

LAUNCH OF THE GREAT LAKES WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS' NETWORK



Special Envoy Huang Xia (center, front row) with participants at the launch of the Great Lakes Women Entrepreneurs network in Nairobi, Kenya, 2 December 2021 (Photo: Penangnini Toure/UN).

Women entrepreneurs in the Great Lakes region account for about 70 percent of cross-border traders. Their role as catalysts for the region's economic growth is recognized as key to the consolidation of peace and security in the Great Lakes region. In addition, women are critical actors in the region's vibrant agricultural sector. During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many women entrepreneurs had to adjust their business models to the new context.

It is therefore particularly timely that on 2 December 2021, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and the ICGLR Private Sector Forum launched the Great Lakes Women Entrepreneurs' Network in Nairobi. This initiative is a follow-up to the regional workshop for women business leaders, held in December 2019, to promote the role of women entrepreneurs in advancing regional economic cooperation in the Great Lakes region. It is also an initiative carried out in support of the UN regional Strategy and the ICGLR Regional Action Plan on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). Members of the Network include women entrepreneurs from Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the



Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. As part of the launch, the Network benefitted from training sessions on regional markets, knowledge and best practices for business growth, as well as gender mainstreaming in the African Continental Free Trade Area.