



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9446th meeting

Thursday, 19 October 2023, 10.35 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Moretti (Brazil)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Mrs. Frazier
Mozambique	Mr. Kumanga
Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Nusseibeh
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 Somalia (S/2023/758)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on Somalia (S/2023/758)

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: Ms. Catriona Laing, 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/2023/758, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

I now give the floor to Ms. Laing.

Ms. Laing: I am pleased to address Council members on developments in Somalia since my last briefing, in June (see S/PV.9356). I am delighted to do so alongside the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef.

I want to pay tribute to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the dedicated service of its personnel and troops. At the beginning of my remarks, I would also like to reiterate the commitment and dedication of the United Nations to supporting Somalia on its historic journey to create, as President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud says, "Somalia, a country at peace with itself and the world".

Since my last briefing, I updated the Council on the situation in Laascaanood on 7 September. Also, I briefed the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 6 September. My briefing today will

provide brief updates on eight areas: first, political developments; second, Laascaanood; third, security, including the ongoing offensive, stabilization and the impact of the ATMIS drawdown; fourth, women and peace and security; fifth, the humanitarian situation and links to climate change; sixth, human rights; seventh, the heavily indebted poor countries initiative (HIPC) and finally, transition.

My first update is on political developments. The communiqué issued on 27 May by the National Consultative Council (NCC) set out four specific proposals for a future electoral system, with moves to a presidential system, a two-party system, one-person, one-vote throughout the country, and dates for local council elections and alignment of the federal member states' terms of office.

Those four proposals continue to dominate the political debate. In particular, the proposed change to a presidential system and the proposed synchronization of the election schedules for federal member states, with the implication of the extension of incumbent mandates, have proved to be contentious. There are particular tensions around term extensions in South-West and Jubaland states. I continue to stress that all constitutional amendments, including a decision on term extensions, should be based on inclusive dialogue, consensus and legislative processes. I remain concerned about the fact that Puntland has not participated in the NCC since January, and I urge the Puntland state Government and the Federal Government to seek spaces of compromise and pursue dialogue to enable the constitutional review process to move ahead. The constitutional review serves as the cornerstone of Somalia's State-building agenda and is key to reaching an agreement on federalism in the country.

My second update covers Laascaanood. As highlighted in my most recent briefing to the Council, the conflict in Laascaanood escalated on 25 August when the Dhulbahante militia advanced towards the town of Oog. The current situation is calm, and people are returning home. However, the potential for a relapse into violence cannot be ruled out. The United Nations continues to convene partners to coordinate its joint efforts towards a resolution of the conflict. Following the events of 25 August, we issued a joint statement on 27 August condemning the escalation of the conflict and calling for all involved to abide by human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

My team and I have had numerous engagements with all the key stakeholders, including President Bihi Abdi, President Deni of Puntland, elders, the Dhulbahante leaders and the newly formed Sool, Sanaag and Cayn Committee. Our key messages to all the parties are threefold — to push first for an immediate exchange of detainees; secondly, for a commitment to no further violence, and thirdly, for the start of dialogue. The United Nations is also supporting demining efforts and a humanitarian needs assessment to enable people to return home.

My third update focuses on the security situation, where I will cover three issues — first, the ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab; secondly, stabilization efforts in newly recovered areas and thirdly, the ATMIS drawdown and its impact on the population and the ability of the United Nations to deliver on its mandate.

First, with regard to the offensive, the President was in Dhuusamarreeb, the capital of Galmudug state, from 5 August until 8 October, to direct the military campaign against Al-Shabaab. Despite initial success, when the Somali National Army and allied clan militias took significant territory, there have been setbacks and operational challenges. The Government forces are now focused on regrouping, reinforcing and reorganizing, as well as mobilizing additional support from clans, before they resume large-scale operations. But in parallel, smaller-scale operations in Galmudug and Hirshabelle by the Somali National Army, with ATMIS support, are making progress. In response to its own setbacks, Al-Shabaab has increased the use of 107 mm rockets, particularly in Mogadishu. It has also conducted targeted attacks on high-profile Somali politicians.

The conflicts in Somalia continue to take a heavy toll on civilians. Last year, we saw the largest increase in civilian casualties since 2017. Sadly, early data indicate a similar trend in 2023, with 1,289 civilian casualties recorded so far. That is partly attributable to Al-Shabaab attacks, but also to the conflict in Laascaanood.

Secondly, turning now to stabilization, the main findings and recommendations of the recently completed independent assessment will inform future United Nations efforts and guide our work. Two issues in particular need attention — first, generating sufficient police capacity to hold recovered areas, and secondly, mobilizing additional resources from partners

for stabilization efforts. On policing, the forthcoming Somalia security conference in December will present a more detailed needs assessment. In the meantime, while the Government continues to rely on local militia to hold recovered areas, it is essential to ensure that they operate within a clear legal framework. On funding, the stabilization programmes are drastically underresourced, with only \$20 million being spent per year. I urge all our partners to scale up their support for stabilization to ensure that those hard-won security victories can translate into better lives for Somalis.

Thirdly and finally, with regard to security, I want to update the Council on the ATMIS drawdown and its impact on citizens and United Nations operations. A particular challenge during August and September was that the military offensive was taking place alongside the preparations for the second phase of the ATMIS drawdown. The subsequent request by the Federal Government of Somalia for a 90-day technical delay, while maintaining overall security transition timelines, was endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 30 September. Work is now under way to mobilize the funding to support that. I urge all partners to consider providing support to fill the funding gap for ATMIS to ensure that the Mission can deliver on its mandate and its troops do not go unpaid.

The United Nations is now assessing the drawdown and its implications. Our foremost concern is the impact of the drawdown on the civilian population. In that regard, I welcome the recent joint technical assessment, which reviewed lessons from the impact of the first phase of the drawdown on civilian populations. The safety and security of Somali people must be central to our considerations as we move forward with the transition. For the United Nations, we are assessing the potential impact of the drawdown on our operations and ability to deliver on our mandate.

My fourth update is on women and peace and security, which remains at the forefront of the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The United Nations is working with the Government through the joint programme on women, peace and protection, focusing on engaging and empowering women in peacebuilding processes. As the United Nations scales up its work on stabilization in newly recovered areas, we are paying particular attention to the role of women as peacemakers. The United Nations also continues to undertake advocacy

to strengthen the legislative framework for addressing impunity regarding sexual violence.

On the political side, UNSOM continues to work with female members of the federal Parliament, including as part of the ongoing efforts to implement the 30 per cent quota for women. To that end, the United Nations continues to provide capacity development training for parliamentarians. I also recently met with courageous Somali women leaders and heard of their pioneering work to ensure that Somali women play a significant role in critical areas, from politics to climate change. The women stressed the need to agree on a clear plan to achieve the 30 per cent women's quota. In our engagement with Somali officials, the United Nations continues to raise the importance of women's rights and to ensure that women are consulted and their views are reflected in legislative frameworks.

