

UNITED NATIONS**NATIONS UNIES****MESSAGE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL****TO THE REGIONAL OVERSIGHT MECHANISM OF THE
PEACE, SECURITY AND COOPERATION FRAMEWORK
FOR THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO AND THE
REGION****Munyonyo Commonwealth Resort, 8 October 2018**

I thank the incoming Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, and the people of Uganda for hosting this Summit. I also express my appreciation to the outgoing Chair, President Denis Sassou N’Guesso, for his leadership over the last twelve months.

The historic 2013 Agreement signed by the Presidents of the region in Addis Ababa – along with the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region – remains central to peace and stability.

I commend the signatory countries as well as the Guarantors for their efforts to implement commitments under the Framework.

I salute the recent reactivation of the Follow-up Mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed combatants and their dependents.

The process has created a positive dynamic of cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

I encourage the countries concerned -- with the support of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations - - to ensure regional cooperation in tackling longstanding challenges in parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Building confidence and trust is crucial to building peace.

I also recognize the work of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, which has started to address specific cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This cooperation is crucial to fight impunity in the region.

As we look ahead, a number of challenges remain.

First, foreign and local armed groups continue to threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of Congolese citizens. The presence and activities of these groups has forced many from their homes and resulted in significant economic losses due to illicit exploitation and trade in gold and other commodities.

These groups remain a risk to peace and security in parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, cross-border security related incidents significantly affect relations and trust between some of the countries of the region.

This Summit presents an opportunity for a frank exchange on neutralizing remaining negative forces and advancing the African Union's objective of 'silencing the guns by 2020' in the Great Lakes region.

Second, to resolve recurrent political crises in a positive and sustainable way, I encourage leaders to recommit to political inclusion and participation.

We have a responsibility to provide youth with the space for their leadership, innovation, and full engagement.

Equally, women's meaningful participation consistently brings to the table root causes, leading to more sustainable peace.

The Great Lakes pioneered the innovative Women's Platform to ensure women's full participation in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation framework. It is important that such efforts are given greater support and real investment.

Progress in preparations for the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the ongoing dialogue process in Burundi are encouraging. The Governments of these two countries should pursue long-term stability by creating the conditions for credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. The United Nations stands ready to support such efforts if requested.

Third, I encourage you to work together for urgent and durable solutions to address the suffering of those forcibly displaced from their homes – including through the possibility of integrating in the receiving countries people who have been displaced abroad for many years.

Fourth, I urge you to intensify efforts to end impunity and human rights violations, including through greater judicial cooperation. This is crucial not only for solidarity and justice, but also stability and security.

The region's leaders and all concerned should work in close collaboration with bodies working to prevent and tackle human rights violations and ensure accountability.

Please be assured that the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting your efforts to deepen regional integration and economic cooperation, including engagement with the private sector.

You can continue to count on my personal commitment to work closely with you to advance peace, security, human rights, justice and sustainable development for all the people of the Great Lakes region.

Thank you and best wishes for a successful meeting.