27th Statutory Meeting of the Fifth Panel of the Wise: Strategic Directions and Leadership Transition

The Fifth Panel of the Wise convened its 27th Statutory Meeting on 27 April 2024, at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Esteemed members, namely Professor Babacar Kante, former Vice-President of the Constitutional Court of Senegal and Chairperson of the Panel; H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of Burundi; H.E. Amre Moussa, former Foreign Minister of Egypt; and Hon. Lady Justice Effie Owuor, retired Judge of the Court of Appeals of Kenya; deliberated on strategies to enhance peace, security, and stability across Africa.

On 26 April 2024, Panel members engaged in key informal consultations with representatives from AU Member States undergoing political transitions, discussing recent progress and challenges. These consultations, in line with the directive of the Peace and Security Council from its 1204th meeting held on 13 March 2024, were crucial for understanding the unique dynamics within these nations. Additionally, the Panel engaged with the AU High-Level Ad-Hoc Committee on South Sudan (C5) and regional countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, and Sudan, to synchronize efforts in support of South Sudan's forthcoming elections.

The Statutory meeting was inaugurated by Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace, and Security, who welcomed the Panel members and underscored the significance of their advisory role. He provided insights into Africa’s political governance, peace and security landscape, emphasizing the necessity of the Panel's direction in reinforcing the efforts of the AU.

Throughout the meeting, the Panel reviewed various key initiatives such as: The efficacy of joint Electoral Observation – Preventive Diplomacy Missions which have played a critical role in supporting peaceful and credible elections across several nations; The findings from the fact-finding mission to South Sudan, which highlighted the need for substantial international support across political, security, and humanitarian domains; and; Strategic discussions centred on the necessity of returning nations to constitutional order.

A significant moment of the meeting was the election of Hon. Lady Justice (Rtd) Effie Owuor as the next Chairperson of the Panel, beginning May 2024. Lady Justice Owuor will lead the implementation of the Panel’s mandate until the end of their tenure in February 2025.

As the Panel looks ahead, outgoing Chairperson Professor Babacar Kante outlined key recommendations for enhancing the Panel’s impact, including deepening its collaboration with similar mechanisms at the regional levels under the Network of the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise Network), and supporting the formation of a permanent framework for political dialogue within AU Member states to enhance inclusivity and broaden participation.
Overall, the Panel extends its sincere gratitude to the AU Member States, the AUC Chairperson, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms, and the AU Special Envoys for their constructive participation in the Panel’s engagements.

**About the Panel of the Wise:** Established under the 2002 Protocol of the Peace and Security Council, the Panel of the Wise advises the AU Peace and Security Council and the Chairperson of the Commission on promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa. It is a testament to the collective resolve of African nations to address and resolve conflicts through wisdom, foresight, and concerted action.

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