The fifth part of my briefing focuses on the humanitarian situation and links to climate change. The humanitarian crisis in Somalia remains deeply concerning, with close to 4 million people continuing to be food insecure and in need of assistance. The situation is projected to deteriorate further from mid-October to December, mainly due to the enhanced Deyr rains, exacerbated by the El Niño phenomenon, which are expected to cause flash and riverine flooding in large parts of the country. The number of food-insecure people is predicted to rise to approximately 4.3 million, with 1.2 million displaced. It is essential that we scale up programmes that tackle the underlying drivers of the humanitarian crisis and integrate the humanitarian response with longer-term climate adaptation.

It is also critical to ensure the funding of the 2023 humanitarian response plan, which is seeking more than \$2.6 billion to meet the priority needs of 7.6 million people. The plan is currently only 39.4 per cent funded, and partners are having to prioritize the most vulnerable people in areas with the most severe needs. I call on all of Somalia's friends to increase the much-needed funding and to do so without delay.

My sixth update will be on human rights. The legislative developments in the reporting period are encouraging. I commend the Federal Government for approving a disability rights bill, as well as a child rights bill and a juvenile justice bill. An age verification policy, which is the first formal procedure for age assessment in the country, was also adopted. The United Nations provided technical support and advice in drafting the

bills and policy. I want to take this opportunity to call for their timely enactment and implementation. However, despite that progress, more needs to be done. I reiterate my call to the Somali authorities to urgently adopt legislation to address sexual violence crimes in compliance with the international human rights obligations to which Somalia has already committed. I also urge the Government to harmonize all legislative and policy reforms to define the child as a person under the age of 18 years. As highlighted in my briefing to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Government must take all necessary precautions to protect children during military operations.

My seventh update is on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). I am encouraged by the commitment and progress made by the Government of Somalia towards reaching the HIPC completion point by December. I welcome in particular the passage of the audit bill as one of the final milestones. Looking ahead, it is essential that agreement is reached with Puntland to ensure the state can benefit from post-HIPC large-scale concessional finance and to enable the finalization of the fiscal federal model for Somalia as a whole.

Finally, I would like to provide an update on the United Nations preparation for the three transitions outlined in the 2022 UNSOM strategic review (see S/2022/716). The transition cell is now fully established with three different workstreams for each of the three transitions. The Council will hear from the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia more detail on the security transition. Looking ahead, I commend the Government for the work under way to prepare for a post-2024 security architecture. It is essential to prepare early for a smooth security transition and for that to be based on a clear assessment of capabilities needed and funding requirements. I look forward to the December security conference, which will be a critical opportunity to agree on the detail of the post-2024 security architecture.

In conclusion, Somalia is at a critical juncture. While there is every expectation that Somalia will prevail, that is more likely if there is an honest reflection of the areas where things are off track, as well as a celebration of the many successes. I urge all international partners to continue to support Somalia to ensure we lock in the gains achieved so far. The United Nations remains firmly committed to supporting Somalia in achieving and consolidating peace and prosperity.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Souef.

Mr. Souef: I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to brief them on the situation in Somalia. Let me start by congratulating the Government of Brazil on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I am pleased to be joined by Ambassador Catriona Laing, the Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

Before I begin, allow me to salute once again the dedication and bravery of the Somali security forces and the African Union troops and police personnel and to pay tribute to those who paid the ultimate price in the pursuit of peace and security in Somalia.

Prior to my trip to New York, I undertook extensive engagements with all partners, including the Federal Government of Somalia, on the transition. On 12 October, I hosted a briefing session with diplomatic partners in Mogadishu to take stock of the progress achieved so far in the transition process and to determine the required support for a successful and orderly transition. It was apparent that continued partnership and collaboration between the African Union, the United Nations and other key partners remain vital in delivering our collective support to Somalia.

Today's Council meeting is therefore timely and urgent, as Somalia remains united under the stellar leadership of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in the country's effort to deliver lasting peace, security and stability. I strongly believe that our continued interaction will allow us to afford Somalia the urgent concerted support it needs in that regard.

Since my most recent briefing in June (see S/PV.9356), despite the continued challenges facing Somalia, we have witnessed commendable progress on some of Somalia's immediate and outstanding issues. Those have predominantly focused on maintaining consensus-building and dialogue among Somalia's leaders and the ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab.

I am pleased to report that the National Consultative Council (NCC) continues to play a leading role in fostering unity between the Federal Government and its federal member states. In August, the NCC agreed to accelerate the Federal Government's offensive against Al-Shabaab and to prioritize stabilization and reconciliation in the newly recovered areas. That is

ongoing and deserves our collective support. Despite Puntland's absence in the NCC, I am encouraged with its expressed intention to engage in direct talks with the Federal Government of Somalia. That signals renewed willingness to re-engage, and I look forward to Puntland's return to the NCC, which remains a crucial mechanism for building consensus and advancing national priorities.

Turning to the security situation, we continue to assess that Al-Shabaab remains the main threat to Somalia and, presently, the region. In the past three months, while we have seen Al-Shabaab prove its resilience across some sectors of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), we do not assess that to be a resurgence of Al-Shabaab.

In response to Al-Shabaab's resilience, we have continued to see the unwavering commitment of the Federal Government in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Leading that effort has been President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. His long presence on the front lines in Galmudug has offered inspiration to the Somali security forces-led and -owned offensive.

In parallel, ATMIS has continued to support the Federal Government of Somalia-led offensive against Al-Shabaab. In that regard, ATMIS launched shaping and clearance operations in all the sectors, provided artillery support in Mahas and undertook the historic inter-sector operation in Califoldheere Forest. That dislodged Al-Shabab from its defensive positions and enabled Somali security forces to achieve considerable operational successes. As offensives against Al-Shabaab progress, ATMIS intends to undertake similar inter-sector operations in support of the Federal Government of Somalia's offensive where necessary.

In addition, ATMIS and key partners have also registered achievements in the implementation of key mandated tasks. Key in that regard has been the successful completion of the joint technical assessment and the submission of a report to the Council for consideration in accordance with resolution 2687 (2023).

As part of efforts to continue the agreed drawdown, the joint tripartite committee, consisting of ATMIS, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) and the Federal Government of Somalia, completed the drawdown of 2,000 ATMIS troops in June and began activities for the phase 2 drawdown, which saw the ATMIS Bio Cadale forward operating base (FOB) transferred to the Somali security forces on

17 September. In line with Somali security forces and ATMIS operational requirements, the Raga Ceel FOB, an ATMIS FOB in Middle Shabelle was handed over to the Somali security forces on 18 October to constitute mobile forces.

Moreover, I am particularly pleased to report remarkable progress in the introduction of new enablers in the theatre. Four helicopters from the Republic of Burundi shall be deployed to Somalia in the coming days. That will certainly augment the operational support of ATMIS to Somali security forces; a significant step towards achieving an orderly and smooth transition.

Operational and military successes, while significant, are not enough to degrade and ultimately defeat Al-Shabab. They must be supplemented by other enabling elements, such as dedicated support to the Federal Government of Somalia's reconciliation and stabilization efforts, comprising the promotion of social cohesion and the extension of State authority, including to the newly liberated areas.

