



PRESS RELEASE:

FIFTH ANNUAL RETREAT OF SPECIAL ENVOYS, REPRESENTATIVES AND MEDIATORS CONCLUDES WITH A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO SILENCE THE GUNS BY 2020



23 October 2014, Arusha: The fifth Annual Retreat of Special Envoys, Representatives and Mediators on the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa, held in Arusha, concluded with renewed commitment by participants to ‘silence the guns’ on the continent by 2020. During the Retreat, participants reflected on various experiences, drawing lessons in order to strengthen the Continent’s efforts towards this goal.

In their Declaration at the end of the Retreat, participants vowed to tackle increasing threats posed by emerging transnational crimes such as terrorism and violent extremism, drug trafficking, piracy, illicit arms proliferation, human trafficking and smuggling as well as money laundering.

The retreat, which was opened by H.E. Dr. Mohamed Gharib Bilal, Vice President of the Republic of Tanzania and Amb. Smaïl Chergui, AU Peace and Security Commissioner brought together more than one hundred and thirty participants, including former African leaders, representatives of the AU Commission, as well as its Special Envoys and Representatives. It also included the Chair of the Peace and Security Council for the Month of October, Ethiopia; members of the Panel of the Wise, as well as Friends of the Panel of the wise, representatives of the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) for conflict prevention, management and resolution, the United Nations, League of Arab States as well as several scholars and international partners.

Making his closing remarks, at the culmination of the three days of deliberation, Amb. Smail Chergui stated, *“The frank and open discussions over the last three days, will no doubt go a long way towards elaborating a concrete roadmap towards silencing the guns by 2020.”* Amb. Chergui, thanked H.E. President Jakaya Kikwete and the Government of Tanzania for its warm hospitality and for hosting the fifth edition of the Annual Retreat, adding that this was testimony to Tanzania’s continued commitment to shaping the continent’s peace, prosperity and integration agenda, a clear extension of its contribution during the early years of Africa’s liberation struggle.

Building on the momentum of the Durban Retreat of April 2014 and the Abidjan Retreat of October 2013, the Arusha retreat succeeded in framing practical aspects of the implementation of Agenda 2063, Africa’s roadmap for the next 50 years, in particular critical aspects relating to the promotion of peace, security and stability on the Continent.

The meeting reviewed a wide range of issues including the state of Africa in 2014, and the causes of conflicts and instability, the triggers and facilitators of violence and the impact of global developments on Africa among the climate change.

The Retreat was preceded by a meeting of AU Special Envoys, Representatives and Heads of AU Missions and Liaison Offices on Monday 20 October, 2014. The meeting took place on the cusp of the outbreak and spread of the Ebola Virus Disease as well as the AUC Chairperson’s visit to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, the three West African countries hardest hit by the outbreak. As such, participants welcomed the concerted contributions by Member States in true African solidarity as well as the response measures undertaken by the Executive Council and the PSC to tackle Ebola.

The Retreat also paid homage to Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, former Secretary-General of the OAU, and to Mr. Hashim Mbita, former Chairperson of the Liberation Committee, for their estimable contribution to Pan-Africanism and the liberation of the Continent from colonialism and conflict. The inaugural ‘Son of Africa’ award, which was presented to them by Amb. Chergui on behalf of the AUC Chairperson, H.E Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma during a gala dinner hosted in their honour, will continue to be presented on a regular basis to eminent Africans who have served the Continent with great distinction.

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2014-10-23

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