To our esteemed readers:

Happy New Year and thank you for devoting some of your time to read this edition of our newsletter! As in the rest of the world, the Coronavirus pandemic has not spared the Great Lakes region. The region has been severely impacted, with several countries reporting high numbers of cases and deaths. The pandemic has disrupted normal operations, including the suspension of educational activities, which have now resumed in some countries.

World economies have been brought to a halt resulting in millions of job losses. In many countries, health services proved inadequate or insufficient in the face of the scale of the disease. Schools, universities, and other academic centers were forced to close. In short, there are hardly any sectors or areas that have not been touched by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Never in recent memory has humanity faced a challenge of this magnitude for its own survival. This existential threat has spared no communities, no countries, no regions, and no continents. As of today, the number of deaths to the virus globally has reached and passed the two million mark. This is a global tragedy of which the consequences will be with us for a long time to come. We are grateful that the Great Lakes region of Africa has been spared the brunt of the pandemic. The Great Lakes region has reported fewer cases and deaths compared to other regions in the world.

We are, therefore, very pleased to note that the Great Lakes region has been able to maintain its economic and social activities to some extent. However, the pandemic has exposed some weaknesses in the region's infrastructure and systems, which need to be addressed to ensure resilience in the face of future crises.

On the political front, the pandemic has not impacted negatively on the implementation of the political agenda. The region continues to work on the political agenda, with several meetings held virtually.

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The Meaningful Participation of Youth Is Crucial for the Region's Peacebuilding

While prioritizing political solutions, the Strategy advocates for a shift in narrative beyond the traditional focus on conflict-related challenges that have characterized the region in recent years. The Strategy focuses on identifying the root causes of conflict and putting an end to recurring cycles of violence.

In the Great Lakes Region, 75% of an estimated population of 420 million people is young people. These young people are faced with various challenges, including lack of education, lack of job opportunities, and drug and substance abuse. These factors undermine regional stability and peacebuilding. The Strategy recognizes the importance of engaging young people in the political process, with a focus on promoting the integration of the gender dimension in responding to the challenges faced by the region.

In the region, a high percentage of youth refugees and internally displaced persons, to better leverage the political, operational, and programmatic expertise of the UN in support of a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, and resilient region.

SIX QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NEW UN STRATEGY FOR THE GREAT LAKES

Editorial by Special Envoy Huang Xia

The Great Lakes region has a history of conflict and political instability. The region has been plagued by recurring cycles of violence, which have resulted in the displacement of millions of people. The region has been characterized by the exploitation of natural resources, particularly on critical issues pertaining to women and human rights.

Addressing the Illicit Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes

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Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Address the Issue of Negative Forces in the Great Lakes

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