Through the national reconciliation framework, Somalia has demonstrated the political will to pursue dialogue. Through the Somali security forces and ATMIS, there is sufficient capacity to protect civilians. And through ATMIS, UNSOS, UNSOM and the United Nations country team, there is the necessary platform to coordinate support to Somalia's stabilization and reconciliation efforts. We must not lose sight of those important aspects.

I also wish to express concern about the El Niño phenomenon, which is expected to increase the risks of flooding along the main two rivers, the Juba and the Shabelle, likely leading to the loss of lives, property, population displacement, disease outbreak and the destruction of infrastructure and crops. El Niño is likely to worsen the humanitarian situation in internally displaced person camps, including those next to ATMIS forward operating bases. It is also expected to reduce the operational tempo of the Somali security forces and ATMIS and to disrupt road resupply.

As ATMIS, we have already established, in consultation with UNSOM and UNSOS, a Mission-wide disaster management committee to coordinate the Mission's mitigation, preparedness and early action. It will, however, require extensive resources to limit the negative impact of El Niño, and the Council is invited to continue supporting humanitarian action in Somalia.

As the Council is already aware, the Government of Somalia formally transmitted a letter to the President of the Security Council in September, requesting a technical pause in the phase 2 drawdown of 3,000 ATMIS personnel. The Government's note underscored that a technical pause would provide the necessary time to address the significant challenges identified in the joint technical assessment and further provide an opportunity to address the current security dynamic across Somalia. In response to that request, the African Union Peace and Security Council met on 30 September and issued its communiqué 1177, according to which it agreed to support Somalia's request. The African Union's decided to support the technical pause in recognition of Somalia's operational realities, including the successes and setbacks in the ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab. The Federal Government's request also represented a pragmatic response to the current security transition realities.

While the African Union looks forward to the Council's endorsement of the African Union Peace and Security Council's communiqué 1177, it remains vital that the drawdown of ATMIS troops be informed and guided by a careful assessment of the prevailing security situation and the capability of the Somali security forces. That must aim to avail the Somali security forces with the necessary firepower to take over security responsibilities while also undertaking its offensive against Al-Shabaab. In that context, the Council should, as a first step in November, consider lifting the current arms embargo on Somalia. That is also in the light of the technical assessment report (see S/2022/698) on the benchmarks stipulated in resolution 2662 (2022), which clearly highlights the important progress made by Somalia in meeting the conditions for lifting the arms embargo.

As the African Union anticipates a positive endorsement of African Union Peace and Security Council's communiqué 1177, it is important to underscore two key points.

First, the technical pause of the phase 2 drawdown will now provide Somalia, ATMIS and key partners the opportunity to secure the collective gains we have all made in Somalia. The pause will create space and time for a reassessment of the operational needs of the Somali National Army to defeat Al-Shabaab. That is ongoing, and we are beginning to see the results.

Secondly, as the Council considers the African Union Peace and Security Council's communiqué 1177, it remains vital that its endorsement of the technical pause address the growing financial deficit faced by ATMIS as the Mission prepares to exit in December 2024. As previously indicated by many members of the Council, the ongoing efforts to transfer security responsibilities to the Somali security forces must be matched with sustainable, predictable and adequate funding through a consideration of assessed contributions for ATMIS and similar AU peace support operations.

It is in that regard that I convey the African Union's commitment to burden-sharing, including through the allocation of funds from the African Union Peace Fund to support ATMIS operations. I also express profound gratitude for the support extended throughout the years by traditional and non-traditional partners to the Somali security forces and ATMIS — previously the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) — and I request sustained support, including through the United Nations trust fund for the Somali security forces, to ensure a successful transition process.

(spoke in French)

In a few months, the Council will once again start to discuss the renewal of the ATMIS mandate. Given the recent technical pause in phase 2 of the drawdown, the renewal of the ATMIS mandate in December should provide an opportunity for a collective reassessment of the security situation in Somalia and to determine the immediate and long-term needs required to enable the Somali Government to fully assume its security responsibilities and to continue to weaken and ultimately eradicate Al-Shabaab.

For its part, the African Union, in accordance with the African Union Peace and Security Council's communiqué 1068, of 2022, is currently conducting a lessons-learned assessment of AMISOM. That exercise will enable the African Union to finalize its report on its future presence in Somalia. We are, however, aware of the importance of the views of our various partners, in particular the views of the Federal Government of Somalia, on the type of support it will need from the African Union after 2024.

In that regard, the African Union intends to play a key role in the ongoing discussions on post-ATMIS Somalia. That will undoubtedly enable us to leverage our respective advantages in order to support sustainable peace in Somalia. Ensuring peace and security must be

at the forefront of our collective efforts with a view to laying the foundations for an orderly and harmonious transition to lasting peace and stability in Somalia after the departure of ATMIS. In that vein, ATMIS renews its commitment to supporting all the efforts to maintain and build on the hard-won gains of the past 17 years, beyond December 2024, including through a mechanism for assistance and capacity-building in the area of security.

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

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

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Souef for their briefings this morning and for the continued work of their teams and troops in very challenging circumstances. I also welcome the participation of Ambassador Osman, Permanent Representative of Somalia, in today's meeting.

Let me begin by reiterating the United Kingdom's full support for, and solidarity with, Somalia in the fight against Al-Shabaab. We are approaching a crunch point in the security transition. In 2024, we will see the continuation of the transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) to Somali-led security forces. That will happen as Somalia continues its ongoing offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. The Security Council and the United Nations should continue to work closely with Somalia and the African Union to ensure that both objectives are balanced and are successful. Member States need to support ATMIS and Somalia financially. Since 2022, the United Kingdom has contributed over \$57 million to ATMIS and over \$12 million to the United Nations trust fund for the Somali security forces, and we urge other Member States to step up their support as well.

The United Kingdom welcomes the positive collaboration between the Government and ATMIS on the recent joint technical assessment. By working together, the African Union and the Government of Somalia, with the support of the United Nations and partners, can ensure that the security transition is successful. The African Union Mission in Somalia and ATMIS have made huge sacrifices in enabling Somalia to get to where it is today, and we fully support them as they seek to finish the job.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Government's commitment to establishing inclusive political processes. Progress on this agenda, including clarity on the electoral model and the constitutional review, will underpin medium- to long-term stability in Somalia. Indeed, progress with State-building and peacebuilding is also essential to ensure sustained progress in the fight against Al-Shabaab, as it will consolidate the military gains. Our top priority in Somalia is to support the Government to advance its State-building and political-reform objectives while it continues to address security threats.

Let me conclude by commending Somalia on its progress through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. Thanks to Somalia's hard work, the country is on track to benefit from debt relief, including from the United Kingdom. After debt relief, Somalia has the opportunity to continue to increase revenue collection, strengthen fiscal management and limit the space for corruption. Taken together, security successes, accompanied by progress on political and economic reforms, should be a cause for cautious optimism.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Ms. Catriona Laing, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission for Somalia, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their briefings. I also welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia to this meeting.

We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the leadership of her team and look forward to renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia this month.

