



Security Council

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Letter dated 14 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefings provided by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Permanent Representative of Egypt, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, the Russian Federation, Tunisia (on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video-conference on “The situation in the Great Lakes region” convened on Monday, 12 April 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 7 May 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia**

[Original: French]

I thank you for this opportunity to present the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2021/306) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

At the outset, I wish to reiterate my sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the United Republic of Tanzania for the death of President John Pombe Joseph Magufuli on 17 March. I extend my warmest congratulations and best wishes to President Hassan on her accession to the highest office.

It has been one year since the first case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was reported in the region. Since then, nearly 2 million cases have been reported across the 13 countries that signed the Framework agreement. More than 60,000 lives have been lost. I would like to pay my respects to their memory and express my solidarity with those who are still suffering the negative consequences of the pandemic, including women, who are disproportionately affected.

Against the backdrop of this difficult situation, the Governments and the peoples of the region continue to show resilience and determination. To them, I would like to express my sympathy and admiration. Let me also commend the Governments of the region that have put in place programmes to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic, as well as those that, through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility and other means, have started vaccination campaigns. Using a conservative estimate, those campaigns have delivered just over 1 million doses in the region. I invite the members of the Security Council to continue mobilizing to promote more equitable and affordable access to vaccines, including in areas of armed conflict, in accordance with resolution 2565 (2021), adopted on 26 February. I also reiterate my call to the international community to continue to support the countries of the region in their fight against the pandemic.

Despite this particularly difficult context, the leaders of the region have maintained their commitment to the Addis Ababa Framework agreement, as demonstrated by several political, security, judicial and economic initiatives. Let me highlight a few.

On the political and security front, President Tshilombo Tshisekedi has continued to engage his counterparts in the region, in particular Presidents Kagame, Museveni and Ndayishimiye, in an effort to find concerted and lasting solutions to the issue of armed groups that continue to cause chaos in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend these efforts and reiterate my commitment to support the Heads of State so that the region can overcome this scourge, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and in close collaboration with the other guarantor institutions of the Framework agreement — the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community.

We can achieve this ambitious goal if, in addition to the military actions under way, we also work to put in place non-military arrangements as part of a comprehensive and coordinated approach, as requested by the Heads of State of the region at their summit on 20 November. In that respect, I am pleased to announce that the guarantors of the Framework agreement are supporting the operationalization

of the contact and coordination group, thus bringing together civilian and military experts from the countries of the region. The group's first meeting should be held in the next few weeks in order to further spell out the package of non-military measures to be taken, as well as a possible implementation programme.

Still in the context of strengthening regional political cooperation, I would also like to pay tribute to President Lourenço of Angola, who, before taking over the chairmanship of the ICGLR in November, had already committed — alongside his counterpart from the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to bringing Rwanda and Uganda closer together in the framework of the quadripartite process. During my latest tour of the region, the main actors all assured me of their firm commitment to remain involved in this process. In view of this expression of political will, I encourage Presidents Lourenço and Tshilombo Tshisekedi to continue their efforts to ensure that this process reaches a successful conclusion, and I reiterate my readiness to support them, if necessary.

I would also like to encourage Burundi and Rwanda in their efforts to improve their relations. In recent months, we have witnessed a series of encouraging gestures that testify to the common will of both countries to move forward. I am referring to meetings between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, consultations between the security services on securing the border zone and the return of Burundian refugees. All of this augurs well and, with the consent of the authorities, I intend to continue to play my part in helping these two brotherly countries to consolidate those achievements and to remove any obstacle to the definitive and unreserved normalization of their relations.

Despite this progress, the region continues to face certain challenges, exacerbated by COVID-19. Among them, I remain particularly concerned about the level of violence that continues to affect the safety of individuals, especially women and youth, and to impede the full development of communities. The continued violence perpetrated by armed groups is appalling. We must put an end to it — not only through the strong measures under way, but also through the use of justice. I would like to welcome the various exemplary verdicts reached against leaders of armed groups in recent months, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's national courts and in the International Criminal Court.

Unfortunately, some countries of the region have experienced elections marred by violence and loss of life. While it is difficult to put an end to armed group activity, I am convinced that it is not impossible to dream of a Great Lakes region free of the horrors of electoral violence, provided that we have the means to bring it about, particularly through stepping up preventive action. I therefore call on all people of goodwill to mobilize to promote a calm environment conducive to the holding of inclusive, free and transparent elections, in full compliance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

The region seems to be firmly on the right track to addressing the security, political and economic challenges that plague it. However, it will need the continued support of the international community. That is one of the main challenges and objectives of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, prepared by my Office at the request of the Secretary-General and transmitted to the Security Council on 3 December. Indeed, the Strategy intends to make the most of the various United Nations entities present in the region to better serve its people and countries in their quest for peace, stability and sustainable development. We will do so with the Council's support and the cooperation of the countries that signed the Framework agreement, keeping in mind the requirements of the peace-humanitarian-development nexus.

In that spirit, I will continue to engage with the countries and organizations of the region, my fellow Special Representatives of the Secretary-General operating in the region, the Resident Coordinators, as well as experts and civil society organizations, in order to develop a Strategy action plan. The aim will be to identify priority actions together, duly considering the progress being made and the persistent challenges, as well as the comparative advantages of each country and, above all, the needs of the countries of the region.

In addition to the elaboration of the action plan for a coordinated implementation of our collective Strategy, in the coming weeks my Office will focus on a few priority tasks that I would like to share with you before concluding.

First, I will continue the Secretary-General's good offices to support the ongoing efforts of rapprochement and political dialogue in the region. Building on the successful engagement I have had with the authorities of the countries of the region and in keeping with a patient and discreet approach, I will resume consultations, as appropriate, subject to the evolving pandemic.

