



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

**The Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the region
Annual Progress Report for 2018**



Looking forward to a future of equality, August 2018 Courtesy/UNWOMEN

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on progress achieved through the Women's Platform (WP) of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (WP-PSCF) in 2018. A key achievement has been the increasing high level political attention and commitment to advancing the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the Great Lakes region, including at the Heads of State and Governments 8th Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) Summit in 2017, and the expanded Advisory Board of the Platform in 2018, which included African women leaders and civil society representatives.

2. Other key highlights included, women solidarity missions to countries in the Great Lakes region affected by instability, the intervention of women leaders to the 9th ROM, the endorsement of a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) in the Great Lakes Region, and an agreement to achieve increased women's political advancement and socio-economic empowerment by 2020.



Advisory Board engaging with the network of the CAR Women Leaders, August 2018 Courtesy/MONUSCO

Activities Undertaken

The following provides details of the activities carried during the year:

3. In October 2017, at the 8th ROM, the Heads of State and Government directed the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (O/SESG- GL), in consultation with the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Secretariat, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to review progress in the implementation of the 2016 WP-PSCF Goma Declaration.
4. In February 2018, the Advisory Board of the WP-PSCF, at its 9th meeting, agreed on a framework and roadmap to support the WPS agenda in the region. The Board also proposed to include representatives of youth organizations, women business leaders, and the private sector as members. Members also acknowledged the need to bring together women’s and governments representatives to discuss and agree on ways to advance the WPS agenda.
5. The Board also endorsed the proposal by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (SESG-GL), Said Djinnit, to dispatch representatives of the WP and the ICGLR Women’s Forum to the countries affected by instability to promote the role of women in peace and political processes. It also welcomed the plan to convene a Gender Ministers’ meeting to agree on ways to increase the political space of women in political processes in the region, and to endorse the RAP.
6. Following on these decisions, at the initiative of the SESG-GL, the expanded Advisory Board of the WP-PSCF, comprising of high-level women representatives, visited Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during August 2018. The former Vice-President of Uganda, led the solidarity missions to Burundi and CAR accompanied by representatives of ICGLR, UNWOMEN, the Office of the UN SESG for Burundi, and the O/SESG-GL. In addition, a mission to South

Sudan in July 2018 was co-led by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the AU Special Envoy on WPS, with the participation of SESG-GL, Djinnit, among others.



UN Deputy Secretary General, AU Special Envoy for WPS, UN Special Envoy for the GLR engaging on Women's protection in South Sudan, July 2018 Courtesy/UN

7. The objectives of the missions were to; express solidarity with women in the Great Lakes regions; strengthen women's coalitions and support their participation in all aspects of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions; raise awareness among political leaders of the need for women's participation in democratic processes and socio- economic development and bring attention to the issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and abuse against women, and the need for accountability and measures to address human rights violations.

Burundi

8. In Burundi, women leaders agreed to focus on increasing women's participation in the 2020 elections at both local and national levels. The mission welcomed the decision of women's associations and CSOs to establish a network to prepare a strategy to increase women's political participation, including through the revision of the electoral code, reviewing targets and strategies to ensure the mobilization of women at the grassroots level, and develop partnerships with the youth and political parties to improve synergy and build coalitions. The mission noted the commitment by the Government to raise the current 26 percent parliamentary representation to 30 percent in-line with the Constitution.



Advisory Board advocating for women political participation and economic empowerment in Burundi, August 2018 Courtesy/UNWOMEN

9. The mission acknowledged the developments in relation to the security situation and the return of refugees facilitated by the tri-partite collaboration between the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania, and UNHCR. The adoption of a National Gender Policy and of a law on the prevention and repression of SGBV and the protection of victims in 2016, was noted by the mission.

10. On the nexus for strengthening the peace infrastructure in the country, the mission noted that the President and the First Lady are already engaged in mobilizing young women and had agreed to put in place mechanisms to start the process as soon as possible. The objective is to ensure the Burundi women take a leading role in the process themselves with the UN, AU, and ICGLR, with the support of the Advisory Board.

11. Consultations were held with the President of the Republic, the First Lady, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and political parties. The mission also met representatives of women groups, civil society organizations (CSOs), the diplomatic community, the media, as well as representatives of youth and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities.



Burundi's future women leaders, August 2018 Courtesy/UNWOMEN

Central African Republic

12. In CAR, the importance of supporting women's leadership and capacities to engage in the political and peace processes from the grassroots' level was highlighted as well as the need for programmes to enhance women's educational and socio-economic opportunities, including through the creation of a dedicated Women's Fund. The mission noted the commitment of the country's leadership to promulgate the law on gender parity, and to promote increased participation of women in the peace process and at different levels of the administration. It welcomed the ongoing work to review the electoral code and the willingness of some of the political parties to revise their statutes to guarantee equal opportunities to women to run for elected offices.