The United States is encouraged by the Federal Government of Somalia and the African Union's ongoing efforts to advance peace and stability in Somalia and East Africa by addressing the threat from Al-Shabaab. We welcome the progress made by Somali forces in freeing communities from Al-Shabaab's control in the Hiraa region and encourage increased efforts to stabilize these liberated areas, with a particular focus on strengthening local governance. We also congratulate the Federal Government and those federal member States that have agreed on key federal reforms, including a national security architecture and a national justice sector framework. The United States is concerned, however, about recent security setbacks in the Galmudug region, which have highlighted

continuing capacity limitations and command-and-control challenges among Somali security forces. Those developments demonstrate the urgency of finalizing a security transition plan with feasible and resource-informed objectives, timelines and support requirements.

The United States remains committed to supporting the efforts of Somalia and the AU to build up Somalia's security sector capacity and stabilization efforts. We recognize that the process requires improved international coordination, and we will be working with partners to adjust our approach to achieve those goals. I also note that we are concerned about the potential for additional violence in and around Laascaanood, and we urge all sides to agree to an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and to resolve their disputes peacefully through dialogue. In addition, we call for greater commitment to monitoring human rights abuses and violations in and beyond Laascaanood.

On the humanitarian front, we must all come together to address the dire impacts of Somalia's severe drought. The United States remains committed to helping Somalia to address the crisis, including through the provision of more than \$750 million in humanitarian assistance this year. We are proud to be the largest humanitarian donor to Somalia. Earlier this year, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield travelled to Mogadishu to review the humanitarian and security situation. While there, she called on the international community to stamp out hunger and famine once and for all. We followed up by co-hosting a high-level pledging event in May to keep the crisis on the agenda and ensure that we are galvanizing all partners to act. The event raised \$2.4 billion.

The United States strongly supports the Somali people and remains committed to helping to advance democracy, peace and stability, and we will continue to work with Somalia and international partners to build a brighter future for the Somali people.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3).

We thank Ms. Catriona Laing, 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 (AU) Commission for Somalia, for their

respective briefings. We also welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of Somalia, our brother, Ambassador Abukar Osman.

We would want to begin by commending President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his remarkable efforts in advancing Somalia's key priorities and State-building efforts through a consultative and inclusive political dialogue. His convening of the National Consultative Council (NCC), which brought together federal and state leaders, demonstrates a commitment to fostering unity and inclusivity in Somalia. Despite the choice of some federal member states not to attend NCC meetings, we welcome the commitment to convening them and strongly encourage the ongoing efforts to promote and facilitate constructive dialogues, as they play an essential role in addressing the challenges faced by Somalia in its State-building goals. We believe that it is through such inclusive dialogues that diverse views can be heard and considered, bearing in mind the ultimate goal of consolidating peace and the stability of Somalia for a brighter future.

Similarly, we welcome the initiatives taken to resolve conflicts and promote dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland. The engagement by the Federal Government's special envoy for Somalia-Somaliland dialogue with political and civil society stakeholders is commendable. Such efforts are crucial to fostering understanding and finding common ground between the two parties. We encourage the continuation of those conversations and urge all stakeholders to actively participate in them in order to achieve a peaceful and mutually beneficial resolution.

We express our deep concern about the recent conflict in Laascaanood and the surrounding areas. The violence and escalation of hostilities have resulted in civilian casualties and the displacement of innocent people. In that regard, we call on the Somaliland administration and the Dhulbahante clan elders to engage in meaningful communication and mediation efforts to reach a peaceful outcome that can foster an environment conducive to stability and reconciliation in Laascaanood and the surrounding areas. The A3 reaffirms its commitment to supporting any measures that can advance peace, stability and reconciliation in Laascaanood and its environs, while standing in solidarity with the communities affected. We sincerely hope that, by working together, the conflict can be quickly resolved, and the impacted communities enabled to start the process of healing and rebuilding

their lives. We express our deepest condolences and sympathy to the families of those who have fallen victim to terrorist attacks and pay tribute to all peacekeepers, who risk their lives.

Despite the ongoing offensive against Al-Shabaab and the successful liberation of some areas from the terrorist group, the security situation in Somalia continues to be tense and worrisome. As we heard earlier, the persistent use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by Al-Shabaab has resulted in a high number of casualties. Specifically, its 255 IED attacks have caused 692 deaths. Attacks with indirect fire, including rocket strikes, have also been directed against important national institutions, including the Aden Adde International Airport, the presidential palace and United Nations facilities, resulting in several injuries and deaths. In the light of the ongoing phased withdrawal of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), those incidents are deeply concerning and highlight the urgent need for sustained support in addressing the security challenges faced by the country.

The Federal Government of Somalia has requested a three-month technical pause of the drawdown of ATMIS troops. Recognizing the importance of continued support for Somalia in their pursuit of lasting peace, security and stability, the AU Peace and Security Council has signalled its support for the request. The A3 is in accord with the justification provided by Somalia for the technical pause of the drawdown and believes that the United Nations Security Council must also endorse that in solidarity with their aspirations for peace and security. We consider it important to continue the provision of support to the Federal Government of Somalia to preserve the hard-won gains made over the years in stabilizing the country, especially during the implementation of the technical pause. In that regard, the A3 calls upon all stakeholders, particularly the United Nations Security Council, the private sector, donors and Somalia's bilateral partners, to help to mobilize the necessary resources for the successful implementation of the three-month pause for the ATMIS personnel concerned, as well as for the smooth transition of the relevant security responsibilities to Somalia's security forces. In that context, we also call for the lifting of the arms embargo to support their efforts to combat the threats within the country.

On the economic front, we commend the Federal Government of Somalia for the progress made under

the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). Despite facing challenges, such as droughts, flooding, the severe impact of climate change and economic shocks, Somalia has shown remarkable resilience and determination. The successful implementation of the poverty reduction strategy, the establishment of the unified social registry and the adoption of important legislation like the national audit bill demonstrate the Government's determination to improve the economic well-being of its people.

We encourage all partners to expedite debt-relief agreements to provide Somalia with the necessary international development financing, while urging the Government to continue their post-HIPC reforms, particularly in the area of good financial governance, for sustained progress and prosperity.

On the humanitarian front, Somalia, like other countries in the Horn of Africa, is grappling with a severe crisis, exacerbated by the consequences of climate change. The vulnerable populations within the nation are facing the devastating impacts of drought, conflict and flooding, which have further deepened their plight.

We are deeply concerned about the current humanitarian situation, particularly due to the significant funding shortfall for the 2023 humanitarian response plan. With only 37.4 per cent — some \$942.6 million out of \$2.6 billion — of the required funding secured, the ability to address the urgent needs of several million people is severely constrained. We urge the donor community to help bridge the funding gap in order to alleviate the suffering of the Somali people.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our commitment to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia. We will continue to stand with the good people of Somalia in their pursuit for peace, security and national development.

Mrs. Frazier (Malta): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing and African Union Special Representative El-Amine Souef for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Somalia in this meeting.

Malta welcomes the intensified efforts to advance political dialogue on key national priorities and commends the Federal Government of Somalia's

leadership in that regard. While we are encouraged by recent agreements on the constitutional review process and electoral preparations at the federal level, we remain concerned that Puntland is disengaged from that crucial exercise. We call for broad consultations with all federal member states in order to ensure a holistic and inclusive State-building process.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our call for the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women in political, electoral and constitutional processes. We are disappointed at the limited political participation of women in decision-making and commend the efforts of women civil society organizations to ensure that the voices of women are not only heard, but also included. We continue to support their call for including women's issues in the National Consultative Council, including gender-responsive legislation and special measures to ensure that the 30 per cent quota is attained.

