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**PROPOSAL BY THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT TO ESTABLISH A
MEDIATION SUPPORT AND CONFLICT PREVENTION UNIT AT THE
AFRICA UNION COMMISSION, WITH EGYPT'S INITIATIVE TO
SUPPORT THE MEDIATION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION
CAPACITIES OF THE AFRICAN UNION**
(Item Proposed by the Arab Republic of Egypt)

Concept Note
on the establishment of a Mediation Support & Conflict Prevention
Unit at the African Union Commission

Background and Rational:

Over the past decade, the International community has recognized the growing need for mediation as an efficient and cost-effective tool for conflict prevention and to achieve the peaceful settlement of disputes and preventing it from escalating into armed conflicts after the outbreak of violence and during implementation of peace agreements. Experiences in both Africa and on the international scene have underlined that the most favourable time to resolve disputes is at an early stage before they turn into violent conflicts, which stresses the indispensable role of mediation activities for preventing and reducing human suffering, creating conditions conducive for lasting peace and sustainable development, as well as laying the foundations for a more prosperous and just world.

The United Nations Charter has mentioned the optimal use of mediation as an important peaceful means to achieve the settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution, and encouraged the involvement of regional arrangements in such activities. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly and Security Council resolutions have reaffirmed the important role of regional and sub-regional organizations as mediators, and encouraged their continuing involvement in the peaceful settlement of disputes, including through mediation. It encouraged as well regional and sub-regional organizations to continue to develop their mediation capacities, emphasized the need for closer and more operational cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the fields of early warning and conflict prevention, and stressed the need to ensure coherence, synergy and collective effectiveness of their efforts.

Since its establishment in 2002 the African Union (and the subsequent establishment of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in 2004), has increasingly affirmed its willingness/mandate as per its constitutive act and capability to achieve peace, security and stability in the Continent through a wide range of mechanisms that include early warning and good offices within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). However, the growing number of security challenges and emerging threats that Africa has to deal with requires the elaboration of comprehensive and sustainable continental mechanism for mediation support, in close cooperation with relevant sub-regional arrangements, in order to strengthen conflict prevention and early resolution.

According to the Protocol relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council, which recognizes mediation as one of the objectives of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the African Union is mandated to engage promptly in mediation as a form of peace-making. Today after more than a decade, and as Africa enters a new phase of conflict resolution and peace building, it is of most need for the

African Union to develop a specialized expertise and institutional mediation practices, in cooperation and coordination with strategic partners, bearing in mind the role of mediation as an integral part of peace-making and as an instrumental tool to prevent, manage and settle conflicts.

Against that backdrop, the establishment of a Mediation Support and Conflict Prevention Unit within the African Union Commission Structure has become an essential priority to achieve the full use of preventive diplomacy to further promote peace and security in Africa and as a part of the full operationalization of the African Peace and Security architecture (APSA). Furthermore, the establishment of such Unit will contribute positively to the enhancement of the Continental Early Warning System and the Panel of the Wise capacities and will provide substantive inputs and technical advice to the Peace and Security Council in areas related to conflict prevention, including preventing post-conflict countries from relapsing into conflict.

Further, there is a need to strengthen cooperation and partnerships between the African Union and the United Nations, as well as other relevant international organizations, in mediation implementation and capacity-building, based on Africa's ownership and leadership of efforts aiming at achieving the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflicts prevention and resolution. The cooperation with the United Nations in the field of mediation will build on the relevant articles of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and the establishing Protocol of the Peace and Security Council and will draw from relevant resolutions, decisions and communiqués adopted by organs of both organizations, including the AU Peace and Security Council Communiqués of 22 March 2013 on the full use of all available tools in preventive diplomacy and UN General Assembly resolutions 65/283 and 68/303 on strengthening the role of mediation. The establishment of an African Mediation Support and Conflict Prevention Unit will contribute to achieving better cooperation in mediation efforts in Africa and with international partners.

The proposal to establish the suggested Unit comes as a contribution from Egypt towards the realization of a more secure, stable and prosperous Africa, and will build upon previous initiatives and key efforts exerted by Member States and the African Union Commission to make the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) fully operational including providing support in the area of conflict prevention and peaceful settlement. Furthermore, the proposal to establish the Unit will be based on relevant documents of the African Union Commission, lessons learned and best practices in Africa and internationally.

Objectives:

The proposed Mediation Support and Conflict Prevention Unit aims to:

- Consolidate the African Union and the RECs approaches in conflict prevention and mediation efforts, including principles, policies and guidelines, to achieve more coherence and synergies;

- Enhance the role of the African Union Commission in promoting peace and security on the continental level, including efforts of both Departments of Peace and Security and Political Affairs;
- Scan the horizon for potential conflicts in Africa, consider the political and security dynamics of conflict zones and fragile situations, and intervene through relevant experts to resolve disputes in early stage before they turn into violent conflicts;
- Support and improve the capacity of the Panel of the Wise to enable it to fully accomplish its mandate, and to work as a Secretariat to the Panel;
- Provide advice, assessment and technical support to African Special Envoys and African High Level Panels, such as the African high-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan (AHIP);
- Strengthen mediation capacities of African regional and sub-regional organizations and mechanisms to promote peace and security in the Continent;
- Work as an African hub for mediation knowledge, policy, guidance, lessons learned and best practices, as well as sharing information and expertise on conflicts prevention and resolution;
- Enhance African mediation capabilities and set a roster of African eminent personalities and experts to be assigned as envoys and mediators;
- Develop and provide guidance for mediation and preventive diplomacy to the African Union Commission, the RECs and REMs and Member States upon request and in full respect to its national sovereignty and political independence;
- Promote cooperation with strategic partners, including the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, to strengthen the African Union's leading role in conflict prevention and mediation.

Location and Structure:

The Mediation Support and Conflict Prevention Unit is proposed to be located within the structure of the African Union Commission and composed of a number of experts relevant to the thematic and technical areas of its work. The Sub-Committee of Structure so the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) will decide later on the structure of the Unit with respect to the African Union policies.

The Way Forward:

Upon adoption of the Twenty-Fourth Ordinary Session of the Assembly in January 2015, the African Union Commission shall submit progress report on the implementation of the decision establishing the unit to the Twenty-Fifth Ordinary Session of the Assembly in June 2015, so as to consider its structure and to take the necessary measures to achieve its effective functioning.

2015

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initiative to support the mediation and
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