Secondly, alongside the guarantors of the Framework agreement and with the support of MONUSCO, we will provide all the necessary support for the operationalization of the contact and coordination group on non-military measures. Furthermore, we will pursue high-level political advocacy and mobilize the necessary resources to achieve the desired objectives.

Thirdly, we must protect natural resources. The issue of armed groups will not be resolved once and for all unless, as has often been said, we address the root causes of instability in the region, and in particular the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Aware of the key role of these resources for the development and prosperity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the other countries of the region, we must therefore reflect on an innovative approach to combat the illicit exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources.

Fourthly, in collaboration with the ICGLR and the German Agency for International Cooperation, my Office intends to organize a high-level regional workshop with the objective of developing a three-year regional action plan focused on increasing synergy among all actors and partners so as to promote transparent natural resource management in the region.

These four priorities will keep us busy in the coming months. It goes without saying, however, that in line with the aims of the regional Strategy, my Office will remain fully mobilized on other equally urgent issues — support for the recovery efforts of countries of the region, the promotion of human rights and the fight against impunity, and the mobilization of youth organizations and women's organizations, including the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region, to advance the objectives of the Framework agreement.

In conclusion, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the members of the Security Council, to the Peacebuilding Commission and to other States that have continuously provided financial and technical support to my Office for the implementation of my mandate since I took office in 2019. I know that I can still count on your support in pursuit of our common goal: a peaceful, stable and prosperous Great Lakes region.

Annex II

Briefing by the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees

I would like to start by thanking you for the invitation to brief the Security Council on the continued engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in support of peacebuilding and regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region, which supports the mandate of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, with the consent of the countries of the region, and complements the work of the Security Council in the region.

Before I present some highlights of PBC engagement, I would like to acknowledge the Special Envoy's comprehensive briefing on the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. I look forward to our continued cooperation in support of its implementation, particularly with regard to the peacebuilding priority areas in which the PBC has a comparative advantage.

Since its first meeting on the Great Lakes region in November 2017, the PBC has emphasized the importance of mobilizing support for peacebuilding and regional cooperation initiatives in the broader context of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. During a more recent meeting, in June, the Commission discussed ways to support regional socioeconomic cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes as a key component of building and sustaining peace and fostering sustainable development. That is even more important in the midst of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the continuing challenges posed by the Ebola virus. The PBC noted that the COVID-19 pandemic could contribute to the deterioration of regional macroeconomic indicators and the disruption of economic activities and increase pressure on national budgets, thereby affecting the countries' capacities to address peace and security challenges.

PBC engagement in the Great Lakes region has promoted the role of women in peacebuilding and development in the region. In November, the PBC considered the recommendations that emerged from a series of regional consultations designed by regional women leaders, with support from the Office of the Special Envoy, and well attended by a broad array of local and international stakeholders. The recommendations centred around the need to prevent all forms of violence, particularly sexual violence, against women; to empower women and youth as agents of social and economic transformation, particularly in view of COVID-19; and to promote their meaningful participation in political processes and peacebuilding. As Ms. Brenda Denousse, a woman business leader from the region, noted at a recent PBC meeting, small and medium enterprises, particularly those owned by women, have experienced the largest effects of the risk associated with COVID-19 compared with large-scale businesses. Informal cross-border trade, another important source of income for many women in the region, has also diminished owing to the impact of the pandemic. The Commission committed to remaining engaged with the countries of the Great Lakes region, including by advocating for resource mobilization and giving due attention to women-led peacebuilding and development initiatives in the region. The PBC will continue to advocate for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and youth in peacebuilding in the region, in line with its recently adopted action plan.

Furthermore, the PBC collaborates closely with international financial institutions and regional actors, including by inviting them regularly to our meetings. Thanks to that collaborative approach, the Commission has stayed abreast

of the World Bank's regional support for the Great Lakes, which is complemented by the Bank's increased country-based support to promote resilience and prevent resurgence of crises. The World Bank Great Lakes initiative, with total commitments of approximately \$1 billion in support for the PSC Framework, aims to promote peace, stability and economic development through economic cooperation and regional integration. It reinforces other financial instruments designed to tackle vulnerabilities and improve community resilience. At the PBC meeting in June, the Bank also presented additional resources to support country responses to COVID-19 and underlined the readiness of the Bank to work with partners to strengthen regional integration, including through the World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020–2025.

The PBC supports the cross-border cooperation in the region in the context of the PSC Framework, including ongoing support for enhanced security cooperation. The PBC has also welcomed and encouraged continuous Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) contributions in support for national, cross-border and regional peacebuilding initiatives in the region. Past and ongoing projects funded by the PBF in the Great Lakes region amount to \$167 million and cover Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. The PBF investments in the region on cross-border trade and food security, as well as in support of the reintegration of former combatants in the region, contribute to the work of the Special Envoy in the region and to the broad implementation of the PSC Framework.

Furthermore, we will discuss with the Special Envoy and countries of the region which areas of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region the PBC can support. That could include helping to mobilize international support for processes involving the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants from various armed groups in the Great Lakes region.

We also remain engaged to help mobilize international partners in the context of the upcoming Kigali Investment Forum, organized jointly by the Special Envoy's office, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Rwanda Development Board. We will also continue to consolidate our partnership with the World Bank and other international financial institutions in strengthening regional integration, including through the instruments supporting a coordinated response to COVID-19 and post-COVID recovery. Furthermore, and to be able to harness the full economic capabilities of the region, the PBC encourages joint efforts to promote transparency and the integrated regional management of natural resources, including through the Regional Certification Mechanism.

