



COMMUNIQUE

7th Meeting of the Guarantors of the

Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

2 April 2020

1. On 2 April 2020, the representatives of the Guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region held a consultative meeting via videoconference. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the region, and the impact on the implementation of the PSC Framework, including the holding of the 10th Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM), and to exchange on recent peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region.

2. In attendance were Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (Chair); Basile Ikouebe, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission for the Great Lakes region; Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR); and Commander Phillipus Hashondili Nghilondwa, representing Dr. Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region

3. The representatives of the Guarantors noted with deep concern the spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential adverse impact on the countries and the people of the Great Lakes region. They noted that the pandemic, if not well contained, could cause great economic disruption, social tensions, and human suffering, significantly threatening vulnerable populations, including women and youth, adversely impacted by the consequences of decades of conflict. The Guarantors expressed condolences to the Governments and to those bereaved as result of the pandemic while wishing speedy recovery to recuperating victims. They welcomed and expressed full support to coordinated efforts and joint decisions by the countries of the region to fight the pandemic, both at the national and regional levels, including the outcome of the meetings of Ministers of Health of SADC and of the East African Community held on 9 and 25 March, respectively.

4. Noting the multi-dimensional impact of the pandemic, the representatives of the Guarantors called on the signatory countries of the PSC Framework to take every measure to protect the most vulnerable populations, and to ensure regional supply chains remain functioning through the free movement of goods and cargo.

5. In line with the appeals by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, the representatives of the Guarantors expressed their readiness to engage international financial institutions and partners to mobilize the resources required to address the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region and to pro-actively engage and plan for early recovery to sustain recent gains on the development track.

6. In light of the increased vulnerability of women and girls, the representatives of the Guarantors called on all stakeholders to ensure that responsive support mechanisms are put in place to safeguard the lives of women and girls, as well as to combat sexual and gender-based violence in the ongoing efforts to contain the pandemic. This requires a strengthening of capacities and networks between national entities and civil society, including in the context of the COVID-19 response. Recognizing the role of women as key contributors to the region's agricultural sector, the representatives of the Guarantors called for sustained support from the Government and partners, and encouraged the women and youth not to relent but to remain united and resolute even in the face of the threat posed by the COVID-19 crisis.

Recent peace and security developments in the region

7. The Guarantors noted that the pandemic is reaching the region at a watershed moment for progress in peace, security and development. In that regard, they recognized and welcomed the positive impact on the region of the peaceful transition of power in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the signing of the Political Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (CAR), the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Rwanda and Uganda under the auspices of Angola and the DRC, the peaceful transition of power to a civilian-led Government in Sudan, the formation of a Unity Government in South Sudan as well as the decision by the Governments of the DRC and Zambia to address their border dispute through dialogue.

8. They expressed appreciation and support to the Governments of the region for choosing the path of cooperation, collaboration through good offices, and dialogue to resolve differences between the countries of the region in line with their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework as well the ICGLR Pact. They emphasized that while consequences of the pandemic may be unprecedented and unpredictable, efforts must continue to sustain the positive gains achieved so far and advance regional cooperation without delay in the overall interest of the region. Now more than ever, the countries of the region can significantly benefit from steadfast solidarity and unity to overcome the challenges of the moment, as well as those

emanating from the longstanding and recurrent instability in the region. The representatives of the Guarantors, therefore, called upon all actors to continue to abstain from any actions capable to undermine the progress achieved in political processes both at national and regional levels, and encouraged them to demonstrate their unwavering determination to regional cooperation and integration.

9. With regard to the neutralization of negative forces in the region, the representatives of the Guarantors welcomed the significant progress achieved towards a comprehensive approach, including military and non-military measures, in line with the decisions of the Heads of State and Government taken during the 9th high-level meeting of the ROM held in Uganda in October 2018. They encouraged the concerned countries to pursue these efforts to prevent a re-grouping and remobilization of the negative forces at this time of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 and to continue to work together to resolve the threat posed by negative forces.

10. They took note of the decision to postpone the 10th high-level meeting of the ROM scheduled on 27 to 29 March 2020 in Kinshasa, the DRC, and the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, scheduled on 18 to 20 March 2020 in Kigali, Rwanda, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They expressed their readiness to support these events aimed at promoting cooperation and development in the region. In particular, they requested Special Envoy Xia to seek further guidance from H.E. President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and H.E. President Félix Tshisekedi, in their capacity as outgoing and incoming Chair of the ROM, respectively, on the best way forward concerning the implementation of decisions taken during the last high-level Summit and preparation of the upcoming Summit.

Elections in the region

11. The representatives of the Guarantors took note of the ongoing preparation for elections in the region, particularly the general elections scheduled in Burundi in May and, in this regard, they called on the Burundian authorities to ensure a peaceful, inclusive and credible electoral process.

Appreciation

12. Participants expressed their appreciation to Special Envoy Xia for convening the 7th meeting of the Guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework. They committed to pursuing their exchanges through regular consultations with a view to better supporting the Great Lakes countries to achieve durable peace and development.