

# UN maps out Somalia's future without consulting African Union

With less than a month to go to presidential elections which look increasingly unlikely to take place, an independent UN report has reviewed the options available to Somalia to get out of its current difficulties.



*Soldiers of the African Union Mission in Somalia in Mogadishu in 2019. ©Feisal Omar/Reuters*

The **African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)** needs to change form as quickly as possible, according to an independent report commissioned by the

**United Nations**, which has been seen by *Africa Intelligence*. Over the last 13 years, AMISOM has succeeded in driving terrorist group **Al-Shabaab** out of Mogadishu and other urban zones but has reached the limits of its capacities in its current form, say the report's authors.

The 30-page document, which was commissioned in August 2020, has been drawn up by a panel of independent experts appointed by UN secretary-general **Antonio Guterres** and headed by Brazilian general **Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz**, who was head of the UN mission in the DRC (**MONUSCO**) from 2013 to 2015. It draws on facts and testimony collected from September to December 2020 via videoconferences.

## Three major stumbling blocks

The UN approved and encouraged the creation of AMISOM in 2007 but it is the **African Union** (AU) which oversees the mission via its Peace and Security Commission (PSC). The inspection rights the UN has given itself in commissioning the report is seen by the PSC as a threat to its authority and it has told AMISOM personnel not to cooperate with Alberto dos Santos Cruz's team. The team has nevertheless identified three major problems which are at once allowing Al-Shabaab to continue to flourish and preventing AMISOM from adapting to the changing nature of the threat posed by the jihadists.

The first problem is the absence of a clear, stable, long-term political project. In February, Somalia is due to elect a new president (read [our running story](#)). For the first time in the country's history, the elections are to be conducted by universal suffrage. Last autumn, however, outgoing president **Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed**, generally referred to as "**Farmajo**", reneged on his promise that all citizens would have a vote. He also announced that he had reached agreement with five regional presidents on a revision of the electoral process without having concerted with the other candidates. Since then, none of the dates for the run-up to the elections has been respected and there are increasingly insistent reports on the ground that the elections will be delayed. Without anywhere mentioning Farmajo's name, the experts are highly critical of his centralisation plans for Somalia, which is already struggling to operate the federal system introduced in 2004 and enshrined in the constitution in 2012.

The report next draws attention to the incapacity of the Somali authorities to provide basic public services and, in particular, to protect their citizens. Since the start of the year, not a week has passed without the country having had to mourn deaths resulting from attacks by Al-Shabaab.

Finally, the experts express their concern over the corruption and the clan mentality which are continuing to prevent the country's institutions from functioning properly and which has even filtered into the ranks of the **Somali National Army** (SNA), which is supposed to take over from AMISOM in 2021.

## Regional differences and world recession

The report's authors take the view that in the current circumstances a handover cannot take place and puts forward four possible scenarios for AMISOM's future: replace it by a UN operation, a joint UN-AU operation or an ad hoc regional coalition, or simply reconfigure it.

The first two scenarios offer the advantage of being multi-dimensional and offering both civil and military solutions to the problems raised by the report. Such operations would cost \$2bn per year, however, and this cannot be contemplated, according to the report's authors, as countries reduce their international aid allocation under the impact of the world recession and the **Covid-19** pandemic.

The third option has been inspired by the **G5 Sahel**, the pan-African force which is operating with France's **Operation Barkhane** in the Sahel. Under this scenario, the experts recommend putting the future new force under the authority of the **Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism** (EASFCOM), which is the East African component in the **African Standby Force**, which itself is made up of contingents from different national armies and overseen by the AU. The authors consider that this solution would not be viable, however, because of the major differences in the stance towards Somalia of the various powers in the region (*Africa Intelligence*, [08/01/21](#)).

By default, this leaves the last scenario, which would involve reconfiguring AMISOM and giving it additional civil responsibilities as a means of encouraging the earliest possible handover to the SNA, the Somali Security Forces and the

Somali Police Force. The report considers that Somalia has a window of only five years before international aid starts to dry up.

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