To conclude, the PBC will continue to support the countries of the region, according to their nationally identified priorities and in coordination with the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the United Nations system, including in the context of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. We will also work to build a more coherent approach that brings all the stakeholders together for the sake of stability, development and prosperity in the Great Lakes region, in line with resolution 2389 (2017). The PBC remains ready to continue to exercise its advisory role to the Security Council in that regard.

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Dai Bing**

[Original: Chinese]

I thank Special Envoy Xia and Ambassador Edrees, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their briefings.

For some time, the countries of the Great Lakes region have been working hard to overcome the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, deepen cooperation and trust, promote common development and build up momentum for peace and stability. At the same time, the region remains afflicted by armed conflicts and intercommunal violence and continues to face multiple challenges in the areas of socioeconomic development and livelihood improvement, the resolution of which will require greater attention and investment from the international community. In the light of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/306), I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, we call for the steadfast implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Recently the number of cross-border security incidents in the Great Lakes region has decreased significantly. Several countries in the region have completed their general elections. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to improve its relations with neighbouring countries, and the dialogue between Burundi and Rwanda has resumed.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community have reached greater consensus on regional issues. Mutual political trust among countries in the region has become ever stronger, and the concept of resolving differences through dialogue and consultation has taken hold. China is pleased with those developments and hopes that all parties will maintain the momentum for cooperation, operationalize the contact and coordination group, strengthen the monitoring and verification mechanism and hold the 10th high-level meeting of the regional oversight mechanism when conditions permit so as to inject more positive energy into the regional situation.

Secondly, we underscore the need to eliminate the root causes of conflict. The Great Lakes region is rich in resources and has enormous development potential. The countries of the region should seize the opportunity of the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area, boost regional economic cooperation and translate natural resources into people's well-being rather than allow them to drive conflicts and wars, with a view to promoting peace through development. It is essential to provide former combatants with viable livelihoods and remove any incentives to be involved in armed conflict so as to enhance the sustainability of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. COVID-19 has inflicted a strong shock on the Great Lakes region. The international community should make the COVID vaccine more accessible and affordable to the region in order to help the countries there fight the pandemic and overcome the difficulties.

Thirdly, we call for enhanced coordination of United Nations entities in the Great Lakes region. In order to address the highly complicated situation in region, the Office of the Special Envoy is formulating an action plan in implementation of the new United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. We hope that the Special Envoy's Office will adhere to a problem-driven approach, strengthen policy coherence and operations coordination, leverage the respective advantages of the various

United Nations agencies, focus on promoting post-pandemic reconstruction and eliminating the root causes of conflicts, and devise practical plans. According to the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy assumes the important responsibility of leading, coordinating and evaluating the implementation of the PSC framework. The PBC, with its extensive mandates that dovetail with the needs of the Great Lakes region, is in a unique position to facilitate the implementation of the PSC framework. Special Envoy Xia should continue to maintain close coordination with the relevant countries and regional organizations as well as other United Nations agencies and make important contributions to improving the regional situation. The PBC, under the leadership of Ambassador Edrees, has made tremendous efforts for the Great Lakes region as well. We hope that the Office of the Special Envoy and the PBC will further strengthen cooperation and generate synergies. We also hope that the members of the Security Council will lend their strong support.

Supporting the Great Lakes region on its path towards prosperity and stability is a collective responsibility of the international community. The Security Council's attention to and investment in this region should be strengthened rather than weakened. We hope that all members of the Council will maintain unity and cohesion, proceed on the basis of ensuring the well-being of the people of the region and participate constructively in discussions on the relevant issues. China has been actively supporting countries in the region in the COVID-19 response and post-pandemic recovery and will continue to contribute to the long-term peace and stability of the region.

Annex IV**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations, Gert Auväärt**

I thank the briefers for their valuable review.

The coronavirus disease pandemic continues to negatively affect the region. Regrettably, the series of recent security incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have in no way improved the situation. Socioeconomic instability, human rights violations and abuses, and conflicts with the involvement of armed groups are of great concern. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on women and youth, and we are concerned that the armed groups continued to use sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war.

I would like to underline that the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations are critical to the prevention of abuses. We learned about recent court rulings in the region against perpetrators of serious crimes. We also learned about the acquittal of journalists. Those positive developments provide prospects for the people in the region in the fight against impunity and also bring the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance closer to implementation.

We would like to recall that peaceful political and electoral processes are of great importance to stability in the region. Accordingly, we call upon all stakeholders to ensure that the upcoming elections in some countries of the region remain peaceful, free and credible. I take this opportunity to underline the importance of the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all political processes and welcome the steps taken in that regard.

Greater cooperation and the economic integration of the countries of the region are vital to peace and development. Therefore, we are pleased to see improvements in the bilateral and multilateral relations among some of the countries in the region. In particular, we note the commitments to address common threats such as the health crisis, forced displacement, cross-border security and violations committed by armed groups, as well as the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Those positive developments would support the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and trigger its action plan.

Finally, I wish to thank the Special Envoy for his leadership and tireless efforts to contribute the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and to overcome the instability prevailing in the region.

Annex V

Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière

[Original: French]

I thank Mr. Huang Xia and Ambassador Edrees for their briefings. I would like to come back briefly to three points.

First, several positive developments have taken place in recent months in terms of bilateral and regional cooperation. The cooperation efforts between Rwanda and Uganda as well as Burundi must be supported. The encouraging momentum begun since the election of President Tshisekedi must continue in order to further reduce tensions and build confidence.

