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**OPENING ADDRESS BY**

**THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE PANEL OF THE WISE & CO-CHAIR OF FEMWISE-  
AFRICA**

**H.E. DR. SPECIOSA WANDIRA-KAZIBWE**

**TO THE 2<sup>nd</sup> GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE NETWORK OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN  
CONFLICT PREVENTION AND MEDIATION (FemWise-Africa)**

**SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA BY 2020: WOMEN'S ROLE IN PREVENTING  
AND RESOLVING NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED CONFLICTS**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 29-30 November 2018

Your Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

Your Excellency Cathérine Samba-Panza, Former President of CAR and Co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation;

Your Excellencies Honourable Ministers;

Excellency Amb. Smaïl Chergui, Commissioner Peace and Security;

Excellency Amb. Minata Samate-Cessouma, Commissioner Political Affairs;

Excellencies representatives from the United Nations, the European Union and bilateral partners and friends;

Representatives from conflict prevention and mediation mechanisms of the Regional Economic Communities and Mechanisms;

Representatives from African Civil Society Organizations and academic think tanks

MEMBERS OF FEMWISE – AFRICA , Ladies and gentlemen

Your Excellency the President of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. We are particularly honoured that you found the time, and at short notice, to come and address us. Knowing of your commitment to the cause of peace in Africa and globally, your enduring struggle with the woman of Africa to ensure her rightful position in society, and the fact that a Founder Member of FemWise is now a President and Head of State of a deeply patriarchal society gives us hope that Africa is on the right path to redeeming itself. You no doubt know that we have very high expectations of you and from

you, to hold the African woman's hand in those closed sessions of the Assembly of our Heads of State and Government. FemWise commits to support you in all ways possible...by the Grace of God. You are currently the only one of our kind we have on the continent. May you be blessed with good health and God's favour in your work.

We have come a long way with respect to the struggle for equal opportunity for women in Africa: 1994 OAU Kampala Declaration on Women Empowerment; 1998 OAU and ECA established the African Women's Committee of Peace and Development; 2010 the AU Panel of the Wise instituted a study into the situation of women and children in armed conflict. 2016 PANWISE, UN and ACCORD convened the first African Women Mediation Workshop on Silencing the Guns. This is when FemWise was conceived. 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 the AU PSC endorsed the formation of FemWise; 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017 the UN PSC through its Arrial Forum gave it further endorsement. July 04<sup>th</sup> 2017 was when the AU Summit decision to establish the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation, now best known as FemWise-Africa.

The 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Constantine, Algeria in December 2017 paved the way for us to start operationalizing the Network as a subsidiary mechanism of the AU Panel of the Wise. We have, since then, popularised FemWise at national and international forums. We have deployed members on peace building / solidarity missions and nurtured bridges with the AU RECs / Regional Mechanisms and at International Women Mediator's Networks of the Mediterranean and Nordic countries, South America and Asia. FEMWISE AFRICA is now known. A clarion call has been issued to the women of Africa to 'CATALYZE THE PROCESS OF SILENCING THE GUNS BY 2020'. We have to take the cow by the horns

and get on with it!

My address will focus on three areas; 1) deliberations of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee meeting; 2) induction training of young women / members in conflict prevention and mediation; 3) the theme for this 3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly on women's role in preventing and resolving natural resource-based conflicts. The FemWise Co-Chair, HE Catherine Samba-Panza will give us the way forward at the conclusion of this General Assembly.

### **Steering Committee Deliberations**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee meeting reviewed progress on: membership and member recruitment; operationalisation of the Network with respect to deployments and Members' activities in 2018; the Network's popularization strategy in terms of outreach and networking; training goals, approaches and frequency as well as how to select trainers and training institutions, including African Centres of Excellence.

The structure of FemWise-Africa was extensively discussed with respect to membership on the Advisory Board, Steering Committee and General Assembly. We reflected on the question of FemWise National and Regional chapters' in terms of their design, their implementation and reporting modalities. The Accreditation Form and members' Code of Conduct, and the FemWise Project Document were among the discussed key policy documents.

Of further importance, and as agreed in Constantine, we reflected on the rationale and design of Quick Impact Projects and how they can create

synergies with FemWise activities and deployments.

Finally, the Steering Committee considered the way forward with respect to the FemWise Strategic Plan and future collaboration, coordination and synergy with members of the Panel of the Wise, the Pan African Network of the Wise (PanWise) and similar mechanisms at the RECs and Regional Mechanisms. Together with the Panel of the Wise, FemWise-Africa will soon brief the Peace and Security Council on the 2018 activities and plans for 2019.

### **Induction Training of Members**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the FemWise Co-Chairs, I wish to sincerely thank His Excellency, the Commissioner Peace and Security, my brother Smaïl Chergui, for his enduring and dedicated commitment to our Network. He has pushed hard to keep a promise made last year at the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in Constantine: that is to train within one year a hundred women from across our continent. We can attest to the fact that the first induction training was carried out in June 2018. The second group of women mediators finalized its training on Tuesday and Wednesday this week. Promise made, promise kept!

