PRESS RELEASE

7TH RETREAT OF THE PAN-AFRICAN NETWORK OF THE WISE
21ST OCTOBER 2022

1. The 7th retreat of the Pan-African Network of the Wise (PanWise) held on 20th and 21st October 2022 at the Safari Court Hotel, Windhoek, Namibia themed “Re-energizing and strengthening through experience sharing, lessons learnt and best practices”.

2. The PanWise, a subsidiary mechanism of the African Union (AU) Panel of the Wise was established by the AU Assembly in May 2013. It is an umbrella network that promotes concerted and inclusive approach to preventive diplomacy, mediation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. The Network facilitates coordination, collaboration and communication between the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Panel of the Wise and similar mechanisms at the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), national peace infrastructures, Special Envoys, Mediators, mediation associations as well as individuals working on conflict prevention and mediation.

3. Participants at the meeting comprised of the AU Panel of the Wise and similar mechanisms of the RECs/RMs namely, The Common Market for Eastern and Southern African (COMESA) Committee of Elders, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Council of the Wise, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)’s Roster of Mediators, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Panel of Elders. Representatives from the AU and RECs/RMs Secretariats were also in attendance.
4. H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of the Republic of Burundi and Chair of the AU Panel of the Wise, delivered the keynote address at the opening ceremony, emphasizing the importance of effective coordination and collaboration between the AU and RECs/RMs on preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention under the auspices of PanWise. Alhaji Sarjoh Bah, Director, Conflict Management Directorate of the Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the AU Commission gave the welcome remarks and expressed the Commission’s commitment to support the Network’s efforts to promote conflict prevention and management in line with the Silencing the Guns agenda.

5. The meeting introduced new Network members to their mandates, facilitated shared understanding of threats to African governance, peace, and security and considered corresponding options and entry points for response; and provided a platform for experience sharing on lessons and best practices in preventive diplomacy and mediation.

6. Further, in order to fully revitalize the Network, the meeting considered and provided guidance to the Secretariats of the AU and RECs/RMs towards the review of the organogram of the Panel and its subsidiary mechanisms as well as the revised framework for its operationalization.

In accordance with the Framework for the Operationalization of PanWise and with respect to the horizon scanning on the threats to governance, peace and security, the PanWise:

7. **Expressed concerns** over persistent threats such as governance deficits, unconstitutional changes of government, complex political transitions, violent extremism and terrorism, transnational organized crimes, slow implementation of peace agreements, adverse effects of climate change, the impact of COVID-19, external developments including the situation in Ukraine and its consequences on energy and food security in Africa; political interference with judicial institutions, a practice that fuels impunity; marginalization and exclusion of women in political and peace processes, foreign interventions, and growing impact of the media especially social media on peace and security.
8. **Further expressed concerns over** the conflict situations across the continent, particularly in Burkina Faso, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan, and its resultant loss of lives, livelihoods, properties, forced displacement, and reversal of socio-economic and political gains.

9. **Commended** the governments and peoples of Angola, Kenya, and Lesotho on the recent conduct of peaceful general elections; and encouraged other Member States of the AU to promote dialogue and consensus on electioneering processes in order to prevent election-related violence.

10. **Decides** to convene a dedicated session to strategically reflect on the threats to governance, peace and security in order to develop context-specific recommendations for the consideration of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government and the PSC, to inform interventions aimed at preventing and managing violent conflicts.

11. **Commits** to enhance synergy, coordination and collaboration on conflict prevention and management efforts through the implementation of joint activities including horizon scanning briefing to the PSC and similar policy making organs of RECs/RMs, deployment of fact-finding and preventive diplomacy missions, support to complex political transitions including through national dialogue, reconciliation and transitional justice issues. **Further commits** to enhance the meaningful participation of women and youth through FemWise-Africa and WiseYouth in preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts;

12. **Decides** to convene the 8\textsuperscript{th} Retreat of the Network in April 2023.