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Provisional

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New York

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett	(Guyana)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria	Mr. Bendjama
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
	France	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
	Japan	Mrs. Shino
	Malta	Mrs. Frazier
	Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Sierra Leone	Mr. Sowa
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2024/129)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2024/129)

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/2024/129, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia.

I now give the floor to Ms. Laing.

Ms. Laing: I welcome this opportunity to address the Security Council on developments in Somalia since my previous briefing in October (see S/PV.9446), and I am pleased to do so alongside the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef. I pay tribute to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the dedicated service of its personnel and troops.

The Federal Government of Somalia has made solid progress in recent months in the implementation of its priorities, including the completion of a critical security road map presented at the Somalia security conference on 12 December last year. Since my previous briefing, Somalia also gained admission to the East African Community, reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, secured the lifting of the arms embargo and, most recently, secured the endorsement of the African Union

Executive Council for a seat on the Security Council in 2025 and 26. Those are very significant achievements.

The United Nations family in Mogadishu has faced a challenging start to the year, particularly the incident that took place in Galmudug on 10 January involving one of our helicopters. We are working closely with the Federal Government and all partners to secure the safe return of passengers and crew. I also would like to recognize the tragic death of a member of the United Nations Guard Force Unit, who was killed in an Al-Shabaab indirect fire attack on our United Nations compound on 11 January. Despite those tragic events, our focus remains on supporting Somalia with its rightly ambitious agenda over the year ahead.

My briefing today will provide brief updates on eight areas: first, political developments; second, regional developments; third, security; fourth, women and peace and security; fifth, human rights; sixth, the humanitarian situation and links to climate change; seventh, economic development and finally, transition.

I will begin with an update on political developments. The National Consultative Council (NCC) proposals of 27 May on the proposed new electoral model continue to be debated intensely. On the positive side, there is broad public support for the transition to one-person, one-vote elections, but there is also a realization that the timelines proposed by the NCC are too ambitious. The United Nations is therefore working with the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation to develop a realistic plan that will nevertheless ensure the momentum towards one-person, one-vote elections is maintained.

We welcome the recent approval by Parliament of the procedural rules for constitutional changes. That now sets a clear pathway on process. It is now urgent to reach an inclusive consensus on the electoral framework. And on the constitution, we encourage all parties to engage in the spirit of compromise to finalize the process. Without an agreed constitution, Somalia remains vulnerable to perennial crises, with no agreed rules of the game to enable resolution.

I commend the people of the federal member state of Puntland on the peaceful conclusion of the electoral process on 8 January. President Said Abdullahi Deni, the sixth President of Puntland, was re-elected by the Puntland state assembly to a second term in office. The presence of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and three federal member state Presidents at the inauguration

on 25 January was a very positive signal. We hope that that has created the foundation for a reset of dialogue with the full re-engagement of President Deni in the NCC process. The planned Garowe conference on the future of Somalia could be an important part of that reset, with the opportunity for wider consultation with key stakeholders, including women and youth.

In Laascaanood and the Sool region, the situation has remained calm since the violence of November 2023. There is, however, no formal ceasefire. We continue to urge all parties to work towards an immediate exchange of detainees and a commitment to no further violence and to start dialogue to address the underlying drivers of the conflict. As the United Nations, we continue to provide humanitarian assistance to those affected and to support demining and early recovery.

My second update concerns regional developments. On 1 January Ethiopia and Somaliland announced a memorandum of understanding that reportedly grants Ethiopia a 50-year lease on 20 kilometres of coastline in exchange for certain political and economic benefits to Somaliland. The full details of the memorandum of understanding are not available, but public pronouncements have generated strong hostile public reaction in Somalia. It is also worrisome to see Al-Shabaab exploiting that situation as a tool for recruitment. We recognize that the strong feelings in Somalia are putting pressure on the Government to respond, and we encourage the President to remain measured in his response.

I echo the words of the Secretary-General, who has recalled that the Security Council has repeatedly affirmed its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Somalia and called for all parties to engage in peaceful and constructive dialogue and to refrain from inflammatory words or actions that could further escalate tensions. The situation must be resolved through constructive dialogue. In that regard it is disappointing that no significant progress was made at the recent AU Summit.

My third update focuses on the security situation. Countering Al-Shabaab remains one of the Government's top priorities. Heavy rains and flooding hampered operations towards the end of 2023. However, since the rains eased in December, Government forces have had some success in the south and east of Galmudug state. The Government is now preparing for a resumption of large-scale operations.

The United Nations is pleased to report some positive developments in the stabilization of newly recovered areas. Specifically, there has been progress in the delivery of the rule of law, governance, reconciliation and the provision of basic services. United Nations joint programmatic efforts are being deployed in recovered areas. Nevertheless, funding for those initiatives remains limited, and I urge international partners to provide the resources needed to meet vital stabilization needs in newly recovered areas. The handover of security responsibilities for the State House and Villa Somalia to the national security forces on 14 December 2023 was an important symbolic milestone for Somalia. There were some delays in the phase 2 drawdown, but it was completed successfully and in full at the end of January. As planning is now under way for a new AU-led mission from January, the plans for the drawdown may need to be revised to allow for a smooth transition to any new force and to prevent a security vacuum from emerging during the transition phase. It is essential that the further drawdown of ATMIS forces be undertaken in a manner that ensures protection for local communities and enables the ongoing presence of the international community in Somalia.

Finally, with regard to security, I welcome the commitment by the Federal Government on 11 February to relocating all high-explosive ammunition from the Halane armoury by 25 February. That is critical to minimizing the danger posed to the international community and surrounding local residents.

My fourth update is on women and peace and security. We have continued to work with the Government, women in the Federal Parliament and civil society to advance the implementation of the 30 per cent quota for women. Despite concerted efforts, women's political participation and representation remains a significant challenge. To illustrate that point, only one of the new members of Parliament of Puntland is a woman, among 66 representatives. The electoral model, security issues, patriarchal structures and a lack of financing for female political campaigns have all contributed to that underrepresentation. I met with senior women leaders again in February. They had three key messages for me. First, a minimum of 30 per cent representation at all levels must be enshrined in the constitution currently under review. Secondly, they reiterated their strong support for one-person, one-vote elections. And thirdly, they strongly oppose the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia

and Somaliland, given its potential to lead to conflict in the region and the disproportionate effect that conflict has on women and girls.

My fifth update concerns human rights. On the legislative front, the offences of rape and indecency bill was approved by the Somali Cabinet. Defining a child as a person under the age of 18 was a positive step. However, there are articles in the bill that are not aligned with international human rights standards. For example, the definition of rape must contain the element of consent as part of the crime, and the crime of indecency must be clearly defined so that conduct that is prohibited and punishable under the law is clear. The United Nations has offered technical assistance to promote compliance and is working with partners to advocate for the bill to be amended to comply with international human rights standards.

