

Report of the 24th Session of the Technical Support Committee

Nairobi, 16-17 July 2019

The Technical Support Committee (TSC) of the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the region held its 24th meeting on 16-17 July 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Xia Huang, United Nations (UN) Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, and Mr. Basile Ikouebe, African Union (AU) Special Representative for the Great Lakes region (represented). It brought together representatives from the signatory countries of the PSC Framework, as well as senior officials from the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) and MONUSCO. The Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, South Africa and South Sudan, as well as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were unable to attend.

The TSC discussed and agreed on the following:

Political and dialogue processes

1. Noted the positive dynamics generated by ongoing consultations among leaders of the region and the efforts to enhance cooperation, including the Tripartite Summit between the leaders of Angola, the DRC and Rwanda, as well as the Quadripartite Summit between the leaders of Angola, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda. These engagements present important opportunities to further build confidence and help the region to turn a new chapter on regional integration, peace and security
2. Regarding the DRC, welcomed recent developments, notably, the constructive management of the transition process following the recent elections in the country. Welcomed President Felix Tshisekedi's commitment to deliver peace and prosperity for all Congolese people. Encouraged his efforts to promote good neighborly relations and regional cooperation to advance peace, security, and economic development in line with the objectives of the PSC Framework.
3. In discussing developments in Burundi, took note of ongoing preparations for elections to be held in 2020 and welcomed the declared commitment by Burundi to self-finance the elections. Noted that open political space and the preservation of rights and freedoms hold the best prospects for the consolidation of democracy in the country. Affirmed the readiness of the region and the Guarantors of the PSC Framework to support Burundi in efforts to ensure a peaceful and inclusive electoral process in strict accordance with the relevant provisions of the 2000 Arusha Agreement.
4. Regarding the Central African Republic (CAR), welcomed the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Government and 14 armed groups on 6 February 2019 and called for continued regional support to encourage the signatories to sustain their efforts and commitment towards the full implementation of the Agreement. Encouraged greater financial support for humanitarian efforts considering the prevailing precarious humanitarian situation.
5. Reviewing recent developments in Sudan, welcomed the political agreement on transitional arrangements signed between the Transitional Military Council and the opposition coalition on 17 July 2019 under the auspices of the African Union-Ethiopian mediation. Encouraged all parties to continue

pursuing the path of cooperation and dialogue in a peaceful democratic transition for the benefit of Sudan and the region.

Security cooperation and regional approach to address negative forces

6. Expressed concern over the continued activities of negative forces in the region, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and other Rwandan and Burundian armed groups operating in eastern DRC. Expressed grave concern about reports of linkages between the ADF and international terror networks. Called for urgent and decisive measures to address this threat to the region.

7. Welcomed the efforts made in follow-up to the decisions of the 9th ROM Summit to strengthen existing regional mechanisms, notably the ICGLR Joint Follow-up Mechanism (JFM) on the ADF, and the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM). Noted that greater efforts are required to ensure the operationalization and effectiveness of these confidence building mechanisms and encouraged Member States to make and implement concrete commitments, ahead of the 10th ROM, to contribute to the effective functioning of these two critical mechanisms.

8. Regarding the JFM on the ADF, welcomed the conduct of the joint assessment mission and took note of its conclusions. Noted the continued lack of progress in the secondment of experts and in the contributions by Member States and expressed the urgent need for all members to fulfil their obligations to the JFM. On the EJVM, commending the tireless work of the EJVM team, welcomed the capacity building workshop that took place in Gisenyi from 7 to 9 May and took note of its recommendations, notably, to amongst others, address some of the political challenges to ensure the EJVM is able to implement its mandate effectively. Called on the Guarantors of the PSC Framework, to mobilize political support amongst Member States to deepen their commitment to facilitate EJVM mandate implementation. Further encouraged the Executive Secretariat of ICGLR to engage EJVM partners, including OSESG-GL, to build the EJVM's technical and operational capacity.

9. Welcomed the convening on 5-6 June 2019 in Kinshasa of a meeting of the representatives of intelligence and security services of the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania, and Burundi, which reviewed the security situation in the region and reviewed and shared information on the negative forces. This confidence building effort, in line with the 9th ROM decision to promote new approaches on regional security cooperation, should be further pursued in complementarity with other regional initiatives. In this regard, encouraged all concerned countries to sustain their commitment and engagement on the initiative. Endorsed preparations for the next meeting to ensure that the ongoing process is concluded before the 10th ROM.

10. Welcomed the new opportunities to advance regional cooperation on security matters, including on the neutralization of negative forces in eastern DRC, following recent consultations between the President of the DRC and some leaders in the region. Called for efforts by the concerned countries to pursue and strengthen cooperation including with a view to cut the rear bases of negative forces in the region.

11. Recommended that Member States pursue their efforts to enhance cooperation on security matters by ensuring that substantive progress is achieved on commitments in this regard, and to provide full support to the Government of the DRC to stabilize its eastern parts and the sub-region.

Repatriation of former combatants and their families

12. Noted and commended the ongoing bilateral engagement between Rwanda and the DRC aimed at the repatriation of ex-M23 members currently in camps in Rwanda. Noted and commended Uganda's continued commitment to facilitate the repatriation of all ex-M23 members remaining in the country. Called for continued efforts to sensitize the ex-M23 members that are still in Rwanda and Uganda.

13. Reaffirmed the importance of sustained follow-up actions on the reintegration of repatriated ex-combatants and recommended that the Follow-up Mechanism on the repatriation of foreign disarmed combatants conduct a mission to monitor the re-integration process of ex-M23 members repatriated to the DRC through the Follow-up Mechanism. Welcomed the planned mission of UNDP with the support of the Office of the UN Special Envoy to identify possible support to the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission for the sustainable re-integration of former FDLR members repatriated to Rwanda in 2018.