It is also crucial that a civic space is maintained and that all Somalis, including civil society actors and communities, can freely engage on key issues of national interest and concern. Meanwhile, we welcome efforts to strengthen the capacity of rule-of-law actors. A rules-based order generates trust within communities, and it is an opportunity to restore peace.

Malta welcomes the intensified efforts by Somalia to root out Al-Shabaab and conveys our gratitude to the courage displayed by Somalis in that regard. We condemn, in the strongest terms, all offensives carried out by Al-Shabaab, and we place our trust in a Somali-led concerted effort, with the support of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), to maintain recovered areas while reforming Somalia's security sector. Both of those exercises are interlinked and should run in parallel.

It is in that vein that the European Union (EU) contributes both to ATMIS and to the Somali National Army to ensure that ATMIS fulfils its mandate and that Somalia takes responsibility and prevents a vacuum in liberated areas. The EU has allocated €85 million for the military component of ATMIS in 2023 and an additional €33 million for its civilian and police components for 2023 and 2024, which brings the EU's total support since the formation of ATMIS to more than €2.5 billion.

Malta urges efforts towards a lasting and meaningful conflict resolution in Laascaanood. As we call for accountability, we continue to support the

good offices of the United Nations to complement Somali-owned national dialogue efforts, including by clan elders.

Malta is concerned about the stark increase in grave violations committed against children across the country, in particular the abduction of 263 children for forced recruitment and use. We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. In that context, we welcome the Federal Government's endorsement of the age-verification checklist and encourage it to continue its engagement to end and prevent all grave violations against children.

As Somalia grapples with climate shocks, such as the projected above-average rainfall, which will further exacerbate humanitarian needs, we are concerned that up to 3.7 million people face acute food insecurity, with 1.5 million children expected to suffer acute malnutrition. The international community must heed this warning and act now by scaling up humanitarian action to Somalia, particularly with regards to the delivery of essential food assistance.

In conclusion, Malta is deeply committed to peace, stability and security in Somalia. As we look forward to the renewal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, we continue to support the tireless efforts of the Mission and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing, who, in partnership with the Federal Government of Somalia, has ensured that sustainable peace lies at the core of their mandate.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Catriona Laing and Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef for their interventions, and I acknowledge the presence of the representative of Somalia at this meeting.

My delegation hopes that Somalia furthers dialogue and consultations on key State-building priorities, including constitutional review and preparations for the upcoming elections.

The work of United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), alongside the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations system, to enhance Somalia's ability to create legislation on gender, participation and decision-making is paramount. We agree with the Secretary-General on the discouraging level of political participation of Somali women. As signatories to the shared commitments of the Council's women and peace and security agenda,

we reiterate that exclusionary political processes jeopardize lasting peace and stability.

It is worrisome that the Al-Shabaab terrorist group remains a serious threat to peace, security and stability in Somalia and the region. In the face of those security threats and with a view to stopping the violence, it is critical that the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) support the Government.

Information received by the Council indicates an increase in grave human rights violations against children, mostly committed by Al-Shabaab. It is the duty of the State to prioritize the protection of children's rights. Children deprived of their liberty for alleged links with armed groups should be treated as victims and not as ex-combatants, in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law. In that regard, we commend the recent advances achieved with the laws regarding children's rights and juvenile justice.

We also call for the rights of journalists and human rights defenders to be respected. Violations of those rights must be investigated thoroughly, as there should be no place for restrictions on the freedom of opinion or expression.

The food security situation in Somalia is of concern, and we reiterate the importance of working on all initiatives aimed at improving conditions for the Somali people. Now that the El Niño phenomenon is once again threatening to batter the region, the international community's support is necessary to initiate preventive and humanitarian response efforts.

We recognize the request of the Federal Government of Somalia to postpone by 90 days the second phase of the ATMIS transition, and we call for continued close cooperation between the Government and the United Nations in order to enable a gradual, responsible transition, with no security vacuums and with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Ecuador will constructively support negotiations on the upcoming renewal of UNSOM's mandate.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing for her update on the situation in Somalia and underline our support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). I also thank Mr. Souef for his briefing and welcome the presence of Somalia in this meeting.

Albania commends the Government of Somalia for its ongoing commitment to addressing the complex situation and strengthening the fight against terrorism. Allow me to focus on three key areas.

First, as highlighted by the Secretary-General's report (S/2023/758), Somalia has made progress on key legislative processes to advance national priorities. In that regard, we welcome the approval of the child rights bill, which is a significant step towards protecting the rights of all Somali children. We also welcome efforts to promote women's participation in public life, but we think that the legal frameworks against conflict-related sexual violence must be strengthened. We encourage the Government of Somalia to work with the United Nations and advance its State-building efforts. Progress is required on the constitutional and electoral processes. We are deeply concerned about the reported restrictions on freedom of expression, journalists and media. We call on the Government of Somalia to take steps to create a safe and inclusive civic space essential for any thriving democracy.

Secondly, we are encouraged that the Government has taken ownership of and prioritized its security and taken steps to restore peace and stability in the country. We commend the progress made towards the reconfiguration of the Somali National Army and the collaborative efforts with partners to launch the counteroffensive against Al-Shabaab. We recognize the many challenges faced, particularly with Al-Shabaab's continued use of improvised explosive device attacks. In that regard, stabilization efforts remain crucial to ensuring gains are consolidated and to avoiding a security vacuum in liberated areas. As the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) looks to draw down by the end of 2024, efforts must be made to strengthen the capacity of the national forces. Coordination and planning between ATMIS and Somalia is critical to preparing the country for a security handover and enabling it to ensure the protection of its civilians.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation remains dire, with 8.3 million people in need of assistance. Although famine has been averted, recurring climate shocks and conflict continue to exacerbate humanitarian needs, disproportionately affecting women and children. We stress the importance of continued humanitarian aid to mitigate those challenges. We express concern over the continued conflict in Laascaanood, which is taking a heavy toll on civilians and essential infrastructure.

As reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 185,000 people have been displaced. We call on all parties to agree on a ceasefire and end the hostilities, while those responsible must be held accountable.

As this is the last time Albania will speak on this issue in the Security Council, we take this opportunity to stress our support for the critical work of UNSOM in supporting the Government of Somalia. As ATMIS draws down, it is critical to build the capacity of Somalia's security and governance to take over the responsibility to protect its people. The aspirations of the Somali people for peace, stability and prosperity deserve to be met.

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

At present, the political and security process in Somalia is at a critical stage. The international community must not relent in its attention and support at this juncture and must help Somalia to better meet the challenges on all fronts.

