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12<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE PANEL OF THE WISE OF THE AFRICAN UNION  
TUNIS, REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA  
30 APRIL 2012

POW/PR/COMM(XII)

COMMUNIQUÉ

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The Panel of the Wise of the African Union (AU), which is one of the pillars of the African Peace and Security Architecture, as provided for in the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, held its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting in Tunis, Republic of Tunisia, on 30 April 2012. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Mary Chinery-Hesse, member of the Panel of the Wise. The Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, and the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, participated in the meeting. Also in attendance were the representatives of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Community of the Sahelo-Saharan States (CENSAD) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa - COMESA (Council of the Elders and Secretariat).

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Panel of the Wise was held a little more than two weeks after the passing away of its Chairperson, Ahmed Ben Bella. The Panel observed a minute of silence in his memory, stressing his invaluable contribution to the liberation of his country and that of Africa, as well as to the implementation of the mandate of the Panel.

The meeting was preceded by a workshop organized by the Panel of the Wise, in cooperation with the Nairobi-based *Africa Leadership Centre*, on the theme "Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa". This workshop, which is the second of its kind, after the one organized in Zanzibar, on 5 and 6 December 2011, was convened pursuant to the communique of the 275<sup>th</sup> meeting of the PSC, held in Addis Ababa on 26 April 2011 that requested the Panel to exhaustively review the existing mechanisms on democratization and governance in Africa, so as to submit concrete recommendations to the PSC. The decision of the PSC was adopted against the background of the popular uprisings in North Africa, which, as stressed by the policy-making organs of the AU, provide a unique opportunity to deepen the democratization processes on the continent.

The President of the Republic of Tunisia, Dr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, the Chairman of the Ennahda Movement, Cheikh Rached Ghannouchi, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Speaker of the Constituent National Assembly, Mr. Arbi Abid, also participated in some specific interactive sessions of the workshop. The participants were thus able to exchange views with these high-ranking personalities on the ongoing transition in Tunisia and the challenges related to the transition from an authoritarian system to democratic and representative institutions that are respectful of human rights. The lessons learnt from the Tunisian experience will enrich the reflection carried out by the Panel of the Wise.

The Panel of the Wise considered the state of peace and security in Africa on the basis of the statement made by the Chairperson of the Commission and the presentation by the Commissioner for Peace and Security. The Panel also listened to the briefing given by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the activities of the ICRC in West Africa. The Panel of the Wise took stock of the activities it carried out since its 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, held in Zanzibar, Tanzania, on 7 December 2011. In this regard, the Panel drew lessons from the pre-

electoral missions undertaken to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and to Senegal, within the framework of the elections held in those two countries in November 2011 and in February/March 2012. The Panel encouraged the Congolese actors to draw lessons together from the November 2011 election, in order to address the shortcomings that were identified and to agree on the measures to be taken to strengthen the democratic institutions of the country. The Panel congratulated the Senegalese political actors for the smooth organization of the presidential election which enabled a peaceful transfer of power that honors Senegal and the rest of Africa.

The Panel of the Wise expressed particular concern about the tension prevailing in the relations between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, which is a serious threat to the viability of the two States, as well as to peace and stability in the region. The Panel welcomed the adoption by the PSC, during its meeting of 24 April 2012, of a Roadmap outlining the steps to be taken to defuse tension, facilitate the implementation of the agreements already concluded and ensure the resolution of the outstanding issues. The Panel requested the two countries to comply scrupulously and fully with the Roadmap, and urged the UN Security Council and the other partners of Africa to support all the components.

The Panel of the Wise strongly condemned the *coups d'état* which took place in Mali and Guinea Bissau, stressing that these were unacceptable and regressive acts which call for firmness on the part of Africa. The Panel expressed satisfaction at the efforts made by the AU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It encouraged the two organizations to continue to work closely together to ensure the effective restoration of constitutional order in these two countries.

The Panel of the Wise expressed deep concern about the situation in northern Mali. It stressed the need for a collective and determined African action, with the support of the international community, to preserve the unity and territorial integrity of Mali. The Panel condemned the action of the armed and terrorist groups operating in northern Mali.

The Panel also exchanged views on other crisis and conflict situations. It encouraged all the actors concerned to redouble their efforts to speed up their resolution.

The Panel of the Wise considered the conclusions of the Workshop on the theme "Strengthening Political Governance for Peace, Security and Stability in Africa", held from 27 to 29 April 2012, and agreed on the way forward for the finalization of this work, in order to submit a report to the PSC.

The Panel of the Wise considered its work programme for the rest of the year 2012. It agreed on the missions to be undertaken, particularly to the countries preparing for the organization of presidential and/or legislative elections. These missions fall within the framework of the Report of the Panel on Election-Related Disputes and Political Violence, whose recommendations were endorsed by the Summit held in Sirte, in July 2009.

The Panel of the Wise stressed the need to enhance its working relations with similar structures in the Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. In this regard, it looks forward to the outcome of the meeting scheduled in Ouagadougou, on 4 and 5 June 2012, between the Panel and similar structures in the Regional Mechanisms.

The Panel of the Wise thanked the ICRC for its work on the ground. It agreed on the need for sustained interaction with the ICRC, at the appropriate level, to identify the joint actions likely to contribute to a better observance of International Humanitarian Law in Africa.

Finally, the Panel of the Wise expressed its sincere appreciation and gratitude to the Government and people of Tunisia, for their warm welcome and for all the facilities made available for the smooth organization of the workshop and the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Panel. In particular, the Panel paid tribute to President Mohamed Moncef Marzouki for his struggle for human rights and democracy and the sacrifices he has made for this purpose, as well as for his action at the helm of the Tunisian State, particularly the renewed commitment of Tunisia to the principles and objectives of the AU and the unity of the Great Maghreb. The Panel also expressed its sincere gratitude to the other Tunisian personalities who participated in the workshop on the strengthening of political governance. It reaffirmed its commitment to support the ongoing transition, building on its visit to Tunisia in April 2011.

The closing session was marked by a statement made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia, Mr. Rafik Abdessalem. The Minister seized the opportunity to reiterate the support of his country to the efforts of the Panel of the Wise and to the overall action of the AU in the field of peace and security.