



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

8630th meeting

Thursday, 3 October 2019, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Matjila/Mr. Mabhongo	(South Africa)
<i>Members:</i>	Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
	China	Mr. Zhang Jun
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
	Dominican Republic	Mr. Singer Weisinger
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Germany	Mr. Heusgen
	Indonesia	Mr. Djani
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Peru	Mr. Duclos
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Mrs. Craft

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

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/2019/783)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

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/2019/783)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2019/783, which contains 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.

I now give the floor to Mr. Huang Xia.

Mr. Huang Xia (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to brief the Security Council on the report (S/2019/783) of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I begin my statement with a hint of optimism because the Great Lakes region is, more than ever, firmly committed to its path towards stability. Significant steps have been taken in the implementation of the Framework agreement, thanks in particular to the peaceful transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the restated willingness of the region's leaders to face together the challenges that hinder its development.

After taking up office, Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, pledged to work closely with his peers to restore peace and security in the east of the country. That diplomatic

overture was welcomed by all of the Heads of State I met in the region, who assured me of their commitment to supporting the momentum in cooperation. In that regard, tripartite and quadripartite meetings, held thanks to the good offices of the Congolese President and the Angolan President, led to a rapprochement between Uganda and Rwanda, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between those two brotherly countries.

I would like to commend here the Government of Uganda and the Government of Rwanda for their commitment to easing tensions and restoring brotherly cooperation between them. I must also commend Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their determination to promote dialogue and the peaceful resolution of disputes among the countries of the region. I call on the Council to encourage the continuation of those efforts.

The desire for cooperation in the area of security has recently led to consultations among the security and defence services of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those of neighbouring countries, in particular Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, held with a view to strengthening their cooperation in fighting armed groups operating in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those initiatives underline the relevance of a holistic regional approach to addressing the security threat.

Given the observations I have made thus far, I can assure members that there is considerable opportunity to address the root causes of insecurity. Enhancing regional cooperation is therefore of the utmost importance to enable people to benefit from their region's wealth. To that end, development programmes must be strengthened and regional integration improved. It is by understanding the correlation between peace and security that are guaranteed, on one hand, and development and prosperity that are more evenly distributed, on the other, that the region will succeed in changing its current approach, which remains focused on conflict management. Indeed, many challenges remain. The insecurity caused by the presence and activism of foreign and local armed groups in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a major concern. Moreover, the illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources fuel an illegal economy that sustains those armed groups.

Forced population displacements caused by insecurity remain frequent. In addition, greater efforts are needed to protect and promote human rights in order to ensure greater justice, equality and respect for the dignity of individuals. In that regard, allow me to share with the Council some initiatives led by my Office, together with the other guarantors of the Framework agreement, to support the signatory countries.

With regard to security cooperation for the purposes of neutralizing negative forces, the guarantors of the Framework agreement, together with the national monitoring mechanism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, facilitate consultations among the heads of the intelligence services of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania. That initiative is a follow-up to the guidelines of the most recent summit of the Regional Monitoring Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and seeks to strengthen the climate of trust and promote a common approach in the fight against foreign armed groups operating in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In that context, my Office has undertaken consultations with the countries concerned on the issue of non-military measures that could complement military operations. Although the military option remains crucial, complementary programmes must be put in place, with the support of the international community, to facilitate the voluntary disarmament, repatriation and reintegration of those groups in their countries of origin, as well as the rehabilitation of affected communities.

Furthermore, cross-border projects that create employment for young people must be implemented. Regional cooperation and integration are being revitalized. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda have expressed their interest in initiating a political conversation on the issue of natural resources, with a view to using them as a springboard for bringing about shared prosperity.

My Office is also supporting preparations for the second iteration of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, to be held in Kigali in March 2020. The Rwandan President, Mr. Paul Kagame, assured me of his firm commitment to holding the Conference. I call on the members of the Council to support that

initiative, which will enable highlighting the role of the private sector in the search for lasting peace.

Judicial cooperation and the fight against impunity have been strengthened thanks to the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance by the Ministers of Justice of the Great Lakes region in May. Follow-up measures were undertaken to ensure their implementation, including by the strengthening judicial cooperation among the signatory countries.

Promoting the role of women, youth and civil society is one of my priorities. In partnership with UN-Women, the African Union, FemWise-Africa and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, my Office is leading joint solidarity and advocacy missions to encourage women's participation in decision-making bodies and political and peace processes, as well as a definitive rejection of the culture of impunity, above all with regard to gender-based violence.

My Office is also working closely with civil society for a concerted and inclusive approach towards bringing peace and development of the region. To that end, consultations between the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and civil society took place in Nairobi in September and led to recommendations for improving civil society's involvement in political processes and the achievement of gender parity.

It is fitting to note that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will succeed Uganda at the helm the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and that the next summit of the Mechanism will be held in Kinshasa.

There is more hope than ever, and we must redouble our efforts to support the region on the path it has embarked upon towards positive change.

In conclusion, I thank Council members for their valuable guidance dating back to the very beginning of my mandate. I duly remain at their disposal so that together we can support the countries of the region in their drive towards achieving lasting peace and shared prosperity.

The President: I thank Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

I would to acknowledge the presence of the members of Committee of Experts of African Union

Peace and Security Council and welcome them in the Chamber today.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I thank Mr. Huang Xia very much for his briefing.

For several months, the Great Lakes region has seen a new dynamic, energized by President Tshisekedi and the support of President Lourenço and the commitment of Presidents Museveni and Kagame. Such resolve to reduce insecurity has already allowed for tangible progress. The meetings held in Kinshasa on 31 May and in Luanda on 12 July and 21 August led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Rwanda and Uganda intended to improve their political and economic relations. The decision of the Southern African Development Community to strengthen its cooperation with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is also a part of that momentum.

The situation in the region, however, continues to be unfortunately all too often characterized by the tensions and insecurity that have been on the rise over the past months in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It has also been characterized by the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the forced displacement of populations. Foreign armed groups and various militias are carrying out illicit and criminal activities in violation of the most basic rights. We commend the continuous efforts in the eastern part of the country by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which faces that situation on a daily basis.