First, all efforts should be made to consolidate achievements in the fight against terrorism. The Somali authorities have achieved visible results in the fight against terrorism. The terrorist group Al-Shabaab has recently launched frequent attacks on Government institutions, airport facilities and United Nations agencies, resulting in civilian casualties. The international community should continue to support Somalia's counter-terrorism and stabilization efforts and help the Somali security forces to speed up their training and capacity-building with a view to the latter assuming greater responsibility for security. Recently, the Federal Government called for pause in the drawdown plan of African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). China believes that it is imperative to carry out the drawdown plan in a smooth, orderly and responsible manner on the basis of a comprehensive assessment of the security situation so as to avoid a security vacuum. At the same time, ATMIS is seriously underfunded. The Secretary-General expressed his concern in his report (S/2023/758) and called for greater financial support from the funding parties. China takes a positive view of the Council's study of the financing options for ATMIS and hopes that developed countries,

founding parties and major stakeholders will respond to the Secretary-General's appeal by maintaining their financial support so that years of effort on the part of ATMIS might not be wasted.

Secondly, we must support the political transition in Somalia, which is the very basis for consolidating national security and maintaining political stability. China supports the holding of a national consultative conference between the Federal Government of Somali and its member states, to promote political dialogue and to discuss major issues such as elections, counter-terrorism and reconciliation. We call on all parties to continue to resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation and to advance the transition process. China notes that the situation in Laascaanood has yet to ease and calls on all parties concerned to heed the call made in June by the President in the Security Council (see S/PV.9356) to exercise calm and restraint and refrain from taking retaliatory actions that could lead to an escalation of the situation. The international community and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) should carry out their good offices on the basis of respective ownership of the Somali authorities and safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia.

Thirdly, since assuming office, Special Representative Laing has led UNSOM in its multiple efforts to promote political dialogue, maintain stability and carry out humanitarian and development activities. The renewal of UNSOM's mandate is currently under discussion in the Council. China hopes that UNSOM will focus on its core mandate, make dedicated efforts to help Somalia to address the root causes of conflict and take more practical measures to promote humanitarian assistance, poverty eradication and sustainable development, and support the stabilization plan for the recovered areas and the counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures taken by Somalia. It is necessary for the United Nations to plan its future cooperation with Somalia in an integrated manner, permit the transition of UNSOM in accordance with the request from the Government of Somalia and align its efforts with the priority tasks for Somalia's national development. The Somali authorities have repeatedly called for the lifting of the arms embargo. The Council should respond to the concerns of the Somali side, adjust the sanctions measures in the light of the security situation on the ground and create conditions conducive to the building of Somalia's national defence.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Catriona Laing and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Mohamed El-Amin Souef for their informative briefings. I also welcome the presence here today of the Permanent Representative of Somalia.

Let me start by paying tribute to all African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and Somali security forces personnel for their sacrifices in the work of achieving peace and stability in Somalia and the region. The successful completion of the first phase of the ATMIS drawdown illustrates the strong political will of the Federal Government of Somalia in working to implement the planned security transition, which we all welcome.

It is a daunting task to continue effective offensive operations against Al-Shabaab's strongholds in remote areas while at the same time consolidating the Government's security control in newly liberated areas. A comprehensive security review of the population centres surrounding forward operating bases (FOBs) is an important exercise for preventing any vulnerabilities that Al-Shabaab can exploit. We therefore understand the necessity of the three-month technical pause of the second phase of the ATMIS drawdown requested by the Federal Government of Somalia as a reorganization period.

Degrading Al-Shabaab and preventing any recurrence of its intrusion into Somali society is a long-term endeavour based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The extension of State authority should come from good governance with the assurance of safety and better social welfare for Somalia's people. That is especially true as the country is being battered by multiple challenges, including severe climate shocks. The reliable delivery of basic services will help to ensure the trust of the population, which is vital for sustainable stability. For that, developing adequate security forces is crucial, and accelerating reform of the security sector is a priority in that regard. We commend the neighbouring countries that are contributing troops to ATMIS for their continued support to force generation for Somalia. An enhanced presence of the Somali security forces is required, including in order to cover the camps for internally displaced persons adjacent to ATMIS FOBs and to provide humanitarian access to the vulnerable.

We must also focus on socioeconomic development through capacity-building, especially if we are to provide young Somalis with future prospects that can keep them from becoming involved with armed groups and illegal activities. For its part, Japan has provided support to local organizations to help young entrepreneurs explore the potential for businesses that can increase employment opportunities for young people.

A successful transition in Somalia is essential to peace and stability in the entire region. It requires the continued support of the international community, and Japan remains committed to that collective effort.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): I would like to begin by thanking today's briefers, Special Representative Catriona Laing and Ambassador Mohammed El-Amine Souef. We also welcome Somalia's participation in this meeting.

Over the past two decades and against the odds, Somalia has proved to be a great example of resilience and of the potential of regional and international partnerships. I would therefore like to start by reiterating our support to the people of Somalia, the Federal Government of Somalia and both the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). Thanks to their collective efforts, and despite the challenges the country still faces, Somalia has continued its inspiring upward trajectory.

As we meet today, the country's stabilization continues apace and efforts to address terrorism have been effective, presenting an opportunity to consolidate lasting peace in Somalia. It is a tribute to the vision of Somalia's leadership and the strength of its people. There is still much work to be done to sustain that momentum, however, as Somalia seeks to rid itself of Al-Shabaab and jump-start its recovery. In that context, I would like to make three key points.

First, the fight against terrorism must be sustained and follow the lead of the Federal Government of Somalia. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the Somali National Army have shown great determination in working to dislodge Al-Shabaab from its strongholds across the country, but we are all too aware that its terrorist activities continue to pose a grave threat to Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa. Just last Monday, the killing of a journalist by Al-Shabaab during a

suicide attack at a restaurant in Mogadishu was yet another reminder of the need to remain vigilant.

In recent months, threatened by the Somali Government's offensive, Al-Shabaab has responded by ramping up violence. The next steps in countering Al-Shabaab are clear. There is a need for a coordinated strategy that sustains the ongoing military offensive to protect Somalis while also helping the Government of Somalia stabilize its territorial gains. Somalia has taken international concerns about the fight against Al-Shabaab seriously, including in developing accountability mechanisms to trace weapons systems, which is a very encouraging sign. It is now up to the international community and the Council to fulfil their end of the bargain. Sanctions are effective only if they adapt to the shifting dynamics on the ground. The United Arab Emirates believes that the current situation necessitates the lifting of the arms embargo on the Federal Government of Somalia.

Alongside African troop-contributing countries, we support Somalia's call for a three-month pause on the withdrawal of ATMIS, which will allow much-needed time to design appropriate strategies to prevent the possibility of a security vacuum ripe for exploitation by Al-Shabaab. We must also remain vigilant with regard to the regional ramifications of Al-Shabaab, including its ties with other terrorist networks, and we should continue supporting the Government of Somalia's cooperation with its neighbours to address that threat.

Secondly, efforts to strengthen resilience to climate change must be scaled up. Somalia has been facing regular disasters fuelled by climate change, ranging from recurrent droughts that affect food security and exacerbate poverty to the recent floods that displaced nearly a quarter of 1 million people. Such events aggravate an already dire humanitarian situation and can become a driver of conflict. That is why the United Arab Emirates has been partnering with the Somali Government in helping to alleviate the humanitarian needs on the ground. During the period between 2018 and 2023, assistance from the United Arab Emirates to Somalia amounted to \$197 million.

