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Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 52 of Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council requested me to report to it every six months on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2019/783](#)) and covers the period from 1 September 2019 to 15 March 2020.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. During the period under review, the security situation in the region remained fragile, with continued challenges in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Military operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) against armed groups in North and South Kivu provinces were stepped up, in line with the commitment made by the President, Félix Tshisekedi, to deliver peace and stability, particularly in the east of the country. In North Kivu, the military offensive by FARDC against foreign and national armed groups appeared to have contributed to their weakening. However, increased retaliatory attacks by suspected elements of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have resulted in a deterioration of the security situation in that area. Meanwhile, allegations

¹ In this context, the region refers to the 13 signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, namely, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In addition, the following four intergovernmental organizations act as witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.



of cross-border security incidents continued to fuel tension among neighbouring countries in the region.

3. On 30 October, FARDC launched military operations in North Kivu province that resulted in the capture of several ADF bases and the reported death of about 80 ADF combatants. Around 60 FARDC soldiers were reported to have lost their lives during the operations, while another 175 were wounded. Despite the progress achieved by FARDC, suspected ADF elements continued to carry out attacks, especially in the Beni area in North Kivu. An attack on 28 December resulted in the killing of 18 civilians in Apetina, Beni territory, significantly raising the number of civilians killed by the armed group during the reporting period. Furthermore, the situation in Ituri deteriorated as a result of the movement of dispersed ADF members from the Beni area into Irumu and Mambasa territories and subsequent attacks against civilians. It is estimated that some 250,000 civilians have been displaced since the beginning of 2020 owing to this development.

4. FARDC military operations made progress against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), including during operations in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, on 17 September, which resulted in the death of a top commander, General Sylvestre Mudacumura, and other top lieutenants. This was followed by the capture and surrender in Kalehe, South Kivu province, of 1,877 elements of the FDLR splinter group Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie, including 367 combatants who were subsequently repatriated to Rwanda. This was one of the most significant surrenders recorded in the context of military operations against the group. In a related development, FARDC operations led to the death of the commander of the Front de libération nationale, Jean Pierre Gaseni, on 30 November in Kalehe territory.

5. In Burundi, the security situation remained relatively calm. However, on 17 November, armed elements attacked the Burundi National Defence Force near the town of Mabayi, Cibitoke province, close to the Rwandan border. The incident resulted in the death of 18 Burundian soldiers, including the commanding officer, and injured 13 others. Following the attack, Burundi deployed military reinforcements to its borders with Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the request of Burundi, the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) investigated the incident. Its report was reviewed by the chiefs of the defence forces of the States members of ICGLR at a meeting held in Kampala on 15 January. The final report will be issued through the appropriate ICGLR channels.

6. Isolated cross-border security incidents occurred elsewhere in the region during the period under review. On 5 October, suspected members of the FDLR splinter group Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie (RUD-Urunana), reportedly from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, carried out an attack in Musanze district in Rwanda, near the Volcanoes National Park, in which 14 people were killed. Rwanda stated that its defence forces had repelled the attackers, killing 19 of them and capturing 5. On 9 November, the commander of RUD-Urunana, General Juvenal Musabimana, also known as Jean-Michel Africa, died during a FARDC operation in Binza, Rutshuru territory, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. Following a series of consultations in the context of the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants, established through the joint efforts of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and representatives of the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda signed a memorandum of understanding on 5 November in Kigali, in which they agreed to repatriate former combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) currently living in camps in Rwanda. In a related

development, the Government of Uganda indicated that some former M23 elements encamped in Uganda might be willing to return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the request of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework initiated preparations for a meeting of the follow-up mechanism to assess the support required by the countries concerned to finalize the repatriations and facilitate the reintegration of repatriated individuals.

8. In the Central African Republic, armed groups continued to violate the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, especially in the north-east, centre and west of the country, including by carrying out attacks, imposing illegal taxes and obstructing the installation of State institutions and the deployment of security forces. In addition, conflicts among armed groups and clashes between them and the Forces armées centrafricaines had a negative impact on peace and security in certain parts of the country.

9. South Sudan witnessed a reduction in conflict-related violence, as the ceasefire continued to hold in most parts of the country, despite isolated security incidents. The South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, mandated in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, was reconstituted in September. The Commission has yet to begin its activities in cantonment sites, however, owing to funding challenges.