I am concerned about the high number of casualties among children owing to explosive remnants of war and crossfire incidents, which have a particular impact on children. I remain gravely preoccupied by the number of violations attributed to Al-Shabaab and the group's continued abduction of children for recruitment and use. I call on all the parties to the conflict to immediately cease and prevent violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

My sixth update is on the humanitarian situation and links to climate change. Somalia's humanitarian crisis remains dire. In 2023, Somalia experienced the worst drought in decades, which was followed by the impact of El Niño, leading to heavy rains and extensive flooding in October and November. That affected more than 2.4 million people, inundated farmlands and damaged critical infrastructure. The 2024 humanitarian needs and response plan will require \$1.6 billion to meet the needs of the 5.2 million most vulnerable people in Somalia. That is, however, a 37 per cent reduction from 2023. The reduction is in line with a new approach aimed at making the humanitarian response highly targeted and prioritized, given the dwindling funding outlook globally. But that will require greater collaboration with development and peace actors to address underlying vulnerabilities. Integrating climate resilience strategies into the humanitarian assistance is important for creating sustainable, long-term solutions to Somalia's complex challenges, and that demands a holistic response that goes beyond the traditional aid models in order to build resilience through durable

solutions. Following the recent Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) and the HIPC completion, there is significant momentum to advance access to climate finance for Somalia. Somalia also joined the task force on access to climate finance, which should allow it to unlock funding pledged at COP28.

My seventh update is on economic development. I would like to congratulate the Government and all partners that supported Somalia in successfully concluding the HIPC debt relief process in December 2023, and it is encouraging that Somalia will access grant financing from the World Bank for another year. The United Nations supports the Government's priorities on domestic revenue mobilization, accountability and the commitment to delivering social services for citizens. But on financing for State-building, the United Nations is facing a huge shortfall for its strategically important joint programming. Without adequate funding, we will not be able to deliver on the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, which is aligned with Somalia's national development plan, and I urge international partners to make adequate resources available to the Somalia Joint Fund.

Last but not least, I would like to update members on strategic aspects of transition planning. At the security conference in December 2023, the Federal Government of Somalia presented its plan for the transition of full security responsibility to national ownership. International partners signalled their collective intention to support the Federal Government in countering insurgency and building a stable and prosperous future. As the ATMIS drawdown proceeds, Somalia has requested a new, repurposed and smaller AU mission, focused on protection. That security umbrella will also be essential to enabling the implementation of the United Nations mandate and the efforts of the wider international community in Somalia.

The Federal Government of Somalia is requesting an evolved United Nations logistics support package to strengthen national systems and capacity. The independent review of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia will explore how to achieve that in a way that strengthens the capacity of the Somali Government. Predictable, sustainable funding for the new AU mission is vital. We are working with the African Union and the Federal Government to explore all potential funding modalities, including applying resolution 2719 (2023) on the financing of

African Union-led peace support operations. We are also working with the AU and partners to ensure that our collective support to the security sector is more coherent and that we establish more innovative, nimble and cost-effective ways of working. We recognize that we must do business differently to ensure a more sustainable approach.

In conclusion, Somalia remains resilient, and the Federal Government's commitment to its State-building agenda remains strong. The efforts of the campaign against insurgency are commendable, but much more is needed to ensure that its gains are sustained. I would like to assure the people of Somalia of the unwavering support of the United Nations for their country's State-building agenda and to underscore that the Security Council's support is central to Somalia's success. Through our collective support, Somalia is demonstrating that a country can emerge from prolonged conflict to become one that delivers for its people and acts as a force for good in the region.

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 Guyana on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. I am pleased to be speaking alongside Ambassador Catriona Laing, Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. I would like to commend President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for his exceptional leadership and the progress that Somalia has achieved thus far. And I also want to express my gratitude to the Somali security forces and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) troop- and police-contributing countries for their joint efforts, and to pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the pursuit of peace and security in Somalia. Their valour and selflessness will never be forgotten.

Prior to this briefing, I had the opportunity to consult with the key partners involved in Somalia's State-building process, including discussions on the ongoing transition. On 9 February, I briefed diplomatic partners based in Nairobi on the progress of the transition and the support needed to ensure a smooth and successful transition that promotes Somalia's stability

and development. I believe that those discussions are essential for aligning efforts and support towards that goal.

Since my previous briefing to the Council in October 2023, Somalia has achieved notable milestones (see S/PV.9446). They include its admission to the East African Community, the attainment of debt relief, the lifting of the arms embargo and the successful holding of the Somalia security conference in New York. More importantly, Somalia initiated the constitutional amendment process, a crucial step towards advancing inclusivity and strengthening the foundations of good governance. The ongoing efforts of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to promote dialogue among Somalia's leaders are commendable. His recent attendance at the inauguration of Puntland's leader, President Said Abdullahi Deni, and his visit to Kismaayo to consult with the Jubbaland leadership showcased his statements promoting unity and building on the progress made in 2023. Those initiatives are instrumental in fostering a cohesive and stable political environment in Somalia, which is essential for the country's continued development and advancement.

However, we regret the recent political tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia following the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland. We echo the calls of the African Union Peace and Security Council and other key international partners urging all partners to respect Somalia's sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. We strongly encourage seeking a peaceful resolution to the dispute through dialogue and adherence to international law in order to maintain stability and cooperation in the region.

With regard to the security situation, the Somali security forces, with the support of ATMIS, intensified their efforts against Al-Shabaab over the past 18 months, achieving several significant successes. However, we have also faced setbacks, some of them serious, at the hands of Al-Shabaab. In that regard, I strongly condemn the recent Al-Shabaab attacks on our base camp, on the national forces in Shabelle and at the General Gordon Camp in Mogadishu. It is evident that Al-Shabaab remains a major threat, possessing the capability to carry out attacks across Somalia. In addition, there are increasing concerns about the potential of a Houthi infiltration in the region. We must recognize that and learn from those events, especially as ATMIS prepares to draw down an additional 4,000 troops by the end of June, taking our troop number below 10,000 personnel.

That concern highlights the interconnected nature of the security challenges in the region and the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing them.

I am pleased to report that the security transition continues to make progress under the leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia. Before continuing, I would like to commend the Federal Government for co-hosting the security conference in New York in December 2023, at which Somalia presented its security sector development plan to international partners, including the African Union. The plan addresses critical issues, including the importance of successfully completing the transition and planning beyond the current December deadline. As a result, the transition process has seen renewed collaboration and cooperation in the implementation of joint agreed priorities. ATMIS has continued to support the Somali security forces in their offensive operations against Al-Shabaab, including through shaping and clearing operations in preparation of decisive operations.

