-owned political process based on the 17 September electoral model must be acceptable to all Somali stakeholders and include 30 per cent political representation of women, minorities and youth. We also call on the United Nations and the international community to increase financial and technical assistance to the Somali Government to achieve this goal.

Secondly, on resilience for security, we are deeply concerned about the armed clashes in Mogadishu in April. Armed clashes and political division have often been at the centre of the turmoil in Somalia. We strongly condemn the violence and recent terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab on civilians, Government officials, Somali security forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia.

National unity and reconciliation are the only way forward for Somalia. We call on all relevant bodies to refrain from all acts that might plunge the country into chaos and jeopardize peace and security in the country. We urge the Government of Somalia to redouble its efforts in ensuring safety and security for civilians and accelerating investigations into violence against and killings of civilians, especially children, in order to bring the perpetrators to justice. In this regard, we call on international partners to maintain their support for the Somali security forces through training, equipment provision, capacity-building and implementing operations against Al-Shabaab.

Thirdly, on socioeconomic development, we are concerned about the critical water shortages caused by drought in many parts of the country. More than 80 per cent of Somalia is facing moderate or severe drought conditions. The weather-related crises — including drought, desert locusts, floods and long-standing threats and challenges — have worsened the situation in Somalia and had a negative impact on segments of population that were already vulnerable due to chronic poverty and conflict. We cannot overemphasize the need to address these challenges, especially through agricultural development. Therefore, a comprehensive approach must strive for sustained stability and development in the country.

Peace, stability and development are the legitimate aspirations of the Somalis. We call on the United Nations, regional and international organizations and relevant bodies to work towards this end, while fully respecting the independence and sovereignty of the country.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): My delegation joins others in thanking the Chinese presidency for resuming in-person meetings in the Council Chamber.

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan for updating us on the latest report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2021/485) and the implementation of the mandates of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia. I also thank the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union in Somalia (AMISOM), Ambassador Francisco Madeira, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the Foreign Minister of Somalia, Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, and thank him for his update.

The developments over the past three months reflect the complex nature of the political dynamics in Somalia. The political brinkmanship of certain Somali leaders and some of the federal member states has created new challenges to the electoral process. The decisions made a few weeks ago by constitutional bodies and authorities brought the electoral process to a standstill and created further uncertainty. The fact that these developments took place despite repeated calls of the international community, including the Council, seeking forward movement on elections is disappointing. These developments threaten to derail the expectations of the international community for

Somalia for this year. While the constitutional bodies have taken some measures to redeem the situation by rescinding the decision on the Special Electoral Bill for Federal Elections, the entire episode has cast doubts on the electoral cycle. We need leadership at this juncture on the part of all stakeholders to put the country back on the path towards representative democracy. In this context, the consultative meeting that is currently taking place in Mogadishu among the signatories of the 17 September agreement provides some positive direction. We also welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's update on developments over the past two days.

The 17 September agreement provides the basis for all stakeholders to work and agree on all aspects of electoral issues. We join other Council members in reiterating the call on the Somali leadership, in both the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, to work constructively to resolve contentious issues so that elections are held without further delay. Resorting to violence and unilateral actions must be avoided, as they will only compound problems for the people of Somalia.

It is worrisome that the political stalemate has emboldened Al-Shabaab, as is evident from increasing attacks and security incidents. Over the past three months, Al-Shabaab has targeted both Somali security forces and AMISOM. We strongly condemn all attacks against innocent civilians. The worsening security situation requires an effective response led by the Somali security forces. The authorities need to redouble their efforts to fast track the transition plan. In this regard, we welcome the revised Somali transition plan. We hope that the funds to support the Somali transition plan can be augmented sufficiently in the coming months.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation, the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and desert locusts remain causes for concern. We reiterate the call of the Secretary-General for donor support to the United Nations Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia, which has realized only one-fifth of its requirements so far.

The unpredictable political and security situation discourages eagerness on the AMISOM drawdown. AMISOM has been playing an important role in stabilizing the security situation and fighting Al-Shabaab. The worsening security situation and

strengthening of Al-Shabab will impact not just Somalia but its neighbours as well. India commends and pays tribute to all AMISOM troop- and police-contributing countries for their sustained commitment and for the sacrifices they have made. Renewing its commitment to peace and stability in Somalia and the Horn of Africa, India recently contributed \$1 million to the United Nations trust fund in support of the AMISOM.