Advancing economic integration and shared prosperity

14. Welcomed the new opportunities to advance economic integration and cooperation in the Great Lakes region, including through the recently-launched operational phase of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Commended progress in the preparations for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference (GLITC), scheduled to take place in Kigali on 18-20 November 2019. In that regard, noted the regional consultations organized by the Office of the UN Special Envoy and the ICGLR Secretariat on 3 May 2019 in Kigali where stakeholders validated the planning for the GLITC. Further noted the follow-up meeting held on 4 May 2019 to operationalize the ICGLR Private Sector Forum that should lead the organization of the conference. Welcomed the setting up of a Steering Committee and commended the full involvement of the organized private sector of the region, especially the respective national Chambers of Commerce, in the GLITC process. Highlighted the importance of ensuring cross-border project proposals to be presented at the Conference are well prepared, including on the basis of lessons learned from the first Conference and related efforts by development partners. Encouraged Member States to engage and to actively support the preparation of the conference.

15. Recognized the political context of natural resources exploitation and trade in the Great Lakes region and welcomed the consultations on 'natural resources as a driver for regional integration and shared prosperity' held in Paris on 26 April 2019 on the margins of the ICGLR/OECD 'Forum on responsible mineral supply chains'. Encouraged the DRC's intention to take this conversation forward in the context of promoting greater regional economic cooperation and integration and called for ensuring the participation of women and youth in these discussions. Further welcomed the proposal by ICGLR to conduct, with the support of the Office of the UN Special Envoy, an assessment of the implementation of the ICGLR Regional Initiative on Natural Resources (RINR). Called on Member

States to fully implement their commitments under the Regional Initiative. Encouraged ICGLR to explore options to strengthen the whistleblowing mechanism, as a way to help identify and take measures against actors involved in the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources.

16. Noted the importance of border demarcation and reaffirmation in the region and called on the African Union, through its Border Programme, and the United Nations to continue to support these efforts. Welcomed regional initiatives, i.e. the Uganda-DRC border reaffirmation project in the Sarambwe area led by the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) or the renewed efforts by the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL) to implement cross-border projects, and encouraged ICGLR and O/the Office of the UN Special Envoy to further support these sub-regional organizations and their initiatives.

The situation of refugees in the region

17. Welcomed the holding of the high-level meeting of Ministers in charge of refugees in the Great Lakes region on 7 March 2019 in Kampala. Noting the scope and gravity of the situation of forced displacement, urged Member States to take all necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the high-level meeting. Encouraged the ICGLR with the support of the Office of the UN Special Envoy to develop a strategy and action plan for implementing durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes region as requested by the high-level meeting.

Human rights, justice and good governance

18. Welcomed the holding of the Conference on Justice and Good Governance in Nairobi on 13-15 May 2019 and the adoption of the “Nairobi Declaration,” under which the countries of the region and other stakeholders made important commitments to strengthen rule of law and respect for human rights and to advance the fight against impunity. Encouraged ICGLR and the Office of the UN Special Envoy to work with the countries of the region to support the effective implementation of the Nairobi Declaration and to report regularly on progress in this regard.

Women, Peace and Security

19. Welcomed the efforts of the Advisory Board of the Women’s Platform of the PSC Framework through follow up missions to Burundi and the DRC to promote women’s meaningful political participation, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and their social and economic development. Welcomed the proposal to extend such solidarity missions to other countries of the region and conduct consultations with Regional Fora and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to gather their views on women, peace and security issues in preparation for the 10th ROM Summit. Further noted the proposal made by the Women’s Platform to convene a meeting of the First Ladies of the Great Lakes Region under the auspices of Madame Denise Tshisekedi, First Lady of the DRC, on the margins of the upcoming ROM Summit with a view to supporting and strengthening regional platforms for the advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Great Lakes region.

MONUSCO Strategic Review

20. Welcomed the briefing on the Strategic Review process of MONUSCO. Called for continued collaboration between the Government of the DRC, MONUSCO, countries of the region, and other stakeholders to ensure the envisaged responsible and sustainable outcome.

Second progress report of the PSC Framework

21. Discussed and agreed on the initial outline and key findings of the second progress report of the PSC Framework. Agreed that the report, whilst providing an objective review of achievements and challenges in implementing the PSC Framework, should provide concrete suggestions on the way forward to enhance regional cooperation and integration on political, security, judicial, and economic matters in the region, in line with the letter and spirit of the PSC Framework.
22. Noted that the consultant would develop the first draft of the report following consultations with the signatory countries and representatives of the Guarantors of the PSC Framework and that the report will be shared ahead of the 25th TSC meeting for further inputs and comments. Agreed to review and validate the final draft of the report at its 25th meeting.

Preparations for the 10th Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM)

23. Reviewed and agreed on the approach for the ROM, notably to hold the Ministerial meeting on 16 October 2019 and the Heads of State level ROM Summit between 18 and 19 October 2019. Noted the briefing by the DRC on planned side meetings on economic cooperation, youth and women and the planned meeting of First Ladies on the margins of the ROM.
24. Reviewed and approved the draft agendas for the Ministerial Meeting and the ROM Summit of Heads of State.

Next meeting of the TSC and vote of thanks

25. Decided that the 25th meeting of the TSC will be held on 10-11 September 2019 in Nairobi.
26. Expressed appreciation to the UN Special Envoy and the AU Co-Chair for convening the 24th meeting of the TSC.