

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: ____/2026

Date: 24 May 2026

Venue: Libreville, Gabon

African Union Commission Convenes the Chairperson's 17th High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa in Libreville, Gabon



The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, convened the 17th High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa from 21 to 22 May 2026 in Libreville, Gabon, co-hosted with the Government of the Republic of Gabon.

Held under the theme “Powering Ceasefire, National Dialogue and Reconciliation for Durable Peace,” the Retreat brought together members of the AU Panel of the Wise, High Representatives, Special Envoys, Special and Permanent Representatives, senior officials of the African Union Commission, representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs), the United Nations, international partners, experts and practitioners engaged in conflict prevention, mediation, ceasefire support, national dialogue, and reconciliation.

The opening ceremony was graced by H.E. Hermann Immongault, Vice-President of the Government of the Gabonese Republic. Remarks were delivered by H.E. Ambassador Nasir Aminu, Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairperson of the African Union Peace and Security Council for the month of May and by H.E. Sinikka Antila, Ambassador of Finland to Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the AU representing Finland as the main partner for the convening of the Retreat and for the AU's broader preventive diplomacy and mediation initiatives. The session reaffirmed the central role of the African Union in conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation and peacebuilding, and welcomed ongoing efforts to strengthen the AU's preventive diplomacy and mediation architecture.

Participants emphasized that ceasefires remain essential instruments for halting violence, protecting civilians, enabling humanitarian access and creating space for political dialogue. They underscored, however, that ceasefires should not be treated as final outcomes, but as political and operational tools requiring sustained engagement, credible monitoring, enforcement mechanisms, implementation follow-up and continuous accompaniment.

The Retreat underlined that inclusive peace processes are essential for legitimacy and sustainability. Participants stressed that women, youth, civil society, local communities, traditional and religious leaders and other relevant actors should be meaningfully included in the design, negotiation, implementation and monitoring of peace processes.

Deliberations further emphasized that national dialogue and reconciliation processes are indispensable for rebuilding trust, restoring social cohesion, addressing grievances and constructing a shared political identity. Such processes should be adequately resourced, politically protected and linked to transitional justice, institutional reform, security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and post-conflict recovery.

Participants noted that durable peace requires addressing the structural and political economy drivers of conflict, including political exclusion, weak state institutions, poor service delivery, unequal access to economic opportunities, unresolved historical grievances, natural resource exploitation, illicit economies, external interference and actors who benefit from the continuation of violence.

The Retreat reaffirmed the need for coherent and coordinated regional and international engagement, with African institutions, particularly the African Union, playing a leading role in setting priorities, shaping approaches, ensuring ownership and aligning external support with continental priorities. It also recognized that increased and predictable financing from within the continent remains critical to reinforcing the AU's strategic autonomy and capacity to lead peace processes in accordance with African priorities.

Across its sessions, the Retreat examined practical approaches to ceasefire management, national dialogue and reconciliation, including the challenges and opportunities in the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Deliberations stressed the importance of engaging relevant actors, rebuilding institutional credibility, strengthening facilitation mechanisms and ensuring that security responses are accompanied by political dialogue, governance reforms, economic inclusion, accountability and regional cooperation.

A high-level Fireside Chat on “Leadership Perspectives on the State of Peace and Security in Africa” brought together H.E. Mokgweetsi Masisi, Former President of the Republic of Botswana, and H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, Former President of the Republic of Kenya. The exchange highlighted the importance of trusted, accountable and visionary leadership, including in the governance of Africa's natural resources and the strengthening of national capacities in contract negotiations. It further emphasized the need for leadership that responds credibly to the aspirations of Africa's informed and increasingly engaged youth, while advancing peace, development and shared prosperity across the continent.

The Retreat concluded with closing remarks delivered by H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. He emphasized that ceasefires are not the final destination, but rather a pathway toward inclusive national reconciliation and sustainable peace, and reaffirmed the Commission's readiness to continue working with Member States, Special Envoys, partners and regional stakeholders to promote peace, stability and development across the continent.

The outcomes of the Retreat will inform ongoing efforts by the African Union Commission, working with the Panel of the Wise, AU organs, RECs/RMs, Special Envoys and High Representatives, Member States, partners and relevant stakeholders, to strengthen conflict prevention, mediation, reconciliation and durable peace across the continent.

The African Union Commission expressed its profound appreciation to the Government and people of the Republic of Gabon for co-hosting the Retreat and for the warm hospitality extended to all delegations, as well as the excellent arrangements made for its successful convening in Libreville. The Commission also extended sincere gratitude to the Government of Finland, the CMI - Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), for their continued support to the successful convening of the Retreat and to the African Union's preventive diplomacy, mediation, dialogue, and reconciliation efforts across the continent.

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