In his effort to address those challenges, I commend the announcements made by President Tshisekedi with regard to combating impunity, improving the capacities of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and managing natural resources. I hope that those announcements will soon be translated into action, and I encourage the neighbouring countries to implement similar initiatives.

The development of good-neighbourly relations and the strengthening of border cooperation are vital to achieving the shared goal of bringing peace to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is necessary to address the root causes of regional instability at the same time, first by stopping all forms

of trafficking and the efforts of those who finance them, and developing economic opportunities based on the legal and beneficial use of natural resources for all, with a view to achieving genuine development of the region.

Those root causes must also be addressed by encouraging a reconciliation process among communities so that everyone can enjoy their civil and political rights, as well as economic opportunities, including fair access to land; by supporting the fight against impunity and respect for human rights — as Mr. Huang Xia said earlier — as well as by maintaining full humanitarian access to ensure the provision of assistance to those most vulnerable; by addressing land conflict resolutions to allow for peaceful co-existence among the various communities; and by implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for armed groups to allow for the effective reintegration of former combatants within their countries and their communities.

Such mechanisms have been initiated for the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Mouvement du 23 mars. Progress has been made, which France commends, and it must lead to its natural conclusion. In Ituri the process began with the Congolese group known as the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri. That is encouraging, and the process must be rapidly pursued in order to avoid any relapse into conflict. Time is not on our side.

In other instances it will require a combination of military and police action underpinned by incentives for demobilization and cooperation among countries of the region. The handing over of Rwandan rebels by the Burundian authorities to the Kigali authorities in April represents such an example.

Lastly, we must respond decisively to the humanitarian and health crisis affecting hundreds of thousands of people in the region owing to conflicts and the Ebola, malaria, measles and cholera epidemics. In that regard, France calls on all international partners to take action to respond to the latter. Only 30 per cent of the funds required for the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been provided. That is grossly inadequate.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General has a crucial role to play in all of those aspects through his support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and the Region and its Oversight Mechanism. France reassures him of its full support, as well as reaffirms its solidarity with the Great Lakes region and its support for reconciliation and regional development. France will remain faithful to the commitment made in 2013. We share the common goal to help forge long-term regional stability. We stand ready to work with the region to overcome current challenges.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his first briefing to the Security Council.

I would like to focus on three key points.

First, I will focus on economic development as a key factor. As the Special Envoy rightly underscored, development and economic cooperation are important drivers of peace and development in the Great Lakes region, as elsewhere, provided that they are based on respect for human rights and the environment. That priority, which we also fully support, has been reiterated numerous times by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo himself. This also requires the creation of a level playing field for investments and economic opportunities in the region. The activities and reforms undertaken to address corruption must be sustained, and there must be increased transparency in the financial and mining sectors, for instance, which would make it possible, among other things, to encourage international financial institutions to re-engage.

Secondly, our most important message — important because it underpins success in all other areas — concerns the security, political, humanitarian and human rights situation in the Great Lakes region. We welcome the new regional momentum, driven in large part by Presidents Tshilombo Tshisekedi and Lourenço. Of course, while the overall situation in the Great Lakes region remains a subject of concern and deserves our full attention, the latest regional initiatives have the potential to substantially tip the balance in the fight against the various armed groups.

On another track, we hope that future presidential, legislative and local elections in Burundi will be credible, transparent and inclusive, and place in a peaceful atmosphere in which the rights and security of all political actors are guaranteed.

Turning to humanitarian issues, the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/783) is particularly

worrying. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we remain concerned by conflicts among communities in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu. Nor must we forget that aside from the Ebola epidemic, which continues to afflict the region, malaria and cholera are still claiming many lives. We also continue to pay close attention to the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As President Tshilombo Tshisekedi stated, respect for human rights and the restoration of the rule of law are essential.

It is worrying to note that many incidents of sexual violence — 41 per cent, according to the most recent report — continue to be attributed to State actors. This only strengthens our conviction that professionalizing the security forces and combating impunity must remain priorities. President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's proactive approach is creating a better environment for carrying out the reforms that have long been awaited by the Congolese population in this particularly important area. This proactive attitude, which has included several preliminary measures, should be encouraged and supported by the international community so that the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can continue their efforts with determination. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as mandated by the Council, has a role to play here and will remain crucial in this respect.

My third point concerns strategic thinking on the Great Lakes region. Before the end of the year, we will focus on the future of MONUSCO, while elections in Burundi are planned for next year. It will be vital to devise, as quickly as possible, a United Nations approach to the Great Lakes region — a concerted approach that provides even greater coherence and that will be decidedly forward-looking.

Mr. Ipo (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is grateful for the holding of this briefing and congratulates Mr. Huang Xia, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, for his outstanding briefing on the implementation of Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the progress made in the implementation of political processes in certain countries of the Great Lakes region, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic. In the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, my country welcomes also the setting up of national institutions in the wake of the most recent elections, specifically the Parliament, as well as the appointment of the Prime Minister and the formation of the new Government. It urges the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue along this path through the implementation of the Government programme that was adopted on 6 September by the Parliament in order to meet the pressing needs of the population.

Concerning Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire takes note of the advanced state of the preparations under way for the 2020 elections and encourages all Burundian stakeholders to re-engage in a political dialogue and to pool their efforts in order to ensure the holding in 2020 of inclusive, credible and peaceful elections.

Regarding the Central African Republic, my delegation welcomes the formation of an inclusive Government and of the progressive restoration of State authority in the interior of the country following the signing on 6 February of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. We call upon all signatories to that agreement to respect their commitments by fully implementing all the provisions of the agreement in order to bring about stability and the strengthening of peace in the country.

These positive signs lead us to hope that the effective implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement by all stakeholders will make a significant contribution to the restoration of peace and stability as well as to development in the countries of the region. However, this headway must not cause us to lose sight of the security, humanitarian and health-care challenges facing the Great Lakes region, particularly the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On the security front, my delegation remains concerned by the continued activities of armed groups, which are destabilizing the provinces of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and forcing the civilian population to flee to safer areas, thus exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the country. We call on the countries of the region and international partners to further support the initiatives of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at neutralizing negative forces and stabilizing that part of the country.

