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Your Excellency, Hermann Immongault, Vice President of the Government of Gabonese Republic,

Your Excellency, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

Distinguished Former Heads of State and Government here present,

Members of the Peace and Security Council,

Senior Government Officials of the Republic of Gabon,

Your Excellency Amb. Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs Peace and Security,

Excellencies, AU High Representatives, Special Envoys, and Special Representatives,

Esteemed Members of the Panel of the Wise,

Representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms,

Dear Partners and Fellow Practitioners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both a great honour and privilege to address you today in my capacity as the Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council for the month of May 2026 and on behalf of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.

2. Permit me to start by expressing the Council's heartfelt gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Gabon for graciously hosting this 17th High-Level Retreat and for the exceptional hospitality extended to all delegates. The serene city of Libreville not only offer a peaceful backdrop for our discussions but also serves as a poignant reminder of Africa's unwavering commitment to the pursuit of peace. As the Chairperson of the PSC, let me once again, congratulate the Government and People of Gabon for a smooth and rapid political transition which brought back the country to the democratic pathway.

Excellencies,

3. We are gathered here at a pivotal moment in the history of our Continent. I associate myself with Commissioner Bankole in underscoring that the peace and security landscape, across our Continent, is evolving in multiple and intersecting ways. Conflicts are increasingly complex as they are no longer easily defined by traditional battle lines between identifiable armies. They are marked by fragmentations and layered dynamics influenced by various factors, including competition over valuable resources, deeply rooted and identity-based grievances, the destabilizing effects of Unconstitutional Changes in Government, and the growing influence of external actors who see Africa as fertile ground for their unending geopolitical rivalries.

Excellencies,

4. In the face of these complexities, the AU Peace and Security Council has, at various instances, re-examined the limitations of our traditional approaches. Our challenging experiences revealed that a ceasefire, desirable as it is, should no longer be viewed as the ultimate resolution in our often-complex conflict situations. Nonetheless, its' relevance remains as it represents a critical, but fragile turning point in every conflict situation. In most instances, a ceasefire provides respite from hostilities. However, experience has shown that it could easily become a temporary pause before violence reignites unless it is supported by a more profound commitment.

Excellencies,

5. We are gathered here today to deepen our reflection on this foundational work. The work of connecting ceasefires to credible national dialogue as well as the incorporation of both into our peace and reconciliation processes.

6. As we engage in the theme of this year's Retreat, "Powering Ceasefire, National Dialogue and Reconciliation for Durable Peace," the question we must grapple with is, how can we transition from simply silencing the guns to establishing the trust, credible institutions, and social cohesion necessary for sustaining enduring peace in all parts of our Continent?

From the vantage point of the AU Peace and Security Council, let me share the following three reflections:

- i. **There is need to address the challenging reality surrounding our ceasefire agreements:**
The Council has observed that more often than note, these Ceasefire Agreements resemble procedural formalities rather than substantive operational commitments. Although there are instances where they are accompanied by sincere political intent, their implementation often lacks necessary political and technical follow-through. We have observed arrangements that are devoid of credible monitoring mechanisms, clear sequencing, and genuine engagement from parties to the Agreement, and by this I mean those that hold significant influence over compliance. While sustained diplomatic engagement continue to yield promising outcomes, a substantial gap remains between written agreements and their practical application. We must, therefore, transcend generic templates and create ceasefire provisions that accurately reflect the unique complexities of each conflict situation;

- ii. **The second point I would like to put forward is the necessity to reframe national dialogue processes as endeavours that prioritize legitimacy over mere representation:** Excellencies, while we often celebrate inclusivity as a guiding principle, we frequently encounter challenges in its practical application. It is the view of the AU Peace and Security, which I am privileged to Chair this month, that a dialogue that welcomes parties to conflict and overlooks the invaluable contributions of women, who foster community resilience during conflict, and the youth, who represent the future of peace, falls short of true inclusivity. Indeed, such process often leads to outcomes that are politically expedient, but socially lacking. It is for this reason that the AU Peace and Security Council, through our FemWise, African Youth Ambassadors and WiseYouth initiatives, remains steadfast in advocating for the meaningful participation of women and young people in all peace processes. This approach is not merely an act of goodwill; it is a strategic necessity. Women and youth possess vital insights into emerging tensions, hence, they remain the fulcrum for rebuilding trust; and
- iii. **Lastly, the PSC would like to underscore the imperative to position dialogue and reconciliation as foundational elements of our peacebuilding efforts, rather than an afterthought:** Without doubt, Excellencies, dialogue and reconciliation, which remain under-resourced, are among the most critical components for achieving lasting peace. We have witnessed countries transitioning from conflict to elections, only to regress into violence due to unresolved fundamental historical grievances. Processes such as truth-telling, accountability for serious offences, reparations for victims, and community-based healing should not be treated as secondary considerations in any peace process. They are, and indeed should be treated as, essential for preventing future occurrence. Accordingly, we must equip our mediators with the necessary skills and support to enable them carefully navigate the often-complex peace and security terrain without compromising transitional justice in favour of expedience.

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. The Peace and Security Council regards this Retreat as a crucial opportunity for honest reflection. We seek, not merely polished statements of progress, but candid discussions about past shortcomings and the reasons behind them. As such, we are looking forward to pragmatic recommendations on how the African Union, in collaboration with our Regional Economic Communities, Regional Mechanisms and partners, can enhance the coordination of our mediation efforts, improve information-sharing, and deploy our panels of the Wise and other structures to enable us to achieve desired outcomes.

8. I commend the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for convening us for this important dialogue and I look forward, with great anticipation, to the spotlight conversation on youth peace and security, the fireside chat with former Heads of State, and the plenaries focused on the specific challenges facing the Sahel, the Great Lakes Region, and the Horn of Africa.

9. It is my hope that we will depart Libreville with, not only general insights, but concrete and actionable recommendations that would empower us as Africans driving Afrocentric solutions to African conflicts.

10. **I thank you for your kind attention.**