Secondly, France condemns the continued attacks by armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Efforts must also be redoubled to ensure full respect for human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law, as well as to promote the full participation of women in the peace process. While humanitarian needs remain considerable, in particular for the large number of refugees and displaced persons, France and the European Union will continue to support them, as they have done so far, in particular through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace. That instrument mobilized more than €24 million for the region from 2016 to 2020. Humanitarian contributions paid by France have also exceeded €10 million over the past two years.

Finally, the States of the region and their partners must remain mobilized to address the root causes of conflicts and fully implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism is vital in order to ensure the follow-up of the agreement and must be held as soon as possible. The presidency of the African Union also offers the Democratic Republic of the Congo the opportunity to give a decisive impetus to the consolidation of peace and the strengthening of economic and trade cooperation in the region.

It is also key that the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region be rapidly operationalized through the formulation of an action plan. The Secretary-General's Special Envoy knows that he can count on our full support in that regard.

Annex VI**Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti**

I thank Special Envoy Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing on the developments in the Great Lakes region. I welcome Ambassador Mohamed Edrees of Egypt, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), to this meeting and thank him for his remarks on the Commission's engagement in support of peacebuilding and regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region. We also welcome the PBC's continued engagement and active role in the region.

Let me take this opportunity to reiterate our deepest condolences on the passing of the Honourable President John Pombe Magufuli last month. He will always be remembered for his strong commitment to nation-building and for his steadfast devotion to the welfare of the people of Tanzania.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is an essential mechanism to achieve lasting peace and security in the Great Lakes region. The PSC Framework, with the involvement of 13 countries in the region and the guarantors, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations, has been playing an important role in the past eight years towards consolidating peace and security in the region. The Framework has enabled countries in the region to collaborate and work together to eliminate the negative forces operating within the region. The early convening of the 10th meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism will help advance regional security cooperation further.

In recent months there have been several positive political developments. Elections have been conducted successfully in Tanzania, Uganda, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, reflecting the faith of the people in democracy. The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo assumed the rotating chairmanship of the African Union, which will have a positive impact on the region. The countries in the region have also intensified bilateral engagements, with regional organizations playing a proactive role. The continuing efforts towards normalization of relations between Rwanda and Burundi is another encouraging sign. These efforts deserve the appreciation of the Security Council.

On the security front, the number of cross-border incidents has diminished, even though the activities of armed groups continue unabated, affecting the overall security in the border areas and aggravating the humanitarian situation. We are also concerned by the growth of terrorism in the region. In this regard, we encourage more active collaboration among the national security forces of the region to address common security threats. We also encourage the active implementation of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to address security-related issues, particularly along the borders of countries in the region.

The illegal exploitation and extraction of natural resources is one of the major drivers of conflict in the Great Lakes region. We welcome the steps taken by the Special Envoy to support regional efforts aimed at addressing this challenge. We also welcome the road map to track progress in the next three years. Regional organizations will be crucial in this effort, in particular the ICGLR, with the six tools set forth in its Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, including the establishment of a certification and tracing mechanism.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has exacerbated the socioeconomic difficulties that the countries in the region are already facing. With

more than 15 million displaced in the region and many thousands of refugees, the region needs continuous support and assistance.

We welcome the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. The implementation of the Strategy needs to be in line with the priorities of countries of the region.

India has close bilateral relationships with all countries in the Great Lakes region. A key driver of these relationships is the people-to-people contact that has existed for many years, with a large Indian diaspora in the region. We have also collaborated through the exchange of experts and expertise, training programmes and capacity-building, and enhanced support for post-conflict reconstruction in the region. So far, India has extended lines of credit totalling \$3.93 billion to 10 countries for various developmental projects. In the last few months, made-in-India COVID-19 vaccines have made their way to eight countries in the Great Lakes region.

India is cognizant of the importance of peace and security to the development of the region. India has also contributed to defence and security in the region by setting up defence institutions in Tanzania; deploying training teams in Botswana, Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania; making goodwill ship visits and offering defence training programmes. Indian defence forces have been at the forefront of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, including during Cyclone Idai in Mozambique in 2019. India has been contributing to peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1962. We have also contributed troops to other United Nations missions in the region.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that India remains steadfast in its commitment to this region and will continue to support international efforts aimed at bringing about lasting peace.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

I want to thank the Special Envoy Xia for his briefing. Following last week's discussion with Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita (see S/2021/316), it is very useful to hear from the Special Envoy his own views on regional developments and the dynamics in the Great Lakes region. And I am also particularly happy to see among us this morning the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees. As Council members know, we have long advocated that the voice of the Commission should be heard at the Security Council, so we are particularly happy to hear from him this morning.

This statement is Ireland's first intervention under this agenda item during its term on the Security Council, so I want to take the opportunity to affirm my country's commitment to the region and the work of the Special Envoy's Office. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region has been our road map towards sustainable peace since 2013, with predecessor Special Envoy and former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, working as the first Special Envoy. We, Ireland, takes a serious interest in Mr. Xia's work.

Of course, the truth is that many of the challenges that were faced by the first Special Envoy in 2013 remain with us today. The deteriorating security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern provinces, as we heard last week, highlights how vital this Council's engagement remains. Many of the challenges, including human rights violations, complex humanitarian crises, environmental degradation, climate change, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and the activity of multiple armed groups, as we heard from Mr. Xia this morning, continue to undermine efforts towards peace and sustainable development.

As the Secretary-General has highlighted in his report (S/2021/306), the current coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has stretched capacities even further. We know that this COVID-19 pandemic has had a particularly adverse impact on women. We find the increase in sexual and gender-based violence associated with the pandemic particularly alarming. The continued use of sexual and gender-based violence as a weapon of war is simply unacceptable. We welcome the explicit commitments in the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region to addressing conflict-related sexual violence. We expect to see the promotion of women's roles in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding efforts. As we never cease to say, women's participation should be on a full, equal and meaningful basis.