Concerning the health sector, my country remains alarmed by the spread of the Ebola virus, which, despite the stepped-up efforts of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the international community, remains a threat to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader region. In that respect, we call for ongoing support from all stakeholders to tackle this disease and strengthen preventive measures throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo and well as on the borders with neighbouring countries.

In conclusion, Côte d'Ivoire would recall that the Addis Ababa agreement represents the cornerstone of lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region. It therefore urges the countries of the region that are signatories to the agreement to strengthen their cooperation in various sectors of common interest in order to collectively meet the ongoing security, health and humanitarian challenges facing the region.

Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

The Dominican Republic commends the progress that has been made in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and we also very much welcome the positive progress that we are seeing in the region, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the peaceful transition of power and the formation of the new Government.

We have seen progress in terms of the representation of women and the forging of new commitments to regional cooperation and integration. We also very much welcome the fact that in the Sudan an agreement was reached between the Transitional Military Council and the opposition coalition, Forces for Freedom and Change, to establish a civilian-led transitional Government with African Union mediation.

We are concerned about the fragile security situation, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups continue to intensify their attacks against the civilian population, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), resulting in the death of hundreds of civilians, including women and children.

Such activities have a negative impact on peace and stability across borders and throughout the region. We therefore urge the affected countries to combine their efforts to dismantle armed groups, control the illegal trafficking in natural resources and eradicate the illegal trade in arms and ammunition. Development plans that include young people affected by armed conflict are needed in order to develop their skills and meet labour demands by providing relevant educational opportunities.

The climate of insecurity adds to the worrying humanitarian situation. We note with great dismay the increasing number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons. The millions of internally displaced persons and refugees in South Sudan and other countries of the region registered during the reporting period highlight the need to continue encouraging positive developments in the political situation in the region. In the case of Burundi, while some 75,000 refugees have returned to their homes, the 400,000 Burundian refugees dispersed in the region are of great concern.

We believe in the importance of convening the upcoming Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, with a focus on cross-border investment as a critical enabler for economic integration and sustainable development, as well as the steps taken towards economic development.

A joint review of problems and opportunities is needed to address the existing challenges. It should focus on achieving regional solutions through dialogue and cooperation by fulfilling the commitments made in support of peace, security and socioeconomic development in the Great Lakes region.

In conclusion, we highlight the role played by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and MONUSCO, among others, through their efforts and cooperation in pursuit of peaceful and stable coexistence in the region.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing. The Great Lakes region is located at the heart of the African continent. It has abundant resources, vast territories and huge development potential. The Great Lakes region has long been plagued by discontent and conflict, a difficult security situation, a lack of development and a grim humanitarian outlook. Recently, thanks to

the joint efforts of the international community and countries of the region, the Great Lakes region has made many positive developments in its political and security situation. We are encouraged by that.

The new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo smoothly completed its formation. Since assuming office, President Tshilombo Tshisekedi has actively sought to improve relations with countries in the region, which has given new momentum to regional cooperation. The situation in Burundi has remained calm. Active preparations for the general elections in May 2020 are under way.

The President of South Sudan, Mr. Kiir Mayardit, recently met opposition leader Mr. Machar in Juba, which laid the groundwork for accelerating the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. A new transitional Government was established in August and is actively working to achieve economic development and to relaunch the peace process.

Since the start of his term in April, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Huang Xia has actively carried out good offices and made focused visits to countries in the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, to call for improved relations in the region and to strengthen regional cooperation and integration process. He has done a great deal of work to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region by the countries of the region. China commends such work and will continue to support the Special Envoy and his Office in performing their mandates.

China calls on the countries of the region to seize the positive momentum that has now emerged in the region by further consolidating mutual trust, strengthening cooperation and striving for the early attainment of peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. The international community should provide strong support to that end. China would like to make three proposals.

First, resolving the humanitarian crisis in the Great Lakes region is a top priority. Countries in the region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, face a grave humanitarian situation, with many displaced persons and refugees and a serious food crisis. The Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not been

effectively brought under control and risks spreading to other countries in the region. At the same time, more infectious diseases, such as measles and cholera, are also raging in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, causing a death toll that is even higher than that of the Ebola epidemic. The international community should further increase its humanitarian assistance, effectively honour its assistance commitments, narrow the funding gap for humanitarian aid and help the countries of the region to resettle and repatriate displaced persons and refugees. The Office of the Special Envoy can play a coordinating role in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

Secondly, continued efforts should be made to strengthen cooperation between countries in the region. Effective communication and cooperation among the regional countries are the basis and guarantee for implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. China is pleased to see that, since assuming office, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshilombo Tshisekedi, has been actively meeting the country's specific commitments under the Framework and working to enhance cooperation with other countries in the region. With the assistance of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa and the ICGLR secretariat, countries of the region have improved their cooperation and mutual trust in the security sector. China calls on the United Nations and the ICGLR to continue to fully leverage their mediation roles to promote greater coordination and cooperation on such issues among the countries of the region in order to achieve the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the illegal armed groups.

Thirdly, more input is required to achieve socioeconomic development. Development is the key to resolving all problems. In the Great Lakes region, the root causes of such issues are poverty and underdevelopment and the solution is sustainable development. The international community should increase its assistance and investment in countries of the Great Lakes region in areas such as interconnectivity, health and education and should help countries in the region to create jobs and improve people's livelihoods.

The Office of the Special Envoy is assisting with preparations for the Great Lakes Investment and

Trade Conference scheduled to be held in Rwanda in November. We believe that it will help to attract international investment and promote cross-border trade. China welcomes such an initiative and hopes that the Office will further promote economic cooperation among countries in the Great Lakes region, increase interconnectivity and other infrastructure areas, promote integration, achieve sustainable economic and social development and bring about lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

China stands ready to work with the rest of the international community in our continued effort to contribute to achieving peace, stability and development in the region as soon as possible. China will remain committed to strengthening peacebuilding in the region, actively participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the region, providing military assistance and supporting countries of the region in advancing their peace processes. China will remain committed to strengthening capacity-building for regional development and providing, as best it can, assistance in infrastructure, agriculture and health care to promote peace through development. China will remain committed to promoting the forging of regional partnerships to help countries in the region strengthen people-to-people and cultural exchanges. It will build partnerships that are based on mutual confidence and collaboration in order to promote peace through culture.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Republic of Equatorial Guinea would like to thank Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, for his first briefing, in which he extensively explained the situation of the Great Lakes in general and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region in particular.

