

Statement by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region at the opening of the Peacebuilding Commission meeting on Gender, Peace and Security

4 November 2020

**Mr. Chairman of the Peacebuilding Commission,
Excellencies Representatives of the Permanent Missions,
Distinguished guests, the representative(s) of civil society,**

I wish to begin by congratulating Ambassador Bob Rae on his appointment as Canada's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and through him, thank the Canadian Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his initiative in convening this meeting on women's engagement in peacebuilding.

Today's meeting demonstrates the Commission's unequivocal commitment to support the countries of the Great Lakes region and to integrate priorities related to women's roles in peace, security and economic development into its agenda in the current context of the global health crisis.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence among us of Madam Bineta Diop, Special Envoy of the African Union Commission, and Madam Liberata MulaMula, former Executive Secretary of ICGLR, both women leaders and members of the Advisory Board on Women, Peace and Security for the Great Lakes Region. Finally, I wish to recognize and welcome the participation of women representatives from the region in our meeting. They will shortly report on the conclusions of the consultative round tables that my Office organized in July and August, to which took part a large number of influential stakeholders .

Mr. Chair, Distinguished guests

The Great Lakes region, which has suffered from instability and conflict for several decades, is today experiencing encouraging progress in terms of rapprochement and confidence-building among its member states. This positive dynamic offers new opportunities for regional cooperation and support from the international community. Following consultations in June by the PBC on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ebola virus disease on peace in the Great Lakes, it expressed its readiness to support the countries of the region in their efforts to ensure socio-economic recovery and development, and to give priority to programs that support women to ensure that they are fully involved in regional peace-building efforts. In this regard,

the Commission committed itself to organize a follow-up meeting dedicated to the implementation of the agenda on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

It is in this context that my Office facilitated the organization of three consultative round tables events on 28 July, 11 and 20 August. I am pleased to note that the many participants were able to identify a number of key proposals relating to the effective participation of women in peace and stabilization processes, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and economic recovery, as contained in the report submitted to you.

Furthermore, Mr. Chair, I would like to recall that these consultative roundtables were held at a pivotal time, not only for our organization, but also for the issue of women, peace and security that brings us together today. Indeed, they take place in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, with the key principle of humanism resonating as a commitment that we must all make to "Leave no one behind", and on the other hand, in the context of the twentieth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and that of the recent Security Council Resolution 2532 (2020).

At the end of our discussions today, it will be important for us to capitalize on the interest generated by these consultations to better target our actions in support of women at this critical time, in view of the profound upheavals caused by the pandemic and its far reaching economic and social repercussions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our substantive discussions will be introduced by Ms. Lusenge and Ms. Muque, who will present the recommendations that emerged from the consultative round tables. They will be able to draw our attention to some of the key recommendations, and in doing so remind us that, more than ever, the States of the region and the international community must work together to provide women and girls with all the necessary support they deserve. Indeed, we must act together to support and accompany initiatives for economic development, community dialogue and social cohesion. We must also act together to support and accompany sub-regional cooperation, in particular the role of women, their commitments in terms of prevention and participation in the processes of governance, peacebuilding and economic development in the Great Lakes region.

From this perspective, I wish to assure you that my Office will spare no effort and will play its full part in supporting the women and girls, who I know we all recognize as essential actors for change in a Great Lakes region, thereby ensuring it is more stable, more inclusive, but also more integrated and therefore more prosperous. The elaboration in the coming weeks of an action plan based on the United Nations Regional Strategy for the Great Lakes Region, will provide an additional opportunity to strengthen synergies and cooperation efforts on the women, peace and security component, which is one of its priorities.

Allow me to conclude with a request for the mobilization of the Commission and all the participants in this endeavor, so that the recommendations resulting from our work are translated into concrete actions on the ground, and thus contribute to the efforts of women and girls to establish sustainable peace, stability and development in the post-COVID period and beyond. Beyond words, then, we will all need to act. It is a firm commitment that we owe to the women and girls of the region.

I thank you!