INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE PANEL OF THE WISE

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
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DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Panel of the Wise was appointed in 2007 and will commence its work in 2008. This draft “Programme of Work for 2008” will be the Panel’s first and it thus serves two purposes. First, it offers a general overview of the work methods of the Panel. Second, it proposes a specific work plan for 2008.

2. The draft is intended to stimulate discussion at the inaugural meeting of the Panel on a number of issues, including on how the Panel will conduct its meetings, when and how it will consult and relate to other AU bodies, how it will engage with countries and regions affected by conflicts, and how it will consider key thematic issues related to conflict prevention and peace-building in Africa. This draft also addresses the issue of the resources that will be needed to support the work of the Panel, including a dedicated Secretariat within the Conflict Management Division of the Peace and Security Department, ad hoc specialized expertise and an annual budget.

II. PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

3. It is proposed that the Panel undertake the following activities:

   (i) deliberations among the Panel members, including formal meetings and informal consultations;

   (ii) collaboration and consultation with the relevant organs of the AU, including the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the Chairperson of the Commission;

   (iii) engagement in countries and regions affected by conflicts;

   (iv) consideration of key thematic issues related to conflict prevention and peace-building in Africa.

4. Below follows a brief discussion of what each of the above categories may entail.

   a) Deliberations among the Panel members

5. The Panel will meet in formal sessions at least three times a year, or at any time at the request of the PSC or the Chairperson of the Commission. The Panel shall normally hold its meetings at the Headquarters of the AU, in Addis Ababa; however, it may, after consultation with the Chairperson of the Commission, hold meetings outside the Headquarters of the AU.
6. Each meeting will last between 1 and 3 days, or longer if required. The first meeting in any given year will consider the Programme of Work, and the two other meetings will consider the bi-annual reports of the Panel to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government through the PSC, as well as the regular reports to the PSC. At every regular meeting, the Panel will consider (a) developments in the countries and regions on its agenda, and (b) an overview of the current state of affairs on the continent in order to anticipate and identify any new conflict situations requiring the Panel's attention. In addition, one of the Panel’s meetings can be used to focus on a key thematic issue. The Panel could schedule additional meetings as may be necessary.

7. At the Panel’s first meeting in 2008, it may be useful to:

   (i) discuss the Panel’s method of work;

   (ii) consider the 2008 Programme of Work;

   (iii) select a Chairperson;

   (iv) discuss how the Panel may engage with countries or regions affected by conflicts, including, among others, how the Panel may carry out field missions and what would be the minimum number of Panel members needed to participate in any given mission. Over the course of its tenure, the Panel may need to undertake a number of missions, and this may impose a heavy schedule on its members. The Panel may, therefore, wish to devise guidelines regarding the situations in which partial representation (for example by 1 of its members) will be considered adequate;

   (v) develop an initial list of priority countries or regions on which the Panel should focus its work. These ideas will be discussed in the Panel's meeting with the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission; and

   (vi) develop initial ideas on the type of thematic issues the Panel may wish to focus its work on.

8. Throughout the year, the Panel members may also communicate and consult with each other via telephone or other methods to update each other on matters of concern to the Panel’s work. Such communication will be facilitated by the Panel's dedicated secretariat. They will also share with each other any material they consider pertinent to the Panel's activities. Such sharing of information and material will be facilitated by the Panel’s secretariat.
b) Consultation with the Peace and Security Council and the Commission

9. In carrying out its work, the Panel will consult with the Commission and the PSC and will keep them informed of ongoing activities and developments. The Panel is empowered to decide to focus on any issue or conflict situation, either at the request of the PSC or the Chairperson of the Commission or at its own initiative (Article 11 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council). In undertaking its mandate, the Panel shall, at all times, keep the PSC informed of its activities and coordinate with it as appropriate.

10. The Panel will offer advice and contribute to the discussions of the PSC at the request of the Chairperson of this organ, and will hold at least one joint meeting per year with the PSC, perhaps on the occasion of the presentation of its annual report. The Panel's joint meeting with the PSC may be timed to immediately precede or follow one of the Panel's regular sessions in order to reduce the Panel members' travel requirements. The Panel will have regular consultations with the Commission (Chairperson of the Commission, Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Peace and Security Department).

11. Furthermore, during one of its regular sessions, the Panel may wish to interact with and be briefed by other bodies of the AU, for example the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights and the Pan-African Parliament. The Panel may request to address the Assembly. The Panel may also interact with civil society groups.

12. Finally, the Panel will submit regular reports to the PSC. It will also, through the PSC, submit bi-annual reports to the Assembly.

c) Engagement in Conflict Affected Countries and Regions

13. At every regular meeting, the Panel will consider the current state of the continent with a view to identifying emerging conflict situations. The Panel may wish to alert the PSC and the Chairperson to any important developments, and it may wish to make specific recommendations regarding the types of action that could be taken by the PSC and/or the Commission.

14. In addition, the Panel may wish to identify a few (not more than 3) priority conflict situations on which it will focus its attention in any given year. The Panel will engage in a systematic and sustained manner with each of the priority countries and regions. It may undertake fact-finding visits, engage with parties to a conflict and other stakeholders, and assist and advise mediation teams engaged in formal negotiations. This work may involve missions to the countries or regions affected by conflict.

