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**Welcome Remarks for the Opening Session of the 8th PanWise Retreat on
“Enhanced Technical and Political Coordination between the AU, RECs/RMs, and
National Peace Infrastructures”**

7 – 8 December 2023

Kigali, Rwanda

Your Excellency Professor Babacar Kante, Chairperson of the AU Panel of the Wise

Your Excellency Domitien Ndayizeye, Former President of Burundi and Member of the AU Panel of the Wise

Your Excellency Sylvestre Ntibantunganya, Former President of Burundi and Chairperson of the EASF Panel of Elders

You Excellency Paramasivum Pillay Vyapoory, Former Vice President of Mauritius and Member of the SADC Panel of Elders

Your Excellency Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Former Deputy President of South Africa and Member of the AU’s Panel of the Wise

Lady Justice Effie Owuor, Member of the Panel of the Wise

Honorable Marie-Pierre Lloyd, Vice-Chairperson of the COMESA Committee of Elders

Honorable Monique Esoavelomandroso, Member of the COMESA Committee of Elders

Your Excellency Mroudjae Moinaecha, Vice-Chair of EASF Panel of Elders

Your Excellency Ophelia Eliza Hoff, Member of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise

Your Excellency William Collina Asare, Member of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise

Distinguished members of National Peace Infrastructures,

Ladies and Gentlemen and Honored Guests,

With great pleasure, I extend my warmest greetings to each and every one of you as we come together for the auspicious occasion of the 8th PanWise Retreat. In the esteemed company of such distinguished Excellencies, it is indeed a privilege to stand before you and convey a heartfelt welcome on behalf of Commissioner Bankole Adeoye. Your presence in this significant

forum is not only valued but also serves as a resounding testament to our shared commitment to fostering collaboration, unity, and a deeper understanding between the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities/Regional Mechanisms.

As we embark on this pivotal gathering, it is with a deep sense of recognition that we acknowledge the unique opportunity it affords for meaningful discourse and strategic deliberations. Commissioner Bankole Adeoye extends his sincere gratitude for your unwavering commitment to advancing the ideals of peace, security, and cooperation across the African continent. Your diverse perspectives and collective expertise promise to enrich the dialogue that will define the PanWise Retreat, setting the stage for collaborative initiatives that undoubtedly will shape the trajectory of our shared future.

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The AU Panel of the Wise, an illustrious assembly comprised of individuals of exceptional repute, stands as an enduring beacon of inspiration within the African Union. Renowned for their vast reservoirs of experience and wisdom, the distinguished members have consistently demonstrated an unwavering dedication to the noble cause of promoting peace and security across our diverse continent. Their profound contributions have played a pivotal role in navigating the intricacies of complex challenges, fostering regional stability, and providing sagacious counsel that resonates far beyond borders.

In the spirit of renewed cooperation, it is with appreciation that we acknowledge the commendable efforts undertaken to revitalize the PanWise Network. The regrettable hiatus experienced in recent years was met with resilience and determination, and the endeavors of the past year stand as a significant milestone in breathing new life into this vital network. The PanWise Network, as a symbolic representation of Pan-Africanism, holds the promise of unity and collective action. Noteworthy strides have been achieved in AU-REC cooperation, particularly in joint activities centered on preventive diplomacy.

For several years, the AU Panel of the Wise and similar mechanisms at the RECs/RMs have engaged in collaborative initiatives, showcasing the potential for a more formalized and systematized approach. It is with great pleasure that I share the news of a technical

coordination meeting convened just yesterday to deliberate on the Framework for the Revitalization of the PanWise Network and the draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee. These pivotal documents, the result of collaborative efforts, stand as a testament to our collective commitment to reigniting and formalizing AU-RECs/RMs cooperation in the crucial realm of preventive diplomacy.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to mention that the last convening of the PanWise Network took place in October 2022 in Windhoek, Namibia, marking a significant milestone in the ongoing revitalization efforts.

As we stand at this juncture, let us collectively seize the opportunity before us to enhance collaboration, strengthen ties, and contribute to the realization of a peaceful and prosperous Africa. Each one of you plays an integral role in shaping the future of our continent, and your dedication is indispensable in addressing the multifaceted challenges that lie ahead.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your commitment, foresight, and tireless efforts. I wish us all a retreat filled with insightful deliberations and meaningful connections that will shape the trajectory of peace and prosperity across our beloved continent.

Thank you.