Clearly, if we are to build sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region, then deep and meaningful regional cooperation remains absolutely essential. The progress outlined in the report of the Secretary-General, including the positive roles played by Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, respectively, is encouraging.

We know that economic development will act as an engine of progress. Still, it is not an end in itself, and the three-pillar approach of the Strategy is important. Of course, now that the Strategy has been endorsed by the Secretary-General, implementation is key. No time can be lost in agreeing a timebound and effective action plan across the three pillars and the 10 priorities that are set out therein.

Let me thank Special Envoy Xia again for his time. We look forward to working very closely with him on our shared goal of peace and prosperity in the Great Lakes region.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Juan Ramón de la Fuente Ramírez**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing and for the work his Office is doing together with regional organizations and national authorities to strengthen regional cooperation. This collaboration is an essential tool for meeting shared challenges, as well as for the economic development of the countries of the region. I am also grateful to Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission and Permanent Representative of Egypt, for his briefing. I also welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We have been closely following the unfolding events in North Kivu, and I must say that we condemn the acts of violence committed by armed groups, as well as the disproportionate responses against demonstrations by civil society groups. We also express our support for the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the progress made in strengthening dialogue, both bilaterally and regionally, in particular the resumption of talks between Burundi and Rwanda. We urge the various actors in the region to continue to focus on this path.

We consider regional coordination work to be essential, especially as one of the major challenges remains the link between the conflict and illegal economic activities based on the illicit exploitation of natural resources. This combination has serious humanitarian consequences for the civilian population, as reflected in recent reports of food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We call on Governments in the region to take firm action to address the exploitation and illicit trafficking of natural resources. The harmonization of legislation and the strengthening of judicial systems are steps that will allow for more effective investigation and punishment of those responsible for these acts. It is urgently necessary that there be consequences for perpetrators in order to prevent these practices from continuing to benefit armed groups and affecting the region's population, economic development and the environment. We hope that the workshop in Khartoum will generate new momentum to address this issue.

Finally, we will remain attentive to the new action plan for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, particularly actions related to strengthening women's participation in mediation and peacebuilding processes.

Annex IX**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Odd Inge Kvalheim**

[Original: English and French]

First of all, let me thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Huang Xia, for his insightful briefing. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission. The challenges in the Great Lakes region demonstrate the need for close cooperation between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission.

Despite the challenges related to the pandemic, we are pleased to see signs of improved regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region. We therefore encourage all stakeholders, including the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to build on recent progress and continue efforts aimed at strengthening regional diplomacy.

The continued implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region can bring stability and have a positive effect on the humanitarian situation in the region. However, enhanced protection of civilians is essential to making progress in this regard.

We are deeply concerned about reports of continuing human rights violations and abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including against children. We are also deeply concerned about reports of attacks on health-sector personnel and humanitarian workers in parts of the region. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access to people in need must be guaranteed.

We encourage the Special Envoy to continue to use the tools at his disposal to address root causes of conflict in the region, including the adverse effects of climate change, the illicit trade of natural resources and the need for reforms to end impunity. We welcome the new United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, and we look forward to receiving the related action plan. All relevant stakeholders, including women, human rights defenders and civil society, must be actively engaged.

Finally, Norway looks forward to continuing to work with the Special Envoy to promote stabilization and development in the Great Lakes region.

Annex X**Statement by Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for his detailed briefing, and the Chair of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, Mr. Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, for his briefing on the work of the Commission in favour of peacebuilding and regional cooperation in the Great Lakes region.

We share the concern expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/306) over the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region, which has deteriorated as a result of the pandemic. There have been 1.8 million confirmed cases of coronavirus disease in the region, with more than 58,000 deaths. According to updated forecasts from the International Monetary Fund, a significant economic recession is ongoing, while a debt crisis is looming.

The rather complex situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a key factor in defining the state of affairs in the region. The direst situation with security has developed in Ituri and North Kivu — areas where the Allied Democratic Forces and other groups have recently been active. Since December 2020, militants have killed over 200 civilians. We are also concerned over the fact that the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have so far been unable to solve the problem of illicit exploitation and export of natural resources from the country, which the illegal armed groups use to finance their activities.

We are convinced that military measures alone cannot ensure lasting stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are closely following domestic political developments in the country and expect the new Government, which is to be formed soon, to assume control of the security situation, improve the humanitarian status, promote sustainable socioeconomic development, solve border disputes with neighbouring States, settle intercommunal conflicts and reduce crime.

Against this backdrop, we welcome the regional commitment to fostering cooperation aimed at overcoming the pressing challenges, specifically through collective efforts. We note the agreements of the November summit of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region that stipulate better coordination of steps taken with regard to members of armed formations captured in the border areas. The Southern African Development Community has adopted measures for reconfiguring and supporting the Force Intervention Brigade of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, contacts have been made with a view to boosting economic cooperation and bilateral trade. We note progress in the relations between Uganda and Rwanda, which was achieved under the mediation of the presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. We believe that President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's term as Chairperson of the African Union this year will help to draw extra attention to this issue.

Every one of the aforementioned efforts deserves the full support of the international community. We welcome the work of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on this track, which is greatly needed. We proceed from the assumption that all countries must observe the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region. We are convinced that the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region will give an impetus to the collective efforts of actors in the region. We take note of the Special Envoy's efforts to prepare

a plan of action on the implementation of the Strategy. Further, we support the good offices of Mr. Huang Xia aimed at promoting dialogue, strengthening trust and cooperation and normalizing the relations among the States of the region.