Our new members are here with us today. Women, young and not so young, from the whole of Africa and from diverse backgrounds and sectors of society. Welcome to the FemWise Network. Without you, we do not exist. With you, Africa's Agenda 2063 is surely on its journey of ensuring inclusivity in the transformation of Africa by Africans—for you are the teachers and custodians of its culture and values.

Our deepest appreciation goes to our enduring partners—multilateral and bilateral, Centers of Excellence and CSOs. They have been with us on this journey, physically, financially and technically. Last but not least, I have, with more sincerity, to acknowledge our small, dedicated but very effective Secretariat, previously led by Yvette Ngandu, and now Nancy Tolentino and Caroline Abraham, under the supervision of Amb Fred Gateretse-Ngoga. This is attestation to the capacity, dedication and potential of our young people.

The induction training brought together leadership from the AU Commission and the RECs, facilitators and experts in the field. The new members were introduced to the continental spectrum of prominent conflict trends, preventive tools, and experiences on the ground—at both continental and regional levels. Members reflected on their roles and commitment to join forces with these bodies, to secure African women and young women’s participation in peace building, preventing and mediating conflict on the continent.

Currently, there are 200 accredited members of FemWise-Africa, half of whom have received an induction training. This status change is significant, as it gives the Secretariat a wider berth in the selection exercise of members who will be short-listed for deployments of any kind. When partner organizations request FemWise members to attend meetings, conferences or missions, it is from the “inducted” list that members will be selected. This is due to their deeper understanding of the Network, their relationship to the AU as members, and their advancement in honing the opportunities and limitations of operating within such a

network. Furthermore, inducted members are closer to signing the FemWise-Africa Code of Conduct. We are working on rolling out Regional Induction Training as opposed to Continental Induction, in close collaboration with RECs and Regional Mechanisms.

Our sincere thanks go to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). It was represented at the training by its Director Division for Peace and the Manager Peacekeeping Training Programme. Further gratitude goes to the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, (ACCORD) and the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) for their support at all times. Thanks also to colleagues from the African Union Commission, the United Nations and the RECs as well as all the other sisters and brothers who have helped in the induction trainings. You have done a wonderful job!

### **Women Preventing and Resolving Natural Resource-Based Conflicts**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The central theme of our 3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, is the role of women in preventing and resolving natural resource-based conflicts. The theme goes back to a report presented by the UN Environmental Programme to the 19<sup>th</sup> statutory meeting of the Panel of the Wise, held last month in Accra/Ghana, just ahead of the 9<sup>th</sup> High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability.

We know that changes in the environment and natural resources, affect women and men differently. It is a problem made worse by women having less access to economic resources, education and legal rights.

Interventions around natural resources, environment and climate change provide significant opportunities to empower women politically and economically, and to strengthen their contribution to conflict prevention and peacebuilding—within the Human Security context. Mitigation interventions, however, continue to remain majorly male dominated, despite efforts by national, continental and the international community to recognize and better address these multiple roles through agreements such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and the operational National and Regional Action Plans.

Women in conflict-affected settings routinely experience physical insecurity, including sexual violence, when carrying out daily tasks linked to the use of natural resources. Women are particularly vulnerable, due to heightened exposure in their gendered roles and responsibilities. Gender is an important part of understanding these dynamics, as men and women tend to use and enjoy the benefits of natural resources according to the roles and responsibilities determined by their gender, as well as economic and social status. This, for instance, has a particular bearing on the issue of land as a natural resource from which women are usually excluded. Women will have to further understand that in many cases, perpetual, unending conflict is not rooted in what they often see and hear. Central Africa and the Great Lakes Region are one glaring example of the century old conflicts generated by theft of Africa's natural resources...oil, timber, gold, diamonds etc with dire consequences for current and future generations.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly therefore will discuss modalities for the involvement of women in preventing and resolving resource-related



conflicts, the challenges they face and how conflict prevention and resolution strategies applied in resource-based conflict can be further improved through inclusivity of women and gender issues as a way to anchor even more the initiatives of FemWise-Africa in the ongoing conflict prevention and mediation and reconstruction efforts of the African Union and the RECs. In addition, in order to further deepen the protection of the interests of women, peace keeping / intervention forces / mechanisms—local, regional and international, will further be required to be compliant to the agreed gender norms and required practices.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my firm belief that since the 1<sup>st</sup> General Assembly we have made substantial progress in the operationalization of FemWise-Africa. Nonetheless, we need to accelerate the technical preconditions for being fully functional, including building a roster for Track 1, 2 and 3 mediation processes, linking with similar institutions of the RECs, and further professionalizing women mediation, conflict resolution and peace building efforts on the continent. In addition, we would like to see the Secretariat of the Panel of the Wise strengthened in terms of human resources so as to lend even more assistance to our various activities.

Women's contribution to *Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020* calls for a more active deployment of FemWise-Africa members at all levels, including pre-election missions, structural conflict prevention activities, border dispute resolution and natural resource-based conflicts.

For the next two days I wish us fruitful, constructive and visionary debates

that will help to further define the role of FemWise-Africa and to sharpen our understanding of how best to strengthen the role of women in the prevention and resolution of natural resource-based conflicts.

Thank you for your kind attention.

**ASANTE SANA**

**ALUTA CONTINUA**