



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION



NEW YEAR, RENEWED COMMITMENTS



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

At the start of the new year, it is customary to commit to new goals and recommit to old ones. Most often, these renewed commitments are responses to the challenges we face.

In the Great Lakes region – the focus of my Office’s work – the first of those challenges remains the illegal and violent activities of armed groups, and the immense suffering they inflict on the civilian population. Over the past months, the attacks by the M23, the FDLR, the ADF and other local armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have continued unabated, forcing innocent people to flee their homes, and seeking protection and refuge elsewhere. In addition, these armed groups



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activities have affected negatively regional relations, raising tensions between some countries in the region.

Encouragingly, leaders of the region have swiftly responded, notably by initiating the Nairobi and the Luanda processes, both supported by my Office among other international partners.

In this context, at the dawn of the new year, it is fitting for us to recommit to continue to support regional efforts aimed at bringing back security, stability, and prosperity to the people of the Great Lakes region.

Through a host of activities and actions – some of which are highlighted in this newsletter – my Office will continue to play its part, along its national and international partners.

Our collective efforts in support to the region are vital as 2023 marks 10 years since the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, which remains an important vehicle towards lasting stability and development in the Great Lakes region.

On the eve of the Framework's 10th anniversary, it is my sincere hope that the countries of the region and the international community will step up their efforts to recommit to and honour the pledges made a decade ago and translate them into real change for the people and communities in the Great Lakes region.

I wish you all a peaceful, healthy, and successful New Year!

Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region