



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION



FOREWORD BY SPECIAL ENVOY HUANG XIA



Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region (Photo: Penangnini Toure).

Welcome to this new edition of the Newsletter of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, which covers key events and developments concerning the Office between May and December 2022.

With the mandate of the Office anchored in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) following the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework by 13 countries of the region nearly a decade ago, we are struck by the continuing security challenges still facing this region. In November 2021, to our general surprise, the March 23 Movement (M23) which was defeated in an apparent



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capitulation in 2013, resurfaced in North Kivu province, eastern DRC, carrying out attacks against positions of the Congolese Armed Forces and killing dozens of civilians. By March 2022, the rebel movement captured key parts of Rutshuru territory, which borders Uganda and Rwanda. The M23 continued its advance until late in the year.

This latest resurgence of the M23 contributed to further exacerbate existing tensions in the Great Lakes region. In response to the prevailing situation, the East African Community decided to deploy a regional force under Kenyan command. This force is a result of the Nairobi talks organized under the aegis of former President Uhuru Kenyatta.

In view of these security challenges which threaten the very essence of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Office undertook good offices in a series of missions conducted in the core countries of the Great Lakes region, namely the DRC, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda, as well as with the African Union, to help de-escalate the nascent conflict.

In other areas, my Office, and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) joined hands to organize in Kinshasa in June 2022 a conference of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, which my Office has supported since its establishment in 2016. The Network is the main vehicle and intergovernmental organization that supports the work of Central Authorities in regional criminal justice matters.

Other activities co-organized by my Office include a joint mission with the ICGLR Executive Secretary to Brussels and Paris from 5 to 9 September 2022 with the objective to solicit increased political, technical, and financial support for a better governance of natural resources management in the Great Lakes region. Also, on 24 August 2022, my Office and the ICGLR organized in Kampala a meeting of heads of intelligence and security services to review the regional security situation and to put in place security monitoring mechanisms. Furthermore, on 25 August, we facilitated a meeting of women entrepreneurs from the region in Arusha, Tanzania, to explore ways of helping them realize their full potential in trade and business in the Great Lakes.

While we are at it, I would like to use this opportunity to express happiness and hope for the Great Lakes region with two recent examples of democratic and peaceful elections, which saw a seamless transition of power from outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta and the incoming President William Ruto. Similarly in Angola, President João Lourenço was re-elected for a second term in office in a peaceful process. These exemplary elections point in one direction: Africa's Great Lakes region's democratic maturity and its genuine aspiration for peace and prosperity. I leave you on this encouraging note and invite you to explore the rest of the newsletter. I also take this opportunity to express my hope for a more peaceful and prosperous Great Lakes region and for you and your loved ones, I send my best wishes for the new year.

Huang Xia,

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region