



Political conversation on regional economic integration based on the sustainable management of natural resources as a driver for peace and shared prosperity

26th April 2019, Paris

An event facilitated by the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes

SUMMARY REPORT

Strengthening regional cooperation through deepening economic integration, with a focus on natural resources, as a key vehicle to achieve peace and stability, is a regional commitment of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region signed in Addis Ababa in 2013.¹

As part of broader efforts to support signatory countries implement this commitment, the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes (OESG-GL) facilitated a consultation with high level representatives from the core countries of the Great Lakes region (DRC, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi) and some partners (list of participants in annex). The meeting aimed at initiating a political conversation on how the region can work together to mobilize the necessary political commitment and agree on joint action to enhance their cooperation on this critical agenda.

The meeting, which took place at the margins of the OECD 13th Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains to maximise opportunities to access and share knowledge, practice, and networks in the area of sustainable management of minerals, was timed and tailored to take advantage of the political momentum created by the new leadership in the DRC and by the region's readiness for greater regional integration.

This effort complements other on-going initiatives in this area, in particular by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The conversation, initiated at this meeting, with a restricted group of partners, shall subsequently be brought to the Great Lakes region, and taken forward under the leadership, and within the context, of the political dialogue and cooperation among the signatories of the PSC Framework.

The meeting was held under "Chatham House" rules.

This report summarizes the main conclusions of the meeting and the suggested way forward.

¹ The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was signed by 13 countries: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya and the Republic of Sudan. However, for this activity, the GL region will refer to the core countries that are the region's main theatre of instability: the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

I. Briefs by the core countries on regional integration and the management of natural resources

- Participants agreed that several initiatives in the past few years have contributed, in the region and in individual countries, to improve the management of natural resources. Specific examples were shared by the high-level delegations from the participating countries.
- They, however, noted that on-going illicit exploitation and traffic of natural resources, and the associated illegal economies and their linkages to armed groups and criminal activity, continue to deprive the region of much needed drivers of growth and shared prosperity.
- They agreed that a new common agenda, centered around greater regional integration, and building on the regional natural resources' endowment, is required for the region to advance on a path of peace and shared prosperity. In this regard, participants welcomed and endorsed the clear and forward-looking agenda outlined by the DRC delegation, reflecting the priorities for regional cooperation and integration of the new DRC leadership. They also welcomed the on-going effort by the core countries in the region to implement national, regional and international standards on natural resources management.
- Participants acknowledged that new solutions are required to overcome the challenges encountered so far, including the obstacles of political and other nature that have prevented greater cooperation in this area.
- Participants thus noted the timeliness of an initiative aimed at promoting a political conversation and at bringing the leadership of the core countries of the region and the broader neighborhood and partners to cooperate more closely on this agenda. They highlighted in particular the need to seize the momentum created by the new DRC leadership and the region's readiness to advance on the regional economic integration agenda, as opportunities.
- Experiences from other regions, notably from the European Union, that generated political and economic integration, starting from the shared management of critical commodities, were noted.
- Participants suggested, *inter alia*, that a political agenda to advance economic integration based on the sustainable management of natural resources as a driver for peace and shared prosperity, should include the following:
 - ✓ Strengthening intra-regional trade and in particular the promotion of cross-border trade, with specific attention to the key role of women, including through developing trade facilitation measures, including the gradual lifting of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and the formalization of trade as well as artisanal mining processing activities (ASM), including gold;
 - ✓ Establishing, with the support of technical and financial partners, regional value chains to optimally utilize raw materials, transform them, add value, guarantee compliance rules, create decent jobs and stimulate inclusive economic growth in the region;
 - ✓ Setting up of a regional sanctions mechanism for non-conforming actions related to the illicit exploitation of natural resources, as recommended already by the joint ICGLR-OSESG-GL experts' meeting on natural resources held in Nairobi in 2017.

- ✓ Promoting specific attention and initiatives to support the critical role of women in the sustainable management of natural resources and regional integration.
- ✓ Significant progress with regional integration and the creation of a “regional space or entity,” included a "sub-regional citizenship," were, in conclusion, mentioned as aspirational goals the region should work together to achieve. Cooperation on improving the management of natural resources as a driver of such integration, peace, and shared prosperity was reiterated as a pillar of such effort.

II. Next steps

The following next steps were proposed for consideration, building on on-going national and regional initiatives.

1. Develop an option paper with the suggested key elements for a political conversation, which will outline:
 - the key issues the political dialogue should aim to address in order to advance a common agenda on regional economic integration based on the sustainable management of natural resources as a driver for peace and shared prosperity.
 - how these issues should be addressed, i.e. what are political decisions, the options, and the mechanisms required to concretely advance on this agenda.
2. The paper would be presented during the forum on regional integration that the DRC plans to organise by August 2019 in Kinshasa, during which clear points for a political agenda on regional economic integration based on the sustainable management of natural resources as a driver for peace and shared prosperity will hopefully be agreed.
3. The key elements endorsed will be extracted and will eventually be subject to specific recommendations to be presented to the 10th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) of the PSC Framework, scheduled in October 2019 in Kinshasa, for decision by the heads of States of the region.

Acknowledgments

The participants warmly thanked the high-level delegations for their participation, contributions, and commitment to working together to advancing this critical agenda for the region. The contribution by the French Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and the European Union coordinator for the Great Lakes region, as well as other partners, were warmly welcomed. The OSESG-GL greatly appreciated the constructive spirit of collaboration by all participants, their participation, and thanks the OECD for agreeing to host the event.

**POLITICAL CONVERSATION ON REGIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION BASED ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AS A DRIVER FOR PEACE AND SHARED PROSPERITY**

FRIDAY 26TH APRIL 2019, OECD, CONFERENCE CENTRE ROOM CC 16, PARIS, FRANCE

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