

## Update on the implementation of the UN Regional Strategy



*SESG Huang Xia (2nd from R) and SRSB Bintou Keita (2nd from L) with Congolese officials. Kinshasa, DRC.*

Since the adoption of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region ([S/2020/1168](#)) by the Secretary-General, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region has made a number of important strides towards its implementation.

A Senior Policy Group (SPG) was established in May as the political steering and management body for the implementation of the Strategy and its Action Plan. Bringing together principals from UN missions and offices in the region under the leadership of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, including Special Representatives and Resident Coordinators, as well as UN entities both at Headquarters and field levels, the SPG held its inaugural meeting on 20 May 2021. During this meeting, the members of the SPG not only endorsed a roadmap for the elaboration of the Strategy's Action Plan, but also proposed initial priority initiatives, issues and opportunities on which the Action Plan should be centered.

Consequently, this first meeting of the SPG set the stage for the development of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy. After a series of extensive and broad pre-consultations led by the Office of the Special Envoy, a hybrid workshop was organized on 9-10 June 2021 in Kinshasa with the support of MONUSCO and facilitated by the New York-based think tank Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum.

For two days, over one hundred participants representing signatory countries and guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, bilateral and multilateral partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, as well as United Nations entities operating in the Great Lakes region and beyond, engaged in rich and in-depth discussions on what should be the "priorities of the priorities" for the next three years. It should be



recalled that while the Strategy spans a period of 10 years in total, this first Action Plan covers an initial period of three years and is thus centered on immediate priority actions for the period of 2021-2023.

The workshop resulted in a consensus among participants on the five clusters, under which priority interventions should be aligned, namely: i) Promoting Dialogue and Strengthening Trust; ii) Reducing the Threat Posed by Armed Groups; iii) Promoting a Sustainable and Transparent Management of Natural Resources, as well as Trade and Investment; iv) Finding Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement; and v) Promoting Regional Preparedness to Public Health Crises. The inclusion, participation and empowerment of women and youth, as well as the promotion of human rights and the fight against impunity were reiterated and agreed upon as cross-cutting issues in all five clusters.

Based on this outcome, the Office of the Special Envoy, together with other UN entities, finalized a draft Action Plan, which was approved by the SPG on 8 July 2021.

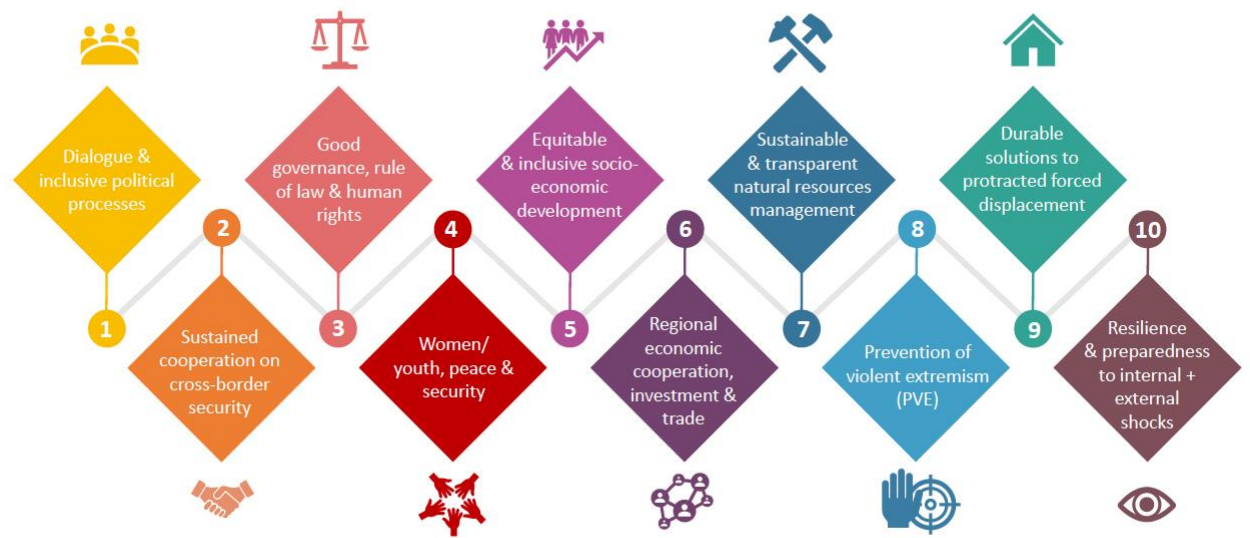
Building on the positive momentum witnessed by the countries and people of the region over the past two years, the Strategy and its Action Plan are expected to provide a comprehensive roadmap for UN political and programmatic engagement to help them address some of the major remaining challenges in the area of peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region.

In an effort to increase the visibility of the Action Plan and to garner the critical political support for it, special Envoy Xia embarked in a two-week mission to the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Brussels and Paris from 13 to 23 July 2021. In New York the Special Envoy presented the Action Plan to the Secretary-General, António Guterres, as well as other members of the UN leadership, including the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, and the Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. Further to this, the mission to New York was also an opportunity for special Envoy Xia to interact directly with permanent Missions of member States and to also present the Action Plan to them. Amongst others, this included consultations with the permanent Missions of the United Kingdom, the USA, China, Russia, Niger, Kenya, the DRC, Norway and Ireland. These consultations in New York were followed by a mission to Brussels, Belgium, where the Special Envoy met with representatives of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as with officials from the European Union. The mission was concluded with consultations with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris.

The echoes to the Action Plan were very positive and all interlocutors voiced their firm commitment to support the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, as well as the countries of the region in their joint efforts towards attaining greater and more sustainable peace, security and prosperity through their own initiatives, as well as through the conduit of the Action Plan.

RECAP: TEN PRIORITIES GUIDING UNITED NATIONS EFFORTS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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For ease of reference, each of the ten priorities identified in the Strategy has been colour-coded and associated with one icon, as shown above.

METHODOLOGY: IDENTIFYING ‘PRIORITIES OF THE PRIORITIES’ THROUGH 5 CROSS-CUTTING CLUSTER WHEELS

CLUSTER APPROACH: Priority areas of intervention extracted from the Strategy and endorsed during pre-consultations



The cluster wheels show which of the ten priorities (colour-coded) identified in the Strategy are most relevant in pursuit of the stated objective.