Despite facing some challenges, such as the effect of the El Niño weather pattern and other administrative processes beyond our control, phase 2 of the drawdown of 3,000 ATMIS troops was successfully completed in collaboration with the Federal Government of Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia. With phase 2 of the drawdown now complete, our focus has shifted to planning phase 3 of the drawdown. Open and constructive discussions have already begun with the Federal Government, taking into account the lessons learned from previous drawdowns and addressing any potential issues related to the target dates, in line with the recently convened ATMIS sector commanders' conference to initiate the planning process for the next phase of the drawdown, ensuring a smooth and effective transition.

However, it is important to note that our assessments indicate that phase 3 of the drawdown will present both challenges and opportunities. With the significant reduction in the number of troops, the force protection of key population centres and installations, as well as the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, will be impacted. While those challenges are significant, it is important that they do not overshadow the opportunities that lie ahead. The recent deployment of additional air assets has enhanced ATMIS operational support to the Somali security forces, demonstrating our continued commitment to the Mission's success. It is crucial that the Council continue to encourage partners to remain

steadfast in their support to Somalia's force generation efforts, including the development of specialized military capabilities. Such a multidimensional approach will ensure that the ATMIS drawdown will not jeopardize the hard-won security and stabilization gains achieved thus far.

In anticipation of the post-ATMIS security arrangements, I commend the Federal Government's leadership and ownership of the process, which began with the consultations held on 18 January among the Federal Government of Somalia, the African Union and the United Nations. In line with resolution 2710 (2023), the African Union dispatched a technical team to engage with the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations and other key partners and to plan for post-ATMIS security arrangements. Furthermore, a high-level consultative meeting was convened in Addis Ababa on the eve of the thirty-seventh African Union Summit within the framework of the Core Security Partners Group, on 13 February, at which partners reached mutual understanding on how to maintain momentum throughout the remaining phases of the security transition. I am pleased to report that partners have agreed on the broad parameters for future post-ATMIS security arrangements. The African Union Peace and Security Council's role in deciding on the type of the new mission in accordance with the African Union's Peace Support Operations team was emphasized, particularly with regard to its scope, size, composition, duration and funding options.

At this juncture, I would like to underscore the importance of maintaining focus on ensuring a smooth and orderly transition of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces by 31 December. By doing so, we will establish a solid foundation for any post-ATMIS security arrangement enabling sustained progress and stability in Somalia.

In conclusion, I would like to express ATMIS's gratitude for the Council's recent adoption of resolution 2719 (2023), which addresses the financing of African Union-led peace support operations. I commend the leadership of both the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council for their efforts to drive that initiative forward. Resolution 2719 (2023) is a testament to the growing collaboration and partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in redefining our joint strategies and developing innovative solutions to advance global peace and stability. Given that Somalia has outlined its vision for

post-ATMIS security arrangements and articulated the support it requires from its key partners in its security-sector development plan, I appeal to the Council to continue its support and ensure predictable, sustainable and flexible financing for the envisioned post-ATMIS mission. That support will be crucial to ensuring long-term stability and institution-building, and particularly to establishing resilient and inclusive institutions that guarantee security, reduce the risk of conflict and respond effectively to potential threats. That outcome will contribute to a safe and prosperous Somalia, setting an example for peacebuilding initiatives in the region and beyond.

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 thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing and Special Representative Souef for their briefings and pay tribute to the work of their teams in Somalia. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Somalia in this meeting.

Let me first address the Ethiopia-Somaliland memorandum of understanding. As we have said before, the United Kingdom reaffirms its support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The United Kingdom is a close friend and long-standing partner to both Somalia and Ethiopia, and we continue to engage with both Governments directly. The United Kingdom calls for calm dialogue to de-escalate the situation and expresses its support for mediation efforts, including the work of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union (AU).

Turning to the situation in Somalia more broadly, the United Kingdom notes that the Somali Parliament has begun to debate constitutional amendments outlined in previous National Consultative Council agreements, and we urge the Federal Government to pursue a consultative and consensus-building approach to ensure that the process has broad-based support among Somalis.

This year represents a milestone in Somalia's security transition. After 15 years of truly courageous service, the current AU and United Nations missions are due to leave at the end of the year. We look forward to receiving an update from Somalia next month on its requirements into 2025 and beyond, and we encourage

the United Nations and AU to work together closely on their next steps, ahead of the mandate renewal in June. We recognize the funding problems that the African Union Mission in Somalia and the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) have faced, and as we have said many times, the United Kingdom has tried to play its part in solving them. But we are approaching a critical juncture. Somalia, the AU, the United Nations and partners have invested so much to get to where we are today, and we do not want that progress to go to waste. We therefore encourage all Somalia's partners to continue to support Somalia throughout its security transition and to think about creative ways to maintain support post-ATMIS and post-United Nations Support Office in Somalia. If we do not, it will be Al-Shabaab that benefits.

Finally, Somalia's changing security landscape presents significant humanitarian risks alongside an already severe and protracted humanitarian crisis. It is therefore deeply concerning that the humanitarian response plan remains significantly underfunded. The United Kingdom urges donors to contribute to the plan in order to address the urgent unmet needs in Somalia. Any alteration or decision on Somalia's security must not compromise the protection of civilians and humanitarian access.

Mr. Afonso (Mozambique): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Sierra Leone and my own country, Mozambique, as well as Guyana (A3+1).

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Catriona Laing, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, for their insightful and informative briefings. More importantly, we thank them for their extraordinary efforts in working for peace and stability in Somalia. We also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Somalia in this meeting.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2024/129) and the updates on the implementation of the mandates of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). The A3+1 is encouraged by UNSOM's renewed efforts and the support that UNSOS has provided to the African Union Transition

Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in assisting the Federal Government of Somalia in its State-building process and peacebuilding initiatives.

We are particularly pleased and encouraged by the reform measures taken by the Federal Government of Somalia on the political, economic and security fronts. We welcome Somalia's admission to the East African Community, which will potentially provide opportunities for stronger regional partnerships and trade, the necessary building blocks for boosting Somalia's future economic development. The A3+1 commends the Government of Somalia on reaching the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, which will allow for an increase in domestic revenues of the country. We agree with the Secretary-General that it will be critical in the period ahead to seize the current momentum and further advance the country's national priorities through continued political dialogue and consensus.

