PANEL OF THE WISE
2ND MEETING
17 JULY 2008
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PRESS STATEMENT
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The Panel of the Wise, formed in conformity with the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), held its 2nd meeting at the AU headquarters, in Addis Ababa, on 17 July 2008, under the chairmanship of H.E. Mr. Ahmed Ben Bella, Chairperson of the Panel.

The opening ceremony was marked by statements of the Chairperson of the Panel and the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, as well as by the handing over to President Ben Bella, by the Head of the Diplomatic Mission of Denmark in Addis Ababa, of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 3 Champion Torch, symbolizing the third of the eight MDGs.

The opening ceremony took place in the presence of representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, in his capacity as Chairman of the AU, and the representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in his capacity as Chair of the PSC for the month of July 2008, as well as the representatives of the Presidency and the Commission of the European Union.

The Panel had an exchange of views on tensions and crises associated with electoral processes in Africa. It is to be recalled that, within the framework of its programme of work, the Panel of the Wise decided to undertake, each year, a thematic reflection on an issue relevant to conflict prevention. This year’s reflection is devoted to election-related crises and tensions. This choice was made in response to the relevant decisions of the PSC and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU.

The Panel agreed on the steps to be taken to carry forward this reflection. In this regard, it is envisaged to organize in Nairobi, in December 2008, a workshop involving the Regional Economic Communities and other relevant African and international institutions, as well as a host of experts, to discuss the report to be prepared by the Commission with the support of a team of consultants. This workshop will be immediately followed by a meeting of the Panel to review and to endorse the recommendations to be submitted to the Assembly of the Union, at its ordinary session scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa, in February 2009.

The Panel also undertook a review of the peace and security situation on the Continent. In this respect, the Panel agreed on the principle that its members would undertake information-gathering missions aimed at evaluating the situation and examining the modalities of the involvement of the Panel in efforts aimed at promoting peace and security on the continent.
The Panel expressed its support for the ongoing efforts by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the AU aimed at finding an early solution to the crisis in Zimbabwe, including the early establishment of a Government of National Unity, in conformity with the decision adopted by the 11th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from 30 June to 1 July 2008.

On the specific issue of the application made by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 14 July 2008, concerning the situation in Darfur, the Panel encouraged the Commission and the PSC, with the support of the AU Partners, to find a peaceful and just solution which takes into account the complementary goals of combating impunity and promoting peace, reconciliation and healing in Darfur, in the interest of the Sudan, the region and the African continent, as well as the entire international community.

Finally, the Panel accepted, with gratitude, the invitation of the Algerian Government to hold its next meeting in Algiers, in mid-October 2008.

Addis Ababa, 17 July 2008