B. Political developments

10. Despite reports of tensions among some neighbouring countries, progress towards enhanced regional cooperation was recorded during the period under review. The leaders of the region took steps, both at bilateral and multilateral levels, to ease tensions, address differences and strengthen relations among their countries.

11. Diplomatic efforts by Mr. Tshisekedi and the President of Angola, João Lourenço, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, and the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, contributed to easing tensions between Rwanda and Uganda. After the signing of a memorandum of understanding by the two countries on 21 August, an ad hoc ministerial commission on implementation, comprising representatives of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, was established. The first meeting of the commission, on 16 September in Kigali, was preceded by the release of 32 Rwandan nationals previously detained in Uganda. After the second meeting of the commission, held on 13 December in Kampala, failed to achieve its expected outcome, Mr. Museveni sent a message to Mr. Kagame on 28 December, with a view to resolving the tensions between the two countries. He also announced that both Governments would be taking steps to address the concerns of the other. Subsequently, on 7 January, nine Rwandan nationals were released from detention in Uganda. Shortly thereafter, Rwanda released nine Ugandan nationals.

12. At the third quadripartite summit of the four Heads of State, held in Luanda on 2 February, Rwanda and Uganda both reaffirmed their commitment to releasing each other's detained nationals, based on lists exchanged for that purpose. They also committed to refrain from supporting, financing, training and aiding destabilizing forces that sought to harm the other country and to protect and respect the human rights of each other's nationals. The ad hoc ministerial commission on implementation held its third meeting on 14 February in Kigali, in preparation for the fourth summit of the four Heads of State. On 18 February, Uganda announced the withdrawal of charges against 13 Rwandan nationals, who will be handed over to the Rwandan authorities. This move was immediately followed by an announcement by the Government of Rwanda that it would terminate the prosecution of 17 Ugandan

nationals. Uganda also revoked the passport of Charlotte Mukankusi, the Commissioner for Diplomacy of the opposition party Rwanda National Congress, which is outlawed by the Government of Rwanda.

13. At the fourth quadripartite summit, held on 21 February in Gatuna/Katuna, at the border between Rwanda and Uganda, an extradition treaty between Rwanda and Uganda was signed. In addition, a number of decisions were adopted, including a request for Uganda to verify, within one month, claims of hostile activities against Rwanda launched from Uganda and, if well-founded, take remedial action. The Heads of State agreed to meet within 15 days of the finalization by the ad hoc ministerial commission of a report on the actions taken by Uganda, with a view to reopening the border between the two countries and completing the normalization of their relations.

14. Tensions between Burundi and Rwanda persisted during the reporting period. The attack of 17 November near the town of Mabayi in Burundi led to accusations by the Government of Burundi that Rwanda was involved in the attack and other activities intended to destabilize Burundi. Rwanda consistently rejected those allegations. On 8 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, Vincent Biruta, refuted the accusations and stated that Rwanda was in fact subjected to attacks launched from the territory of Burundi. The Minister noted, however, that his country remained open to dialogue with the Government of Burundi.

15. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, presented the Government's programme to Parliament on 3 September, after several months of negotiations between the two ruling coalition partners, *Cap pour le Changement* (CACH), the political platform of Mr. Tshisekedi, and *Front commun pour le Congo* (FCC), the platform of the former President, Joseph Kabila. The programme covers four main areas: politics, defence and security; economy and finance, with a focus on tackling corruption; reconstruction; and social and cultural issues, with a focus on improving access to health care and education. The Prime Minister also proposed to allocate additional resources to the security and defence forces and to strengthen their efficiency through security sector reform and amendments to the relevant legislation.

16. Following tensions between supporters of FCC and CACH, Mr. Tshisekedi emphasized, in his first state of the nation address on 13 December, the need for the ruling coalition to overcome internal disputes. He also called for a debate on constitutional changes related to the election of the President and provincial governors. On security matters, Mr. Tshisekedi expressed support for FARDC operations to neutralize foreign armed groups in North and South Kivu.

17. Meanwhile, some national religious and political figures warned the Congolese public about the alleged threat of "balkanization" of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by neighbouring states. This was widely understood to be a thinly veiled reference to the rapprochement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which Mr. Tshisekedi has championed since taking office. On 8 January, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda and spokesperson of the Rwandan Government denounced the allegations. On 10 January, to address concerns fuelled by public statements criticizing the country's rapprochement with its eastern neighbours, Mr. Tshisekedi stated that no "balkanization" of the Democratic Republic of the Congo would take place during his presidency.

