



PRESS RELEASE

MISSION OF THE PANEL OF THE WISE AND THE COMMITTEE OF ELDERS TO EGYPT

1. In pursuance of the relevant decisions of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and in accordance with its own mandate, the Panel of the Wise of the African Union undertook a mission to Tunisia and Egypt, to mark the continued support of the AU to the efforts of the Authorities and people of both countries in the current political transition, as well as to assess the situation in order to identify possible accompanying measures by the AU.
2. While the mission to Tunisia took place from 11 to 13 April 2011, the visit to Egypt was conducted from 3 to 6 June 2011. It should be noted that both missions, which occurred against the backdrop of impending constitutional reforms and preparations for electoral processes, were also undertaken within the framework of the decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of July 2009, to “invest in prevention of election-related disputes”, and to promote and/or strengthen peaceful, free and harmonious electoral processes, as stipulated in the report of the Panel on Election-Related Disputes, as well as in the African Charter on Democracy, Election and Governance.
3. The delegation of the Panel of the Wise to Egypt was composed of two of its members, namely **Dr. Mary Chinery-Hesse**, former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations and former Chief Advisor to the President of Ghana, and **Dr. Brigalia Bam**, Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission of South Africa. It also included **H.E. Sir James Mancham**, former President of Seychelles, as a member of the Committee of Elders of COMESA, which counts Egypt as one of its Member State. In order to ensure the smooth conduct of its mission, the delegation was greatly assisted by **Ambassador Soad Shalaby**, an Egyptian national, and also a member of the Committee of Elders of COMESA. It should be recalled that the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2008 calling for greater collaboration and coordination of efforts between them in all areas of work, including conflict prevention, management, reconstruction and mediation. The involvement of the Committee of Elders in the mission of the Panel of the Wise is, therefore, a tangible expression of the keenness of the AU and the RECs to strengthen relations with each other, and harmonize their strategic approaches.

4. During the visit, the delegation of the Panel was received by, and held in-depth discussions with, the current Prime Minister of Egypt, **H.E. Dr. Essam Sharaf**, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (newly-elected Secretary-General of the League of Arab States), **H.E. Dr. Nabil El-Araby**, as well as the Acting President of the National Council for Human Rights, **H.E. Dr. Mohamed Fayek**, the Former Prime Minister of Egypt, **H.E. Dr. Abdel Aziz Hegazi**, and the Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs, **H.E. Amb. Mona Omar**.

5. The delegation also had lengthy discussions with the outgoing Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, **H.E. Dr. Amr Moussa**, and a wide range of civil society representatives, including women's groups, students, researchers, academics, journalists, bloggers and activists, in order to get a first hand account of the triggering factors and root causes of the popular revolt, as well as a sense of the aspirations of the people of Egypt, their anxieties and vision for the future of the country. Furthermore, the delegation took advantage of its presence in Cairo to meet with the African diplomatic corps and with the Head of Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to assess the regional and continental implications of the events which unfolded in January-February 2011 in Cairo, in "Tahrir Square".

6. Firstly, the delegation extends its sincere gratitude to the members of the Interim Government, particularly the Prime Minister, for the warm welcome extended to the members of the delegation throughout their stay, as well as for making themselves available for very rich, candid and frank interactive exchanges, which is a clear demonstration of the continued commitment of Egypt to the continent of Africa and to the AU.

7. Secondly, the Panel notes with encouragement and satisfaction the exemplary efforts being deployed by the current Interim Government of Egypt, including the Supreme Council of the Military Forces, for the transition to a new dispensation, a "New Egypt", and a new constitutional order, in accordance with the democratic and developmental aspirations of the Egyptian people. The delegation equally salutes the courage of the people of Egypt and their preference for the peaceful change, as well as for the cohesion demonstrated so far in their resolve to set the country on the path to democracy.

8. The delegation encourages the authorities of Egypt in their efforts to ensure that the road to the legislative elections, currently scheduled to be held in September 2011, as well as the subsequent Presidential elections, will restore the confidence of the people of Egypt in politics as a moral project that transcends leaders, parties and ideologies; and will meet the peoples' democratic aspirations.

9. The delegation appeals to the Authorities and people of Egypt to continue in their exemplary management of the transition process, and especially the continuation of national dialogues, the preserve of values of dignity, tolerance and justice as they strive to build and consolidate a new democratic Egypt at this historic moment in their national history.

10. The delegation is grateful to the Authorities and People of Egypt for their willingness to continue to share with the rest of Africa, and the AU in particular, lessons learned from their ongoing quest for democracy. Equally, the Panel welcomes the invitation of the Authorities of Egypt to the AU to assist with technical expertise for the observation of the electoral process, in order to ensure that these are performed in a peaceful and credible manner.

Cairo, 6 June 2011