In conclusion, India and Somalia are linked by two millennia of shared history and culture. We are neighbours across the seas. Until the late 1980s, Mogadishu, Kismaayo and other Somali cities had thriving Indian communities. Even today, India is home to many Somalis and is a popular destination for students and medical treatment-seekers. India contributed a significant number of peacekeepers and naval and air assets to United Nations operations in the early 1990s. Over the past several years, India has been training Somali Government officials and students through our capacity-building programmes. Recently, we also donated 27 buses to Somalia. A stable, peaceful and prosperous Somalia is what we wish for. India will continue to support Somalia and the Somali people in these challenging times towards that objective.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I too join my voice to those thanking you, Sir, for getting us back into the Chamber. It does feel great and, as Estonia will be President of the Security Council for the month of June, I am hopeful that, except for high-level meetings, will be able to return all meetings to the Council Chamber.

I join others in thanking the briefers for their insightful overviews, and I would also like to welcome the Foreign Minister of Somalia to today's discussion.

As pointed out by previous speakers, today's meeting is taking place simultaneously with the summit between Somali leaders to agree on the elections. Estonia welcomes the resumption of talks and supports the role of Prime Minister Roble leading on the issue. Allow me to emphasize that dialogue, compromise and consensus are the key to overcoming the stalemate. Estonia will be following the summit closely and with great hopes for a successful outcome.

It is regrettable how the ongoing political crisis is diverting attention and resources away from Somalia's development, humanitarian, rule of law and security priorities — areas where progress is desperately needed. Moreover, the longer the stalemate lasts, the higher the risk that it could reverse the gains Somalia

achieved over the past decade. Therefore, Estonia urges the leaders of Somalia to finally reach a solution based on the 17 September electoral agreement and to move forward with holding credible, inclusive and consensus-based elections without further delay.

In the upcoming elections, Estonia urges Somali authorities to implement the quota of 30 per cent for the participation of women and ensure that marginalized groups, including youth, are included. Additionally, Estonia underlines the need to put in place measures and institutions to protect human rights. I reiterate the call to establish an independent national human rights commission, which would have a key role to play in promoting and protecting human rights. The high level of conflict-related sexual violence remains very concerning. It is crucial to hold the perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

Therefore, I urge the Federal Government to take steps to protect women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence by enacting the 2018 Sexual Offences Bill. Estonia also calls for the implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in Somalia.

We are very concerned about the deteriorating security situation and strongly condemn the violence that has taken place in Somalia. The recent spike in Al-Shabaab activity is a stark reminder of how much there is to lose if the political stalemate is not urgently resolved.

It was also alarming to see election-related violence. The latest developments have highlighted the need to make progress on the security front. Resolution 2568 (2021) sets out concrete steps with clear timelines on how to achieve that. The continuation of a post-2021 mission is critical, yet it is crucial that the future mission learn lessons from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and take into account the changing conditions on the ground. Estonia, as a member of the European Union, is proud of the organization's contribution to AMISOM and Somalia's security over decades. We call on all stakeholders to come together and play their part to support a successful security transition.

Estonia welcomes the recent revision of the Somali transition plan. However, as with any plan, its worth is dependent on its actual implementation. In this connection, Estonia calls on the Federal Government to redouble its efforts for the implementation of the plan.

Finally, Estonia is deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation and that the Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia is currently only 19 per cent funded. Without urgent assistance, millions of people will be suspended from receiving critical humanitarian aid. Estonia calls on international community to provide the funding necessary to save lives in Somalia.

To conclude, this is the moment for Somali leaders to rise to the challenge and break the political stalemate so that the leaders' full and undivided attention can go to helping the Somali people. Allow me to reiterate Estonia's full support for the country and its people.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): Let me join others in thanking our briefers this morning for their insightful reports. I also want to thank the Foreign Minister of Somalia for joining us this morning and sharing his update.

As we have stated repeatedly before the Council, Somalia's holding of a peaceful, transparent, inclusive and timely electoral process — agreed to on the basis of consensus — is vital if the country is going to resume progress on critical State-building reforms and stabilization efforts.

In just the last few weeks, we have seen the risks associated with actions that are undertaken without broad consent among critical stakeholders in Somali. As we have just heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Somalia's stability was threatened and the country pushed to the verge of conflict because of clashes between Government forces and opposition-affiliated militia that resulted from the 12 April mandate extension bill, which was passed by the Lower House of the Somali Parliament and signed by President Farmajo. We, like many others represented here, therefore welcomed the decision of President Farmajo to rescind this deeply decisive action, which the Parliament joined in, and to resume negotiations with the federal member states on the basis of the September 2020 agreement.

We commend Prime Minister Roble and his efforts to organize the discussions that are under way in Mogadishu, and we welcome President Farmajo's announcement that the Prime Minister will oversee the implementation of election planning, including election security. Prime Minister Roble must be given the latitude and the authority to deliver on the elections without any interference.

We therefore welcome the talks in Mogadishu, and we are encouraged by the reports we have heard just this morning on the status of those talks and the progress being made. What we have heard this morning is certainly the best international news I have heard over the last several days, so we hope it continues. We continue to call, however, on all the political parties participating in the talks, and all the parties, to set aside their narrow, personal political agendas, do what is right for Somalia and finalize an agreement that can be implemented as soon as possible. The United States remains prepared to take actions against individuals who we assess are obstructing agreement or otherwise threatening Somalia's peace and security.