Despite the progress made in the Great Lakes region, it continues to face significant challenges with regard to security, stability and development — including the activities of armed groups — the illegal exploitation of natural resources, rape and ethnic and sexual violence and a large-scale humanitarian crisis affecting millions of its inhabitants. Many of those challenges are cross-border in nature and require regional cooperation. In that context, we believe that establishing alliances and strengthening State structures in the region, as well as promoting and empowering women, civil society and the private business sector, is fundamental to the

promotion of sustainable development, which will alleviate poverty, curb frequent migration and famine and confront armed groups in the region.

We welcome the recent positive developments in the region. Those include the holding of peaceful elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the peaceful transfer of power, the election of the Prime Minister and the formation of the new Government, the steps taken by His Excellency Mr. Antoine Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo to open up the political space and the momentum of the regional dialogue that has been initiated. Those are all good indicators. The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the signing of the memorandum of understanding between Uganda and Rwanda in order to alleviate tensions are two other positive developments. The current situation and return to normalcy in Burundi, including the adoption of its new Constitution and new electoral code, its presidential, legislative and local elections scheduled for 20 May 2020 and the decision of His Excellency Mr. Pierre Nkurunziza to fully finance the elections are signs of a strong and positive political will.

We appreciate the efforts deployed by the authorities of the Central African Republic, in coordination with its international partners, in the signing on 6 February of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation between the authorities of that country and 14 armed groups within the framework of the African Union Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic with a view towards an inclusive Government. We appreciate the efforts of the Central African Republic to stabilize itself and welcome the efforts of its Government to mobilize a platform to support the political process during the presidential and legislative elections to be held in 2020 and 2021. That constitutes another step towards achieving reconciliation as well as future and permanent stability in the country.

We commend the work that the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is doing to ensure women's genuine participation in the political, peace and security processes in the region. We appreciate the approval by ministers responsible for gender issues of the regional action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, we must continue to support the regional efforts undertaken by the Great Lakes Judicial

Cooperation Network to achieve peace and security, safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms and combat impunity. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea reiterates its firm commitment to the formal declaration of the African Union to silence the guns by 2020. That initiative is outlined in resolution 2457 (2019), which was preceded by an open debate organized by the Republic of Equatorial Guinea (see S/PV.8473).

Despite the measures that have been implemented by the Governments of the Great Lakes region to address the critical humanitarian situation, we remain concerned about the large number of forcibly displaced persons, who remain exposed to malnutrition, cholera, measles and Ebola, all of which require the provision of adequate technical and financial assistance from the international community. We condemn the frequent attacks in the Great Lakes region by illegal armed groups, both foreign and domestic, as well as the constant and sporadic clashes with armed forces and State security, humanitarian personnel and means of transport and equipment. Those actions violate international humanitarian law.

Our delegation is confident in the capacity of the joint efforts of the United Nations, the African Union and regional and subregional organizations to deal adequately and in a coordinated manner with the conflicts in the region. We welcome the recent report (S/2019/759) of the Secretary-General on strengthening that partnership with regard to issues of peace and security in Africa. Our delegation deeply appreciates the renewed political will shown by the leaders of the Great Lakes region to strengthen ties among their countries, address differences through trust and dialogue and investigate cross-border incidents in a constructive manner in order to advance international cooperation and integration. We appeal to the African Union, the International Organization of La Francophonie, the Southern African Development Community and international partners to continue to develop synergies with the member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region in order to implement of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework agreement in the region and to take advantage of the current climate so that the countries of the region, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Central African Republic, can be fully involved in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and African Union Agenda 2063. We would like to conclude by

congratulating the various United Nations missions and offices in the Great Lakes region on their hard work.

Mrs. Craft (United States of America): I would like to thank Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for the work he has done to promote peace and security in the Great Lakes region during his first several months in that role.

Conflict has plagued the Great Lakes for decades, but six years following the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, we have seen some momentum towards solutions to the drivers of that conflict. The United States is encouraged by that momentum. We recognize the positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the historic Democratic elections that were held this past December. Specifically, we applaud the formation of a Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that embraces new leaders, whom we hope will pave the way for positive reforms while largely excluding those who have proven themselves corrupt and unfit.

We also recognize the President's efforts to proactively address the long-held grievances of the Congolese people, improve conditions for foreign investment and strengthen relationships with neighbouring countries. Amidst those developments, we must underscore that the burdens of implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework fall to all signatory parties, not just the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are therefore heartened that the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/783) details multiple efforts of neighbouring countries to engage on issues of mutual concern — regional commerce, illicit flows of goods that contribute to corruption and the presence of armed groups.

We commend the initiative that countries of the region have shown in working toward lasting peace and stronger economic ties. With that said, the United States is deeply concerned by several negative trends outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/783). Insecurity continues to plague the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups still benefit from the mineral trade, especially in gold, and the Allied Democratic Forces continue indiscriminate attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and the Congolese military.

Political solutions, security sector reform and the demobilization of armed groups into civilian life will

be critical for future stability. For our part, the United States will continue to identify opportunities to engage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on how to attain greater security, peace and prosperity for the Congolese people.

In Burundi, we remain concerned about continued restrictions on freedom of assembly and expression, as well as attacks on opposition political parties. We remind the Government of Burundi that peaceful, free, fair and transparent elections in 2020 are the basis for normalization of relations with the United States and other members of the international community.

Next week, the Security Council will discuss its need to assume a stronger posture towards preventative diplomacy and conflict prevention. We are all keenly aware that elections in this region have been a flash point for considerable violence in the past. So, with Burundi's 2020 presidential elections fast approaching, and with recent trends in the country pointing in a concerning direction, the United States believes that the people of Burundi need the Council's attention. If we fail to engage, their lives and the lives of millions of others throughout that region could be adversely impacted.

