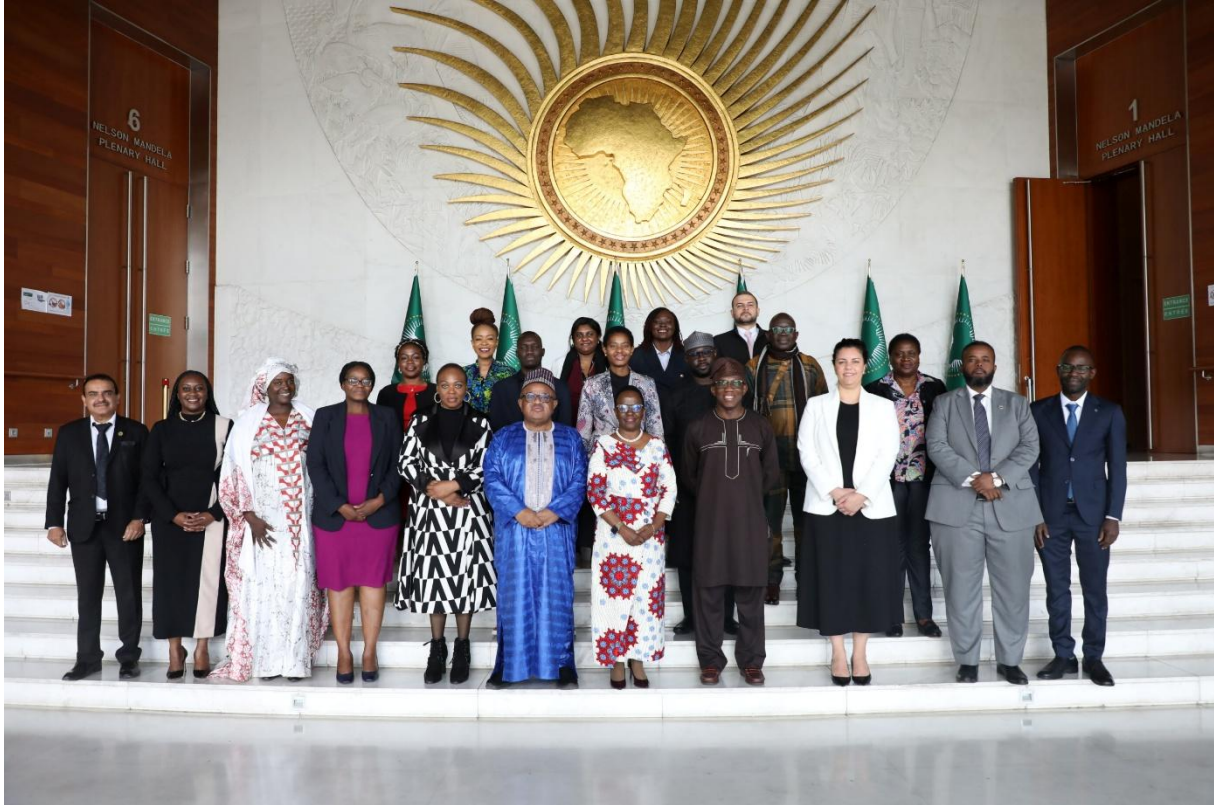


## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### OSE-WPS Retreat Charts a Bold Path: Aligning Vision, Renewing Commitment, Advancing Women, Peace and Security



From 26 to 28 August 2025, the African Union Commission's Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security (OSE-WPS) convened a landmark 3-day Strategic Planning and Onboarding Retreat under the theme *"Align, Renew, Advance: Strengthening Leadership and Collaboration for WPS Impact."* Held at Kuriftu Resort and the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, the retreat marked a pivotal moment of transition and renewal for the Office.

The retreat provided an opportunity for H.E. Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, who assumed office as the AU Chairperson's Special Envoy on 1 July 2025, to meet her team, engage AU leadership, and set the tone for a new era in advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. She underscored her vision of ensuring that women's voices, leadership, and priorities are at the heart of Africa's peace processes. The Special Envoy emphasized that WPS is not an "add-on" but an essential pillar of sustainable peace, calling for stronger accountability, innovative partnerships, and protection of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The opening ceremony brought together senior AU officials, including Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Chief of Staff to the Chairperson of the AUC; Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security; Ms. Faten Aggad, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Deputy Chairperson; Ms. Botho Kebabonye Bayendi, Director of Strategic Planning and Delivery; Ms. Patience Chiradza, Head of the Peace and Security Council Secretariat; Ms. Neema Chusi, Director of Strategic Planning; and Ms. Chido Cleopatra Mpemba, AU Youth Envoy.

Speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Ambassador Mohamed El-Amine Souef, Chief of Staff, emphasized that the retreat offered a unique opportunity to align Member States' efforts, renew commitments, and advance

collective action to strengthen the Women, Peace and Security agenda. He reiterated that protecting women and girls from gender-based violence and other forms of harm during conflict and post-conflict recovery is central to inclusive leadership, stronger collaboration, and lasting peace in Africa. *“As we align our strategies, renew our commitments, and advance our actions, let us place the protection of women and girls at the very heart of peace and security. Safeguarding their dignity and rights is not only a moral duty but also the foundation of resilient communities and a peaceful, prosperous Africa.”*

The Deputy Chairperson, H.E. Ambassador Selma Malika Haddadi, highlighted the importance of institutional coherence in advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, noting that alignment across AU organs and Member States is critical to generating real impact. Her speech was read on her behalf by Ms. Faten Aggad, Deputy Chief of Staff. *“This retreat demonstrates that when we align our efforts and speak with one voice, we can transform the protection and participation of women in peace and security processes. It is through renewed leadership and closer collaboration that the African Union can ensure no woman or girl is left behind in our journey toward peace and stability,”* she said.

In his remarks, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye congratulated Ambassador Mulamula on her appointment, hailing her as *“a champion, strong advocate, and passionate leader for African women,”* and pledged the Department’s full support in advancing WPS priorities across peace, democracy, counter-terrorism, and technology.

Building on this momentum, Ms. Botho Kebabonye Bayendi, Director of Strategic Planning and Delivery, highlighted the importance of embedding the retreat’s outcomes into the AU’s broader strategic frameworks. She stressed that advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda requires both measurable actions and accountability. *“Women, Peace and Security is not an isolated priority; it is woven into the AU’s vision for inclusive development and resilient governance. By renewing our commitments and embedding them into our planning and delivery processes, we create a framework that ensures sustainability, impact, and accountability for generations to come,”* she affirmed.

Facilitated by governance and peacebuilding expert Dr. Remember Miamingi, the retreat also produced a shared three-year roadmap for the Office, clarified staff roles, and reaffirmed OSE-WPS as a driver of advocacy, accountability, and collaboration across the AU system. Importantly, this 3-year Strategic Plan remains a work in progress—requiring further refinement, validation, and adoption by AU leadership to ensure alignment with Member States’ priorities. It is designed to be firmly anchored in the African Union’s *Agenda 2063* vision of “an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.” Above all, the retreat re-energized internal cohesion, reminding staff that their collective responsibility is to deliver concrete results that transform the lives of African women and girls.

A symbolic highlight was the virtual handover of strategic documents by former Special Envoy Bineta Diop, ensuring continuity in leadership and accountability.

As the retreat closed, one message was clear: the journey ahead demands alignment of vision, renewal of purpose, and advancement of impact. With H.E. Ambassador Mulamula at the helm, supported by a committed team and AU leadership, the Office of the Special Envoy is poised to champion women’s leadership and accountability in peace and security, turning commitments into action and aspirations into lasting change.

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