

Communiqué of the 10th High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region

Kinshasa, 24 February 2022

The Heads of State and Government of the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region convened, with the support of the Guarantor institutions, namely, the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Tenth High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) on 24 February 2022 in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The meeting was hosted by His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the Guarantor institutions represented respectively by Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chairperson, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and Chairperson of the ICGLR, and His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa and Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation.

The Heads of State and Government (list annexed) reviewed the political and security developments in the Great Lakes region and the progress made in the implementation of the PSC Framework since their last meeting held in Kampala, Uganda, on 8 October 2018 and observed as follows.

I. On the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

The Heads of State and Government

1. Reaffirm their strong commitment to implement fully the PSC Framework as an important vehicle to address the causes and drivers of conflict and instability in the region.
2. Welcome the adoption of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (2020 – 2030) and call for the swift implementation of its Action Plan (2021 – 2023).
3. Endorse the Second Progress Report on the implementation of the PSC Framework; encourage immediate steps to implement the recommendations from the report; request the Technical Support Committee to update the Regional Action Plan and to harmonize it with other existing action plans developed in support of the implementation of the PSC Framework.

II. On promoting dialogue and inclusive political processes

The Heads of State and Government

4. Commend the recent intensification of diplomatic initiatives by signatory countries, which have contributed to increased confidence and an improvement of good neighbourly relations in the region;
5. Welcome the rapprochement between Burundi and Rwanda and encourage the two countries to continue their efforts towards the full normalization of bilateral relations;

6. Welcome the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Rwanda and Uganda in Luanda, Angola, on 21 August 2019, and subsequent efforts through the quadripartite process, facilitated by His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola, and His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; welcome the re-opening of the Gatuna/Katuna border post between Rwanda and Uganda on 31 January 2022 and encourage the continued dialogue between the two countries to resolve outstanding issues;
7. Welcome the peaceful conclusion of recent electoral processes and peaceful transfer of power which took place in several countries of the region;
8. Welcome the signing of the Political Agreement between the Government of the Central African Republic and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019; condemn all acts of continuing violence and called for a sustained commitment by the parties to a peaceful political solution; commend efforts by the ICGLR, under the leadership of His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola in his capacity as ICGLR Chair, including the adoption of a roadmap aimed at providing a way forward to reinvigorate the peace process in the Central African Republic; welcome the unilateral declaration of ceasefire by the Government of the Central African Republic and its efforts towards the organization of a republican dialogue;
9. Welcome the formation of a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity in line with the Revitalized Agreement on the resolution of the conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed on 12 September 2018 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; encourage the parties to accelerate the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement;
10. Encourage the Sudanese parties to engage in a political dialogue leading to a consensus with a view to organizing free and transparent elections by the end of the transitional period in conformity with the rule of law and fundamental freedoms; welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement between the transitional Government of The Sudan and the Sudan Revolutionary Front on 3 October 2020 as another landmark achievement for peace and security in the region.

RESOLVE TO

11. Continue to engage in dialogue and solve tensions, where they emerge or persist, through political and diplomatic channels;
12. Encourage Burundi and Rwanda as well as Rwanda and Uganda to continue pursuing dialogue to address any remaining issues and to fully re-establish good neighbourly relations;
13. Implement expeditiously recently concluded bilateral agreements with a view to further strengthening bilateral relations and good neighbourliness;
14. Further promote inclusive, credible and peaceful political processes that give a voice to all citizens in conformity with the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms.