As previous meetings on this subject have been largely pessimistic, the United States is pleased that the Secretary-General's latest report suggests an improving situation in the Great Lakes region — yet we worry that the gains of the last six months will be lost if the concerns I have expressed today are not comprehensively addressed. I remind my fellow Council members that just yesterday we were inspired by young African leaders who challenged us to do our part in bringing peace and security to the continent (see S/PV.8629). Therefore, in conclusion, I want to reiterate their challenge to us and encourage this organ to engage proactively and preventively as we consider the specific challenges facing the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me, like others, to thank Special Envoy Xia for his briefing this morning. We look forward to continuing to work closely with him to support efforts to achieve greater peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

The Great Lakes region, historically characterized by internal conflict and tensions between neighbours, is experiencing a new momentum towards regional cooperation on peace and security. I think it is important to note and appreciate President Tshisekedi's efforts to revive the Democratic Republic of the Congo's

diplomatic relations with its neighbours and enhance regional cooperation. The United Kingdom very much welcomes this new momentum, in particular the signing of a memorandum of understanding intended to ease tensions and restore friendly relations between Rwanda and Uganda, facilitated by the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola. We also very much welcome the holding of confidence-building meetings between regional security and intelligence actors aimed at enhancing efforts to neutralize armed groups in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Alongside this positive and welcome diplomatic momentum within the region, the security, human rights, development and economic challenges that persist are immense. In this regard, let me say that I strongly agree with the Ambassador of Equatorial Guinea on the importance of taking a coordinated approach to Ebola, but not just Ebola — to cholera and to measles as well. I also agree, of course, with the Ambassador of France on the importance of properly funding the humanitarian response plan.

Of particular concern is the situation in and along the borders of the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where illegal armed groups continue to commit atrocities against the civilian population and present a major threat to regional security. It is important that President Tshisekedi have full control of the security forces and that senior figures within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not allowed to act independently and foster insecurity.

The problems in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider Great Lakes region cannot be resolved solely through military means. As the Secretary-General notes in his report (S/2019/783), regional actors must work together to address the underlying drivers of conflict. That will require cooperation and concerted pressure to prevent armed groups from receiving financing and support from within and beyond the region. Armed groups and other security actors control significant flows of resources, including gold, minerals and charcoal, from the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neighbouring countries. It is clearly in the interests not only of the countries of the region, but more specifically the peoples of those countries, to turn those illicit flows of resources into legitimate trade flows, contributing thereby both to economic development and, crucially for the Council, to stability. In that regard, I would like

to say how much we encourage Special Envoy Xia's efforts to support the establishment of responsible mineral supply chains and to promote economic integration in the region.

There can be no lasting stability without good governance and the protection and promotion of human rights. Restrictions on political space in Burundi, including harassment of opposition parties and restrictions on media freedom, are deeply concerning. As we look ahead to elections next year in Burundi and the Central African Republic, the United Kingdom calls upon all relevant actors in those countries to ensure that elections are safe and credible, uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and properly reflect the aspirations of the populations.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom encourages all countries of the Great Lakes region to seize the positive momentum that is emerging and to fully commit themselves to enhancing regional peace, stability and development and, as they do so, the support of the United Kingdom — and, I believe, of the entire Council — is with them.

Mr. Duclos (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate Mr. Huang Xia's valuable briefing and express our gratitude to him. We also wish to assure him of our full support in his efforts to bring about lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

We recognize the ongoing commitment of the signatory countries to implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which continues to demonstrate its relevance and significance in helping to alleviate the principal issues and tensions in the region, such as those that arose between Rwanda and Uganda but were later overcome thanks to the signing of a memorandum of understanding. We particularly appreciate the potential for regional rapprochement that the Framework agreement affords, not only in identifying common trends and challenges but also in promoting political dialogue and alternative complementary actions, particularly in cross-border regions. In that regard, we welcome the projects that the Special Envoy will promote to generate employment and investment in those areas.

We welcome the positive developments detailed in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/783) linked to the deepening of bilateral ties and the quest for greater coordination and regional integration based

on the establishment of confidence-building measures and the revitalization of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

In the political sphere, we consider the engagement of countries in the electoral process in Burundi in 2020 and in the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in the Central African Republic within this framework to be very positive. Equally promising is the broad political space promoted and fostered in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by President Tshisekedi, as well as the formation of a civilian Government in the Sudan following mediation by the African Union and Ethiopia.

Nevertheless, we continue to be concerned by the ongoing presence of armed groups and the potential for disruption that they represent through attacks on the civilian population and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. We are also seeing an increase in intercommunal violence and persistent violations of human rights across various territories. All of those phenomena are fuelling the fragility, volatility and insecurity of the region. We therefore view it as the utmost priority to take a coordinated approach in addressing security challenges through such joint initiatives as the meeting held last June that brought together the intelligence and security services of various countries in the region.

At the same time, the humanitarian situation remains cause for serious concern, given the persistently alarming numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons living in conditions of extreme vulnerability, who must be protected. Added to this is the troubling health situation due to the prevalence of the Ebola virus in Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and multiple outbreaks of cholera, malaria and measles. We hope that the international community, especially those countries committed to peace and stability in the region, will continue to provide sustained and predictable financing to the crucial humanitarian response plans.

We welcome the vision of Special Envoy Xia to continue supporting and funding the various gains aimed at neutralizing the activities of armed groups at the regional level, protecting natural resources against illegal exploitation, promoting economic cooperation, supporting the fight against impunity and promoting inclusive political dialogue and action with adequate

representation of women and young people committed to sustaining peace and development.

All of this should be done based on the commitments made under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and through efforts coordinated with the various regional bodies and the United Nation system, including the Peacebuilding Commission, humanitarian agencies and civil society.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I wish to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for his very informative briefing. Over recent months, significant opportunities for consolidating regional peace and stability have emerged, including through the holding of peaceful elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation between the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups, facilitated by the African Union-led African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation.

Against this positive backdrop, threats posed by armed groups, rising tensions between the signatories of the agreements and human rights abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law and further displacement of people, continue to impact countries of the Great Lakes region. In that regard, Poland believes that countering illegal cross-border activities has to be an integral part of responding to challenges in the region. It is an essential precondition for the limitation of the activities of armed groups and successful submission of combatants to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

We therefore welcome ongoing efforts to strengthen regional security cooperation mechanisms, notably the expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Follow-up Mechanism on the Allied Democratic Forces.

