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The Team of International Envoys urges for determined actions to preserve regional stability

Kigali, 15 December 2015 - United Nations (UN), African Union (AU) European Union (EU), United States (US) Envoys accredited to the Great Lakes region of Africa conducted a regional tour from 9-15 December 2015. They visited Kampala, Uganda; Kinshasa, Kisangani, Beni, and Goma in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Kigali, Rwanda. The planned mission to Bujumbura, Burundi could not take place. The Envoys focused on critical threats to regional stability and encouraged democratic transition processes in the region.

In Uganda, the Envoys committed to support financially the East African Community (EAC)-led mediation to enable the immediate launching of the dialogue on Burundi. They called on all Burundian parties to put an end to the ongoing violence and give priority to the dialogue to achieve lasting solutions. The facilitator of the EAC-led mediation, Ugandan Minister of Defence Crispus Kiyonga, assured the Envoys of Uganda's availability and readiness to launch an inclusive dialogue among the Burundian stakeholders to end the violence as soon as possible.

In the DRC, the Envoys held consultations with Government officials, the President of CENI (Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendente), political party representatives, including the UDPS, the Catholic Church as well as Civil Society groups. With regards to the convening of the political dialogue initiated by President Joseph Kabila, the Envoys stressed the need for such a dialogue to be inclusive and representative in order to create a conducive environment for peaceful, free, transparent and credible elections within the respect of constitutional framework.

During their visit to Beni, Eastern DRC, the Envoys extended their condolences and sympathy to the population which continue to be the innocent victims of cruel, heinous and terrorist attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). In this regard, the Envoys reiterated the urgency to step up efforts in the neutralization of all negatives forces in the Eastern DRC. They urged the Government of DRC to resume joint military cooperation between FARDC and MONUSCO against the Force Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR).

In Kisangani, DRC, the Envoys met with the Ex-FDLR combatants cantoned in Bahuma camp and encouraged them to accept to be repatriated back to Rwanda, their country of origin,

United Nations Office in Nairobi – P.O. Box 48246, Nairobi, KENYA

For more information, please contact:

Penangnini Toure, Public Information Officer • Email: tourep@un.org • Phone : +254 41 350 6324 • Mobile: +254 715 703 417

without any preconditions. The Envoys assured them of the international community's commitment to support a safe and dignified repatriation process. They also called on all other FDLR combatants still active in the Eastern DRC to voluntarily surrender and submit to the repatriation process without preconditions.

On the Ex-M23 combatants, the Envoys deplored the slow implementation process of the Nairobi Declarations, in particular the current impasse in the repatriation of the former combatants. They urged the ex-M23 leaders to sensitize their remaining troops in Uganda and Rwanda to accept to be repatriated to the DRC.

In Rwanda, the Envoys discussed issues emanating from the crisis in Burundi, in particular, its impact on regional stability and refugees, and the need for all countries in the region to contribute to the de-escalation of tensions, and to support robust regional mediation to find a lasting solution to the crisis. The Envoys further called on the Government of Rwanda to continue to fulfil its regional commitments in line with the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSF) Framework.

The Team of International Envoys is composed of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit who was represented by Assistant Secretary-General Modibo Touré, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) for the DRC and Head of MONUSCO Maman Sambo Sidikou, the African Union Special Representative, Prof. Ibrahima Fall represented by Senior Political Affairs Officer Kassimi Bamba, U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region of Africa, Thomas Perriello and the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region, Koen Vervaeke.

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