PANEL OF THE WISE
THIRD MEETING
12-14 OCTOBER 2008
Algiers, Algeria

POW/PR(III)

COMMUNIQUE
COMMUNIQUE

1. At the invitation of the Government of Algeria, the Panel of the Wise established pursuant to Article 11 of the Protocol establishing 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 as regards conflict prevention, held its third meeting, in Algiers, from 12 to 14 October 2008. In addition to the Chairperson of the Panel, Mr. Ahmed Ben Bella, Dr. Brigalia Bam, Mr. Miguel Trovoada and Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim also participated in the meeting.

2. The Panel expressed its deep appreciation and profound gratitude to President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, who received its members in audience, thanking him for his support to the Panel. It expressed appreciation to the Algerian Government for its contribution to the success of the present meeting.

3. The Panel reviewed the crisis and conflict situations on the continent, on the basis of a briefing given by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, and the interventions made by the representatives of the League of Arab States and the United Nations, Ambassador Ahmed Ben Helli, Assistant Secretary-General of the League, and Mr. Baboucarr Blaise Jagne, Head of the UN Liaison Office with the AU, who both participated in the meeting within the framework of the cooperation and partnership existing between their respective organizations and the AU.

4. The Panel expressed satisfaction at the sustained efforts that continue to be deployed both at continental - particularly by the AU Commission and the PSC - and regional levels, in order to prevent and resolve conflicts and consolidate peace where it has been restored. In this regard, the Panel noted with satisfaction the strengthening of the coordination and cooperation between the AU, the UN and the League of Arab States, as well as the joint actions that the three organisations carry out with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the efforts aimed at resolving the crises and tensions facing the continent, particularly in Mauritania, Somalia and The Sudan.

5. Furthermore, the Panel paid special tribute to the staff of the peace support operations deployed by the AU in the different parts of the continent, for their commitment and spirit of sacrifice in the service of peace, security and stability on the continent, noting, in this regard, the remarkable work being accomplished by the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) under very difficult conditions.

6. At the same time, the Panel expressed its serious concern over the persistence of the scourge of war and violence in many countries and regions of the continent, with the attendant sufferings and destruction. The Panel was particularly worried about the development of the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); the continuing violence in Darfur, including the attacks against the civilian population and the hybrid AU/UN Mission (UNAMID); as well as the deterioration of the security situation in Somalia, despite the signing, in August 2008, of the Djibouti Agreement between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Alliance for the re-liberation of Somalia (ARS). The Panel urged all the parties concerned to favour dialogue and to show a spirit of tolerance and compromise so as to find negotiated solutions to the conflicts facing them.

7. In the light of the above, the Panel specifically:
(i) expressed satisfaction at the recent visit of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr. Jean Ping, to the DRC, encouraging him to pursue and intensify his efforts aimed at promoting dialogue between the parties concerned and facilitating the scrupulous implementation of the commitments made, as well as at contributing to the consolidation of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region, particularly through the implementation of the Nairobi joint communiqué of November 2007;

(ii) requested the Somali parties which have not yet done so to renounce violence, and to join the ongoing peace process and to resolutely commit themselves to sustaining the momentum generated by the historical Djibouti Agreement; and

(iii) urged the Sudanese parties to extend full cooperation to the AU, the United Nations and the League of Arab States for the reactivation, without delay, of the political process and the restoration of lasting peace in the ravaged region of Darfur. The Panel further welcomed the roadmap adopted by the PSC at its 142nd meeting held at ministerial level in Addis Ababa on 21 July 2008 in order to find a balanced and satisfactory solution to the inter-related concerns relating to justice and the fight against impunity, on the one hand, and the promotion of healing and reconciliation, on the other.

8. The Panel expressed satisfaction at the signing, by the Zimbabwean parties, in September 2008, of a power sharing Agreement, and urged them to scrupulously honour their commitments, particularly by establishing, without further delay, a new Government as provided for in the letter and spirit of the Agreement, so as to enable Zimbabwe overcome in a sustained manner the crisis facing it and to tackle collectively its numerous challenges. The Panel expressed satisfaction at the decision of the South African Government to request former President Thabo Mbeki to continue the facilitation he had initiated on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

9. The Panel fully supported the decisions of the PSC on the situation in Mauritania, following the coup d’état of 6 August 2008, and the efforts being made by the Commission for the restoration of constitutional order as requested by the PSC at its ministerial meeting, held in New York on 22 September 2008.

10. The Panel agreed on a number of missions to be undertaken by its members in order to encourage the peace efforts on the continent and to consider any further contribution that it could make.

11. The Panel decided to hold its next meeting in November 2008 in Nairobi to consider the status of implementation of its Programme for 2008, particularly the thematic brainstorming on election-related crises and tensions, initiated in May 2008, within the framework of the conflict prevention efforts of the AU.

Algiers, 14 October 2008