In conclusion, as a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, Russia pledges additional support for the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for stabilization in the Great Lakes region in general.

Annex XI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations, Tarek Ladeb

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

Let me first express our appreciation to Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Edrees, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), for their comprehensive and informative briefings on the situation in the region and on the activities of their respective Offices.

Our statement will focus on the security, political and humanitarian situation, as well as the prospects for the region, in the light of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

The A3+1 notes with satisfaction the relative decline in cross-border security incidents during the reporting period and commends the collaborative response efforts by States of the region. We are equally encouraged by the positive political dynamics in the region following the holding of elections in Tanzania and Uganda, as well as efforts of the leaders of countries in the Great Lakes region to further strengthen and normalize relations.

We are confident that President Tshisekedi's leadership of the African Union (AU) will foster improved cooperation across the Great Lakes region. Nevertheless, we remain deeply concerned about the volatile security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which continues to be a bleeding sore in the region. In that regard, we strongly condemn the hostile activities and deadly attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces and the Lord's Resistance Army, which have had a destabilizing impact on the whole region.

The 22 February attack on a World Food Programme convoy in north-eastern Goma was very indicative of the highly sophisticated operational capacity of such groups. While reiterating that the perpetrators should be held accountable and brought to justice, we underline the need to expedite the establishment of critical national and regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration frameworks.

We support the reconfiguration of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as proposed by the Secretariat, with a view to ensuring that the Mission remains fit for purpose. We underscore the need for enhanced close collaboration between the Mission and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through information-sharing and the coordination of activities to effectively neutralize the activities of local and foreign armed groups. We further call for enhanced and sustained support to the national defence and security institutions in readiness to assume the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On the Central African Republic, we welcome the adoption of resolution 2566 (2021), on the reinforcement of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. We support dialogue between the Government of the Central African Republic and the civil opposition for the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, fully aware that there is no military solution to the situation.

We recognize the valuable role of both the PBC, alongside its key partners, such as the World Bank and other international financial institutions, and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in supporting cross-border cooperation in the region in the context of the PSC Framework, including ongoing support for enhanced security cooperation, reconciliation and social cohesion, inclusive local governance, community reintegration of ex-combatants and durable solutions for displaced populations.

In addition to those security challenges, the region continues to be adversely impacted by the coronavirus disease pandemic, which is impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance and exacerbating the already dire humanitarian conditions of millions of individuals who have been displaced in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We invite the States of the region to enhance their cooperation on cross-border humanitarian issues, including refugee flows, and call on the international community to provide adequate assistance to those vulnerable groups.

We underscore our concern about the worrying increase in attacks against the civilian population and the worsening human rights situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups and various militias continue to commit serious violations. We commend the efforts aimed at addressing such human rights and rule-of-law violations and ensuring accountability. We further encourage the implementation of the 2019 Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance.

The full and effective implementation of the PSC Framework by all signatory States remains the critical key to bringing peace, stability and prosperity to the region. In that regard, the A3+1 commends the ongoing political efforts by signatory States to fulfil their commitments in accordance with the PSC Framework provisions. We equally value the support of regional and subregional organizations in that process.

The endemic proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in the region has exacerbated fragility and insecurity in the region. We encourage an enhanced regional approach, including through the Regional Centre on Small Arms. In that regard, we welcome the tenth Council of Ministers meeting, to be held in Kinshasa later this month.

The A3+1 is hopeful that the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which proposes a whole-of-system approach to the Great Lakes region, will serve as a supporting tool for the implementation of the PSC Framework and further enhance the nexus of peace, security, justice and sustainable development in the entire region.

In that regard, we commend the efforts of the Special Envoy and his able team in promoting peace and security in the region through good offices, mediation and preventive diplomacy, as well as capacity-building activities, which are mutually benefiting to the countries of the region.

We further acknowledge the efforts of the Special Envoy to address long-standing challenges posed by the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources in the subregion. We therefore look forward to his road map document towards the transparent and sustainable management of natural resources.

In conclusion, the A3+1 welcomes the recommendation by the Secretary-General and underscores the importance of the efforts led by regional and subregional organizations, namely, the AU, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, along with the East African Community and all partners, to further consolidate the gains achieved in the implementation of the PSC Framework and to promote regional cooperation, which will ultimately lead to long-standing peace and sustainable development in the region.

Annex XII

Statement by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

The United Kingdom welcomes the publication of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and thanks Special Envoy Xia for the update on its implementation. I would also like to thank Ambassador Edrees, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing today.

We also welcome the establishment of a cross-United Nations senior policy group to guide implementation of the strategy and oversee the formulation of an action plan.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about human rights violations and abuses, including as a result of increased armed group activity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are seeking to support President Tshisekedi in working with partners to address those concerns. We welcome coordination between Special Envoy Xia and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), on eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including MONUSCO's withdrawal strategy.

The United Kingdom recognizes that the abundant natural resources in the Great Lakes region are a source of funding for armed groups and a driver of conflict. We therefore support Special Envoy Xia's work to assist Governments in the Great Lakes region to address the management of natural resources.

Annex XIII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**

Let me thank Special Envoy Xia and Ambassador Edrees for their briefings today.

I am going to be brief, as we described in detail our concerns about the regional dimensions of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo during the 30 March Security Council meeting (see S/2021/316).

We know from last week's briefings that the consequences of inaction are dire. We are particularly troubled by the protests in North Kivu last week, which turned violent, highlighting civilian anger about unceasing armed group attacks. The Congolese people, our colleagues in MONUSCO and the tens of millions of people in the region need us to be ambitious, and they need us to be swift. We must reduce the illegal flows of minerals, arms and fighters that continue to fuel the violence.