The A3+1 welcomes the joint meeting of the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission and the Joint Parliamentary Constitutional Oversight Committee to undertake a technical analysis of the National Consultative Council agreement and discuss the proposed amendments contained in the first four chapters of the Provisional Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia. We hope that the process will involve wide consultations and include all segments of Somali society. In that regard, we urge all the relevant stakeholders to come together in the spirit of compromise and agree on the way forward for the constitutional review process and the electoral model to address all the concerns raised. Furthermore, we wish to commend the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia for its appointment of women in key advisory roles. We encourage their participation, as well as that of youth, people with disabilities and civil society organizations, in governance and decision-making processes.

It is the view of the A3+ that a stable Somalia requires prosperous and stable regional settings. Therefore, we stress the importance of resolving all arising differences between the countries in the region through dialogue within the available regional tools and frameworks.

The A3+ commends the Government of Somalia for the progress made in the implementation of its security sector plan and the consolidation of the

security gains by the Somali security forces, through its offensive against Al-Shabaab. We further welcome the completion of phase 2 of the ATMIS drawdown plan, bringing the total of withdrawn troops to 5,000 people, as well as the handover of 13 forward operating bases to the Somali security forces.

In that vein, as phase 3 of the drawdown plan of 4,000 ATMIS troops is set to go into effect, we wish to underline the important role of, and coordination with, the African Union Commission, the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations and international partners, as well as their meaningful support. In that regard, we urge the international community to continue providing assistance to the security sector of Somalia.

The A3+ welcomes the commitment expressed by the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia during the Somalia security conference held in New York on 12 December 2023, to pursue its national security transition, including the vision presented for the future development of the Somali security forces. We agree that we are heading towards the post-ATMIS phase, which requires the contribution of all partners to build on the important gains achieved since the establishment of the African Union Mission in Somalia then ATMIS. We therefore encourage that the discussion around the post-ATMIS mission be effected with the necessary inclusiveness and participation of the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the African Union, the United Nations and the international partners.

The A3+ remains concerned by the threat posed by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group to the peace, security and stability of Somalia, including in relation to the recent use of improvised explosive devices. We take this opportunity to condemn the mortar attack on Aden Adde International Airport area on 11 January, which killed a member of the United Nations Guard Unit. We extend our deepest condolences to the family and colleagues of the deceased. We further draw attention to the transnational character of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group and affirm that efforts to curb its expansion should therefore be multinational and coordinated in nature.

The A3+ holds the view that it is essential for international partners to maintain their support to the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia in achieving its national strategic plans, including in the security sector development plan. In that regard, we

welcome the leading role played by the United Nations Development Programme and UNSOS in support to the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in the State-building and reconciliation programmes, as well as efforts in the finalization of the National Reconciliation Framework review. We note with concern the devastating cycle of drought and flooding, further exacerbating the humanitarian crises and inhibiting the development of Somalia. In that regard, we reiterate our call for the international community to further increase its financial support to the Federal Government of Somalia, so as to allow for better and more comprehensive humanitarian assistance, as well as the implementation of development programmes, with a view to addressing the root causes of vulnerability of the Somali people.

The A3+ would like to express its appreciation to the African Union, UNSOM, UNSOS and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Somalia. We commend their hard work and commitment under challenging and often difficult conditions. That reflects their strong commitment and dedication to the Somali people, which we highly praise. The A3+ wishes to conclude by reaffirming our full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the people and the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Souef for their comprehensive briefings. I also welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of Somalia in today's meeting.

Somalia stands at a pivotal moment. The security situation is in transition with the impending full drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) by the end of this year. Tension was heightened abruptly in the Horn of Africa recently following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland. Furthermore, the country faces multidimensional and complex challenges regarding the political process and the humanitarian situation, often exacerbated by climate change. In the light of those circumstances, I wish to underline four points.

First, the Al-Shabaab terrorist group remains a significant concern for the peace, security and stability

of Somalia and the region. We deplore the recent bombing attacks in Bakara market and a military base in Mogadishu, which led to the deaths of at least 10 civilians and five military personnel, respectively. We commend the dedication of the Federal Government of Somalia, as well as that of ATMIS troop-contributing countries, to countering Al-Shabaab over the past 17 years. With ATMIS having recently completed phase 2 of its drawdown — that is, of 3,000 troops — we welcome Somalia's commitment to advancing its national security transition. Over the past decade, the Republic of Korea has contributed more than \$18 million to the African Union's peace and security activities, including financial support to the amount of \$1.2 million in 2023 and the procurement of armoured personnel carriers for ATMIS.

It will be imperative to establish an effective post-ATMIS structure in order to preserve and build on its legacy. Without that, we risk seeing the hard-won counter-terrorism achievements reversed, particularly in the current context of heightened regional tensions and the potential for opportunistic expansion by Al-Shabaab. In that regard, the international community should pay attention to the fact that ATMIS, as well as its predecessor, the African Union Mission in Somalia, has suffered from a chronic lack of financial resources. We recognize the need for predictable, sustainable and flexible funding for African Union-led peace support operations, including through access to United Nations assessed contributions, as stipulated in resolution 2719 (2023). It will also be crucial to prioritize the protection of civilians in military operations as Somali national institutions progressively assume security responsibilities from ATMIS and prepare for a post-ATMIS structure. We look forward to the proposal of the Government of Somalia in that regard, to be presented to the Council by the end of March.

Secondly, the political impasse over the electoral model remains a concern. We call on the Federal Government of Somalia to continue to engage with all stakeholders to ensure an inclusive and consultative constitutional amendment process. It is also important for Puntland to participate in national State-building discussions. Throughout that process, ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, as well as maintaining a safe and inclusive civic space, is paramount.

Thirdly, we are encouraged by the progress achieved by Somalia on the economic front. Somalia's admission to the East African Community heralds new

opportunities for stronger regional partnerships and trade. We also congratulate Somalia on its attainment of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion point. We hope that its full debt relief will lay the economic and financial groundwork for Somalia's development and the realization of its Somali Centennial Vision 2060.

