Panel of the Wise
Fifth Meeting
5-6 March 2009
Addis Ababa

COMMUNIQUE

1. The Panel of the Wise, established pursuant to Article 11 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), with the mandate to support the efforts of the Chairperson of the Commission and those of the PSC, particularly with regard to conflict prevention, held its 5th meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 5 and 6 March 2009. The following members of the Panel participated in the meeting: President Ahmed Ben Bella, Chair of the Panel, Madam Elizabeth Pognon; and Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim.

2. The Panel reviewed the status of implementation of its Work Programme for 2009, including the missions to be undertaken in various parts of the Continent by its members, in furtherance of peace, security and stability. Furthermore, the Panel considered pursuing missions to countries where elections are going to be held. Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim reported on the mission he undertook to South Africa from 23 to 26 February 2009. The members of the Panel agreed on the modalities of the other mission to be undertaken by its members.

3. The Panel was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security on the finalization of the report on election-related conflicts, based on the outcome of the workshop held in Nairobi from 26 to 27 November 2008 and the subsequent meeting of the Panel from 28 to 29 November 2008. The final report will be submitted through the relevant AU organs to the Assembly of the Union at its next Ordinary Session in June 2009. The Panel was also briefed on the steps taken to facilitate its reflection on the problematic of fighting impunity and its relationship with reconciliation and healing, including the ongoing preparation of a report on the issue and the forthcoming workshop to be held in April – May 2009, in Monrovia, Liberia.

4. On the basis of the briefing provided by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Panel of the Wise reviewed the state of peace and security on the Continent. The Panel welcomed the progress made in some parts of the Continent. At the same time, it expressed its deep concern at the ongoing conflicts and violence facing many regions and countries in Africa. In particular, the Panel expressed deep concern at the current crisis in Madagascar, appealing to all concerned to demonstrate a spirit of compromise and accommodation and to place the interests of the country and its people above any other consideration. The Panel also expressed utmost sadness and indignation at the assassination of President Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira of Guinea Bissau and the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Batista Tagme Na Wai.

5. The Panel expressed appreciation to the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission for their efforts to further peace, security and stability on the Continent. The Panel extended its support to the decisions taken by the PSC on the various situations it is seized with, in particular the decision on the arrest warrant issued by Pre-Trial Chamber I of the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Omar Hassan Al Bashir of the Republic of the Sudan.
6. The Panel also met with the Chairperson of the Commission, with whom it had an in-depth exchange of views on the peace and security challenges facing the continent and the best ways to address them. The Panel reiterated its commitment to continue working closely with the Chairperson of the Commission to support his efforts, particularly in the area of conflict prevention.

7. Furthermore, the Panel also had an interactive session with the Peace and Security Council. The meeting afforded the Panel an opportunity to brief the PSC on its activities and to exchange with this organ on the joint efforts to be undertaken to promote peace, security and stability in Africa.

8. The Panel agreed to convene its next meeting in Libya at a date to be determined after due consultations.

Addis Ababa, 6 March 2009