18. In Burundi, preparations were under way for the general elections, which are scheduled to take place from May to August 2020. Following contact between representatives of the Government of Burundi and members of the exiled opposition platform *Conseil national pour le respect de l'Accord d'Arusha*, some members of the platform indicated their intention to participate in the 2020 elections and returned to Burundi on 11 December, after four years in exile. Other opposition groups noted that

conditions were not yet conducive to their return and participation in the elections. On 26 January, the Executive Secretary of the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD), former general Evariste Ndayishimiye, was chosen as the presidential candidate of the ruling coalition for the May 2020 elections. Seven candidates were validated to present themselves for the presidential election, including Evariste Ndayishimiye from CNDD-FDD, Agathon Rwasa from the Congrès national pour la liberté, and the current First Vice-President of Burundi, Gaston Sindimwo, from the Union pour le progrès national. Meanwhile, the electoral commission announced on 3 February that over 5.1 million voters had been registered.

19. In the Central African Republic, the political situation was dominated by efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation and preparations for presidential and legislative elections. On 15 December, the former President, François Bozizé, returned to the Central African Republic after six years in exile in Uganda. This was followed, on 10 January, by a short visit by another former President, Michel Djotodia, who has been in exile in Benin.

20. In South Sudan, following extensive consultations led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, with the involvement of South Africa, opposition leader Riek Machar was reinstated as First Vice-President on 22 February, for the second time since the crisis erupted in December 2013. Four other Vice-Presidents, namely Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, James Wani Igga, Taban Deng Gai and Hussein Abdelbagi Akol Agany, were appointed by the President, Salva Kiir. On 13 March, President Kiir swore in a 35-member cabinet in which ministerial portfolios were divided between the Government and opposition groups as stipulated in the peace agreement, thus completing the formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity.

21. In the Sudan, the new Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, and his 18-member cabinet took the oath of office on 8 September. On 11 September, the Sovereign Council of the Sudan and rebel leaders from Darfur, Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan agreed on a six-month road map for peace talks, which began in Juba on 14 October under the auspices of Mr. Kiir. Following the installation of the transitional Government, cooperation improved between the Sudan and South Sudan, culminating in an agreement on 12 September to reopen their common border to facilitate bilateral trade. On 22 October, the Sudan and South Sudan signed an agreement for the demarcation of their common border.

C. Humanitarian situation

22. Violence and conflict continued to drive population displacements in the Great Lakes region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo remained host to the largest internally displaced population in Africa, with more than 5 million displaced individuals, including over 940,000 newly displaced people in 2019. As at the end of February 2020, over 917,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo were hosted in other African countries, with Uganda hosting the largest number of refugees in the region.

23. By the end of 2019, the region was host to some 330,000 Burundian refugees, including 10,500 new arrivals. More than half of those refugees are in the United Republic of Tanzania, with the rest in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. In Burundi, a total of 102,722 internally displaced persons were registered. Burundian refugees and asylum seekers in the United Republic of Tanzania reportedly faced increased pressure to return to Burundi. In a positive development, on 29 November, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) and the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania held the twenty-first meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees, during which both Governments committed to respecting the voluntary character of refugee returns and ensuring free and unhindered access to returnees in Burundi, in accordance with national and international laws.

D. Human rights

24. The human rights situation in the Great Lakes region remained concerning during the reporting period. Restrictions on political space, limited access to justice, violations of basic rights and freedoms, and sexual and gender-based violence were reported in several countries in the region.

25. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, violations of political rights and freedoms decreased compared to the previous reporting period as a result of the Government's efforts to open the political space and address human rights abuses and impunity, including by establishing transitional justice mechanisms. However, human rights violations, including killings, abductions and sexual and gender-based violence, continued to be reported in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, within the context of FARDC operations against armed groups, inter-ethnic fighting and attacks on the civilian population by various armed groups. In a related development, on 7 November, the International Criminal Court sentenced Bosco Ntaganda, the former deputy Chief of Staff and commander of operations of Union des patriotes congolais/Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo, to 30 years in prison for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ituri province in 2002 and 2003.

26. In the Central African Republic, civilians were subjected to serious human rights violations, particularly due to clashes among armed groups. Human rights violations also remained a matter of concern in South Sudan, despite an overall decrease in violence.

