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The leaders of the Great Lakes launch a Private Sector Investment Conference to strengthen economic development and integration

Kinshasa, 7 July 2015 – Under the auspices of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) agreement which required the Preparation for the Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, a meeting was held on Monday at the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, between the National Organizing Committee of the DRC and delegations from the United Nations and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) led by Special Envoy Said Djinnit and Ambassador Vicente Muanda, respectively.

In January 2014, the Heads of State and Government of the region asked the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great lakes Region and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to convene a Regional Private Sector Investment Conference to strengthen economic cooperation, expand trade opportunities as well as stimulate job creation to bring about long-term stability and peace in the region.

Since then, an Investment Opportunities Brief containing a list of regional projects was prepared through consultations with stakeholders in the region and endorsed by a regional consultation meeting held in Luanda, Angola, from 17-18 December 2014. This gathering also endorsed the process of preparing for the Private Sector Investment Conference.

The Conference will bring together different categories of private sector investors, government officials, national chambers of commerce and industry, and investment promotion agencies to discuss business opportunities, assess the operating climate and seal investment deals on many of the projects identified.

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In March 2015, a selection process appointed the DRC as the host for this conference, and the date of 24-25 February has been agreed on to hold the conference on the 3rd anniversary of the PSCF. A Conference Secretariat composed of officials from the Office of the Special Envoy, the ICGLR Secretariat and the Government of the DRC focal point has been established. It will be overseen and guided by a steering committee co-chaired by the political leadership of the three co-organizers assisted by the Guarantors (AUC and SADC) as well as the Regional Economic Communities (EAC, COMESA, CEPGL), among others.

The three officials expressed their gratitude to the President of the DRC for accepting to host this high-level event. They agreed on the significance of this conference as an event with great potential to uplift the entire Great Lakes region with far-reaching positive effects on 13 signatory countries of the PSCF. They also noted with satisfaction that good progress has already been made in the preparation of the conference, but urged the member countries of the Great Lakes region to each take interest in and make a commitment to the success of this event.

“With this Private Sector Investment Conference, we have an excellent opportunity to make the Great Lakes region a business-friendly and attractive environment, where stability and development would take roots, and in the process help alleviate the sufferings of the millions of people living in this area,” they said. “Let us remember that the Great Lakes region represents an area where the population is more and more educated, and where there is a growing number of urbanized youths. This population needs our full support, both at country and regional level,” they also concurred.

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