Moving forward with elections and political dialogue is essential to focusing on the pressing needs of Somalia's people and countering the threat posed by Al-Shabaab. As we heard, we are already seeing evidence that Al-Shabaab has taken advantage of the political turmoil in Mogadishu for its own ends and its own benefits. Addressing the threat from Al-Shabaab is an urgent problem, not just for Somalia but for the entire subregion, and one that is predicated on a stable political situation.

Last month, the United States announced \$154 million in additional humanitarian assistance to address the life-threatening challenges that result from chronic food insecurity, violence, desert locusts and the cycles of drought and flooding. We remain committed to the Somali people, to supporting their aspirations to a peaceful and prosperous future and to addressing their urgent humanitarian needs.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I join my colleagues in thanking the President for bringing us together in the Chamber today. I also thank all the briefers for their briefings and insights.

France is concerned about the political impasse in Somalia. The decision by Parliament to reverse the unilateral extension of its mandate is a positive development, and we are encouraged by Prime Minister Roble's commitment to the resumption of discussions.

We urge the Somali Federal Government and the federated member states to reach a consensual political agreement so that elections can take place across all member states of the Federation without delay. The sustainability of the Somali Federation depends on it.

I recall the importance of inclusiveness in the electoral process. The full participation of women both as voters and as candidates must remain a priority, with the 30 per cent quota of women's participation in Parliament being respected. We also call for the participation of young people, in line with resolution 2535 (2020) on youth, peace and security. The inter-Somali dialogue should make it possible to strengthen the rule of law and consolidate democracy in Somalia, with the support of the United Nations and of Special Representative James Swan, whose work I commend. France also welcomes the engagement of the African Union and all its efforts aimed at promoting dialogue between the Somali parties.

France fears that the political deadlock will have security repercussions. The international community cannot accept that everyone's efforts in the fight against Al-Shabaab are being hampered, while the group continues its deadly attacks, as we have seen recently.

We are concerned about the lack of progress in the implementation of the Somali transition plan. This plan is an essential component of the transition, along with the Santos Cruz report and the upcoming African Union assessment.

All of the foregoing steps must be completed within the time frame set out in resolution 2568 (2021), so that the Council can take decisions on the handover to the Somali forces and on the future of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which must include the establishment of a reconfigured mission. There is no alternative.

France also calls for a decision to be taken this year on the financing of AMISOM. A discussion must take place with all stakeholders, starting with the African Union, but also with Somalia, its regional partners, the troop-contributing countries and entities giving financial support, including the European Union, which, I would remind the Council, has, since 2007, given nearly €2 billion to AMISOM. I cannot stress enough the urgent need for others to financially support this Mission from now on.

France remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in Somalia. The plight of the civilian population is being worsened by the coronavirus pandemic, but also by extreme weather conditions, be it the locust crisis or the consequences of climate change. Food insecurity is worsening. We know that one in

eight children now dies before the age of five. This is one of the highest child mortality rates in the world.

France calls for safe and unhindered humanitarian access and condemns, in the strongest terms, attacks on humanitarian and health personnel and obstructions to humanitarian access. These crimes will not go unpunished. Respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is non-negotiable.

Finally, we are concerned about the increase in violence against children. In this regard, we call for the full implementation of the conclusions of the Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict adopted last August. France encourages Somalia to fulfil its international and regional commitments by enacting appropriate legislation on both child protection and the condemnation of sexual and gender-based violence.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland): Like others, I would like to thank the President for bringing us back to the Chamber today. In our case, it is our first day in the Chamber since we were elected to the Security Council almost one year ago, so we are delighted to be here. I also wanted to thank our briefers this morning. We were glad that Foreign Minister Mohamud was able to join us today.

Since our last meeting, I am encouraged that Somalia has stepped back from the decision to extend the mandates of both the Parliament and the President. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the decision to restore the 17 September agreement was vital for the safety of the Somali people and for the stability of the country. Restoring the 17 September agreement now, we believe, provides a pathway to elections. Squandering this opportunity would be unforgivable. Momentum has been regained and must now be capitalized upon.

The next step is simple: Somalia's leaders must place the country's interests above their own, and we welcome the good breaking news this morning that the preliminary talks are under way and that we may have some positive news. We welcome the leadership of the Prime Minister in those talks. The talks are a very good start, of course, but there remains an urgent need for compromise and agreement on next steps by all parties.

Somalia's political future still depends on timely and inclusive elections. We urgently now need to see clarity from Somalia on how we achieve this. It is crucial that all parties engage in these talks in good

faith and work to find consensus on the electoral process in a timely manner. Any solution — we have said it before, and we say it again now — must ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women at every stage of that process. As we have done before, we urge Foreign Minister Mohamud to ensure that the 30 per cent minimum quota for women's participation be respected.