Poland remains deeply concerned over persistent challenges to the exercise of basic political freedoms and human rights in parts of the Great Lakes region. We therefore call on Governments to uphold their respective commitments, notably those under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and to create the conditions necessary for the voices of all stakeholders to be heard in local and national decision-making processes.

We likewise recognize the important and vital role of women in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security in the region. In this regard, we welcome the role play by the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. At the same time, we call on all national and regional stakeholders to implement the regional action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), notably by achieving the agreed quota for women's representation in peace and political processes by 2020.

Poland considers the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region to be an essential mechanism for achieving peace and security in the region. We therefore call on all signatories promptly and in good faith to fulfil their respective commitments under the relevant agreement. We thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and his team for their tireless support to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Indonesia welcomes Ambassador Huang Xia to his first briefing to the Council as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region. I assure him of Indonesia's full support in his work.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's report of 1 October 2019 (S/2019/783). The Great Lakes region has witnessed positive developments and initiatives recently. We must seize the momentum to make progress in overcoming challenges to peace and sustainable development. I should like to make several pertinent points.

First, the root causes of the conflict should be addressed. The Great Lakes region has been marred by conflict, mistrust and humanitarian difficulties for years. We share the concerns of the Secretary-General over the persistent challenges to human rights in the region. Peace and stability remain fragile, especially in the light of threats posed by armed groups, the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources and the outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A lack of development also causes the instability. Yet, hope remains.

We welcome step taken by President Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi to strengthen relations with neighbouring countries, leading to the confidence-building meeting held in Kinshasa. I also echo the Secretary-General in recognizing the importance of a comprehensive

approach to addressing the root causes of conflict in the region. Trust is important and partnership is key. The international community should unite and stand behind African efforts in their pursuit of peace and security.

Secondly, relief for the humanitarian situation must be prioritized. There are 548,153 refugees and asylum-seekers and 4.8 million internally persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although 75,000 Burundians have returned to their country, the total of remaining Burundian refugees in the region exceeds 400,000. Furthermore, cases of communicable diseases raise concerns and require an urgent international humanitarian response. However, funding for humanitarian responses in the region in 2018 was less than 50 per cent. We, as the international community, must do more. This cannot go on much longer. We should strengthen our support to the region, including through improved humanitarian assistance.

Thirdly, the work of regional organizations and United Nations missions in the region should be supported by the Council. We recognize the role of regional and subregional organizations. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations are the major guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed by 13 countries in the region. We commend the ICGLR for its efforts to ensure that all countries of the region adhere to the cause of peace, including by preventing the illicit movement of natural resources.

We also recognize that United Nations peacekeepers are playing their role in winning the hearts and minds of the local population to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. We are proud that Indonesian peacekeepers in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been successful in assisting the DDR process by engaging with local communities. The support of the international community through regional and subregional organizations will enable the Government to reintegrate combatants into society, thereby preventing relapse.

In conclusion, addressing the complex peace and security challenges in the region is not easy. For our part, Indonesia will remain committed as a true partner of Africa in maintaining peace and security.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Germany welcomes the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, to the Council and pledges its support for his work. We share his conclusions and those of the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/783), especially with respect to the improvement of the cross-border situation and the positive rapprochement he spoke of. We also share the view that it is largely due to President Tshisekedi that we were able to achieve that cooperation. Germany also supports and encourages the ongoing regional efforts and rapprochement, as well as intensifying regional cooperation.

In his briefing, he underlined the remaining challenges. I will touch upon them briefly. Everyone has already highlighted the continuing crimes and attacks perpetrated by armed groups, the forced displacement of persons and the illegal trade in natural resources. If those developments continue, they risk derailing the positive dynamic.

Looking forward, we share Mr. Xia's priorities, particularly on the need for a comprehensive approach of which he spoke. In that connection, one point that has been flagged by many around the table is key — good governance. On that particular point, Germany echoes what was said by our American and British colleagues on the elections in Burundi, which we believe will be crucial for the development of that country.

Respect for human rights, as Mr. Xia said, is absolutely vital. People need to be at the heart of efforts going forward. Action against corruption and impunity is also essential, and we need to strengthen justice in all countries of the region. With regard to the participation of young people and women, I can only endorse what my Polish colleague said on those issues just a few minutes ago.

As the written report of the Secretary-General spells out, sexual violence continues to rage. As has been noted, a large part of that sexual violence is committed by the security forces. That needs to be acknowledged and addressed. Mr. Xia was not here then, but in April the Noble Peace Prize laureate Dr. Mukwege spoke before the Council (see S/PV.8514) and described the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also spelled out what needed to be done to address it. Thereafter, the Security Council adopted resolution 2467 (2019) to address that issue, and the provisions of that resolution need to be fully implemented.

On the economic front, again we support what the Special Envoy said. Cross-border cooperation is vital. The upcoming Kigali conference on trade and investment will be key. In order to promote job creation and more prosperity, there must be good governance. If the rule of law does not improve, it will not be possible to attract investors.

On the humanitarian front, we share the concerns expressed by other colleagues with respect to financing. This year, Germany will provide €66 million for humanitarian efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader region. The Ebola situation is having a ripple effect on the humanitarian and security situation. On that issue, we share the view that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ought to play a key role.

To conclude, we support the Special Envoy. Germany stands ready to contribute to his considerations concerning potential adjustments to his mandate.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation for the valuable briefing by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and to welcome him today on his first briefing to the Council. We fully support his efforts to stabilize the situation in the Great Lakes region. We also support his tireless efforts to build capacities and enhance development in the region.

We have been following with interest the activities of the Special Envoy and his Office and we welcome the steps they have taken to engage the countries of the region in efforts leading to the creation of an environment of cooperation, which will contribute to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

We also welcome the coordination and cooperation among all the United Nations offices and missions in the region. Cooperation among them and with regional organizations like the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is essential to achieving stability of the region which is our common goal.