27. In its latest report, released on 6 August 2019, the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi, which was established by the Human Rights Council, reported prevalent feelings of fear and intimidation among members and supporters of opposition political parties in the country.² It further noted that serious human rights violations continued to be committed, allegedly by Imbonerakure, agents from the national intelligence service, the police and local authorities. The Government of Burundi rejected the findings of the Commission of Inquiry. On 8 October, four Imbonerakure members were given life sentences for murdering an opposition member and injuring three others in August 2019 in Muyinga province. On 22 October, four journalists from the online newspaper Iwacu and their driver were arrested while on a reporting trip in the west of the country. On 30 January 2020, the journalists were sentenced to two and a half years in prison on charges of undermining State security.

28. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the Government revoked the right of individuals and non-governmental organizations to file cases directly with the Arusha-based African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, making it the second country in the region to prohibit direct access to the Court.

29. In Uganda, opposition political actors complained of harassment and what they perceived to be excessive use of force by police in response to public protests. On 6 January, opposition leader Bobi Wine was temporarily arrested, along with several of his followers, as they prepared to hold a political meeting near Kampala.

² A/HRC/42/49.

E. Impact of the coronavirus disease global pandemic on the region

30. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has not spared the region. As at mid-March, the first cases had been reported in Kenya, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the situation continuing to evolve rapidly. Across the region, countries immediately initiated measures to contain the spread of the disease in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organization, including the quarantining of individuals, testing of suspected cases, public awareness-raising of preventive measures, restrictions on social gatherings, border closures and partial lockdowns. As cases rise, it is expected that these measures will be further reinforced. While the full magnitude and impact of the pandemic cannot be predicted with certainty, widespread contagion coupled with weak health infrastructure will certainly have an adverse effect on the region's development trajectory, inhibiting efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and implement the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

31. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took steps to implement its national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 27 September, on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly, the National Oversight Mechanism, with the support of various United Nations entities, held an international conference on peace and investment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during which it presented a road map for the achievement of peace and the stabilization of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government also established FARDC field headquarters in Beni, North Kivu, to strengthen military operations against foreign armed groups, and deployed additional troops and police units to the east. Furthermore, the Government partnered with neighbouring countries and other actors, through the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants and other regional initiatives, to advance the repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants and strengthen regional security cooperation.

32. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and other partners, launched a campaign in Kolwezi, Lualaba province, to raise awareness of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework among local politicians, civil society, women, young people and local media. Other relevant actions included the establishment of a commission to tackle corruption and the holding of the second decentralization forum in Kinshasa, from 11 to 15 December, to review progress on decentralization. At the end of the forum, participants recommended the operationalization of the National Equalization Fund (Caisse nationale de péréquation), in line with article 181 of the Constitution, and the holding of local, urban and municipal elections. From 13 to 15 February, the National Oversight Mechanism facilitated an intra-Banyamulenge forum to enable reflection and an exchange of views on the security and humanitarian situation in the localities of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga, Hauts Plateaux, South Kivu.

B. Commitments of the region

33. As previously noted, in an effort to defuse tensions and normalize relations between Rwanda and Uganda, the leaders of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda met on 2 and 21 February to advance the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed on 21 August. Those quadripartite summits were complemented by meetings of the ad hoc ministerial commission on implementation, held on 13 and 16 September, 13 December and 14 February.

34. The leaders of the region continued their efforts to enhance security cooperation among the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, notably through two confidence-building meetings that brought together the chiefs of the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. The meetings, facilitated by my Special Envoy and representatives of the other guarantors of the Framework, took place from 4 to 6 November in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, and on 3 February in Nairobi.

35. Cooperation on judicial matters was strengthened through regular meetings of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and enhanced cooperation among national judicial institutions on cross-border court cases.

36. Regional organizations remained engaged in support of peace and stability in the region. ICGLR convened a meeting of the Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee of Ministers for Foreign Affairs on 15 October. Participants acknowledged positive developments in some countries, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and the Sudan, and called for enhanced support for stabilization efforts throughout the region. The Committee also called for the lifting of sanctions imposed on Burundi, the Sudan and South Sudan, notably by the European Union and the United States of America. From 24 to 27 November, ICGLR convened a meeting of ministers in charge of gender and justice to assess and identify actions for the implementation of the landmark 2011 Kampala Declaration of Heads of State and Government on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the 2012 Kinshasa Communiqué. The ministers agreed on a model law for the establishment of special courts and procedures to address sexual and gender-based violence, in line with the Kampala Declaration. Furthermore, on 11 November, ICGLR and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation on human rights.

