

Communiqué of the Eighth 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

Brazzaville, 19 October 2017

1. 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 (DRC) and the region held the Eighth High-Level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) on 19 October 2017 in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. The meeting was convened by H.E. Mr. Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo, with the support of the Guarantor institutions, namely, the United Nations, the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

2. Participants (list annexed) reviewed the political and security developments in the region since their last meeting held in Luanda, Angola on 26 October 2016, and agreed as follows:

Neutralization of negative forces and repatriation of disarmed combatants

3. Condemned the continued activities of negative forces in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including most recently the attack by the Mai-Mai Yakutumba against Uvira, South Kivu, and deplored their negative impact on the civilian population and stability of the region. Reiterated their resolve and commitment towards the total eradication of these negative forces from the region. Welcomed the continued cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO Force against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and other armed groups, and encouraged them to expedite actions in this regard.

4. Called upon the Guarantors of the PSC Framework to continue their engagements with stakeholders with a view to creating conditions that are conducive for the resumption of the joint consultations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the leadership of the ex M23 on the implementation of the Nairobi Declarations and the repatriation of the ex-M23 elements that are still in Rwanda and Uganda.

5. Took note of the field visit to eastern DRC by the Technical Support Committee (TSC) of the PSC Framework from 7 to 10 September 2017 and, in line with the recommendations of the TSC, decided to:

- i. Encourage the Government of the DRC, with the support of countries of the region and MONUSCO, to vigorously pursue the neutralization of negative forces in line with the

commitments under the PSC Framework and the ICGLR Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Defence;

- ii. Recommend the strengthening of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade with a view to adapting it to the new challenges in the fight against the negative forces operating in eastern DRC, so as to maintain military pressure and enhance operations against these armed groups, including in particular the ADF, FDLR, Kamuina Nsapu and other armed and terrorist groups that continue to destabilize the DRC;
- iii. Send a strong and unequivocal message to all foreign disarmed combatants in the DRC, including FDLR and the Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), that there is no other option than to return to their countries of origin;
- iv. Complete the repatriation without pre-conditions of the FDLR disarmed combatants that are in the DRC transit camps of Kanyabayonga, Kisangani and Walungu, as well as the ex-M23 former combatants that are still in Uganda and Rwanda, within the shortest time frame possible and not later than 20 October 2018.
- v. In this regard, direct that the follow-up mechanism, comprising the Governments of the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, MONUSCO and the Guarantors of the PSC Framework, be reactivated and propose modalities to accelerate the repatriation of the disarmed combatants and their dependents;
- vi. Ensure that the situation of women and children in the FDLR transit camps in eastern DRC be addressed as a matter of urgency, including through encouraging UNHCR, UNICEF and other humanitarian actors to explore measures aimed at expediting their repatriation to Rwanda;
- vii. Also ensure that those responsible for crimes against humanity be investigated and brought to justice in line with the PSC Framework, the ICGLR Protocol on Judicial Cooperation and international law.

Dialogue and political processes in the region

Democratic Republic of the Congo

6. Noted that despite delays in its implementation, the 31 December 2016 political agreement remains the viable framework for ending the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; stressed the need to pursue the implementation of confidence building measures to create conditions conducive for the good conduct of the electoral process;

7. Commended the significant progress achieved in the voter registration process (42 million voters, out of the 45 million estimated, registered so far) and stressed the need for the

early publication of a consensual electoral calendar and a budget as per the 31 December 2016 agreement. Encouraged the Government to ensure the passing of requisite electoral legislation.

8. Welcomed the decision by SADC to appoint a Special Envoy to support the electoral process in the DRC; and welcomed the outcome of the high-level meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo held in the margins of the General Assembly in New York, on 19 September, regarding a coordinated approach involving the UN, the AU, the European Union, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, and SADC, including through the establishment of a coordinated team of experts, to assist the Commission Électorale Nationale Independante (CENI) in preparing the elections.

9. Condemned acts of violence against state agents, security forces and civilians, as well as human rights violations in the Kasaïs; took note of the Government's efforts to investigate reports of human rights violations and to prosecute the alleged perpetrators, with the support of the United Nations team of international experts on the Kasaïs.

10. Welcomed the positive developments in the security situation in the Kasaïs and welcomed the holding of the Conference on peace, reconciliation and development of the Grand-Kasaï on 19 September 2017.

Burundi

11. Noted the slow progress in the East African Community (EAC)-led Inter-Burundian dialogue and encouraged all the participants to continue and conclude the ongoing consultations with a view to holding an inclusive dialogue.

12. Stressed the need to take effective measures related to the protection of human rights and called on all stakeholders to cooperate in this regard.

13. Reiterated the support of the countries of the region to the efforts of H.E. Mr. Benjamin W. Mkapa, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, in his capacity as Facilitator of the inter-Burundian dialogue on behalf of the East African Community, under the guidance of H.E. Mr Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, in his capacity as the Mediator.