Thirdly, addressing the immediate challenges facing Somalia must not distract us from tackling the country's long-term sustainable development. Both in its individual capacity and as a member of the quintet for Somalia, the United Arab Emirates remains committed to the country's long-term security and stabilization.

The Government's stabilization and reconciliation programme outlines areas that urgently need significant attention and investment, key among them Somalia's economic recovery and development. We firmly believe that economic development is a powerful peacebuilding tool that will consolidate its security gains. The United Arab Emirates looks forward to hosting the next gathering of the quintet to discuss how we can continue to support the people of Somalia. Now is the moment to redouble our support for the significant progress made so far in also enacting economic reforms that can boost the country's recovery.

The people of Somalia have the resolve and the ingenuity to own the solutions to the challenges they face and to pave the way towards a society that reflects their aspirations. The United Arab Emirates will continue to offer its unwavering support.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representatives for their respective briefings, and I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Somalia at this morning's meeting. For my part, I would like to emphasize three points.

First of all, France welcomes the efforts that have been made to bring peace to Somalia. I would like to point to the political efforts in particular, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's organization of the National Consultative Council, which is an important step towards strengthening national unity. France encourages all Somali stakeholders to participate with a view to reaching a consensus. It is essential that the involvement of women, young people and marginalized communities be fully taken into account in that framework, and I am aware of the efforts being made by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia in that direction. Here I would like to thank the Special Representative and her team and commend their mobilization.

Turning to efforts on the security front, France welcomes the commitment of Somalia, as well as the troop-contributing countries to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), in the fight against Al-Shabaab, which has resulted in the recovery of various territories in the south and centre of the country in recent months. Despite those advances, the situation remains fragile. Recurring attacks by Al-Shabaab continue to target civilian populations, increasing the numbers of victims and internally

displaced persons. France is also concerned about the situation in Laascaanood following the clashes of 25 August. We encourage all stakeholders to support dialogue aimed at identifying a solution to the conflict.

The security situation continues to have significant humanitarian repercussions, at a time when the environmental context gives reason to fear a rise in the number of food-insecure people, as the Special Representative reminded us. It is essential to step up support for those populations and enable the full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid. I would like to point out that France made a bilateral contribution to those efforts in the amount of €5 million for 2023.

Finally, the future of our support for Somalia must be discussed now. ATMIS has engaged in a withdrawal process that should lead to its departure in accordance with the timetable set by the Council. In view of the challenges that Somalia is still facing, it is important to identify now which forms of support may be provided to the country after ATMIS has withdrawn. That support should involve all Somalia's partners in order to help the country manage its own security. In that regard, I welcome President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's initiative to organize a conference on security in Somalia in New York on 12 December. The EU remains fully committed to supporting Somalia, through both ATMIS and the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy missions. I would like to recall that such aid and support has totalled more than €4.3 billion since 2009.

France and the European Union will remain ready to support and stand with Somalia and its people.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Representative Laing and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Souef for their presentations and their work. I also welcome the presence of the representative of Somalia at this meeting.

At this pivotal juncture in Somalia's security transition, the country faces multidimensional and complex challenges. I would like to highlight three points.

First, as the Secretary-General points out in his report (S/2023/758), Somalia is at the epicentre of climate change. The humanitarian situation remains dramatic and is likely to worsen as a result of rainfall linked to the El Niño phenomenon. The interdependent effects of conflict and climate change have displaced more than

1 million people over the past year, the majority of them women and children. Many regions are still struggling to recover from a prolonged drought. In addition, more than 100,000 people will soon be affected by the second rainy season, while more than 100 internally displaced person camps have already been flooded.

First, the Informal Expert Group on Climate and Security, co-chaired by the United Arab Emirates, Mozambique and Switzerland, recently discussed the impact of the floods and their potential consequences for the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the Somali Disaster Management Agency to form a committee to enhance preparedness and crisis management for the expected floods. We also stress the importance of regional and subregional efforts. The inclusion in future reports of the Secretary-General of a section devoted to the negative impacts of climate change on peace and security would facilitate analysis in that specific context.

Secondly, a coordinated, holistic and inclusive approach must guide stabilization and peacebuilding efforts. While it is important for Somalia to be able to assume responsibility for its own security in the medium term, that transition must not be rushed, in order to avoid negative repercussions on the security and humanitarian situation on the ground. According to the recent independent assessment report, progress has been made towards such an inclusive approach. Nevertheless, there remain alarming gaps in the involvement of women. In that regard, Switzerland supports the various local partners, from Mogadishu to Hargeisa, in their efforts to empower women to participate in decision-making and to put in place inclusive political processes. Such processes are essential for the establishment of a stable democracy. Switzerland welcomes Somalia's intention to introduce a one-person, one-vote system. However, the change in system and the objective of synchronizing elections must not be used as a pretext for postponing elections in federal member states.

Thirdly, respect for international law must be the backbone of the response to insecurity throughout the country. We deplore the continuing attacks by Al-Shabaab and other armed groups, and we recognize the efforts being made by the Government and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia to address them. We call on all actors to respect human rights and international humanitarian law and to ensure the

protection of civilians. In that context, we particularly deplore the forced recruitment of children, for which Al-Shabaab is the main culprit. Somalia remains one of the countries in which the greatest number of serious violations against children are perpetrated, with an alarming increase. Of particular concern are the attacks on schools and hospitals in the Laascaanood region. Although the number of casualties has declined owing to a decrease in the intensity of clashes in that region, the hostilities continue and the risk of escalation, with serious consequences for civilians, remains high.

I would like to congratulate UNSOM on the crucial role it is playing. Switzerland continues to support the Mission, Somalia and its people in their efforts to build peace and a prosperous future.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Catriona Laing and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their briefings. We welcome to today's meeting Mr. Abukar Dahir Osman, Permanent Representative of Somalia to the United Nations.

Russia supports the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia to stabilize the domestic political situation. Over the past year, there has been a significant uptick in the work of the National Consultative Council (NCC). The Parliament has begun discussing proposals to review the national Constitution and the electoral model. At the NCC meeting held in August, important decisions were taken to strengthen the coordination of military operations against Al-Shabaab and accelerate the implementation of the national reconciliation plan. We note the personal contributions of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to the efforts to consolidate public opinion in the country. Nevertheless, we are concerned that Puntland and Somaliland are not participating in that process. Also of concern is the increased opposition in South-West state, Puntland and Jubaland. We urge all participants in the Somali political process to continue working together to establish a sustainable federative model in the country, while preserving the territorial integrity and unity of Somalia.

