

# Briefing by the Panel of the Wise, FemWise and WiseYouth on their activities in Africa

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Tomorrow (13 March) the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) will convene its 1204<sup>th</sup> session to receive a briefing by the Panel of the Wise and its subsidiary bodies, FemWise and WiseYouth, on their activities in Africa.

Following opening remarks by Ambassador Emilia Mkusa, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Namibia to the AU and Chairperson of the PSC for March 2024, Bankole Adeoye, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) is expected to make a statement. Prof. Babacar Kante, Chairperson of the Panel of the Wise is also expected to deliver a briefing to the PSC.

The meeting which was [initially](#) planned for 19 March 2024, is being convened in accordance with PSC's decision during its [665<sup>th</sup>](#) meeting in March 2017, in which it requested for quarterly briefings from the Panel of the Wise. The last convening of the PSC on the Panel of Wise was in May 2023 at its [1152<sup>nd</sup>](#) session which focused on the Report of the Panel of the Wise on its mission to the Republic of Chad. Prior to that, PSC convened its 1142<sup>nd</sup> session on 3 March 2023, but no outcome document was released.

Prior to the 1142<sup>nd</sup> session, there was no session with the Panel for most of the years since 2017. Thus, despite the expectation for this engagement to be regular, the meetings have not been regular and are yet to be fully

institutionalised. This has affected the harmonisation and collaboration between the two organs around the role of the Panel on conflict prevention, including preventive diplomacy. Tomorrow's session accordingly presents the opportunity for discussing on how to maintain the momentum and institutionalize the regularity of engagement.

The session is also expected to discuss on the work of the Panel of the Wise and its subsidiary mechanisms (PanWise, FemWise-Africa and WiseYouth) from the period 1 March 2023 to 1 March 2024. An area that is expected to receive particular attention in the Panel's briefing is its efforts to assist countries in ***political transitions***. On the situation in [Chad](#), the Panel undertook a fact-finding mission to the country in May 2023 to evaluate Chad's political and security situation in accordance with a November 2022 decision of the PSC. The Panel also undertook a mission to the [Central African Republic](#). The field mission, in which the outcome was discussed during PSC's [1157<sup>th</sup>](#) session, sought to evaluate the political and security situation, assess the progress of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APPR-CAR) and suggested strategies to support the country in achieving peace, reconciliation and democracy. Regarding [South Sudan](#), the Panel undertook a mission to the [country](#) in December 2023 to evaluate the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The mission also aimed to assess advancements and challenges in the political, security, humanitarian and financial aspects crucial for South Sudan's peace and stability.

Considering that this year is a critical year in the transition process in Chad, it would be of interest for the PSC to reflect on how the Panel follows up on issues identified from its mission to Chad including on the issue of candidacy of the members of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) of Chad, for elections. It is worth recalling in this respect that AU rules and PSC's decision itself made it clear

that TMC members are barred from standing for elections. Yet, earlier this month the transitional President, despite his earlier assurances, announced that he would run for elections. No doubt coming against the background of the failure of the PSC to sanction Chad for military coup, this development constitutes a test for the PSC's credibility.

In terms of South Sudan, which finds itself at the most delicate stage of its transitional process, it would also be of interest for the PSC to hear from the Panel on its assessment of the situation and importantly on how the Panel can have sustained role for addressing disagreements that may arise on how to manage this phase of the transition including the lack of progress in key transitional tasks necessary for holding elections.

Another area of the Panel's work that tomorrow's session is expected to focus on concerns the Panel's role in dealing with election related crises including its participation in ***election observation and electoral preventive diplomacy missions***. Through its involvement in crucial Election Observation and electoral Preventive Diplomacy missions, the Panel is expected to brief the PSC on its engagement in recent pre-, during and post-election processes in several member states in 2023. The Panel carried out election observation and preventive diplomacy missions in [Nigeria](#) (February 2023), [Sierra Leone](#) (June 2023), Zimbabwe (August 2023), the [Liberian presidential election](#) (October 2023), the DRC (December 2023) as well as the 2024 Comoros Presidential elections.

In this context, an issue that may be of interest for PSC members is how these efforts by the Panel will and can contribute to the PSC's ongoing engagement in these countries and the work of the various mechanisms of the AU dealing with these country situations.

Regarding the subsidiary organs of the Panel of the Wise,

these are mechanism that contribute to its mission of conflict prevention, management and resolution. During the [25<sup>th</sup> Statutory Meeting](#), held on 12 and 13 May 2023, the Panel members assessed the advancements made by the Subsidiary Mechanisms, the PanWise Network, FemWise-Africa and WiseYouth and underscored the importance of enhancing the efficiency of decision-making and governance structures within these mechanisms. Tomorrow's meeting is expected to provide the PSC an update on these subsidiary bodies of the Panel, particularly regarding the revitalization of the PanWise Network, which was proposed in 2022, as well as the 8<sup>th</sup> PanWise Network Retreat which was held from 7 – 8 December 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda, under the theme "Enhancing Electoral Preventive Diplomacy during Elections: Best Practices and Lessons Learnt."

Furthermore, the PSC is likely to get an update on the operationalization of the FemWise-Africa Network and how members of FemWise are being deployed in various AU peace and security processes. In this context, it is expected that the briefing will highlight, among others, the involvement of the FemWise-Africa Network in AU-led election processes, including through deployments to Election Observation Missions (EOMs) and Preventive Diplomacy Missions (PDMs). In addition, the Panel is expected to brief the Council on the activities of the WiseYouth. As recalled, the establishment of the WiseYouth Network came into being through a decision made during the 35<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2022 ([Assembly/AU/Dec.815\(XXXV\)](#)). The network's purpose is to strategically engage youth in preventive diplomacy, mediation and dialogue across the African continent. Following the Consultative Meeting with all Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) and the G5-Sahel, held on 31 August to 1 September 2023 in Bujumbura, Burundi, whereby the Operational Modalities and

Terms of Reference for Members of the Network were finalized and validated, tomorrow's meeting is expected to get an update on the process of launching an Open Call for Applications for the 1<sup>st</sup> Cohort of the WiseYouth Network which is expected to happen in 2024.

Finally, the session is expected to have a discussion on the challenges the Panel faces and propose recommendations. These are expected to include the issues on quick deployment to situations in areas not yet on PSC's agenda; coordination challenges with RECs and RMs; absence of post-mission follow-up mechanisms and the challenge of political will to systematically and consistently include women and youth as equal stakeholders in all high-level peace processes.

The expected outcome of the session is a communique. The PSC may commend the Panel of the Wise for the activities that the Panel undertook during the reporting period including the missions to countries in transition and the electoral preventive diplomacy missions. It may welcome the progress made with respect to FemWise and WiseYouth. The PSC may call for enhanced coordination, and joint deployments by the AU-RECs/RMs during elections. It may also take note of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Annual Retreat of the African Peer Review (APR) Panel of Eminent Persons and the AU Panel of the Wise, held on December 10-11 2023 in Johannesburg, South Africa and welcome the adoption of the Framework of Cooperation. It may underline the importance of reinvigorating early warning and conflict prevention by working closely with the Panel. It may further underline the importance of enhancing coordination with the Panel in supporting complex transitions, sustaining peace in fragile contexts and ensuring early action to deescalate looming crises. To this end the PSC may reiterate its previous decision and call for the institutionalization of conflict prevention and preventive deployment briefing by the Panel of the Wise. The PSC may also request that the AU Commission continues its support for the Panel including, in working

together with the Panel to address the challenges it faces.