14. Stressed the importance of coherent and coordinated regional and international support to the EAC-led dialogue process on Burundi and welcomed the appointment of Mr. Michel Kafando as the United Nations Special Envoy on 5 May 2017.

South Sudan

15. Condemned the repeated violations of the ceasefire by all the parties and expressed serious concern over continued attacks by various armed groups in South Sudan, resulting in unprecedented levels of displacement, loss of lives and suffering of the civilian population.

16. Welcomed the holding of the 31st Extra-ordinary Summit of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) dedicated to the situation in South Sudan on 12 June and expressed support to convening a High-level Revitalization Forum to restore a negotiated permanent ceasefire and ensure the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. Committed to speaking with “One Voice” as stressed in the African Union Peace and Security Council Communiqué issued at its Ministerial Meeting on 20 September 2017.

17. Welcomed progress in the organization of the national dialogue in South Sudan and called on all parties to commit to a political solution, stressing that there is no military solution to the conflict.

18. Commended H.E. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, for hosting meetings between different factions of the SPLM with a view to reuniting them and encouraged the various factions to participate in the process in good faith in order to create an environment conducive for the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Central African Republic

19. Strongly condemned the continued violence by armed groups in the Central African Republic and called upon all of them to immediately cease hostilities and commit to a political settlement of grievances, including in the framework of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in support of the efforts of the Government led by H.E. Faustin-Archange Touadera, President of the Central African Republic.

20. Called upon national authorities to ensure progress on justice and accountability, disarmament and reconciliation, in line with the conclusions of the Bangui Forum held in May 2015. In this regard, welcomed the establishment of the Special Criminal Court.

21. Welcomed the outcome of the high-level meeting on Central African Republic held in the margins of the General Assembly in New York on 19 September, in particular its calls to ensure and accelerate the effective implementation of the roadmap of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation and to strengthen MINUSCA’s capacities to enable it to more effectively implement its mandate.

Kenya

22. Were briefed on the status of preparations for the presidential election scheduled to be held on 26 October 2017 in Kenya.
23. Expressed their solidarity with the people of Kenya and urge all concerned parties to expend every effort for the holding of a free, credible and peaceful election.
24. Called upon all parties to exercise restraint.
25. Requested H.E. President Denis Sassou N’Guesso, Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC Framework, to visit Nairobi shortly with a view to supporting efforts aimed at creating the conditions conducive to the holding of the presidential election.

Implementation of commitments under the PSC Framework

26. Reaffirmed that the PSC Framework remains an essential mechanism to achieve durable peace and stability in the DRC and the region, and renewed their full commitment to its implementation. In this regard, they endorsed the report of the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of signatory countries of the PSC Framework held on 17 October in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, and the 2017 Annual Report of the TSC.
27. Further endorsed the updated list of Priority Activities of the Regional Plan of Action for the implementation of the regional commitments under the PSC Framework, and requested the TSC to submit a report on its implementation at Tenth High-Level Meeting of the ROM. They welcomed the retreat held by the TSC on 4 and 5 May and endorsed the revised Terms of Reference of the TSC.
28. Welcomed progress in the implementation of the Regional Plan of Action, including through:
 - a. the holding of the regional meeting of Ministers in charge of Youth Affairs in Livingstone, Zambia from 7 to 9 June 2017;
 - b. the convening of a meeting on the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources by the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the ICGLR Secretariat on 5 and 6 July 2017 in Nairobi, Kenya, and
 - c. the establishment of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network in November 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya.

29. Encouraged the ICGLR Secretariat and the Offices of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region to continue to strengthen their collaboration on the implementation of the ICGLR Pact and the PSC Framework.

30. Encouraged the United Nations to work with the countries of the region in efforts to promote cross-border cooperation, including through the implementation of its Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

31. Encouraged the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, in consultation with the ICGLR Secretariat, SADC and the African Union, to convene regular meetings to review progress in the implementation of the Declaration of the Women's Platform of the PSC Framework adopted in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo in July 2016.

32. Expressed concern over the significant increase in displacement in the Great Lakes region over the past year, totalling now more than 7 million internally displaced persons and 3.5 million refugees and asylum seekers; stressed the need to ensure the safety and security of civilians and urged national, regional and international actors to continue addressing urgent humanitarian needs and provide durable solutions for internally displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers. Encouraged the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to hold consultations with relevant stakeholders to further promote durable solutions to displacement in the region.

Next high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism

33. Welcomed the offer by the Republic of Uganda to host the Ninth High-Level Meeting of the ROM in 2018.

34. Extended their deep appreciation to H.E. President Denis Sassou Nguesso and to the Government and people of the Republic of the Congo for their generosity in hosting the Summit of the ROM and expressed their gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the meeting.