As Council members know, the United States was heavily involved in regional diplomacy in 2012 and 2013, which led to the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the establishment of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. We continue to support the new United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which was approved six months ago. We urge the Special Envoy to act swiftly with regard to the regional strategy by pursuing high-level shuttle diplomacy and supporting the full implementation of the PSC Framework.

Although the coronavirus disease pandemic remains an obstacle, we hope that the Special Envoy's Office will work creatively in the coming months, in partnership with dynamic regional leaders, to identify opportunities for diplomatic engagement on the commitments made under the PSC Framework. We need to push those commitments forward.

Together, we can help the Great Lakes countries overcome a traumatic history and fulfil their rich potential.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations, Dang Dinh Quy**

Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to Special Envoy Huang Xia and Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees for their briefings. I also welcome the participation of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2021/306) — an agreement that continues to play a vital role towards peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. At today's meeting, Viet Nam would like to highlight the three following points.

First, on the centrality of regional cooperation, we are elated to witness the genuine commitment of the signatory States. That has been illustrated by the willingness to enhance relations by promoting dialogue and cooperation through both bilateral and multilateral channels.

We warmly welcome the high-level engagement among members of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community to tackle security issues, as well as the promising development of bilateral relations in the region. We are convinced that the current spirit of partnership will continue to bear fruit.

Secondly, regarding the need to address the root causes of instability, the security situation in certain parts of the region remains a source of concern. The volatile situation in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo persists due to the illegal activities of armed groups. The situation in the Central African Republic has been marred by election-related insecurity caused by armed groups.

At the same time, the humanitarian situation is still marked by a significant number of people requiring protection and assistance. The coronavirus disease pandemic continues to exacerbate socioeconomic difficulties and the plight of vulnerable populations, including millions of displaced persons and refugees.

Therefore, it is fundamentally important that the root causes of instability be addressed in the most comprehensive and pragmatic manner. In that regard, we encourage the continued intensification of ongoing diplomatic efforts, as well as further cooperation in the governance of natural resources.

Thirdly, with regard to the valuable support of the international community, technical and financial support for regional countries remains critical to preserving the hard-won achievements and further promoting stability in the region.

Accordingly, we commend the significant contribution of regional and international partners, including the guarantors of the Framework agreement. We also highly appreciate the active engagement of the Special Envoy and the Peacebuilding Commission with stakeholders in facilitating cooperation and development in the region.

Let me conclude by reiterating our full support for the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which has a timeline that corresponds to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The synergy of United Nations support, in close coordination with regional stakeholders as well as international partners, will greatly facilitate efforts towards sustainable peace and development for the people in the Great Lakes region.

Annex XV

Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, Paul Losoko Efambe Empole

[Original: French]

First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the initiative of organizing this meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's thanks to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his report (S/2021/306), which was just presented to us by Mr. Huang Xia, his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, whose presence we welcome. I would also like to thank Ambassador Mohamed Fathi Ahmed Edrees, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Egypt and Chairperson of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his briefing.

Allow me to make a few observations and remarks on some of the points addressed in the report, particularly those relating to the security, political, humanitarian and human rights situations and the implementation of the Framework agreement.

The objective of signing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013 was to create the conditions for a definitive solution to the recurring wars in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is clear that efforts to implement the Framework agreement have been made by both the Congolese State and the other stakeholders. However, on the ground, we unfortunately note that, despite some progress, everything that has been done has not achieved the expected results. Indeed, as the Secretary-General underlines in his report before us, the security situation remains worrisome in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region.

We must therefore all redouble our efforts to revive the Framework agreement and promote its implementation through new initiatives, while continuing to strengthen regional cooperation, which must be conducted at all levels and supported by all. That regional cooperation should cover both military and non-military measures, as well as prevention and peacebuilding measures. In that context, summit meetings among regional Heads of State, ministers and members of the security services and defence forces should be held.

At the political level, the momentum generated by the Heads of State of the region, in particular Their Excellencies Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. João Lourenço, President of Angola; Mr. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda; and Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, should be sustained and strengthened. Such summit dialogue is crucial to easing tensions in the region, restoring trust among leaders and better coordinating efforts to neutralize negative forces.

At the military level, given the threat posed by local and external armed groups, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) continue to track down internal and external negative forces in the subregion, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), whose barbarity is unparalleled, but also the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Lord's Resistance Army.

Furthermore, in accordance with the political will expressed by the Heads of State of the countries of the subregion, the FARDC has been in contact with all the armies of neighbouring countries in order to develop in-depth strategies to resolve

once and for all the thorny issue of insecurity in the subregion, as recommended by the spirit and letter of the Arusha Agreement. In this respect, the FARDC favours strengthening military cooperation, regular consultations among the armies of the region and the pooling of efforts and intelligence to effectively combat and neutralize all armed groups once and for all. Other meetings have also taken place within the same framework of consultations, as indicated in several paragraphs of the report.

The initiatives must also include and give due consideration to non-military measures, in respect of which discussions and reflections should be enhanced and the necessary provisions and programmes established in accordance with the recommendation of the Heads of State of the region.

Indeed, the eighth ordinary summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held by video conference on 20 October 2020, approved and adopted the principle of a comprehensive approach in the fight against negative forces and recommended the operationalization of the contact and coordination group in charge of coordinating the implementation of non-military measures aimed at capitalizing on and complementing, on the ground, the impact of ongoing and future military operations to neutralize the negative forces. This decision by the Heads of State was taken on the basis of extensive consultations among the heads of the military and civilian intelligence services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commissions in the region, and facilitated by the guarantors of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement and the National Oversight Mechanism.

