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INTENSE DIPLOMATIC OUTREACH IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION



Special Envoy Huang Xia briefing the Security Council on 20 October 2021 (UN Photo).

Increased diplomatic outreach and sustained regional cooperation continued during the last quarter of 2021, attesting to the commitment of the leaders of the Great Lakes region to work together towards peace, stability and development, in line with the PSC Framework for the DRC and the region.

In addition to progress made on security and economic cooperation, countries continued to strengthen diplomatic relations, including in the context of joint bilateral commissions, such as between Burundi and the DRC, Rwanda and Tanzania as well as Rwanda and the Republic of Congo, among others. Further visits and meetings among Heads of State in the region illustrated the leaders' continuing focus on deepening dialogue and bilateral relations and following up on previous outreach efforts. Several countries also reached out to countries beyond the region to build or enhance strategic partnerships, including with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

At regional level, the ICGLR, under the presidency of Angola, pursued its efforts to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the crisis in the Central African Republic through the holding of the third mini-Summit in September 2021. The Summit resulted in the adoption of a joint roadmap for peace in the Central African



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Republic. Also noteworthy was the launch of negotiations between the East African Community (EAC) and the DRC to facilitate the country's accession as the seventh member state of the regional body.

At multilateral level, the quadripartite process on the normalization of relations between Rwanda and Uganda, facilitated by Angola and the DRC, did not register further progress. However, the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of both countries on the sidelines of the African Union-European Union ministerial meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, on 25 October, constituted an encouraging development.

At the same time, some challenges persisted at national and bilateral levels. In the Sudan, the military seized power on 25 October, in contravention of the country's Constitution. It dissolved the transitional government and temporarily placed under arrest several government officials, including Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, who - after being reinstated on 21 November - resigned in January 2022.

As highlighted by Special Envoy Xia during his briefing to the UN Security Council on 20 October, "the bilateral and regional initiatives attest to the emergence of a community of destiny cognizant of the added value of dialogue and cooperation as tools for fostering good neighbourliness. It is more important than ever to consolidate the region's achievements in a lasting way while resolutely addressing persisting challenges."