STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BANKOLE ADEOYE, COMMISSIONER FOR
POLITICAL AFFAIRS, PEACE AND SECURITY
AT THE MAINSTREAMING YOUNG PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDS) INTO
AFRICA’S YOUTH, PEACE AND SECURITY (YPS) AGENDA WORKSHOP
His Excellency, H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for the month of August 2023 and AU Champion for Youth, Peace and Security,
Distinguished Members of the PSC and AU Member States,
The AU Chairperson’s Special Envoy on Youth,
The African Youth Ambassadors for Peace,
Youth Peacebuilders
Our Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, it is my utmost pleasure to welcome H.E. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi to the African Union Commission who is the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council and AU Champion for Youth Peace and Security. Your excellencies the African youth are witnesses of your commitment towards advancing the Youth Peace and Security Agenda. Your presence here today, in the middle of a long and tasking journey, is a further testament to your dedication and proactive stance regarding issues of Youth Peace and Security.

Today, as you join young peacebuilders, particularly those with disabilities, this workshop, is also a demonstration of efforts to ensure that youth are mainstreamed in governance, peace and security. It is equally noteworthy that as the Chairperson of the PSC for the month of August 2023, the tenure is beginning with the recognition of youth roles in peace and security. We all recall that the first-ever Continental Dialogue on YPS was held in Bujumbura in 2022 and was officially opened by H.E. President Ndayishimiye. Your Excellency, we are all looking forward to the holding of the second High-Level Dialogue on Youth, Peace and Security. Permit me to assure you that you have the full support of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security in this regard.

Let me highlight a couple of initiatives that the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department is proud to promote to ensure that youth are actively participating in the peace and security agenda of the African Union.

Through the Youth for Peace Africa Program within the department, we have five brilliant African youth peacebuilders that serve as African Youth Ambassadors for Peace (AYAPs). The AYAPs – some of whom are present today – serve as a critical link between the youth demographic and the department ensuring that the voices of young African peacebuilders are not only heard, but also impact, on the peace and security agenda. These young women and men have made us proud by playing their roles at local, national, regional, continental and global stages. Recently, in May 2023, Miss Cynthia Chigwenya, the AYAP representing Southern Africa was one of three briefers to the UN Security Council during its 9315th meeting under the theme “Futureproofing Trust for Sustaining Peace”.

The insights of the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace, representing the perspectives of youth from their respective regions, have also provided the AU PSC with valuable inputs to ensure appropriate policy decisions are made. Also, these young Ambassadors have been instrumental
in advocating for youth inclusion and providing technical support to assist Member States in the process of developing their National Action Plans on YPS. Their dedication and expertise are making a significant impact in advancing the YPS agenda at both regional and national levels.

Secondly, the department is operationalising the WiseYouth initiative which was established through a decision adopted by the 35th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2022, as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise, to ensure and promote a focused and strategic engagement of youth in preventive diplomacy, mediation and dialogue across the Continent. It is my pleasure to announce today that a Technical Consultative Meeting on the Operationalization of the WiseYouth Network is scheduled to take place from 31 August to 01 September 2023 in Bujumbura, Burundi, within the context of the Inter-Regional Knowledge Exchange (I-RECKE) platform. We are confident that capable youth will take on the opportunity to be part of our institutional mechanisms and efforts to promote peace through dialogue and mediation.

**Your Excellency**

We must be cognizant of the fact that the youth demographic is not homogenous. The Continental Framework on YPS (CFYPS) is clear in this regard as it expressly highlights the need for an “inclusive approach to youth”. This means that we must take proactive and pragmatic steps to ensure that young people living with disability are mainstreamed into the YPS agenda. It is within this context that this workshop has been organized to bring our young peacebuilders who, despite their individual circumstances, continue to contribute to the peace and security of their communities. The conversations from this workshop will enable us to understand and obtain first hand information on the peculiar issues and circumstances that young people living with disability face in engaging in the peace and security agenda. Thereafter, we must work together, with all stakeholders, to ensure that opportunities are optimized to enjoy the full benefit of the “inclusive approach to youth”.

In conclusion, by recognizing the diverse perspectives and needs of young people, including those with disabilities, and actively involving them in the peace and security agenda, we can build a more inclusive and sustainable future. The African Union, through initiatives like the Youth for peace Africa Program, the African Youth Ambassadors for Peace and the WiseYouth, is committed to empowering youth and ensuring their meaningful participation. Together, let us continue to champion the cause of youth, peace, and security, working towards a brighter and more peaceful Africa for all.

I thank you.