In accordance with this decision and after consultation with the National Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the guarantors of the implementation of the Framework agreement, the Democratic Republic of Congo will host, in the next few days, the technical workshop to launch the activities and develop the action plan of the contact and coordination group.

As we pointed out at our last Security Council meeting on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (see S/2021/316), the population is tired of crying and counting their dead. They do not really feel protected from this tragedy and are asking for something to be done about the strategy of terror being applied by the armed groups, mainly the Allied Democratic Forces. We must, in addition to the initiatives that exist, devise innovative solutions for the promotion of peace.

It is in this context of innovations that the President of the Republic, Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, has defined a new approach to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme by merging it with the stabilization and reconstruction plan. As such, the new disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration programme, which was announced at the end of the security meeting that included the governors of the eastern provinces of the country and which was held in Bukavu on 9 October 2019, under the presidency of the Head of State, favours a community-based and integrated approach that leverages all local resources with the main objective of ensuring the stability and security of local communities in order to promote development for all.

According to this new approach, the disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo is to be prepared and implemented by the provincial governments, under the leadership of a national coordinator who will be appointed shortly after the exit of the Government in the formation of the Union sacrée pour la nation.

It is true that the realization of this programme will face certain challenges, in particular security and financial challenges. It will therefore be necessary to mobilize

enormous resources. In that regard, the contribution of donors and other partners, including MONUSCO and the Peacebuilding Commission, is very important to the success of the programme, in order to break the vicious cycle of demobilized combatants, both national and foreign, who lay down their arms.

Another innovative solution is the development of a road map whose objective is to bring together all institutions, services and active forces to work in a coordinated manner to identify and address the root causes, strengthen conflict management capacities, reinforce national cohesion, as well as regional and international cooperation to end conflicts. In this framework, the necessary measures should be taken with regard to the military approach by strengthening operational capacities, among others, as well as strengthening intelligence services; and with regard to the non-military approach, which involves the sustainable development of localities and the pursuit of community disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

The objective is to mobilize the stakeholders in a synchronized manner on how to proceed in practical terms in order to take joint action to sustainably resolve the security problem that persists in the east of our country. It is in this spirit that the National Oversight Mechanism has initiated and organized, in collaboration with the guarantors of the Framework agreement, a series of meetings of the security and intelligence services of the main countries in the region, namely: Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains committed to the Framework agreement and has always endeavoured to implement all the commitments made under it. It will continue to assume its share of responsibility for the return of peace and harmony in the region.

My country therefore thanks the guarantors for renewing their commitment, on 24 February in Kinshasa, during the days of reflection organized on the occasion of the eighth anniversary of the signing of the agreement, to support the signatory countries and civil society actors in their search for security, development and stability with a view to its full implementation.

Without being exhaustive, other initiatives for the promotion of peace could also include economic cooperation and regional integration; the repatriation of refugees and other displaced persons to their places of origin in accordance with current international legislation; regional judicial cooperation; the involvement of women, young persons, civil society organizations and unifying activities, such as sports and culture, in peacebuilding and regional integration initiatives, as well as the identification of best practices to be maintained in order to meet the challenges of implementation; the need to mobilize international support in the fight against the smuggling and illicit trafficking of natural resources and arms and ammunition, which drive and fuel criminal activities and insecurity; the resumption of offensive operations by MONUSCO and even their intensification; the application of preventive measures, such as the use of the Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework and the Gender, Peace and Security Programme of the African Union Commission, and so forth.

On the humanitarian front, in addition to the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also facing other epidemics and diseases, such as Ebola and measles, which are straining its health system, in particular in the eastern provinces of the country. There is also the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons, whose numbers are increasing owing to the security situation.

These displaced persons, the majority of whom are women and children, are living in dire conditions which call for international solidarity. Indeed, these populations live without shelter and health care, without access to toilets and drinking water, and without enough essential items, such as blankets or mattresses.

As we have already stressed to the Council, the issue of human rights violations and restrictions on democratic space is at the heart of the work of His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, President of the Republic, who, upon taking office, pledged to work to promote the rule of law and to combat corruption and impunity. This commitment has already been translated into action through several measures.

Today, the improvement of the political climate is a reality through the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, the closing of illegal jails, the humanization of the intelligence services, the peaceful return of political exiles and refugees, the reopening of the opposition media, the broadcasting of opposition activities on the Congolese national radio and television station — the public channel — and the promotion of good governance in the management of public affairs.

Unfortunately, the particular situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is marked by alarming violence, is also the result of ongoing human rights violations in that part of the country.

However, my Government believes that MONUSCO's statistics with regard to these alleged violations by State agents, which are included in paragraph 29 of the report under consideration, should be reviewed, because there is a problem in their formulation.

Once again, my delegation believes that it would be more appropriate, as we have repeatedly requested, to discuss the methodologies used and the information collected and, if necessary, to consolidate the data before making it official and publishing it.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reaffirm the commitment and determination of His Excellency Félix-Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi to reform and combat the armed groups and negative forces that are scouring the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to respond to the people's deep and immense expectations for peace and to promote sustainable development.

I would also like to take this opportunity to invite us to invest in peace in the Great Lakes region because the dividends of peace benefit everyone. Without peace, there is no social progress, no individual or collective fulfilment.

The people of the Great Lakes region aspire to a better life and to become a totally peaceful, prosperous and stable region that is capable of serving as an engine for the entire continent because of its immense human and natural potential.

I cannot conclude this statement without expressing my delegation's thanks to all the members of the Security Council for the special attention and great interest they have always shown whenever they are called upon to consider the situation concerning my country.
