



PRESS RELEASE

The 6th Retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators on Africa Convenes in Windhoek, Namibia

President Sam Nujoma and Madam Maria Ruth Neto Receive Son and Daughter of Africa Award for the Promotion of Peace and Security

Addis Ababa, 22 October 2015: The African Union (AU) Commission, in partnership with the Government of Namibia, the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (IPSS) organized on 20-22 October 2015, in Windhoek, Namibia, the 6th Annual Retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators working on Africa, under the theme: *“Terrorism, Mediation and Armed Groups.”*

The Retreat aims to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the AU and other international stakeholders, including: the United Nations, the Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (OIC), Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflicts Prevention, Management and Resolution (RECs/RMs), in mediating disputes with a view to preventing conflict in Africa and countering terrorism and violent extremism. This year’s retreat seeks to define terrorism in the African context, examine non-military responses like mediation in dealing with terrorism, and reflecting on the development of a more comprehensive multilateral counter-terrorism agenda for Africa.

The Retreat was opened on behalf of the President of the Republic of Namibia, H.E. Dr. Hage Geingob, by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of External Relations and International Cooperation, the Honorable Madam Netumbo Nandi-Ndaiwah. In his opening statement, delivered by the honorable Minister, the President said that Namibia has always been a firm believer in mediation, conflict prevention and the maintenance and support of international law, and as a country born out of conflict, Namibia places great value on peace and stability.

“The implementation of Agenda 2063 is crucial for the economic development of Africa, and thus for peace and stability. We must remember that currently with a population of 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world. Furthermore, more than 70% of Africa’s youth live on less than two US dollars a day, the internationally defined poverty threshold. This is a worrying statistic which means that if we as Africans fail to address issues such as youth unemployment on our continent, we could face the risk of witnessing more conflict and unrest in our countries,” the Namibian President stated. Recalling that 2015 marks the 15th anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, President Geingob emphasized the need to include women in mediation processes and peacebuilding.



On behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Amb. Smail Chergui expressed the AU's gratitude to the Government and People of Namibia for hosting the Retreat with warm hospitality, and praised Namibia for its strong commitment to the African Union's vision of a strong, prosperous and united continent, and its outstanding contribution to the liberation of Africa and the promotion of peace, security and stability.

With reference to the theme of the Retreat, the Commissioner highlighted Africa's extensive experience in dealing with armed conflicts in which non-state belligerent parties, including liberation movements, were designated as "terrorists". *"With this long experience to draw from, we are therefore equipped to undertake a constructive critique of international policies for combating terrorism and violent extremism, and also to develop a more comprehensive multilateral counter-terrorism agenda. An African doctrine for addressing terrorism and violent extremism must be informed by these experiences,"* the Commissioner stated.

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General and Head of the UN Office to the AU, Amb. Haile Menkerios, on his part, emphasized that terrorism is often a means to an end, not an end in itself. *"The goal of terrorists is to make dramatic statements about often longstanding social, political and economic grievances. Without sustained and sincere engagement in search of solutions to these grievances, our efforts may only yield cosmetic and temporary reprieves from the reprehensible violence that terrorists perpetrate,"* the SRSG stated.

The Retreat offered an opportunity for the AU to recognize Namibia's Founding President, H.E. Dr. Sam Nujoma and the sister of Angloa's First post-independence President, Madam Maria Ruth Neto, as an eminent Son and Daughter of Africa for their role in promoting peace and security in the continent. It is worth recalling that the first "Son and Daughter of Africa Awards for the Promotion of Peace and Security in Africa" were bestowed upon Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim and Bigadier General Hashim Mbita, both of Tanzania, at the 5th Retreat of Special Envoys and Mediators, held in Arusha, Tanzania, in October 2014.

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