Lastly, the humanitarian situation remains dire, with 7 million people in need of assistance. The Republic of Korea has contributed \$5.5 million since 2019 in an effort to support Somalia in responding to humanitarian challenges, as well as an additional \$2.3 million in 2023 to the broader Horn of Africa region. In that connection, we note that the country's recurring climate shocks, including a devastating cycle of droughts and flooding along with El Niño-induced heavy rains, are further destroying livelihoods and exacerbating food insecurity. We encourage the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) to proactively undertake comprehensive and climate-sensitive risk assessment and management strategies and to report to the Council. That is particularly relevant because armed groups such as Al-Shabaab can capitalize on the local impacts of climate change and governance gaps to advance their recruitment and control of communities.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reiterates its unwavering support for the work of Special Representative Laing, UNSOM, the United Nations Support Office in Somalia, ATMIS and key regional organizations in fostering peace and stability in Somalia. The Republic of Korea stands ready to support a successful transition in Somalia.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to join others in thanking Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, and Mr. Mohammed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, for their comprehensive briefings today, as well as for their efforts in support of Somalia's continued progress. I also want to welcome the representative of Somalia to today's meeting. Slovenia would like to express its full support and appreciation for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia. I also want to pay tribute to the troop-contributing countries of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), the Somali security forces and other partners for the sacrifices they have made in their fight against Al-Shabaab. Today I would like to make three points.

First, Slovenia commends Somalia for reaching several important milestones, including completing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and joining the East African Community. We urge Somalia to continue with its political, economic and security-sector reforms, including on the crucial constitutional process. The Somali-owned national dialogue with all federal member states and other relevant stakeholders is key. We welcome the existing and future positive efforts of the Federal Government in that regard. We also stress the importance of respecting human rights and ensuring the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women at all levels of the political and decision-making processes.

Secondly, we would like to draw attention to the persistently dire humanitarian situation. With five consecutive failed rainy seasons followed by recent catastrophic floods, Somalia is bearing one of the heaviest burdens of the global climate emergency. We are concerned about deeply food-insecure communities that are still battling to recover from the country's longest recorded drought and the effects of conflict. We call for a gender-responsive humanitarian response, as women and children represent the majority of persons internally displaced due to climate-related disasters and conflict. We encourage Somalia to continue with its climate adaptation efforts in line with its gender- and conflict-sensitive national adaptation plan. Cooperation in the Horn of Africa, including in the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, is crucial to tackling climate and environmental challenges, especially water resource management.

Finally, we welcome the ambitious security-sector development plan presented by Somalia at the December security conference, including the need for a new multilateral support and assistance mission to replace ATMIS. We encourage Somalia to work closely with the African Union, the European Union, other regional organizations, bilateral partners and the members of the Security Council in devising a sustainable proposal for a new mission with a clearly defined mandate, scope, size, duration and funding plan. The fight against Al-Shabaab is far from over and must remain at the top of the international community's agenda for the foreseeable future, both in terms of a security response and addressing root causes. We are concerned about the possibility that the recent tensions between Somalia and Ethiopia could undermine recent gains in that endeavour and give encouragement to

Al-Shabaab's recruitment efforts. We reiterate our support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Somalia and call on both countries to exercise restraint and engage in meaningful dialogue to find a peaceful resolution on mutually acceptable terms.

To conclude, Slovenia remains optimistic that Somalia will be able to keep up the positive momentum and solid progress that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has reported, including during this year of transition. Slovenia, as a member of the Security Council, commits to continuing to support Somalia on its path.

Mrs. Broadhurst Estival (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) for their briefings. I would also like to welcome the representative of the Somalia to today's meeting.

First of all, I would like to commend the progress made in Somalia over the past year. The conference held on 12 December 2023, with the participation of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, provided an opportunity to assess progress, be it on the political front, thanks to the organization of the National Consultative Council; the economic front, with the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative or the diplomatic front, with the admission of Somalia into the East African Community. France welcomes those developments and will continue to stand by the Somali authorities to deepen those efforts, including at the political level. The participation of women, young people and marginalized communities must be fully taken into account.

Despite the progress made, the situation in Somalia remains fragile. Al-Shabaab continues to carry out frequent attacks, including on civilians and international partners. France extends its deepest condolences to the families of all victims, including United Nations personnel, following the various incidents that have affected the country in recent weeks.

France is particularly concerned about the impact of the violence on the humanitarian situation, which is already weakened by extreme climatic conditions. France will ensure that the situation is fully taken into account, as we did in 2023, with humanitarian aid totalling more than €10 million. We recall the need

for full, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need. The European Union will also continue its historic support alongside the Somalis, with nearly €543 million in humanitarian aid committed to Somalia since 2017.

To address those challenges, all of Somalia's partners must define, starting now, the support that can be provided when ATMIS leaves on 31 December. In that regard, France welcomes the strategy put forward by Somalia in December 2023, which is very clear and requires the mobilization of the entire international community. Only a coordinated response by Somalia's partners will provide effective support to Mogadishu's efforts to curb the threat of Al-Shabaab.

France stands ready to define the best way to support that strategy, in conjunction with the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union and, we hope, new partners. The European Union, which has committed more than €4.3 billion to Somalia since 2009 and is deploying two European training missions on the ground, will continue to mobilize all tools at its disposal to consolidate the gains made, with a focus on strengthening Somali capacities. These efforts cannot be carried out without the support of stakeholders in the region, with whom we encourage ongoing peaceful and regular dialogue.

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

We are closely following developments in the Federal Republic of Somalia. We note the overall positive momentum by the Somalis in implementing their national priorities. That applies both to the strengthening of domestic political stability and to issues of national reconciliation and State-building. A positive factor was a series of successful offensive operations by the Somali National Army in the regions, with the support of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia, against the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, which continues to pose the main threat to the country's security architecture and that of the entire Horn of Africa.

At the same time, the Islamists were able to exploit the vacuum that emerged in some areas following the departure of African Union peacekeepers. We are seriously concerned about the persistent capacity of militants, who have no issues receiving funding or attracting young recruits to their ranks and enjoy the support of the local population. Al-Shabaab's incursions into neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda confirm the regional nature of terrorist threats, which require collective action by neighbouring countries.

In the political arena, the top priorities remain strengthening the foundations of the federative structure of Somalia, establishing dialogue between the federal centre and the regions, reforming the economy and the judicial system, combating corruption and amending the national Constitution. We welcome the agreement reached between the President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and the leaders of the Somali regions on a common electoral timetable. We hope that all stakeholders in the national political process will continue to work together to create a sustainable federal model. At the same time, we invariably believe in the need to ensure the territorial integrity and unity of Somalia.

The priority of the international community with regard to Somalia must remain helping to improve the effectiveness of federal security agencies so that they can effectively exercise independent control over the entire territory of the country. In that regard, an orderly and unforced withdrawal of the African Union Transition Mission must be ensured, in accordance with the previously agreed plan. We look forward to the cohesive work of the entire United Nations presence in the country, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

Against the backdrop of severe flooding and the El Niño at the end of last year, food security in Somalia is equally important. To overcome the devastating consequences caused by natural disasters, Russia provided humanitarian assistance to our friendly East African country by donating 50,000 tons of grain.