37. On 5 December, Angola, as Chair of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, convened a ministerial meeting in Luanda on the theme “National reconciliation, restoration of peace, security and rebuilding of cohesion in Africa”. Participants shared lessons and experiences from various countries, including Angola and Rwanda, and urged States to implement best practices in natural resources governance to ensure that citizens are the primary beneficiaries of their countries’ resources. They also emphasized the need to mainstream the role of traditional leaders, young people and women in the design and implementation of reconciliation processes in order to ensure political inclusivity. On 10 January, the Peace and Security Council, chaired by Burundi, was briefed on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework by the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, Basile Ikouébé. The Peace and Security Council welcomed the positive momentum and the steps taken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries to improve the stability of the region. The Peace and Security Council expressed concern about the persistent activities of armed groups, which undermine peace, security and humanitarian operations in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and other countries in the region.

38. On 12 September, the Presidents of Uganda and Kenya signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cross-border cooperation on peace and development issues between the two countries. The memorandum aims to reduce tensions and competition over access to resources by promoting cross-border cooperation, regulating pastoral activities, increasing cross-border trade and investment, and curbing the illegal flow of small arms and light weapons in the region. This is expected to contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region by improving livelihoods, food security, access to basic social services and infrastructure, which will facilitate cross-border economic opportunities.

C. Commitments of the international community

39. The international community continued to support the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework during the reporting period. In this context, the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region and ICGLR co-chaired a high-level event on the Great Lakes region on 25 September, on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. On 26 September, the Contact Group convened a meeting of special envoys and special representatives for the Great Lakes region, also in New York. At both meetings, participants welcomed recent positive developments and emphasized the need for greater coherence and coordination in the international community's support for the region, especially with regard to democratic processes and economic integration. Members of the Contact Group committed to providing political and financial support for the upcoming Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference and to engaging with representatives of the private sector in their respective countries.

40. My Special Envoy continued to promote coordination and collaboration with a broad range of stakeholders, including the group of special envoys and special representatives for the Great Lakes region, in order to mobilize bilateral and multilateral technical and financial support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. He undertook introductory missions to Belgium, China, France, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States and held discussions on political and socioeconomic developments in the region. He also met the Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie to launch joint efforts in support of cross-border projects in the region aimed at promoting inter-youth dialogue and economic youth empowerment. He met representatives of the European External Action Service in Brussels to discuss the support of the European Union for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, as a result of which the European Union provided financial and technical support for the holding of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference. Those discussions underscored the continuing support of the international community for the stabilization and integration of the region.

41. Cognizant of the importance of economic cooperation and integration for peace and stability in the region, along with the need to attract investment and focus international assistance on addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting development, my Special Envoy reached out to senior representatives of international and regional financial institutions, notably the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa. As a result, the institutions strengthened their commitment to forging strategic partnerships in support of sustainable peace and development in the region, with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa supporting the Great Lakes Investment and

Trade Conference and the African Development Bank committing to review joint actions for sustainable and transparent natural resources management in the region.

42. On 9 January, in the context of the implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, the Office of my Special Envoy discussed with the Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) options for revitalizing cross-border projects that promote peace and security. My Special Envoy proposed a review of the governance structure of the Framework in the context of my organizational reforms, to further strengthen intra-United Nations coordination for better project design and implementation in line with the political objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

43. On 20 January, in Bujumbura, Burundi, the Office of my Special Envoy participated in a meeting of the joint steering committee, which is composed of representatives from the European Union, ICGLR, the German Agency for International Cooperation and the United Nations. The steering committee oversees regional projects financed by the European Union in support of regional peace and security, with a focus on women, young people and civil society, transparent natural resources management, and demobilization, disarmament and reintegration, among others. The steering committee approved a joint work plan for 2020, prioritizing the capacity-building of regional mediators, support for the ICGLR forums and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, to be implemented by UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), with the facilitation of the Office of my Special Envoy.

IV. Implementation of the road map of my Special Envoy

Good offices of the Secretary-General

44. During the period under review, my Special Envoy discussed with the signatory countries, guarantors and other stakeholders how best the United Nations and international partners could support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. My Special Envoy placed emphasis on encouraging greater ownership by the region and stressed the importance of reinforcing regional and national capacities to seize the current momentum and opportunities.