The security situation is of particular concern. Despite the offensive operations of the Somali National Army, Al-Shabaab maintains a firm hold in the country. The group is still carrying out high-profile

acts resulting in a large number of casualties, including terrorist attacks, the occupation of towns and villages and attacks on the protected zone of the Mogadishu airport. We categorically condemn all terrorist attacks and pay tribute to the African peacekeepers and the Somali National Army, including those who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

The situation in Laascaanood remains unresolved. We support the mediation efforts of the Federal Government, clan elders and States of the region to resolve that conflict. We urge UNSOM to continue to render the necessary assistance to Mogadishu as part of the Mission's mandate. Against that backdrop, ATMIS remains a very important factor in containing extremist and other illegal activities in Somalia. Any reduction in the Mission's contingent should be based on the real situation on the ground. We agree with the request of the Federal Government of Somalia, supported by the African Union, to postpone the completion of the stage 2 of the ATMIS withdrawal process by three months. We hope that the Security Council will soon be able to approve that request. We also share Mogadishu's concerns regarding the arms embargo, which creates objective obstacles to combating Al-Shabaab effectively. We will be ready to join substantive talks on that issue in November.

In the light of the ongoing Security Council discussions on the extension of the UNSOM mandate, we express the hope that the leadership of the special political mission will be able to provide the necessary assistance to the Somali authorities within the Mission's existing mandate. We believe that it is important to step up work to implement the recommendations approved by the Security Council on an independent strategic review of UNSOM activities, including with regard to the launch of a process for the gradual transfer of the Mission's functions to the United Nations country team.

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

I thank Special Representatives Laing and Souef for their briefings. I welcome Ambassador Osman and the Somali delegation to today's meeting.

Brazil commends Somalia's enduring commitment to improving security and stability. We underscore, in particular, the unprecedented liberation of dozens of communities from Al-Shabaab rule since July 2022. The national stabilization strategy and the revised stabilization plan provide solid conceptual frameworks

to address the considerable needs of the newly recovered areas. By resuming long-term State-building processes in the liberated communities, the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states have unprecedented opportunities to promote local ownership and sustain peace. We welcome the efforts to enhance governance at the federal and member state levels.

President Mohamud's remarks to the Council on 22 June (see S/PV.9356) highlighted how meetings of the National Consultative Council have resulted in agreements on elections, the allocation of power, judicial institutions and fiscal federalism. Despite that remarkable progress, Somalia faces significant challenges ahead.

Al-Shabaab continues to pose the most dangerous threat. Despite the United Nations special political mission's vital mediation efforts, the conflict in Laascaanood remains unresolved. We commend the tenacious efforts of Special Representative Laing and her team to bring about a peaceful solution to the violent clashes in Laascaanood. Her comprehensive briefing to Council members on 7 September made it clear that the engagement, in good faith, of all sides of the conflict is critical to solving the issues that have plagued the lives of civilians in the Sool region since last year. Dialogue facilitated by mediation is the best option available for reaching an agreement.

We welcome the African Union Peace and Security Council's efforts to operationalize the three-month technical pause requested by the Federal Government of Somalia. Brazil commends, in particular, the African Union's commitment to durable peace in Somalia.

As the most essential partner in Somalia's security transition, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia deserves full support from the Council to fulfil its demanding mandate. Support from the international community remains vital in the short term. We commend the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the life-saving efforts of humanitarian agencies. While essential support and generous donations from abroad helped Somalia to tackle the worst aspects of a food-insecurity crisis last year, the challenges remain daunting. After all, nearly half of its population needs humanitarian assistance this year. By improving its security and stability, Somalia will free a significant share of its people's precious time, energy and resources to pursue their

ambitions and dreams. A developing country with such a promising young population deserves all the resources and support we can summon to promote its development.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your country's assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I also want to thank Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, for their briefings.

At the Council's last meeting on Somalia (see S/PV.9356), my President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, highlighted the strides made by Somalia in the months under his leadership. The Government has actively worked towards consensus with the federal member states and made important progress through the convening of six National Consultative Council meetings.

During those meetings, key agreements were reached on fiscal policy, electoral processes and security arrangements. Reconciliation efforts in Galmudug and South-West states have resulted in a renewed spirit of cooperation and unity. Those agreements ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the decision-making process going forward. That unity of purpose has guided us as we strive to liberate areas from Al-Shabaab's control and combat terrorism that has afflicted our nation. The Somali national armed forces, together with local communities and international partners, continue to conduct successful operations against Al-Shabaab, which has led to the recovery of many towns and villages. Since August 2022, more than 600 kilometres of ground has been liberated. We remain vigilant in ensuring that the gains we have achieved are not reversed.

Despite the commendable success achieved in maintaining the phase 1 drawdown by the Somali security forces, it is imperative to recognize that the forward operating bases, earmarked for phase 2, differed significantly. The unforeseen turn of events necessitated a thorough reorganization to ensure we maintain our momentum in countering the threat of Al-Shabaab. Before embarking on the next drawdown phase, comprehensive security planning for the

population centres surrounding the forward operating bases slated for collapse or handover is imperative. We firmly believe that such planning should be methodically tailored to suit the distinctive security dynamics of each area, ensuring a seamless security transition.

Times have changed, and so has Somalia. As President Mohamud passionately expressed, "Let me state clearly that the Somalia of 2023 is not the Somalia of 1992." (S/PV.9356, *p. 10*) It is crucial for the global community to acknowledge that transformation and the advancements we have made, as well as the new realities on the ground. The ongoing enforcement of the arms embargo restricts the capabilities of the Somali armed forces. We again call for the full lifting of the arms embargo imposed on Somalia in 1992.

In addition to those considerations, we must also address the pressing logistical concerns and resource gaps confronting the Somali security forces. As the Somali national armed forces undertake increased responsibilities, there is an increasing demand for logistical support. While the existing logistical support is undeniably crucial, it falls short owing to the ongoing escalated operational tempo in countering Al-Shabaab. During the technical pause, the Federal Government of Somalia, in conjunction with our partners, will conduct a comprehensive reassessment of the operational needs of the Somali national armed forces. That reassessment aims to essentially ensure that our armed forces are endowed with the requisite financial and logistical resources to effectively pursue our transition priorities.

On the economic area, we have worked to fulfil, by the end of this year, the criteria of a framework laid out by international institutions. Our nation's debt is in the process of being absolved. That is more than just a fiscal reset. It is a testament to our dedication to reform, governance and macroeconomic stability. That brings me to the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), which is currently being negotiated by Council members. It is imperative that the UNSOM special political mission transition to the United Nations country team presence align with the reality of Somalia today, not of 10 years ago, and focus its efforts on assisting the Federal Government of Somalia in its articulated long-term development priorities.

On the situation in northern Somalia, I am pleased to report that the situation in Laascaanood is calm, thanks to the tireless efforts of the Sool, Sanaag and Cayn

(SSC)-Khatumo administration, which recently visited the capital, Mogadishu. We welcome the establishment of the SSC-Khatumo interim administration and request that UNSOM and international partners align themselves with and follow the policy of the Federal Government of Somalia, led by the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in that regard. We are extending local governance to the newly established administration and addressing urgent humanitarian needs in Laascaanood. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation is undertaking efforts to build the foundation for national reconciliation and peaceful dispute resolution in Laascaanood and the surrounding SSC region.

In conclusion, our journey has been challenging, but the tangible advancements that have been witnessed across sectors demonstrate our resilience, determination and the unwavering spirit of the Somali people. Through our combined efforts, we will overcome the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and move closer to attaining sustainable peace and prosperity.

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 12.10 p.m.