On the political situation, there are many positive indicators that we must shed light on and build upon during the upcoming period. We welcome the political

developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the recent formation of a new Government and President Tshisekedi's engagement with many of leaders of the region. That could undoubtedly help build trust among countries of the region and create an environment conducive to regional cooperation, especially since many challenges in the region are mutual and interrelated.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region is the best way to address those challenges. We welcome the progress achieved thus far, and in particular the outcome of the Luanda meeting, at which certain countries of the region agreed to settle regional disputes through existing regional mechanisms.

There is no doubt that achieving development in the region will contribute to stability and conflict prevention. We note that all leaders of the region talked about this issue when they addressed the international community during the general debate last week. We look forward to the outcome of the conference on trade and investment in the Great Lakes region that is set to take place next year. We welcome the support provided by the Office of the Special Envoy to the Conference and urge all countries of the region to participate constructively in it and in all regional activities aimed at bolstering the region's economy.

On the security situation, we are concerned about continued insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as it has serious repercussions on the stability and security of the entire region. We welcome the commitment of the Congolese President to take serious and effective steps in that regard, and we stress the importance of regional cooperation to the success of any stabilization plan in the region.

In that connection, we recall the recommendations of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, calling on the countries of the region to redouble their efforts to address the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the conference organized by the Special Envoy and the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework on exchanging information among security services. This is a positive step that enhances cooperation and trust among the countries there.

We also call on all countries of the region to ensure the success of the tenth summit of the regional oversight mechanism, to take place in Kinshasa. We note that

agreeing on strategies to counter violence is essential to achieving the stability of the region.

We are indeed concerned about the fact that some armed groups in the Central African Republic are not abiding by the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, and we stress the importance of upholding the Agreement in the coming period, given its importance to stabilizing the security situation. With regard to Burundi, the stable security situation is a positive indicator, and we hope it remains stable beyond the elections to be held in 2020.

In conclusion, the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region is dire. The large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, along with the spread of disease, are increasing the burdens on the countries of the region and the responsibilities they bear. Intensified regional and international efforts are needed to address those challenges. We commend the preventive measures that various countries in the region have taken to stop the spread of the Ebola virus on their territories and also look forward to seeing them the steps necessary to ensure the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees to their homes.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would first like to thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for his comprehensive briefing and for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/783) for the first time.

It is our view that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region continues to serve as a cornerstone of regional stability. We support the unconditional implementation by all signatories of their commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, the strengthening of confidence-building measures and the development of regional cooperation and economic integration. We are confident that the full implementation of the Framework's provisions will have a positive impact on the overall security situation in the Great Lakes region.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a crucial factor in ensuring security in the region. We are currently witnessing important changes in the life of this major Central African State that have already had an impact on the region as a whole. We welcome President Félix Tshisekedi's efforts

to achieve political stability, including by establishing constructive relations with his neighbours. We were pleased to note the summits held in May and August in Kinshasa and Luanda with leaders of States in the region, as well as the decisions taken there on strengthening security in the Great Lakes region. We noted the important memorandum of understanding between the Presidents of Rwanda and Uganda signed in Luanda in August, and the first meeting of representatives of the security services of States in the region, held in Kinshasa in June with the participation of the Office of the Special Envoy.

We remain seriously concerned about the situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a difficult political and military situation persists and attacks by illegal armed groups, intercommunal clashes and the Ebola epidemic continue. Against that backdrop, we welcome the results achieved by the Congolese armed forces, together with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the fight against several groups. We call for taking advantage of the positive changes in the region to further expand the efforts to eliminate militants and encourage the processes for their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into peaceful life. It will be particularly important to resolve the problem of the Allied Democratic Forces.

We share the Secretary-General's concern about the difficult humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region. At the same time, we note some positive developments in resolving the refugee problem. We particularly want to highlight the ongoing repatriation of Burundian refugees from neighbouring countries in connection with the stabilization of the situation in their homeland. We welcome the measures taken in the framework of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to harmonize national strategies for repatriating and integrating refugees and address the root causes of the issue. Such efforts show that the regional players are part of the collective quest for responses to the challenges facing the Great Lakes region. We hope that the remaining disagreements between the leaders of individual countries in the region will not affect their commitment to the principles enshrined in the Framework. We call on the relevant States to resolve their differences and continue to cooperate on key issues that affect the stability and security of the entire region. We believe

that lasting solutions to these problems can only be found independently, with the support of the ICGLR and other regional mechanisms, in accordance with the maxim "African solutions to African problems".

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of South Africa.

At the outset, let me join others in thanking Mr. Huang Xia, the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, for his informative briefing.

South Africa welcomes the improving relations and levels of cooperation among the core countries of the Great Lakes region. In that regard, we welcome the reinforced commitments by the regional Heads of State to a stable Great Lakes region, as reflected in the rapprochement in the region. That includes the normalization of bilateral relations between Rwanda and Uganda, mediated by President Lourenço of Angola with the support of President Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the formation of a Government of national unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which will hopefully help to unify the Congolese people in a step on the road to national reconstruction and development.

However, my delegation remains concerned about the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the humanitarian situation in parts of the country, which deteriorated during the reporting period. South Africa therefore underscores the importance of ensuring that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo strengthens the capacity of its State institutions, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We hope that the strategic review report reflects the desire of the Congolese people, as articulated in the country's statement in the General Assembly (see A/74/PV.7), to see that the training provided by MONUSCO to the Congolese armed forces results in a force that is focused, well-equipped and capable of adapting to the prevailing conditions on the ground. My delegation is also concerned about the Ebola virus outbreak, which has resulted in the loss of lives. In that regard, we commend the efforts undertaken by regional and international partners in fighting the Ebola outbreak and further urge them to continue to assist in efforts to curb the pandemic.

Turning to the Central African Republic, we note with concern the logistical challenges that hamper

the country's smooth implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. We are also concerned about the activities of some non-State actors, which continue to violate the provisions of the Political Agreement in some prefectures, including through illegal taxation and the obstruction of the deployment of State institutions and security forces. It is our hope that the Council's action in September (see S/PV.8617) easing the arms embargo (resolution 2488 (2019)) will constitute a strong push in the multidimensional efforts to accelerate the restoration of State authority throughout the Central African Republic's national territory. In spite of the challenges, we welcome the cooperation and coordination between the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of Central African States, the United Nations, the European Union (EU) and the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as with other bilateral and multilateral partners. We also welcome the continued positive role of women in fostering local and inclusive peace processes in the region.