We have been closely following developments in the region, in which we see protracted conflicts and an increase in the number of disagreements. We call on all countries in the region to seek common, mutually beneficial points of reference, engage in dialogue, coordinate regional decisions, based on the principle

“African solutions to African problems”, and overcome disagreements that emerge by negotiations, in line with international law and without external interference.

In conclusion, we would like to note that Somalia, together with the help of the international community, has been able to achieve significant results. However, many challenges remain, and they will need to be addressed. We consistently support Mogadishu's official efforts to stabilize the domestic political situation. In that regard, we call on the United Nations and regional and international partners to continue assisting Somalia, with strict respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the country.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Catriona Laing and Mr. Mohammed El-Amine Souef for their briefings. I recognize the presence of the representative of Somalia at today's meeting.

We encourage the efforts made by President Mohamud in combating the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, which remains a threat to peace, security and the stability of Somalia and the region. We regret in particular the incident involving a United Nations helicopter and the recent killing of military personnel of the United Arab Emirates. We extend our solidarity to that country and categorically condemn such actions, which cannot go unpunished.

Ecuador believes that strengthening institutions is the only way to achieve development and stop armed violence through democratic, inclusive and transparent processes. In that regard, we call for an end to the persistent exclusion of women in political decision-making, such as in the National Consultative Council. Women's voices must be duly represented so as to actively promote political participation through the implementation of electoral quotas. We welcome the joint work done by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations to build capacity in drafting legislation on gender and participation in the decision-making process.

The persistence of serious human rights violations against children is alarming. Such violations are mainly perpetrated by Al-Shabaab, through attacks on schools and hospitals, which run counter to international humanitarian law. While phase 2 of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) transition is being completed, we urge the Government and the United Nations to collaborate closely to ensure

a gradual and responsible transition, without leaving security vacuums and with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Along those lines, Ecuador calls on the Somali security institutions to progressively assume the security responsibilities of ATMIS and guarantee the protection of civilians in the planning and execution of military operations, investigating any violations that may arise and sanctioning those responsible.

It is important that voluntary contributions continue to be made to preserve the work of ATMIS until its planned departure on 31 December. Additional support to ATMIS and Somalia will strengthen its efforts to combat Al-Shabaab and enhance internal and regional peace and security.

It is also important to underscore the legislative progress achieved for Somalia's inclusion in the East African Community, as well as in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. That provides opportunities to strengthen regional partnerships and trade, which are essential for the country's development, and to make further progress on key national priorities through continued political dialogue and consensus.

Ecuador is deeply concerned about the food insecurity situation in Somalia. We reaffirm the importance of supporting all initiatives aimed at improving conditions and, in that regard, the international community's support for the Somalia Humanitarian Fund is crucial, which will allow the implementation of both preventive and response actions to address the needs of more than 4 million people who are experiencing food insecurity.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing for her briefing. We commend her work and that of her team, which she has continued to carry out despite difficult circumstances. And I thank African Union (AU) Special Representative El-Amine Souef for his briefing. I also welcome the representative Somalia to this meeting.

We appreciate the challenges to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) this past month, with the loss of the United Nations Guard Unit member killed in a mortar attack, the crash of a United Nations aircraft supporting the World Food Programme and related casualty, and the continued work along with the Department of Safety and Security to return

the helicopter personnel of the United Nations Support Office in Somalia missing since 10 January.

The United States congratulates Somalia on its recent economic progress, including admission into the East African Community, and on attaining the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion point. We are hopeful those developments will facilitate more rapid economic growth and opportunity for the people of Somalia.

On the political front, we note the Somali Parliament recently endorsed procedural guidelines to move forward on a constitutional review process. We strongly support a transparent and inclusive process that will lead to consensus-based reforms. The United States also welcomes the completion of presidential elections in Puntland, which we hope will facilitate Puntland's re-engagement with Mogadishu and the National Consultative Council process.

We remain deeply concerned, however, about the potentially destabilizing implications of the memorandum of understanding concluded between Ethiopia and Somaliland without the consent of the Federal Government of Somalia. The United States joins the African Union and other international partners in reiterating its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia and urging diplomatic dialogue to de-escalate tensions. It is vital that the issue does not distract from the critical State-building challenges that remain in Somalia. We continue to support UNSOM's work to help Somalia on building capacity in governance, security sector reform and the rule of law.

We commend Somalia and the AU for the progress achieved on the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) transition with the completion of the phase 2 drawdown at the end of June. We welcome the international consensus in support of a follow-on mission to ATMIS to help maintain stability while Somalia continues to develop its security capabilities. We are encouraged that Somalia and the AU are actively discussing the parameters of the follow-on mission.

In view of the Security Council's December lifting of the arms embargo on the Federal Government of Somalia, we encourage continued work on weapons and ammunition management, progress in developing the national counter-improvised explosive device framework and steps to improve the implementation of anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism efforts. The United States is committed to

pursuing the designation of individuals and entities in the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 2713 (2023) concerning Al-Shabaab and urges Member States to join it in that process.

In conclusion, on behalf of the United States, I would like to commend UNSOM's use of its good offices and strategic and technical support to help Somalia achieve of all those goals.

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

We commend Somalia for recent positive developments, including its admission to the East African Community. That step underscores the importance of bolstering regional ties. The fulfilment of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative completion point marks a milestone, unlocking a potential for new international financing channels.

Malta also welcomes the conclusion of peaceful elections in Puntland and echoes the Secretary-General's call for Puntland to be included in national State-building discussions.

Malta recognizes the most recent efforts within the National Consultative Council. We encourage consensus-driven and inclusive consultations to any constitutional amendments.

In that context, we welcome the participation of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in the inaugural ceremony of President Deni in January.

We remain concerned, however, that women remain marginalized from the deliberations of the National Consultative Council. We encourage Somali authorities to promote women's political participation and representation and to take tangible steps in that direction.

The recent alarming increase in brutal femicides are gravely concerning. We call for immediate action to investigate those crimes, strengthen legal protection and end impunity.

We welcome the recent training and workshops organized by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia to enhance advocacy capacities on gender-sensitive law-making. We also welcome the convening of the national conference of women parliamentarians

which brought together women parliamentarians, senior Government officials and civil society representatives.

We take note of the recently presented Security Sector Development Strategic Framework by Somalia. At the same time, we recognize that the forthcoming departure of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), by the end of this year, warrants strategic planning.

Terrorism knows no borders. We therefore acknowledge Somalia's need of significant international support to build on the progress achieved through ATMIS and move on to the next phase of Somalia's security capabilities.

Stabilization remains at the forefront of any security progress, accompanied by strong local governance structures and reconciliation.