III. On strengthening security and judicial cooperation against negative forces

The Heads of State and Government

15. Commend the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the notable progress registered in military operations carried out by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC), supported by the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), against negative forces in the eastern parts of the country, and welcome the elaboration by the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the “Programme for the Pacification and Stabilization of Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region;”
16. Take note of the ongoing joint military operation by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) and the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF-MTM) in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; and welcome both countries’ public commitment to respect human rights and international humanitarian law;
17. Express concern that negative forces with networks across the region and beyond, some with affiliations to international terrorist groups, continue to pose a threat to civilians and fuel mistrust and tensions among countries in the region;
18. Welcome the efforts to follow up on the decisions of the 9th High-Level Meeting of the ROM to strengthen existing regional security-related mechanisms, notably the ICGLR Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM) and the Joint Intelligence and Fusion Center (JIFC), both in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Joint Follow-up Mechanism (JFM) on the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF-MTM) in Kasese, Uganda, as well as the various joint intelligence taskforces and teams established bilaterally by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours;
19. Further welcome the progress made in repatriating disarmed combatants of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) and the ex-Mouvement du 23 mars (ex-M23) from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda, respectively; also welcome the repatriation of most former combatants of the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD) as a result of operations in 2019 in South Kivu;
20. Welcome the confidence-building process involving regular consultations among the Chiefs of Intelligence and Security Services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, with the support of the Guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework, as a critical measure to strengthen security cooperation, in line with the call of the 9th High-Level Meeting of the ROM for a new approach in regional cooperation against negative forces;
21. Welcome the launching of the Contact and Coordination Group and its Operational Cell, with the support of the Guarantor institutions, as part of a comprehensive approach comprising non-military measures to complement ongoing military efforts against negative forces in the region; take note of the composition of the Contact and Coordination Group, namely Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda and of the need for further consultations regarding the coordination of the Operational Cell;
22. Note the negative impact that human rights violations and impunity have on the region and on the ability of the populations to prosper and contribute to development efforts; deplore in this regard the repeated attacks on civilian populations by armed groups

- and condemn actors involved in supporting them, whether in supplies, logistics, human resources or by exempting them from prosecution;
23. Note the importance of ensuring that national and international human rights and humanitarian standards be respected, and synergies between security and judicial processes, including on transitional justice, promoted; commend in this regard the adoption of the 2019 Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance and the 2019 AU policy on transitional justice and call for their swift and full implementation;
 24. Recognize the need to find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons for lasting stability in the region; and welcome in this regard the recommendations of the meeting of Ministers in charge of displacement held in Kampala, Uganda, in March 2019; welcome the ongoing development by The Sudan and South Sudan of a Durable Solutions Strategy for Displacement;
 25. Welcome the readiness of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to organize, with the support of ICGLR, a sub-regional conference to address the issue of protracted displacements, taking into account ongoing regional efforts.

RESOLVE TO

26. Encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic to pursue and further expand, with the support of MONUSCO and MINUSCA, respectively, the fight against negative forces;
27. Fully support these efforts in line with the regional commitments under the PSC Framework, including through enhanced cooperation and coordination and by making every effort to eliminate any cause for continued mistrust among countries of the region and the affected populations;
28. Continue strengthening ICGLR security-related mechanisms by making available the required resources and participating fully in the implementation of their respective mandates and to call on the Guarantor institutions to support efforts to address political and resource challenges that affect the functioning of these mechanisms;
29. Commend Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, for organizing, with the support of the Guarantor institutions, regular consultations among their Chiefs of Intelligence and Security Services as a confidence-building measure and to enhance coordination, and encourage them to pursue these efforts; examine the possibility of expanding the consultation process to include the Central African Republic;
30. Encourage the concerned countries to provide the necessary financial and logistical support required for the effective functioning of the Contact and Coordination Group and its Operational Cell, as an innovative non-military vehicle to complement essential military action to eliminate the threat posed by negative forces; express, in this regard, appreciation to the Guarantor Institutions of the PSC Framework for the support provided so far and call on international partners to extend unwavering support to this process, including through mobilizing the necessary resources;
31. Strongly condemn the resumption of military activities of some ex-M23 members in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo;
32. Encourage close collaboration between the Contact and Coordination Group and the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network with a view to ensuring accountability for cross-border crimes committed by armed groups, perpetrators of crimes and persons having endangered State security;

33. Encourage ICGLR, with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy, to establish a platform bringing together the signatory countries of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance to track and report back on progress made in its implementation;
34. Continue to seek durable solutions for displaced persons in the region and to expedite efforts aimed at implementing their voluntary return.

IV. On promoting regional integration

The Heads of State and Government

35. Reiterate the importance of measures to deepen regional economic integration as a vehicle for inclusive and sustainable development, building on existing bilateral and multilateral infrastructure projects and initiatives;
36. Reiterate the importance of improving traceability and certification processes for natural resources in the region on the path towards regional stability and development; and underscore, in this regard, the importance of implementing the recommendations of the high-level regional workshop on natural resources in the Great Lakes region, held from 31 August to 2 September 2021 in Khartoum, the Sudan;
37. Underscore the need to fight against impunity for natural resources-related crimes and dissuade all actors from engaging in this deplorable practice;
38. Emphasize the need to strengthen political and security cooperation and the rule of law to create an enabling environment for cross-border investment and trade and for collaboration aimed at harnessing the extensive natural resources endowments and other economic opportunities that underpin the region's economic transformation;
39. Welcome the decision of the United States of America and the European Union and its member states to lift economic sanctions against the Republic of Burundi.

