OPENING ADDRESS BY THE COMMISSIONER PEACE AND SECURITY OF THE AU COMMISSION, AMBASSADOR SMAİL CHERGUI

TO THE NETWORK OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MEDIATION (FEMWISE-AFRICA)

INDUCTION TRAINING ON PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY AND MEDIATION

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 21-22 June 2018
Your Excellency Mme Catherine Samba Panza, Co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise),
Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms,
Dear Members of the FemWise,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the African Union Headquarters for the first “Induction Training on Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation”. Allow me to first thank you for having answered our call and congratulate you for being selected to join this important Network of African Women in Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation known as FEMWISE-AFRICA.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our esteemed FemWise Co-Chairs: H.E. Mme Catherine Samba Panza and Dr. Speciosa Wandira (as well as the FemWise Steering Committee) who have been tireless supporters of this important initiative and have taken considerable time of their busy schedules to assist the Peace and Security Department in organising and convening this Induction Training for new Members of the Network.

Dear friends, we are meeting here in a very particular context. Overall our continent remains on a positive trajectory but the 15 plus
conflict and crisis situations continues to hold us back. More than ever the need to step up our efforts in conflict prevention and resolution at all levels from grassroot to high level have never been so crucial.

In this context, the establishment of FemWise becomes extremely important, as it aims at “professionalizing the role of women in preventive diplomacy and mediation at Tracks 1 (High Level), 2 (Mid-Level) and 3 levels (Grassroot)”, “establishing a channel for women’s meaningful and effective participation in peace processes” and “strengthening the mediation interventions of FemWise-Africa with the facilitation of Quick Impact Projects”, among other key objectives as will be further explained by your Co-Chair.

In other words, by operationalizing FemWise, we are strengthening our ability to operate in a context that perhaps, more than at any other time, requires leadership, combination of efforts, and creativity in finding innovative solutions to old and new challenges.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that we have recently inaugurated the fourth African Union Panel of the Wise. This means that, as a network under the Panel of the Wise, FemWise will benefit from the renewed energy and profile of the Panel’s new members: Mr. Amr Moussa, H.E. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, H.E. President Hifikepunye Pohamba, Mrs. Honorine Nzet Bitéghé and Dr. Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe.
Dear FemWise Members,

We have ahead of us a very busy Induction Training. Your agenda includes key thematic sessions focusing on the legal, normative and institutional dimensions of preventive diplomacy and mediation by the Africa Union; on understanding mediation (focusing on principles, actors and processes); on the issues, opportunities and challenges of women in preventive diplomacy and mediation. Furthermore, we have prepared several sessions specifically focusing on FemWise itself (rationale, objectives and workplan); looking at opportunities for FemWise’s deployments; as well as reflecting on FemWise in the context of the APSA and particularly its relations with the RECs and RMs. Finally, you will caucus in order to arrive at some form of plan of action. So we have quite a bit on our plates!

Allow me before concluding to emphasize two important dimensions of FemWise which to me, personally, seem particularly important. The first has to do with our efforts to operationalize this nascent resource. As some of you might know this training is part of our commitment, made in Constantine last year, to recruit and train 100 women mediators across our Continent by the end of 2018. We have started this process and I am happy to announce that today, we have in front of us the initial cohort of new FemWise mediators.
In addition, but no less important for the operationalisation of FemWise is the area of preventive diplomacy and other types of FemWise deployments. And here there are two complementary issues. The first, following the 18th Statutory Meeting of the Panel of the Wise, held in Windhoek, Namibia, last March, is the recommendation made by Members of the Panel that, in line with the Modalities for the Functioning of the Panel of the Wise, they should extend their preventive diplomacy missions beyond countries preparing for elections, to support the AU’s efforts at implementing its Structural Conflict Prevention Framework as well as in support of the AU Border Programme.

It is our firm belief that FemWise can play a very important supportive role by being co-deployed with Panel of the Wise Members.

Finally, with regards to the second key dimension of FemWise. I want to personally, as well as on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, assure you of our determination to promote gender parity and the empowerment of women in Africa, including within the very many structures and organs of the African Union. In this, the AU Commission – which is composed of five women and five men – has a particularly important role to play. I assure you that in addition to FemWise and the areas of preventive diplomacy, mediation and dialogue, my Department is focused on
mainstreaming gender in all our activities, and paying special attention to the ratio of male to female employees to ensure a steadfast progression to gender parity across this Department.

This initiative has come a long way and I am pleased with the progress made. I look forward to working with each and everyone of you to promote peace and security on the continent, a pre-requisite for socio-economic development that our people so long for. Once again Welcome to the African Union Family and wish us fruitful deliberations.

I declare this Meeting open and thank you.