NETWORK OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MEDIATION
FEMWISE-AFRICA
2nd GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
29-30 NOVEMBER 2018

Communiqué

The meeting brought together about 150 participants, including AU officials, Ambassadors to the Peace and Security Council (PSC), representatives of Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), Members of the Panel of the Wise and Friends of the Panel of the Wise and newly inducted FemWise-Africa members. In addition, African women who have held senior positions in their home countries or in international organizations, natural-resource based conflict prevention and mediation experts, representatives of think-tanks and academia, as well as selected partners participated in the meeting.

Held in the Nelson Mandela Hall of the AU Commission, the meeting was chaired by H.E. Mme Catherine Samba-Panza and H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, FemWise Co-Chairs. The opening session of the meeting was marked by addresses by H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, Mme Letty Chiwara (UN Women), H.E. Ambassador Smaïl Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and H.E. President Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and founding member of FemWise-Africa.

This meeting took place in the wake of the decision by the 29th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State of the African Union held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2017 concerning the establishment of FemWise-Africa, a network created with the aim of, *inter alia*, professionalizing the role of women in preventative diplomacy and mediation at Tracks 1, 2 and 3; ensuring a channel for women’s meaningful and effective participation in peace processes, including as heads of official high-level mediation missions; and mainstreaming women’s engagement in mediation in line with the AU’s Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals. FemWise-Africa is located within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise and membership of the network is open to African women and girls, including the diaspora, who have served and aspire to serve in
preventive actions and mediation activities, drawn from a variety of different backgrounds.

This 2nd General Assembly was preceded by a meeting of the network’s Steering Committee on 28 November, as well as the 2nd Induction Training on Mediation and Preventive Diplomacy organised for 59 new FemWise-Africa Members on 27 and 28 November 2018.

The General Assembly celebrated FemWise-Africa’s impressive development and operationalisation under a very short period of time. As of 28 November 2018, the network has 200 accredited members, of which 100 have already been inducted, and has already demonstrated its importance and value-addition to the APSA by being deployed as part of the AU Commission’s efforts at conflict prevention, mediation and dialogue.

As emphasised by Commissioner for Peace and Security Ambassador Smail Chergui, the operationalisation of FemWise-Africa comes at a critical time as although significant advances have been made in reducing violent conflicts on the Continent, several African countries and regions remain trapped in a vicious cycle of conflict with devastating consequences to the continent’s development and integration agenda. In contexts marked by ethnic tensions and electoral violence, violent extremism and terrorism, transnational organised crime and drug trafficking, social and economic discontent, gender inequality and extreme poverty, a network such as FemWise-Africa constitutes a vital instrument as part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

In order to hasten the full operationalisation of FemWise-Africa, the AU Commission committed to continuing to build the capacity of the network’s members, particularly with specialised and longer training and capacity-building initiatives (at the AU, the RECs as well as Africa’s Centres of Excellence and Universities). In addition, the AU Commission committed to deploying FemWise-Africa members, including supporting the Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise in developing a deployment and mentorship framework, one which would combine less experienced members with seasoned FemWise-Africa mediators and Members of the AU’s Panel of the Wise.
In this regard, the AU Commission committed to strengthening the Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise to enable it to discharge day-to-day management of FemWise-Africa, including with accreditation, capacity building, mapping of areas of interest, and deployment and quick impact projects. In line with current increases in Member States’ contribution to the Peace Fund, and in particular its “Window One” which is dedicated to conflict prevention and mediation efforts, the AU Commission will continue to mobilise resources to assist FemWise-Africa from Member States as well as partners.

Under the stewardship of FemWise-Africa’s Co-Chairs H.E. Mme Catherine Samba-Panza and H.E. Dr. Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, and inspired by the example and experience of H.E. President Sahle-Work Zewde and the Panel of the Wise, members of the network participated with energy and enthusiasm at the 2nd FemWise-Africa General Assembly, contributing with ideas, reflections and suggestions on the various themes discussed, including providing the network with substantive ideas for the immediate, medium and long term.