RESOLVE TO

40. Collaborate more closely with a view to accelerating the identification and financing of integrative cross-border projects, strengthening the partnership with international financial institutions and other partners, and jointly mobilizing resources for regional socio-economic integration; and to direct their respective Ministers of Economy and Finance, jointly with other concerned national institutions, to develop options for such enhanced joint engagement;
41. Support the continuing preparations for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, scheduled to take place in Kigali, Rwanda, in 2022, with the aim of promoting responsible business through structured cross-border projects that would provide better livelihood opportunities to the population, including women and youth; call on all national and regional stakeholders to participate in the Conference and mobilize support for cross-border trade and investment initiatives to be presented at the Conference and to ensure its appropriate follow-up; further encourage that this Conference be held on an annual and rotating basis;
42. Urge ICGLR to continue advocating for greater ownership and involvement in the Regional Initiative against the Illicit Exploitation of Natural Resources and call on partners to provide further political, technical and financial support;

43. Enhance legal mechanisms to curb financing of negative forces and terrorist groups in the region and, to this effect, strongly encourage the convening in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a meeting of Ministers of Justice of the region on enhancing judicial cooperation; and commit to support ongoing efforts of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network in this area;
44. Increase efforts to foster the economic empowerment of women, including through cross-border trade, with a view to achieving a broader social and economic transformation in the region and in this regard, welcome the establishment of the Great Lakes Women's Entrepreneurs Network;
45. Continue joint efforts to ensure a quick, durable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and call for enhanced international support to that effect.

V. On promoting the role of women, youth and civil society

The Heads of State and Government

46. Welcome the revised Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), endorsed in November 2021 by the Ministers in charge of gender of the ICGLR Member States;
47. Reaffirm their commitment to prioritize transformative actions, including the realization of women's equal rights and to promote gender balance in political and peace processes by 2023 through the swift implementation of the ICGLR Regional Action Plan and national action plans;
48. Commend the work of the Advisory Board on Women, Peace and Security for the region on promoting women's effective participation in political and peacebuilding processes as well as fighting violence against women and girls, including through strengthened partnerships with other stakeholders, such as regional parliamentarians and ombudspersons; welcome and encourage the conduct of solidarity and good offices missions across the region to promote women's effective participation in peacebuilding and prevention activities;
49. Welcome and encourage the increased participation of civil society organizations and the ICGLR regional Fora in support of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and early warning in the region;
50. Stress the need to enhance efforts on the protection of women and girls, victims of violence, and to change related perceptions of norms in the region;
51. Note the need for targeted capacity building and communication programmes to empower young people, notably young girls.

RESOLVE TO

52. Have each High-Level Meeting of the ROM preceded by a review of progress achieved by ICGLR Member States in the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and the African Union's relevant instruments on gender;
53. Encourage the country holding the chairpersonship of the ROM to assume a leading role as gender champion in the region alongside women leaders of the Advisory Board;

54. Accelerate efforts to remove all barriers to the active and meaningful participation of women and youth in conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and political processes;
55. Harmonize their domestic legislation with regional and international instruments to end violence against women and girls and support campaigns to advance towards a Zero Tolerance Policy in this regard;
56. Allocate adequate resources at national and regional levels to fulfill the aspirations of women, youth and civil society, including as expressed in the 2020 Declaration on Civil Society's contribution to Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region; commit to comply with the AU WPS Continental Monitoring Framework;
57. Encourage ICGLR, the Office of the Special Envoy and other relevant entities to provide technical and financial support for women's political and economic empowerment, including through training and capacity building.

VI. On the next High-Level Meeting of the ROM

The Heads of State and Government

58. Extend their gratitude to His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, for his leadership and effective engagement as Chair of the ROM, from October 2018 to February 2022;
59. Welcome the generous offer of Burundi to host the 11th High-Level Meeting of the ROM in 2023 in Bujumbura and encourage other signatory countries to consider hosting such meetings in the future;
60. Finally, extend their gratitude to His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for hosting the 10th High-Level Meeting of the ROM and express their appreciation to all those who contributed to its success.