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

NEW YEAR, RENEWED COMMITMENTS

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 activities have affected negatively regional relations, raising tensions between some countries in the region. [Read more](#)



Consultations of the Nairobi III process, Nairobi, 28 November 2022. Front row, L to R: President William Ruto of Kenya; President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi; and former President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta. Back row, L to R: Serge Tshibangu, Special Advisor to President Felix Tshisekedi of the DRC; Peter Mathuki, Secretary-General of the East African Community; Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region; and Macharia Kamau, former Kenyan Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

LEADERS OF THE GREAT LAKES MOBILIZE TO ADDRESS EMERGING POLITICAL AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE REGION

Over the past months, the resurgence of the 23 March Movement (M23) has had significant regional implications. In addition to contributing to a deterioration of the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it has triggered tensions among neighboring countries, resulting in a political and diplomatic crisis between the DRC and Rwanda, characterized by mutual accusations of support to armed groups and a significant rise in cross-border security incidents.

Leaders of the region mobilized quickly to address the emerging political and security challenges. Peace efforts led by countries and regional organizations as well as relevant stakeholders in the region have multiplied, including notably in the context of the East African Community (EAC)-led Nairobi Process launched by former President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and the Luanda mediation efforts led by President João Lourenço of Angola on behalf of the African Union. [Read more](#)



Face-to-face discussions between members of the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) and elements of illegal armed groups in eastern DRC, 15 December 2022.

THE OPERATIONAL CELL CARRIES OUT ITS FIRST TWO MISSIONS TO EASTERN DRC.

With the support of the Office of the Special Envoy, the Operational Cell of the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) on non-military measures undertook its first two reconnaissance and contact missions to South Kivu Province from 20 to 28 October 2022 and to South Kivu and Ituri Provinces from 7 to 16 December. The main objective of these missions was to establish contact with various stakeholders on the ground, including local authorities, community leaders, and civil society organizations, and to identify entry points for engaging foreign armed groups in the DRC towards their disarmament and repatriation to their countries of origin. [Read more](#)



DRC Prime Minister, Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde, addresses the ministerial meeting in Kinshasa, 16 June 2022.

COUNTRIES IN THE REGION STEP UP CROSS-BORDER JUDICIAL COOPERATION.

On 13 and 14 June 2022, the members of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network (Network) of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) met in Kinshasa, DRC. The Network is the main vehicle in the region that supports the work of Central Authorities in regional criminal justice matters. The Network has been supported by the Office of the Special Envoy since its creation in 2016. This seventh meeting of the Network also included external judicial experts, civil society members, the ICGLR, and other United Nations entities. [Read more](#)



Members of the Advisory Board of Women in the Great Lakes region hold discussions in Bujumbura, Burundi.

MULTI-TRACK APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING: THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN POLITICAL AND PEACE PROCESSES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

On 28 October 2022, the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, together with partner institutions, convened a webinar forum titled: Multi-track Approaches to Peacebuilding and the role of Women and Youth in Addressing Inclusive Political Participation, Peace, Security and Confidence Building in the Great Lakes Region. The webinar brought together civil society representatives from women and youth-focused organisations, peacebuilding networks, and high-level representatives from regional organisations such as the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). [Read more](#)



UN Special Envoy Huang Xia (2nd from left) addresses the media on the sidelines of a workshop on natural resources held in Khartoum, Sudan (Photo: Penangini Toure)

MOBILIZING SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL INITIATIVE AGAINST ILLEGAL EXPLOITATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) co-led a mission to Brussels and Paris on 5 to 9 September 2022. Both offices were represented respectively by Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region and João Samuel Caholo, Executive Secretary of the ICGLR. The objective of the joint mission was to mobilize European partners and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for increased support and additional resources to the Great Lakes region for improvement in the governance of natural resources. [Read more](#)



Participants at the workshop on Strengthening Women Representation in Election Management Bodies, Lusaka, 19 July 2022

BUILDING ALLIANCES BEYOND BORDERS: HOW COORDINATED EFFORTS AND INITIATIVES ARE REINFORCING WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Regional think tanks have an important part to play in offering platforms for stakeholders in the region to work together and build alliances beyond their respective borders. It was in this context that the Office of the Special Envoy facilitated on 19 to 20 July 2022 in Lusaka, Zambia, a peer-learning workshop on strengthening women's representation in Election Management Bodies. The Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance hosted the workshop with support from UNWOMEN, UNDP and the Government of the Republic of Zambia. [Read more](#)



Members of the advocacy mission to Kinshasa, DRC, on women's participation in electoral processes, 11 July 2022

WOMEN INCLUSION IN PEACEFUL DIALOGUE AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The inclusion of women in dialogue processes is of critical importance for efforts towards sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region.

The UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region has prioritized women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in the region. This approach is in line with the UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. [Read more](#)

In a few words...

The UN Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region

The United Nations (UN) Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (S/2020/1168) was adopted by the Executive Committee of the Secretary-General on 22 October 2020. The Strategy was subsequently transmitted to the Security Council and to all signatory countries and guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region in early 2021. The Strategy identifies 10 priorities structured around three pillars: (1) peace, security and justice; (2) sustainable development and shared prosperity; and (3) resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges. The priorities provide an overarching 10-year horizon for United Nations action in the region. [Read more](#)

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region

In February 2013, 11 nations signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region, in a renewed drive to end the recurring cycles of devastating conflicts in eastern DRC which impact stability and development in the Great Lakes area of Africa. On 31 January 2014, two more countries, Kenya and Sudan, became signatories of the PSC Framework. The Framework aims to help "address the root causes of conflict and put an end to recurring cycles of violence" in eastern DRC and the Great Lakes region. [Read more](#)

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