15. There is a need for the Panel to remain flexible so that it can respond to unexpected developments on the continent and is able to engage with new conflict situations outside the pre-identified priority conflict situations on its agenda.
16. When selecting the priority conflict situations on its agenda, the Panel may wish to judge whether its engagement is likely to add value to existing efforts and to contribute to conflict prevention or reduction. Some of the criteria the Panel may wish to consider in defining its priorities may include:

(i) the degree to which a conflict situation already receives regional and international attention or not. Conflicts that have been neglected for lack of resources or other reasons may be especially appropriate cases for the Panel to engage with;

(ii) whether the PSC is already seized with a particular conflict situation and whether additional attention by the Panel may add further value to existing efforts;

(iii) whether a given situation has remained in conflict for a considerable amount of time or in danger of descending into conflict, despite multiple mediation and negotiation efforts. In such situations, the Panel may advise and strengthen existing efforts, inject new urgency to mediation processes, or take a fresh look at the conflict dynamics at play;

(iv) whether a conflict situation has experienced a sudden and speedy decline;

(v) whether a conflict situation has experienced difficulties in implementing a peace agreement and, therefore faces the risk of reverting to conflict.

17. As specified in the Modalities for the Functioning of the Panel of the Wise and depending on the needs of each priority conflict situation, the Panel may wish to:

(i) undertake fact-finding missions;

(ii) undertake good-offices missions;

(iii) undertake or support existing mediation initiatives;

(iv) undertake a mission to a conflict situation where the AU already has a presence, e.g. via a Special Representative or a Liaison Office, assuming that such a mission supports and adds value, and is coordinated with existing efforts;

(v) advise and assist national reconciliation efforts aiming at resolving disputes and restoring stability;

(vi) support the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission in their conflict prevention efforts, by issuing communiqués on current conflict situations, by commissioning reports, by offering advice on specific conflict situations, and by making recommendations to the Chairperson and the PSC on appropriate courses of action related to specific conflict situations, including the appointment of a Special Envoy.
d) **Initiating discussions on key issues related to conflict prevention and peace building in Africa**

18. The Panel’s mandate states that it will “pronounce itself on issues relating to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa”. At its first meeting in 2008, and at the first meeting every year thereafter, the Panel may wish to identify a particular theme relevant to conflict prevention and/or peace building that it may wish to highlight. The Panel may wish to commission a report, arrange a seminar and undertake related activities. The Panel could use such activities to stimulate a policy debate or to raise awareness on themes related to conflict prevention and peace building, which the Panel considers important and which may not be receiving adequate attention by African policy and decision-makers. This thematic work should generate concrete recommendations, as, for example, in the form of a report of the Panel to the PSC.

III. **RESOURCES**

19. This section briefly discusses the types of resources, which will be necessary in order for the Panel to carry out the above-proposed activities.

a) **Dedicated Secretariat**

20. The Panel of the Wise will work in complex political situations and will often need to respond to developments in a timely manner and with all the information available to it. It will, therefore, require the support of several staff organized in a dedicated secretariat located within the Conflict Management Division. The secretariat, working closely with relevant units within the Commission, will perform the following functions under the direction of the Panel:

   (i) collect and analyze information on developments on the continent and the priority countries and region the Panel may choose to focus on;

   (ii) conduct research and contribute substantive knowledge on conflict prevention, peace-making and mediation;

   (iii) research and draft background papers, briefing notes, and policy briefs in support of the Panel’s country-specific engagements;

   (iv) collect and analyze information on non-priority countries and regions of which the Panel should be kept informed in case of future engagement;

   (v) identify experts on issues and countries the Panel is working on;

   (vi) when needed, accompany the Panel to missions or alternatively identify qualified persons to do so;

   (vii) draft and distribute the Panel’s reports, and maintain a record of the work of the Panel;
(viii) facilitate coordination and communication between the Panel and other relevant organs of the AU, including the PSC and the Commission;

(ix) prepare the necessary material for the Panel’s internal meetings and for the meetings with the PSC, the Commission, and other relevant actors;

(x) facilitate the Panel’s outreach efforts to civil society, research and academic institutions, and other relevant organizations; and

(xi) contribute expertise and support to the Panel’s efforts to raise debate on specific issues relating to the promotion of peace and security in Africa.

b) **Expert Advice**

21. In some circumstances, the Panel may wish to seek the advice and support of experts where their specialized knowledge may be of direct relevance and usefulness to its work. Such experts may be commissioned to report on particular aspects of peace-making and conflict prevention or on a particular conflict, or they may be invited to make presentations to the Panel.

c) **Budget**

22. Closely linked to the annual Programme of Work is the budget of the Panel of the Wise. At its first meeting every year, the Panel should consider its budget and, once approved, submit it to the Chairperson of the Commission.

23. The budget will need resources in the following three areas:

   (i) to support the formal and informal deliberations of the Panel;

   (ii) to support the missions of the Panel;

   (iii) to support the secretariat of the Panel, including any additional services that may need to be contracted in support of the Panel’s work.