13. The dire situation of women, with high levels of poverty, limited access to basic services and insecurity, was recognized. In this regard women's groups called for a CAR women's conference to contribute to the stabilization of the country and a support program to strengthen women's leadership. Despite provisions for gender parity, including legislation promoting 35 percent of female representation, and the current revision of the electoral code in favour of gender parity, women remain under-represented in elected and public offices and in the ongoing African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. It was agreed that a new narrative and a strategy that brings together women's organizations, the government, and partners that focuses on human security and on promoting the central role of women in all fields and sectors of socio-economic and political life across the country is urgently required.

14. Religious and women leaders also noted the need to prioritize livelihood security for women in particular as a key priority to enhance stability in the country. The food shortage in CAR is killing more people than the armed groups, which in-turn is affecting the social fabric across the country. CAR also has the highest maternal mortality in the world.

15. The mission met the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, government representatives, women

leaders and parliamentarians, the former transitional President, representatives of political parties, religious leaders, as well as representatives of the international community.

Democratic Republic of Congo

16. In the DRC, the mission was welcome as an opportunity to increase advocacy for the status of women in the country, including for their full participation in the electoral process, which continues to be hampered by sociological, cultural, legal and financial barriers. The mission appealed to the legislature to consider legal reforms and address discriminatory measures against women and minorities.

17. The mission noted the vital role of the media in advancing women's causes and called on the media to redouble their efforts to ensure that women's voices are heard. It took note of the security and humanitarian challenges across the country and the impact of conflict on women, particularly in rural areas, and emphasized the need to build the capacity of grassroots women and youth at the local level to improve their socio-economic conditions and enable them to better realize their role as transformers of society.



Towards the promotion of women political participation in electoral processes and decision making in the DRC, August 2018 Courtesy/MONUSCO

18. The former transitional President in CAR and co-chair AU FemWise-Africa, H.E. Samba Panza, led the solidarity mission to the DRC accompanied and supported by the former Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, and representatives of the ICGLR and Women's Regional Forum, UNWOMEN, MONUSCO, and the O/SESG-GL. The mission met with senior representatives, including the President of the National Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers. Separate engagements were held with the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), women leaders and associations, and representatives of civil society and political parties, religious and traditional leaders, as well as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for MONUSCO. The Head of Mission briefly met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President of CENI, and had a telephone conversation with the President of the Republic.



Recognizing the role of Civil Society and religious leaders in promoting women's empowerment, August 2018 Courtesy/UNWOMEN

Regional Oversight Mechanism, ROM

19. In October 2018, H.E. Samba Panza, addressed Heads of State and Government at the 9th ROM on behalf of the Advisory Board of the WB-PSCF and the Regional Women's Forum. In her statement, she called for greater political commitment to promote women's meaningful participation in the political and peace processes in the Great Lakes region and to achieve full gender parity. This was the first time that a woman senior leader addressed the ROM, which reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of the WPS agenda in the Great Lakes region. Regional leaders reiterated their support for women's advancement, welcomed, and endorsed the recommendations of the solidarity missions.



Courtesy/Catherine Samba-Panza Facebook post

Gender Ministers Meeting

20. In November 2018, Gender Ministers from the Great Lakes region convened in Uganda with the support of the O/SESG-GL, ICGLR, and the Government of Uganda. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to achieving the minimum quota of 30 percent women participation by 2020 in their respective countries, and to ensure effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms. The meeting adopted the RAP. The RAP provides a framework to advance the WPS Agenda in the region with a focus on women's protection, through enhancing prosecution as a deterrent to SGBV, involvement of ministers of justice, promoting economic empowerment and meaningful participation in decision-making and peace processes. The Gender Ministers meeting was a follow-up to the 8th ROM, which had encouraged the O/SESG-GL to convene regular meetings to review the progress in implementing relevant decisions on WPS.



Courtesy/UN/ Abdikarim Haki

Conclusion

21. The Great Lakes Region has enormous potential and there has been steady progress in a number of important areas of the WPS agenda, with significant cooperation, as seen in the expansion of the Advisory Board, the well-received Solidarity Mission to four countries, and for the first time in seven year the Gender Ministers and their representatives met and endorsed a Regional Action Plan to translate strategic guidance into practical actions that will support the most vulnerable across the region.

22. As the region prepares to mark the 20th anniversary of the UNSCR 1325 (2000) it should also be recognised that much needs to be done to meet the targets set, such as the minimum quota of 30% for women's meaningful representation in political dialogue and peace processes. The scourge of violence against women, with many subjected to life changing experiences that no one should have to endure. Punitive and restorative justice therefore requires the attention of all decision and law makers across the region, with National Action Plans needing to be given adequate resources and the focus of all institutions of state.

23. In maintaining the profile of these major issues and working in close tandem with member states, regional fora, women and youth networks, civil society organisations, regional and international partners, the Advisory Board will continue to support the promotion of greater partnership among all components of societies in the Great Lakes Region.