



**13TH HIGH LEVEL RETREAT ON THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND
SECURITY IN AFRICA: Transformative Mediation for Africa's
Effective Governance and Peace Dividends**

21 – 23 October, 2022

Windhoek, Namibia

I. INTRODUCTION

The African Union (AU) Commission convened the 13th High Level Retreat on the promotion of peace and security in Africa from 21 – 23 October 2022, under the theme: ***"Transformative Mediation for Africa's Effective Governance and Peace Dividends."***

The Retreat was opened by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat; and H.E. Hon. Dr. Albert Kawana, Minister of Home Affairs, Immigration, Safety and Security of Namibia.

At the Head of State level, participants in the Retreat included H.E. Domitien Ndayizeye, former President of the Republic of Burundi and Chairperson of the Panel of the Wise; as well as H.E. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and Member of the Panel of the Wise. Also in attendance were other members of the Panel of the Wise, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, H.E. Ambassador Bankole Adeoye; High Representatives, Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the Commission; Permanent Representatives of the AU to the United Nations, the European Union, and to the League of Arab States; Representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs); Senior Representatives of multi-lateral institutions including the United Nations and European Union; Representatives of international cooperating partners; Members of African Embassies accredited to Namibia, as well as staff of the AU Commission.



II. OBJECTIVES

The Retreat provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on current AU-led or supported mediation and peace processes, including progress made in the implementation of peace agreements in various contexts where the AU is engaged, towards taking stock of key achievements, as well as sharing lessons learned and best practices. Relatedly, participants exchanged views on approaches to making AU mediation more impactful in a challenging and rapidly evolving regional and international peace and security landscape, marked by, amongst others: a multiplicity of actors and interests, continued threats to democracy and good governance, expansion of terrorism and violent extremism, foreign interference, as well as the impact of international developments, and the influence of digital technologies on governance, peace and security in Africa.





Towards enhancing the sustainability and impact of mediation processes, the Retreat sought to synthesize practicable recommendations to strengthen cooperation, coordination and complementarity of efforts among national, regional and international actors supporting peace processes through smart partnerships. The Retreat also served as the official launch of the WiseYouth-Africa Network, a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise which seeks to enhance the role of African youth in conflict prevention and mediation in order to significantly improve inclusivity in AU-led and supported peace processes.



III. METHODOLOGY

To achieve its intended aims and objectives, the Retreat was structured around five (5) thematic discussions and the WiseYouth launching ceremony, with lead panelists and participants sharing their perspectives and recommendations towards more impactful and transformative AU mediation.

IV. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS



Across the respective thematic panels, Retreat Participants made several key observations as follows:

On Situating the Role of African Mediation within a changing Global and Continental Peace and Security Landscape:

1. The use of mediation and other forms of negotiation and dialogue should be encouraged in conflict prevention, mitigation, management and resolution efforts in Africa;
2. Mediation is growing in significance as a tool for resolving conflicts arising from electoral processes, a development that is contributing to fostering respect for the rule of law and shared values, and enhancing national ownership of peace processes on the continent;
3. Continuous emphasis and investment in national systems that are democratic, fair and transparent is essential in order to allow conflicting parties to have access to relevant institutions to resolve their grievances;
4. The importance of strengthening national institutions as a means to prevent and mitigate conflicts, as well as making good use of structures such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was stressed;
5. The need for the AU to move away from reactive interventions in response to emerging and evolving conflict situations, towards more preventive approaches including through enhancing sustainable financing and investment in



early warning, early response, and conflict prevention was emphasized. In this regard, the urgency of operationalizing the Peace Fund, and optimizing tools such as the I-RECKE to be was stressed, as well as the need to promote, support and enhance their strategic linkages to AU mediation actors and processes;



6. The need to continuously and deliberately strengthen the inclusion of youth in peace and development activities at all levels in order to prevent them from being used to fuel conflicts or be radicalized was underscored;
7. It is critical for the AU and its multilateral partners to go beyond mediation and invest more resources in the supporting the post-peace agreement stages, including in assisting parties to implement and monitor the implementation progress of signed peace agreements.

On Enhancing the AU's Responsiveness to Regional and International Developments in Peace, Security and Governance:



8. International developments continue to have an impact on the continent's peace, security, and governance, making it critical for the AU to strengthen its conflict prevention and mitigation response mechanisms, including through support for effective and impactful mediation;
9. Multilateralism remains vital in the current highly interlinked global geo-political environment, and we cannot hope to effectively address African problems in isolation. Relatedly, it was stresses that there is a need to continually strengthen coordination, complementarity, and communication among multilateral institutions, as well as with a diverse range of stakeholders, in order to achieve more sustainable and coherent outcomes in support of mediation and peace processes on the continent;
10. Africa needs to amplify the African voice, to fully own and lead all mediation efforts on the Continent, within the context of promoting African solutions to African problems, albeit with the continued support of the AU's partners;
11. The need for unity of purpose amongst Member States was stressed, toward enhancing African solidarity and prioritization of regional and Continental interests, as well as common messaging in responses to conflict and crises, especially at the global stage in the UN Security Council.