Al-Shabaab remains a serious threat to the peace, security and stability of Somalia, and Malta strongly condemns all offensives by that group. We remain deeply concerned by the number of violations attributed to Al-Shabaab, including, as we just heard from Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing, the continued abduction of children for recruitment. We remain supportive of the efforts by the Somali Government in addressing those challenges.

We look forward to receiving a comprehensive Somali proposal by the end of next month. We encourage that proposal to be shared and discussed with the African Union, the European Union and other key partners to ensure its feasibility and to outline a clear exit strategy with measurable objectives.

Cycles of drought and flooding driven by the El Niño phenomenon have made Somalia one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Those climate-security-related impacts exacerbate humanitarian crises, inhibit development and create fertile ground for ethnic conflicts and violence resulting from a scarcity of vital resources. Malta continues to support the work of the Climate Security Adviser within UNSOM, whose role remains crucial in identifying climate-related impacts on the ground.

We are following with concern the recent developments in the region, and we join calls for a de-escalation of tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. Malta fully supports Somalia's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and we encourage the parties to engage in constructive dialogue in order to resolve the situation.

In conclusion, Malta reiterates its full support for the Somali Government in achieving its national priorities, including the constitutional review process and security-sector reform, both of which remain key to ensuring long-term unity, peace and stability for Somalia.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Laing and Special Representative Souef for their briefings, and I welcome the Permanent Representative of Somalia to this meeting.

This is a critical year for the political process, security transition and national reconstruction in Somalia. The United Nations and the international community must not waver in their attention and support to Somalia. First, we must support Somalia in maintaining political stability. The Federal Government of Somalia has recently been actively engaged in political dialogue with its member states on such key issues as the country's political structures, the drafting of a constitution and general elections. China supports all parties in Somalia in resolving their differences through dialogue in consultation and in advancing the political transition process.

It should be noted that the choice of political system and development path is Somalia's internal affair. The international community should adhere to the principle of Somali leadership and ownership and avoid imposing a governance model from outside. In fulfilling their mandates in such areas as political mediation, Ms. Laing and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) should fully respect Somalia's sovereignty and ownership and give the political transition constructive support. The cooperation between the United Nations and Somalia should be continually optimized and improved as the situation develops. China supports facilitating a timely transition for UNSOM that accords with the request of the Somali Government.

Secondly, we should support the security transition in Somalia. The terrorist organization Al-Shabaab recently attacked a number of targets in the capital, Mogadishu, causing casualties among civilians and United Nations personnel. That reminds us once again that terrorism remains Somalia's main threat. The international community should support the Federal Government of Somalia in consolidating the results of the previous phase of counter-terrorism and

stabilization. The Somali security sector needs support in building its capacity to assume greater responsibility for security.

The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) is scheduled to withdraw from Somalia by the end of this year. China supports advancing the ATMIS drawdown plan in a smooth, orderly and responsible manner, based on a comprehensive assessment of the security situation in Somalia so as to avoid a security vacuum. At the moment, all of the parties are generally concerned about security arrangements after the withdrawal of ATMIS. China is of the view that any future arrangements should meet Somalia's security needs and respect the wishes of the Federal Government. Traditional developed-country donors should not reduce their support for Somalia, shift their responsibilities or simply walk away.

Thirdly, we need to support Somalia's economic and social reconstruction. China welcomed the Federal Government of Somalia's recent launch of its Centennial Vision 2060, which sets out the priorities for national development. Somalia has reached the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, and the international community and financial institutions should take this opportunity to increase their assistance to Somalia and avoid attaching political conditions to assistance and funding. UNSOM should mobilize international resources for the priority development areas in Somalia and support the promotion of peace through development in order to address the root causes of the conflicts in the country.

China has consistently upheld the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and has supported countries in maintaining their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We support the efforts of the Federal Government of Somalia to safeguard national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and we hope that the countries of the region will handle their affairs through dialogue and achieve common development on a basis of friendly cooperation.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Special Representatives Laing and Souef for their briefings and to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Somalia at this meeting.

The stability and prosperity of the Horn of Africa rely on regional cooperation and the ability to settle disputes by peaceful means. In that respect, Switzerland is concerned about the rise in tensions following the

most recent controversies concerning Somaliland. Switzerland reiterates its respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia and encourages the parties to continue on a path of peaceful dialogue. We also support the efforts of regional organizations to that end. We call on all actors with influence to use it in order to find a peaceful solution. The past year has seen Somalia reach important milestones, such as the completion of the debt relief process, accession to the East African Community and progress on the constitutional review. To ensure that 2024 continues on that positive trajectory, three elements seem particularly relevant at this time.

First, the offensive against Al-Shabaab remains the primary security concern while the exit of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) by the end of the year continues. By lifting the arms embargo, the Council demonstrated its willingness to look to the future. That future, particularly as regards international support for Somalia, should be discussed now. Measures aimed at reducing the international presence should take account of the situation on the ground. Providing basic services and security in the newly recovered territories is essential. We call on all parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law. In addition, violations must be investigated and the alleged perpetrators prosecuted.

Secondly, we welcome the evidence of democratic progress such as the peaceful conduct of elections in Puntland, while we continue to encourage the implementation of the one-person, one-vote electoral model. In that regard, we emphasize that women's participation is not only a right but a fundamental pillar of sustainable peace. We firmly support their work within the National Consultative Council and stress the importance of achieving the 30 per cent quota for women parliamentarians at all levels. The constitutional review must continue in a safe and inclusive civic space, given that cooperation between citizens, the federal states and the central Government is the foundation of national cohesion.

Thirdly, as the Secretary-General mentioned at our recent open debate (see S/PV.9547), it must be recognized that the threats of climate change, food insecurity and conflict are interlinked. That linkage is vividly illustrated in the case of Somalia, where several million people have been affected by the recent rains and almost one third of the population is suffering from hunger. In order to prevent the situation from

deteriorating further with the onset of the rainy season, it will be crucial to take early action. To that end, Switzerland supports the Central Emergency Response Fund, which acts before crises set in and provides vital assistance in the event of flooding. In the longer term, greater coordination at the local, federal and regional levels is needed to better anticipate and manage those complex crises.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and ATMIS on the crucial role that they are playing in Somalia. Switzerland will continue to support the Missions, Somalia and its people in their efforts to build peace and a prosperous future.

Mrs. Shino (Japan): I thank Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, for their informative briefings. I would also like to welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Somalia here today.

Last month, the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the Somali security forces achieved another milestone by completing phase 2 of the ATMIS drawdown. We commend the firm commitment of the Federal Government of Somalia to the security transition plan and pay tribute to all the personnel of ATMIS and the Somali security forces for their sacrifices in building peace and stability in the region.

