SECOND HIGH-LEVEL RETREAT ON
THE PROMOTION OF PEACE, SECURITY
AND STABILITY IN AFRICA

CAIRO, EGYPT
4 – 5 SEPTEMBER 2011

HL/Retreat/YoPS.Decl.(II)

CAIRO DECLARATION

"STRENGTHENING POLITICAL GOVERNANCE FOR PEACE,
SECURITY AND STABILITY IN AFRICA"

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The second African Union (AU) High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 4 to 5 September 2011, on the theme "Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa". The Retreat provided an opportunity to exchange views in-depth, in both plenary and breakout sessions, on the following topics: (i) trends, challenges and prospects for political governance in Africa; (ii) the role of governance in preventing conflicts, including leadership and accountability, the role of public opinion and civil society and modalities through which the private sector can support good governance; and (iii) the restoration of peace when governance breaks down, with focus on election-related conflicts, constitutional crises, security sector reform and management of natural resources. The Retreat also devoted a plenary session to the following topic: "Uprisings in North Africa – a new dawn for governance?"

The Retreat, which was organized in cooperation with the Government of Egypt, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peace-keeping in Africa (CCCPA) and the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD), was attended by the leadership of the AU Commission and its Special Envoys and Representatives, members of the AU Panel of the Wise and of the Advisory Council for the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, representatives of the Chair of the Union and the Chair of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) for the month of September, as well as several former African Heads of State. Also in attendance were the United Nations Secretariat and Missions on the ground in Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), partner organizations, namely the League of Arab States, the European Union, the International Organisation of *La Francophonie* and the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, as well as representatives of civil society organizations, think tanks and resource persons.

The Retreat took place against the background of the unprecedented developments in North Africa, which erupted as a result of several factors, ranging from widespread dissatisfaction with authoritarian and unaccountable governments; increasing income inequalities, high levels of poverty, and declining living standards; and disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment, leading to social alienation. These developments call for the updating and strengthening of existing frameworks and instruments, so as to efficiently and effectively anticipate, prevent and manage them. In the meantime, Participants stressed the need for full support to be extended to the ongoing transition processes to ensure their successful conclusion and facilitate the establishment of new dispensations that meet the legitimate aspirations of the people concerned.

Participants noted that the North African uprisings have unveiled a profound process that has the potential to contribute to democratic consolidation on the continent. They stressed the need for AU Member States to take advantage of the opportunity thus created to renew their commitment to the AU democratic and governance agenda, give added momentum to the efforts deployed in this respect and implement the required political and socio-economic reforms.

Participants recognized that the continued prevalence of armed conflicts and violence on the continent, in spite of the significant progress made over the past years, was, as stressed by the PSC, linked to the lack of decisive improvements in political and economic governance on the continent, conditions that inevitably generate frustration and discontent in the population, culminating in revolts and revolutions in some cases. Accordingly, they stressed the imperative of good governance through the strengthening of democratic culture and institutions, respect for human rights, upholding of the rule of law as a means for preventing conflicts and enhancing the participation of citizens in addressing the problems that concern them.

Participants acknowledged that, over the years, the AU has adopted several instruments on human and people's rights, governance, elections and democracy, respect for diversity and minority rights, as well as management of natural resources, which represent a consolidated framework of norms and principles, underlining the significance of the decision on the shared values adopted by the Assembly of the Union at its 16th Ordinary Session held in Addis Ababa, from 30 to 31st January 2011.

Participants also noted the establishment of mechanisms aimed at monitoring progress in governance, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism, the UNECA-led Africa Governance Report (AGR) and the Mo Ibrahim Index, which provide early warning tools to anticipate the occurrence of governance-related conflicts, as well as of the AU and RECs/RMs early warning systems. They stressed that observance and effective use of the existing instruments/mechanisms would considerably reduce the risk of conflicts and violence on the continent, while improving the living conditions of the African people.

Participants agreed that focus for the AU should no longer be the adoption of additional instruments, unless exceptional circumstances so require, but rather the implementation of the existing ones. In this respect, they called for renewed efforts from all concerned to address implementation gaps, enhance compliance and live up to the expectations for a better governance arising from the commitments made by the African leaders. They underscored the importance of effective leadership in shaping and maintaining institutions of good governance.

Participants underlined the need for continued African unity of purpose and unified action, including in the governance institutions of the world. They equally stressed the critical importance of mobilizing further financial resources for the AU from within the continent to ensure full ownership and true leadership.

While recognizing the progress made in improving governance, Participants made the following recommendations, which build on earlier AU pronouncements, including the decision to proclaim 2012 as the year of shared values:

(i)   acceleration of the signature, ratification and domestication of relevant AU instruments – in this respect, they appealed to Member States that have not yet done so to urgently take the necessary steps to become parties to these instruments;

(ii)   launching of an effective sensitization and outreach campaign to better popularize relevant existing AU instruments and the provisions contained therein, for them to be owned by all stakeholders, which require coordinated efforts by the AU, the UN, the RECs/RMs, the African civil society and private sector;

(iii)   enhancement of compliance with the existing instruments, with better monitoring. Participants underscored the critical role that civil society could play in monitoring implementation, including through the development of a compliance index that can leverage on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and would provide regular updates on the steps taken by Member States in fulfillment of their commitments;

(iv)   effective use of existing mechanisms and instruments for improving and monitoring quality of governance in Africa, such as the APRM, the AGR and the Mo Ibrahim Index. These tools should be widely disseminated and the recommendations contained therein better followed up;

(v)   full exercise by the PSC of the powers entrusted to it under Article 7(m) of the PSC Protocol, which stipulates that the PSC, in collaboration with the Chairperson of the Commission, shall "follow-up, within the framework of its conflict prevention responsibilities, the progress towards the promotion of democratic practices, good governance, the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for the sanctity of human life by Member States";

(vi)   greater involvement of the AU Panel of the Wise, the Pan-African Parliament and the African Commission on Human and People's Rights in the overall efforts to promote good governance and prevent conflicts, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the PSC Protocol;

(vii)   implementation, wherever required, of security sector reform programs, on the basis of relevant AU instruments and partnership among all stakeholders.

Participants recognized the significant contribution that social media can make in sharpening the organizational tools for service delivery, the promotion of good governance and conflict prevention. They called on Governments and relevant international organizations, in particular the AU and the RECs/RMs, to take full advantage of these new tools, in order to more effectively engage with the citizenry, particularly the youth.

Participants welcomed the steps being taken by the AU Panel of the Wise to undertake a comprehensive review of the existing mechanisms relating to democratization and governance in Africa, and make recommendations to the PSC, in pursuance of the request made by this organ at its ministerial level meeting of 26 April 2011.

Participants called on the AU Commission and the UNECA, working closely with other relevant partners, to draw a comprehensive action plan, taking into consideration the detailed recommendations provided by the various plenary sessions and thematic groups.

Participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the CCCPA for their generous hospitality and all the facilities provided for the successful convening of the Retreat, as well as to ACCORD, HD, the Government of Finland and UNDP for their support.