

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

Strategic Reflection on Strengthening Femwise-Africa

The Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa) convened a strategic reflection meeting under the leadership of H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, the Former President of the Central African Republic (CAR) and outgoing Co-Chair of FemWise-Africa, and Hon. Justice Effie Owour, Member of the AU Panel of the Wise and Co-Chair of FemWise-Africa, on 15-17 May 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The meeting was also attended by H.E. Marie-Madeleine Kalala, Former Minister of Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and President of the Steering Committee of FemWise-ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States); H.E. Amb. Liberata Mulamula, former Foreign Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania and member of the FemWise-Africa Network; Alhaji Sarjoh Bah (PhD), Director of Conflict Management Directorate (CMD); Ms. Patience Zanelie Chiradza, Director of Governance and Conflict Prevention (GCP) and member of the FemWise-Africa Network; and Ms. Flaviana Charles Mayutta, Director of Gender, Women and Children at International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and member of the FemWise-Africa Network. It was also attended by fifteen (15) experts and members from the FemWise-Africa Network and a representative from the Office of the AU Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security.

The meeting reflected on, and celebrated the achievements of the FemWise-Africa Network in the implementation of its mandate to strengthen the meaningful role of African women in peace processes during its first five years of operations, while also considering how to strategically position the Network to have even more impact at continental, regional and national levels. The Network's operations are in fulfillment of the decision of the Assembly of Heads of States and Government on 4 July 2017 Assembly/AU/Draft/Dec.21 {XXIX}, establishing FemWise-Africa as a subsidiary mechanism of the Panel of the Wise within the context of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA); as well as the AU's commitment to implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 Women, Peace and Security Agenda of 2000, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Right on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol of 2003), and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of 2004.

In this regard, the meeting recognized the critical role that FemWise-Africa has continued to play in actively creating space for women's inclusion and participation, being the only one globally that deploys its members to support conflict prevention, mediation and peace processes. Notably, FemWise-Africa members have, and continue to be deployed to the AU Liaison Offices in Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, and Madagascar/Comoros, to support the AU's leadership in mediation, dialogue, preventive diplomacy, and the implementation of peace agreements. FemWise-Africa members also continue to be engaged in AU-led support to electoral processes on the continent, including most recently to Kenya, Lesotho, and Nigeria, and upcoming in the Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Zimbabwe, Madagascar and DRC elections slated for 2023.

Furthermore, the impact that FemWise-Africa continues to have in strengthening the capacity and expertise of women mediators intervening in various conflict contexts was underscored, noting the Network's continued commitment to delivering specialized thematic and advanced trainings in areas such as: Countering of Violent Extremism, Terrorism & Radicalization; Prevention of Electoral-related Violence; Enhancing Women's Political Participation; Understanding and prevention of Inter-ethnic and Inter-communal conflicts; Prevention of Conflict Related Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV); Sensitization and Prevention of Trafficking and Proliferation of small arms and light weapons; and Sensitization and advocacy around Psycho-Social and Mental Health issues within the context of peace and security. The Network will also scale up the thematic focus of its training programs, peer-to-peer coaching, and inter-generational exchange in order to optimize the deployability of its members.

In seeking to consolidate and amplify the achievements of the Network as it moves forward to a new phase of its operationalization, the meeting committed to supporting the ongoing decentralization process of FemWise-Africa at regional and national levels, celebrating the progress already made in the establishment of FemWise West Africa and FemWise-ECCAS, ECOWAS and ECCAS respectively. Relatedly, the network will continue to support the decentralization efforts of other RECs/RMs, as well as at national level, in order to optimize the goal of creating a critical mass of women mediators on the continent who are engaged in conflict prevention and mediation efforts at all levels.

The meeting also applauded the significant achievement that the FemWise-Africa Network took over the Secretariat role for the Global Alliance of Women Mediator Networks, and will have the convening power for women mediators globally for the period of 2023-2024. In addition to FemWise-Africa, the Global Alliance also brings together five other regional networks, including the Arab Women Mediators Network (AWMN), the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM), the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC), and the Southeast Asian Network of Women Peace Negotiators and Mediators (SEANWPNM). In this role, the FemWise-Africa Network reaffirmed its commitment to promote synergy, complementarity, and coordination of efforts, as well as to play a strong advocacy role for women mediators globally.

Finally, in seeking to comprehensively inform of the Networks achievements and lessons learned, while also spotlighting its members role in various peace efforts across the continent, the FemWise-Africa Network will publish and launch a Reflection Booklet on its Five-years of operation on the margins of the African Union Mid-Year Summit in July 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya.

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