MEDIA ADVISORY:
African Union to convene Inaugural Meeting of the New Members of the Panel of the Wise (#PanWise)

Representatives of the media in Addis Ababa are invited to cover the opening ceremony of the Inaugural Meeting of the New Members of the Panel of the Wise.

What: The African Union (AU) will convene the inaugural meeting of the new members of the Panel of the Wise, in line with the Decision of the 29th Assembly of the African Union of July 2017. This event will also witness the appointment of the new Chairperson/Spokesperson of the Panel.

The new members are:

i) for the Eastern Africa region, Dr. Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, from Uganda, is currently a member of the Panel of the Wise of the African Union since June 2014. Dr. Wandira was a Deputy President of the Republic of Uganda;

ii) for the Northern Africa region, Mr. Amr Moussa, from Egypt, who was the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2001 to 2011;

iii) for the Western Africa region, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, from Liberia, is the 24th and current president of Liberia. Her current term of office will expire in December 2017. Dr. Sirleaf was the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner with Leymah Gbowee of Liberia and Tawakkol Karman of Yemen;

iv) for the Central Africa region, Mrs. Honorine Nzet Bitéghé, from Gabon, is the former Minister for Social Affairs and has been a long-time human rights activist, especially women’s rights;

v) for the Southern Africa region, Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, from Namibia, is the former President of the Republic of Namibia from 2005 to 2015.

When: 9:00 am EAT, Wednesday 04 October 2017;

Where: Small Conference Hall 1, New Conference Centre, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia;
Who: Participants will include the Chairperson of the Commission and senior leadership of the African Union Commission; incoming and outgoing members of the Panel of the Wise, partners including the United Nations Office to the African Union, the UN Mediation Support Unit, and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and distinguished academicians on conflict prevention and mediation.

Why: This meeting is organised in furtherance of the Decision of the Assembly of the Union of July 2017 appointing the new members of the Panel of the Wise.

The meeting will provide an opportunity to appoint the new Chairperson/Spokesperson of the Panel of the Wise; exchange views on the strategic positioning of the Panel of the Wise and how it can support the ongoing efforts of the Peace and Security Council and the Chairperson particularly in the area of conflict prevention; to discuss issues of collaboration and coordination with international stakeholders involved in the prevention of the outbreak of political crisis, to review lessons learned and outstanding matters with the outgoing members of the Panel, and to adopt the 2018 work plan.

The African Union Panel of the Wise is one of the pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), as provided for in the 2002 Peace and Security Council (PSC) Protocol. The Panel, which was launched in Addis Ababa, in December 2007, is composed of five highly respected African personalities who have made outstanding contribution to the cause of peace, security and development on the continent. They are selected by the Chairperson of the Commission after consultation with the Member States concerned, and appointed by the Assembly of the Union to serve for a period of three years.

The Panel is mandated to support the efforts of the PSC and those of the Chairperson of the Commission, particularly in the area of conflict prevention and mediation. The Panel may advise the PSC and the Chairperson of the Commission on all matters within their respective competences; carry out fact-finding missions as an instrument of conflict prevention; encourage parties, where appropriate, to engage in political dialogue; and promote confidence-building measures. The Panel may also pronounce itself on any issue relating to the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and stability in Africa.

Since its inception, the Panel of the Wise has undertaken a number of thematic reflections on issues relevant to conflict prevention and peace-building, namely: election-related disputes and conflicts; impunity, justice and national reconciliation; women and children in armed conflicts; democratization and governance; and women in mediation.

In addition to its thematic reflections, the Panel of the Wise has undertaken a number of mediation missions and capacity-building activities. The Panel of the Wise works closely with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs). It has undertaken joint activities with the Committee of Elders of COMESA, the Council of the Wise of ECOWAS, as well as the Secretariats of IGAD, SADC and the ICGLR. In May 2013, the AU Assembly decided to establish an umbrella mechanism called the Pan African Network of the Wise (PANWISE). PANWISE brings together mediation institutions
and actors across the continent, with a view to building synergies among all concerned.

In July 2017, the establishment of the African Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation Network (FemWise-Africa) was endorsed by the 29th Assembly of the Union, in line with a recommendation of the Panel of the Wise. FemWise-Africa will ensure that peace processes in Africa are shaped with the contribution of women’s leadership and participation. FemWise-Africa has already launched its operations by providing technical and mediation supports to four ongoing peace processes in Africa.

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