Against that backdrop, we call on development actors to continue to play a central role in building and sustaining peace in the country through the creation of inclusive institutions, building capacities to deliver services and investing in critical infrastructure, with a view to addressing the socioeconomic gaps and responding to the long-standing drivers of conflict. Collaboration with the World Bank, the EU, the African Development Bank and other development actors is therefore vital for a genuine reconciliation process in the Central African Republic.

Burundi remains an important part of the stability of the Great Lakes region. We therefore continue to support the inter-Burundian dialogue, including the facilitation process led by the East African Community, in the spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi, with the support of the AU and the United Nations. It is South Africa's hope that Burundi's preparations for the May 2020 elections will be inclusive, transparent and peaceful.

With regard to the situation in South Sudan, my delegation welcomes the recent face-to-face meetings between President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar, which we believe are a step in the right direction. Continued dialogue is therefore essential, as it will help to unlock the impasse that has stalled the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan.

It is our view and expectation that a region that is politically stable serves as a foundation for regional economic integration. We therefore reiterate our position on the importance of curbing the persistent illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources, which undermine their proper management. In addition, it will be critical to ensure that there is increased cooperation among the Great Lakes countries in eliminating armed groups by focusing on inclusive cooperation and coordinated security-sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

In conclusion, South Africa welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendations that the differences among States that are signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region are best addressed through dialogue and cooperation. We therefore urge the Council to reiterate its call to all signatories to the Framework to implement their commitments under it with a view to ensuring long-term, sustainable peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October and to say how honoured we are to see the friendly country of the Republic of South Africa leading our deliberations today. I also want to thank you for taking the initiative to organize this meeting, focusing on the situation in the Great Lakes region in general and on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region in particular. I would also like to thank all the members of the Security Council for the kind attention and willingness that they have always shown whenever they are called on to address the situation concerning my country.

My delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's report (S/2019/783) on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which Ambassador Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, just presented to

us, and I welcome his presence in this Chamber. It is regrettable, however, that the report was made available only late yesterday evening.

Before I come back to that, I have taken it upon myself to convey to the Council the vision of my President, Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, of how he intends to resolve the situation in the Great Lakes region and more particularly in the eastern part of our country. Since taking office, as he underscored at the high-level meeting on the Framework agreement held on the sidelines of the general debate of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, he has been taking stock of the challenges to peace and security in our country and the stability of the region. To that end, he has been working tirelessly to find a permanent solution to the worrying security situation in our eastern areas. In the light of the importance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is seen as an agreement for hope and the right instrument for regional stability, he has decided to revitalize its national monitoring mechanism. In that context, an evaluation is being done to draw up a non-compliance assessment of the level of implementation of our country's commitments. The President has now mobilized a new effort in our quest for peace and security. The recommended strategy consists of three components — strengthening the capacities of the defence and security services, promoting national reconciliation and activating regional diplomacy.

With respect to the capacity-building of the defence and security services, he has launched military operations that are ongoing, including in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, in order to disrupt the negative forces that continue to hamper peace and security in that part of the country. With regard to national reconciliation, that process is aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence among the local communities. With that in mind, the forums will be organized with a view to strengthening national cohesion. Lastly, with regard to regional diplomacy, he has undertaken tours to several countries of the region with a view to restoring, together with his counterparts, the trust needed for regional cooperation and integration.

That is the context in which we should consider the rapprochement and dialogue that began in Kinshasa in May with the summit that brought together his peers from Angola and Rwanda, followed by a summit in Luanda with the Heads of State of Angola, Uganda and Rwanda, and, lastly, a third summit, held once

again in Luanda, in August, which was also attended by the President of the Republic of the Congo and was sanctioned by a memorandum of understanding between Presidents Kagame and Museveni. All those meetings are an important step forward in the determination of the region's leaders to work together for peace, security and stability in the region.

With regard to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as he also emphasized in his address to the General Assembly (see A/74/PV.7), President Tshisekedi stated that he is in favour of keeping MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as long as it is streamlined, well equipped, strong and with a mandate adapted to the realities on the ground, similar to the Force Intervention Brigade. As he himself stressed, it continues to be his dream to make the Democratic Republic of the Congo a country that exports peace.

To get back to the report under consideration, we should say that we do not have any particular comments to make about it on the whole. However, we do think that a brief comment with respect to the security situation would be useful. The report highlights the efforts of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, in collaboration with MONUSCO, to neutralize the foreign and national armed groups that are active in our eastern regions. As we have always said, we want to assure the Council that those efforts will continue until the groups are totally eradicated. In that context, we are pleased to be able to point out that the elements from the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda who surrendered voluntarily a few years ago, along with their dependants, and who were cantoned in Orientale province, have finally been repatriated to Rwanda with the assistance of MONUSCO.

Moreover, based on the new dynamic in relations with the various surrendering groups that we have seen since our new Head of State came to power, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reaffirms its determination to fulfil the commitments that it has undertaken under the terms of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement. In that regard, we are asking that the former members of the Mouvement du 23 mars return to the country and make themselves available to the new authorities. My country calls once again for the involvement of the countries of the region and the Security Council in order for this situation to be definitively resolved.

As the Council will have noted, a new wind of hope and confidence is blowing across the Great Lakes region today. My delegation believes that the region should seize this opportunity to restore trust among its leaders, who must now face in the same direction and work together to promote regional cooperation and integration as a means of establishing the peace and stability that the region desperately needs for its development. In that regard, the positive developments in the region should be encouraged. That is why my country calls on the United Nations and the international community as a whole to support the efforts of our leaders to ensure that peace, which some still consider to be a dream, may become a reality for all of the peoples of the region.

I cannot end my speech without thanking Ambassador Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his ongoing efforts within the framework of his mandate to restore peace throughout the entire Great Lakes region and in my country in particular. I wish to reiterate the gratitude of the Congolese people and our Government to all members of the Security Council for their dedication and commitment to our country's cause.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.