Crucially, there must also be full and unambiguous rejection of violence. The use of armed actors to manipulate the electoral process simply cannot be accepted. Those who resort to the use of violence for political gain must be held accountable.

The African Union (AU) plays an important role in ensuring peace and security in Somalia. We heard that this morning from the representative of the AU, we are therefore deeply disappointed that Somalia has rejected the offer to deploy an African Union envoy. We call on Somalia's leaders to reconsider that approach and constructively engage with the AU to find a way forward. The recent political impasse has contributed to a deteriorating security situation — we have heard that today — which includes the diversion of military resources away from operations against Al-Shabaab, increased clan violence and the splitting of the Somali National Army along clan lines.

At the same time, the threat of Al-Shabaab in the region remains serious. In reality, Al-Shabaab is the only one to have gained from this electoral impasse. Its attacks on civilians, Government officials and security forces are reprehensible. The Federal Government must refocus and step up its efforts to protect civilians.

The distraction of the political impasse has also exacerbated the effects of the grave humanitarian crisis in Somalia. As the coronavirus disease pandemic rages, we hear that the country is facing critical water shortages, alongside flash flooding and other climate-related impacts. The reports of conflict-related sexual violence recently outlined by the Special Representative Patten are horrifying and alarming. We call on the Federal Government to take steps to protect women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence by enacting the original 2018 Sexual Offences Bill and by holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

I also want to say that it is deplorable that children continue to be killed, abducted and recruited with

impunity. I call on all parties to prevent and end all grave violations against children.

Before concluding, let me say a word about the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In the context of the security challenges that we have heard about today, the role and the future of the Mission remain vitally important. Through AMISOM, the African Union has made significant gains in laying the path for stabilization in Somalia.

We welcome the revision of the Somali transition plan, and we call for it to be fully endorsed and, importantly, for its implementation to be accelerated. It is clear that the continuation of a post-2021 AU mission in Somalia will be needed. As a member of the European Union, which has proudly contributed to AMISOM and Somali security over decades, our view is that the post-2021 mission must be in line with the needs on the ground and supportive of Somalia's security transition. We look forward to receiving the African Union's independent assessment and to the joint United Nations-AU report in September.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Swan, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission for Somalia, Mr. Francisco Caetano José Madeira, for their briefings and for their contributions to the maintenance of peace and stability in Somalia. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Abdirizak Mohamud, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia, on behalf of Prime Minister Roble.

The situation in Somalia is currently at a critical juncture. The political deadlock over the elections continues. The leaders of the Federal Government have reiterated their commitment to the electoral consensus reached on 17 September 2020 and once again convened a dialogue among the Somali parties, which China fully recognizes. To break the current political stalemate is in the common interests of the Somali parties and people. We encourage the Somali parties to put the country's interests first, strengthen unity and cooperation, make the necessary compromise, rebuild political trust, swiftly agree on electoral arrangements and restore Somalia's political stability so as to create

conditions conducive to the security transition and national reconstruction there.

China welcomes the restoration of diplomatic ties between Somalia and Kenya and commends Qatar for the mediation efforts in that regard.

The security situation in Somalia is still dire, with frequent attacks by Al-Shabaab. China expresses its concern with regard to the situation. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has made tremendous efforts to maintain peace and stability in Somalia and has made major sacrifices, which China commends. We welcome the extension of the AMISOM mandate by the AU Peace and Security Council. We note that an AU independent assessment team will soon submit a report on the reconfiguration of AMISOM. We encourage the United Nations, AU troop-contributing countries and the host country to enhance communication in accordance with the principle of Somali leadership and ownership so as to reach consensus on the future configuration of AMISOM.

The European Union (EU) has provided significant financial support to AMISOM. China expects the EU to continue its strong support so as to make a new contribution to the maintenance of security and stability in Somalia. The international community should increase its assistance in order to help the Somali security forces to gradually assume responsibility for security.

Somalia has long been suffering a profound humanitarian crisis. A lack of development, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, droughts and the locust plague have further compounded Somalia's plight. The international community should provide more assistance in areas such as combating the pandemic, post-pandemic reconstruction, debt relief, food security, poverty reduction and mitigation.

The recently adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2021/10, on post-pandemic reconstruction in Africa, should be fully implemented. Greater attention should be paid to the important role of poverty reduction and development in realizing peace and stability in Somalia so as to tackle the root causes. China has long supported Somalia's peace and reconstruction within its capacity. We have helped Somalia to build infrastructure and enhance capacity-building, and we recently delivered donated COVID-19 vaccines to the country. Along with the international community,

we will strive to make a greater contribution towards lasting peace and sustainable development in Somalia.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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 11.45 a.m.