The Somali security-sector development plan, presented in December 2023, rightly focuses on stabilization efforts for the newly liberated territories, in addition to offensive operations against Al-Shabaab. It will be crucial to accelerate security-sector reform to ensure a presence of Somali security forces sufficient to enable a smooth transition. To that end, in November Japan decided to contribute approximately \$1.8 million to support the Somali police in its operations in fragile and newly recovered areas in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme.

We also welcome the Somali Government's efforts to establish a clear legal framework for law-enforcement and security functions. The rule of law cannot be achieved in a security vacuum, and security cannot be maintained without the rule of law. Building the institution of an effective and accountable police force is a vital part of the ongoing stabilization efforts. The

support of neighbouring ATMIS troop-contributing countries to Somalia's force generation also continues to be essential to the success of the security transition. Any regional tensions increase the risk of losing hard-won achievements and must therefore be avoided through constructive dialogue among stakeholders.

Combating Al-Shabaab requires a whole-of-society approach over the long term based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and in line with the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security perspectives. Somali society must increase its overall resilience to prevent any intrusion by Al-Shabaab into areas of weakness. To that end, basic services should be accessible to everyone under the State's authority. Reaching the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative is a significant outcome of the Federal Government of Somalia's efforts, and it should make good use of that momentum to achieve economic and financial reforms, with additional credit from international financial institutions.

The devastating impact of the heavy rains in the last quarter of 2023 clearly illustrated Somalia's vulnerability to severe climate shocks. Tens of thousands of people have been facing a dire humanitarian situation owing to the consequences of the floods. Socioeconomic development, with continued assistance from the international community, is urgently needed in order to improve the people's welfare. This month Japan decided to provide emergency grant aid to Somalia in partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration and UNICEF for shelter, water and sanitation, non-food items and health care.

A successful transition in Somalia is vital to the peace and stability of the entire region. We note the discussion in the African Union about the post-ATMIS security configuration, and we look forward to participating in future deliberations on possible United Nations engagement. Together with all our partners, Japan remains committed to contributing to collective efforts towards that goal.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Madame President, on your leadership of the Security Council this month, and to wish you every success. I also want to thank Ms. Catriona Laing, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and

Mr. Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, for their briefings. My delegation takes note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2024/129), and would like to make the following points.

First, we welcome the fact that the current report refers to some challenges and acknowledges the positive steps taken by the Federal Government of Somalia. However, we respectfully suggest that in the interests of maximizing its usefulness, the report be redesigned to contain less narrative and fewer details about minor events and more in-depth analysis of major issues, as well as recommendations and conclusions.

Secondly, operative paragraph 13 of resolution 2705 (2023) called for the development of a road map for the eventual transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) from special political mission to United Nations country team, as well as the finalization of its staffing and configuration review. In that regard, we note that the current report did not discuss those tasks. Planning UNSOM's transition to becoming the United Nations country team is urgent and critical, as it will help it to better align with the Government's articulation of its long-term development priorities. We request that the Secretary-General include the transition road map and the finalization of the staffing and configuration review in the next reporting period.

As the Council is aware, on 1 January, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia announced the annexation of part of Somalia in order to establish a military base, and a subsequent decision to recognize the independence of a separatist group in north-western Somalia. That constitutes a clear violation and breach of Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and of the fundamental principles that are enshrined in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Somali Government condemns and rejects Ethiopia's illegal actions and deceptive efforts to disguise its failed attempt to annex a Somali territory as the promotion of economic cooperation and integration. The Somali Government warns that such actions not only adversely affect regional stability but constitute a dangerous precedent for the international system based on the sovereignty, freedom and independence of all States, as well as eroding the credibility of the rules-based system. History has shown us over and over again that annexation has been a catalyst for regional

tensions and protracted conflicts with devastating humanitarian consequences. Ethiopia's establishment of a military base in Somalia amounts to a declaration of war on Somalia and its people. Moreover, its actions have revived the violent extremist group Al-Shabaab and could reverse our three decades of hard-earned gains in Somalia. By unilaterally altering borders and the territorial integrity of Somalia, the Ethiopian Government is fuelling a cycle of distrust and hostility between the Somali and Ethiopian peoples. Furthermore, such actions could have a serious destabilizing effect, given the complex ethnic make-up of the countries of the Horn of Africa. They will certainly inspire the rise of ethnic separatist groups in the Horn of Africa, particularly in countries where there are constitutional provisions for a path to secession, such as in the case of Ethiopia.

In addition to the immediate regional ramifications, the ripple effects of Ethiopia's actions could extend far beyond the borders of Somalia and Ethiopia. They could weaken the region, disrupt global trade and commerce and potentially create an influx of refugees, which would be a strain on the resources and capacities of neighbouring countries. The reverberations of such violations will be felt across the international community and have the potential to undermine the stability and security of the world.

The African Union plays a role in preserving the borders of African countries and preventing conflicts that could potentially threaten the stability and sovereignty of African nations. We brought the violations to the attention of the African Union Peace and Security Council, but Ethiopia's Government did not attend the meeting that the Council called to discuss the matter. Furthermore, at the African Union Summit this past Saturday, the Ethiopian Government kept President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia at his hotel and tried to prevent him from entering the AU's headquarters to deliver his remarks. In the light of those developments, it is clear that Ethiopia is

wilfully obstructing the path of bilateral cooperation and creating a dangerous precedent in terms of the host country's commitment to the principles of the African Union and international diplomacy. It appears that the African Union's image has been seriously tarnished by those actions and that it is being held hostage by a host Government led by a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who has become a habitual violator of international law.

Ultimately, the credibility of the United Nations and the African Union is deeply intertwined with the stability of Somalia, and the violations that I have mentioned pose a direct threat to all. We believe that the African Union should have been more proactively vocal about what amounts to Ethiopia's clear intent of blatant aggression against the unity and territorial integrity of Somalia. Given the gravity of the situation and its serious regional and international repercussions, it is incumbent on the United Nations and the African Union to ensure that they remain true to their mission of conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security.

In conclusion, we want to thank the United Nations and the African Union for their unwavering commitment and support to preserving Somalia's sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and political independence. It is imperative that Ethiopia abandon its expansionist ambitions in Somalia and adhere strictly to the fundamental norms of good-neighbourliness and the principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the Charter of the African Union. My President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has stated on many occasions that we are committed to a "Somalia at peace with itself and the world". That includes our neighbours. While the Somali Government affirms its eagerness to exercise the greatest possible self-restraint, it reserves its full inherent right to self-defence in order to respond to threats presented by violations of its territorial integrity and unity, in accordance with the provisions of international law.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.