On the Role of Mediation in Consolidating the Outcomes of the Malabo Summit and the Accra Declaration

12. The AU has adopted a series of instruments to prevent situations of unconstitutional changes of government (UCG) in Africa, which have been revamped by the Malabo Declaration and the Accra Declaration. As such, the importance of implementing these decisions and instruments was emphasized as being essential to mitigate the possibility of future UCG's;

13. Mediation has a critical role to play in implementing and advancing the outcomes of the Malabo Extraordinary Summit and the Accra Declaration. Of note, the importance of stepping up

efforts to address the root causes of UCGs, including through effective use of the Panel of the Wise, was stressed;

14. Mediators can also play an essential role in the prevention of UCGs by identifying structural vulnerabilities and other early warning signs that threaten effective democratic governance and then deploying timely multi-faceted interventions;

15. It is crucial to build trust between the ruling authorities and citizens as one of the means to advance and promote democracy and good governance. In this context, the importance of having a platform to enhance shared values and social harmony, as well as to promote the use of technology as a tool to convey messages of peace was underscored;

16. The primary concern of many African states at the moment is security. Therefore a conducive environment needs to be created for the organization of free, fair and credible elections;





On Enhancing the Role of Youth and Women in Inclusive Mediation, Dialogue and Other Peace Processes

17. Mediation efforts must continually include women and youth and their contribution should be factored into peace processes. The composition of mediation teams needs to include women and youth representatives and that terms of reference of such teams need to be regularly reviewed to ensure they do not systematically exclude them;



18. The AU has made significant strides in youth inclusivity, including through having an AU Youth Envoy, as well as Youth Peace Ambassadors from each of the five (5) AU geographic regions, to represent the voice of the youth in the Continent. These efforts by the Commission are commendable, but it was stressed that more still needs to be done;
19. Cultural activities which bring young people together and promote a culture of peace need to be enhanced. Relatedly, the creation and promotion of more spaces for women, youth and civil



society organizations in peace-making and peace-building activities, as well as in the decision-making process was stressed;

20. Effective implementation of existing instruments and frameworks aimed at advancing the meaningful participation of women and youth in peace processes from local to international levels remains a critical factor in mainstreaming inclusivity in peace processes. Emphasized was the need to localize and institutionalize continental and international frameworks which promote youth and women participation, especially in peace processes;
21. Security for women, children and youth, particularly in conflict situations, remains a necessity and the obligation of all Member States to protect citizens against all forms of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence. Underscored was the urgency to include women, both in the lead and accompanying roles, in AU mediation efforts so as to ensure that their plight and interests are fully taken into consideration.





On the launch of the Network of African Youth in Conflict Prevention and Mediation: WiseYouth-Africa:

22. Africa needs to continue strengthening the role of the young generation as agents for change, including through the redoubling of efforts to enhance the participation of youth in all spheres where decisions are made;

23. The WiseYouth-Africa Network has a critical role to play in complementing the work of the Panel of the Wise in conflict prevention/preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts. Notably, the establishment of such a network is important for pooling different, but complementary capacities into a single group toward enhancing the meaningful participation of youth; providing a platform for knowledge sharing, lessons learned and best practices; and linking local level youth initiatives to continental efforts;



24. The Network should be utilized to ensure that young people are co-creators of the youth, peace and security blueprints on



the continent and that their inclusion in decision-making processes in conflict prevention and resolution is approached through a multi-dimensional, integrated and interconnected lens;

25. The need to accelerate the implementation and operationalization of the Network to enhance youth dividends in mediation and peace processes was stressed.



On Coordination, Collaboration and Complementarity to enhance effective Mediation and Dialogue towards positive and sustainable Conflict Transformation

26. Enhanced transparency, coordination and harmonization of efforts among the various actors is needed, including through joint analysis, planning, information sharing, and the establishment of frameworks and structures necessary for the promotion of regular engagements;

27. The need to adhere to the principle of complementarity, based on comparative advantage, while agreeing on working methods for more effective and harmonious partnerships was underscored;



28. Partnerships that are mutually complementary and reinforcing are needed in order to maximize impact in addressing peace and security issues in the Continent. The importance by the AU to continue strengthening its cooperation with multi-lateral institutions as well as international cooperating partners, but based on the principle of mutual trust and collaboration for a more sustainable impact was stressed.



V. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The AU needs to develop a shared understanding and response mechanisms to address external and internal actors/factors contributing to African conflicts, including elections which are increasingly becoming contentious on the continent. It also needs to support the work of the members of the Panel of the Wise in their preventive diplomacy and early warning engagements .
2. It is essential to invite additional stakeholders, such as civil society and military representation, to future



mediation forums in order to ensure that the AU mediation strategies and objectives take into account the perspectives of societal segments, including those affected by UCGs.



3. Toward improving cooperation and collaboration of youth efforts at all levels, regional organizations (RECs/RMs) that have not already done so, as well as national organizations, should appoint youth representatives to be represented in all aspects of peace and security generally, and mediation and peace processes specifically.
4. The AU needs to continually strengthen coordination, complementarity, and communication with other multilateral institutions in order to achieve more sustainable, coherent and harmonized outcomes in support of mediation and peace processes on the continent.



VI. VOTE OF THANKS

The Commission expresses its gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Namibia for hosting the 13th High Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa and their outstanding hospitality.



ANNEX:

- a) List of Participants
- b) Final Retreat Programme



ANNEX











