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LAUNCH OF FEMWISE-ETHIOPIA NATIONAL CHAPTER

OPENING REMARKS BY DR. AKOK MADUT

Your Excellency, Mr Binaf Andulem, the Minister of Peace for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Your Excellency, Mr Taye Dendea, the State Minister to Peacebuilding and National Consensus, Ministry of Peace

Your Excellency, Hon. Justice Effie Owour, Co-Chair of FemWise-Africa and Member of the Panel of the Wise,

Your Excellences Ambassadors,

Distinguished Representatives from the Ministry of Peace and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs of Ethiopia,

Distinguished FemWise-Ethiopia Members, Regional Women Mediators and Peace Mothers,

Honorable Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Bankole Adeoye, it gives me a singular honor to welcome you all to the this very momentous occasion for the FemWise-Africa Network, where we gather to launch the third National Chapter of the Network here in Ethiopia.

This occasion marks the culmination of over two years of effort, undertaken jointly by the AU Commission, the Ministry of Peace of Ethiopia, and the FemWise-Ethiopia members who have remained committed to advancing the core objective of the FemWise-Africa Network of strengthening the role of women in mediation, in peace processes and in peace-making and peace-building towards achieving a peaceful and secure Africa, in line with the AU's Agenda 2063.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For those of you who are familiar with the history of FemWise-Africa, you will recall that the Network was established in 2017 with the objective of creating a critical mass of women with the capacities to support Tracks 1, 2 and 3 mediation, dialogue and other peace processes.

At the continental level, the establishment of the Network was also a fulfillment of continental commitments by our members states and our Heads of State, to promote gender equality and the role of women in peace and security, as outlined in: the AU Constitutive Act of 2000, the Maputo Protocol of 2003, and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of 2004.

In the time since the operationalization of FemWise-Africa, there have been many milestones for the Network, including the recognition of women mediators to influence and contribute to effective conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue and other peace processes, not only at the continental level, but more critically at regional and national levels where the peace dividends can be even better felt.

There has also been considerable effort made to ensure that more women continue to be part of mediation and negotiation teams, in order to bring in much needed gender-sensitive lenses to the peace processes led and supported by the African Union.

These efforts, in addition to the recognition that women peacebuilders at local and national levels are better placed to identify early markers of latent or emerging conflicts, and to act in a timely manner, means that it is **more critical than ever** to ensure the effective utility and participation of women in peace efforts at all levels, in order to bridge the early warning and early response gaps, for addressing emerging conflicts.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is premised on the foregoing, and on the need to strengthen the impact of the FemWise-Africa Network at all levels, that the decentralization process for the Network was put in place, in order to allow for chapters of the Network to be operationalized within RECs/RMs at the regional level, and within relevant national ministries or institutions at the national level.

This journey to decentralize, as many of us present here will acknowledge, has not been an easy one. But it is one that has been undertaken with a lot of thought and considerable consultations, and guided by the wisdom of the Panel of the Wise, in order to ensure that it is done correctly, and that women mediators are better placed to intervene in addressing peace and security challenges around us.

Subsequently, we are pleased with the progress we have made in this stead so far, particularly in the last few months when we launched the national chapters of the Network in Uganda and Malawi, and we now gather to do the same in Ethiopia.

It is our hope that as each chapter continues to operationalize, it will also foster a spirit of experience-sharing and learning, in order to ensure the national chapters are managed efficiently, and more importantly, that they are able to contribute to conflict prevention, mediation, dialogue and other peace efforts in a meaningful way for amplified impact.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I close, on behalf of the Commission, I wish to extend a very special thank you to the Minister of Peace and the State Minister, for their continued and tireless support to this process to ensure that we get to where we are today. The Commitment of the ministry to support peacebuilding efforts in the country on all fronts is something that we have continued to see over and over again, and we continue to see today with the Ministry having graciously accepted to host the FemWise-Ethiopia chapter.

Please be assured that the Commission, working in collaboration with the relevant RECs & RMs that Ethiopia is a member of, will remain committed to supporting you in this journey and working with you to ensure that the chapter is fully operationalized.

I also wish to thank our partners here today who have continued to not only support the FemWise-Africa network broadly, but our FemWise-Ethiopia members and other Ethiopian regional women mediators more specifically.

As we launch of the FemWise-Ethiopia chapter, I urge us to not stop here, but rather to remain committed to strengthening the role of women mediators to prevent and resolve conflicts at all levels, for the Africa We Want.

I thank you.