

We shall not abandon Somalia, says AMISOM chief

By Roderick Ahimbazwe
in Mogadishu

The African Union Mission in Somalia has confirmed that the troops from contributing countries will not leave Somalia, until the right security mechanisms have been put in place.

"Somalis have to take over the responsibility of the security of their country and we have agreed on the need of a transition plan by AMISOM," ambassador Francisco Madeira the African Union Special Representative to Somalia and the Head of AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), said on Monday while speaking on the sidelines of the Somalia Security Conference in Mogadishu.

He, however, said AMISOM would only leave when the Somalia government is not

only ready to secure the gains made by AMISOM, but to also take on measures to dismantle al-Shaabab.

"The secret for peace in Somalia lies with the people of Somalia who have to take it in their heart and address the conditions to the existence of al-Shabaab insurgents," Madeira said.

Commending the government of Somalia for the tremendous steps it has taken in the peace process, Madeira said the al-Shaabab can only be defeated by the involvement of the people of Somalia. He noted that the militant group finds territory by hiding within the population.

"It should, however, be noted that AMISOM has no vested interests in Somalia, except a peaceful Somalia and hence when the time is right, we shall have a total pullout."

BETWEEN THE LINES

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Madeira noted that 1,000 AMISOM troops would be leaving by the end of the year and that another 1,000 would leave by the end of next month.

Madeira highlighted the need to bring about social and economic development of Somalia and stressed that it can only be achieved if peace prevails.

Meanwhile, during the conference, which was convened by Mohamed

Abdullahi Mohamed, the President of Somalia, representatives of the Federal States of Somalia, the Bendair Regional Administration, the United Nations, African Union and 29 of Somalia's friends and partners, some resolutions were agreed upon and read out in a communique.

While reading the communiqué, Abdul-rahman Omar Osman, Somalia's information minister, said the Somalia Security Conference offered a pivotal opportunity to reflect on the progress made by the government of Somalia, the federal member states and the Benadir regional administration supported by the international community, in reforming the security sector.

The reforming of the security sector has been a priority for the government of Somalia

and its partners as set out in the landmark agreement by Somali leaders on the National Security Architecture (NSA) in April 2017 and the launch of the security pact at the London Somalia Conference on 11 May 2017.

One of the notable achievements includes the agreement of the implementation plan for the NSA, the integration of 2,400 puntland troops into the Somalia national army and the right-sizing and reforming of the army and the Somalia police force.

In addition to the implementation of NSA, other steps agreed to were the urgent development of a realistic conditions-based plan with clear dates to transfer security responsibility from AMISOM to Somalia security forces.

Key to this will be stakeholders developing a process to plan for transition by December 31, with a view to completing a draft transition plan, before the joint review of AMISOM requested by the security council in 2018.

The other step was the continued international support to build the capacity of Somali security forces and institutions targeted.

It was noted that international partners reiterated their commitment to providing sustainable, political and material support to Somalia's security reform.

Reacting to the resolutions in the communique, Hassan Ali Khaire the Prime Minister of Somalia reaffirmed the willingness of Somalia in the peace process and the transition of the security of Somalia from AMISOM.