45. During his meetings with Heads of State and senior government officials from the region, my Special Envoy sought their views on ways to build trust among the signatory Governments of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and offered my support for regional initiatives. My Special Envoy advocated a comprehensive approach to neutralizing negative forces and urged the leaders of the region to advance regional economic integration and cooperation to overcome development challenges, which were at the heart of conflict and instability in the region. He encouraged the adoption of measures to improve the business climate and increase the capacity of national and regional institutions and mechanisms to make good use of partner funding. He further engaged in joint initiatives with international financial institutions and partners in relation to cross-border stabilization and development projects. Importantly, my Special Envoy facilitated substantive preparations for and encouraged high-level participation in the planned tenth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference.

46. My Special Envoy visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo on several occasions and reiterated the support of the United Nations for the efforts of Mr. Tshisekedi towards achieving durable peace in the eastern provinces, strengthening cooperation and maintaining good relations with neighbours.

47. In a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, Ezechiel Nibigira, held on 24 September in New York, my Special Envoy discussed ways to strengthen the relations of Burundi with its neighbours and, in this regard, welcomed the constructive involvement of Burundi in ongoing regional initiatives, such as the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and the aforementioned meetings of chiefs of intelligence and security services.

Supporting the governance mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

48. The tenth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism was expected to take place in October in Kinshasa but had to be postponed until March for technical reasons. The rescheduled meeting will also have to be postponed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken by Governments in the region to contain its spread. My Special Envoy, together with the representatives of the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, has initiated consultations with a view to ensuring that priority actions envisaged in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework are pursued.

49. Meanwhile, my Special Envoy co-chaired, together with the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region, the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth sessions of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi on 10 and 11 September 2019 and on 3 and 4 February 2020, respectively. At the twenty-sixth session, the Committee, joined by the chiefs of the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, reviewed the security situation in the region and discussed progress made in the implementation of non-military measures to neutralize illegal armed groups. The Committee also finalized all substantive preparations, including the draft agenda and other documents, for the tenth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

Neutralization of negative forces

50. Together with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, my Special Envoy continued to engage with key stakeholders to promote a comprehensive approach to the neutralization of negatives forces in the region. At the second meeting of the chiefs of intelligence and security services, held in November, participants recognized the mutually reinforcing benefits of a combination of military and non-military measures and therefore recommended a multifaceted approach, with a role for women, young people and religious and community leaders. Participants also recommended the establishment of a contact coordination group, tasked with coordinating the implementation of non-military measures. The group would include experts and representatives from the countries concerned, the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and representatives of civil society.

51. At a subsequent expert-level consultation of chiefs of intelligence and security services, held in Nairobi from 11 to 13 December, participants identified gaps and priorities in strengthening national and regional programmes for the demobilization, disarmament, reintegration, reinsertion and repatriation of former combatants. Participants recommended the involvement of the populations affected by the activities of illegal armed groups, particularly through the implementation of a communication and outreach strategy centring on non-military actions to be taken in conjunction with military operations against armed groups. The participants also came up with the proposed terms of reference of the planned contact coordination group. At the third meeting of chiefs of intelligence and security services, held in Nairobi on 3 February, the participants endorsed the recommendations emanating

from the expert-level consultation and called for the swift establishment of the contact coordination group.

Advancing women and peace and security

52. In coordination with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Office of my Special Envoy continued to advocate concerted actions to advance the women and peace and security agenda. On 8 and 9 September, in Nairobi, my Special Envoy facilitated a meeting that brought together the guarantors and representatives of civil society organizations and regional forums to assess their contribution to promoting the representation and participation of women in decision-making bodies and processes and to combating violence against women. Another meeting for civil society organizations and regional forums was held in Naivasha, Kenya, on 13 and 14 December, at which participants considered ways to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the region. Participants agreed to advocate a civilian approach to security and the economic empowerment of women.

53. The eleventh meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Addis Ababa on 11 November, provided another opportunity to explore options for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. The Board resolved to strengthen its political advocacy role, including by forging strategic alliances with civil society organizations; undertaking contextual conflict analysis and research to highlight the causes of violence; strengthening the leadership of women and girls to enhance their meaningful representation and participation in decision-making in the Great Lakes region; and securing sustainable financial resources for women and peace and security in the region.

54. The Office of my Special Envoy continued to advocate equal and meaningful participation of women in electoral processes. At a workshop on the participation, representation and protection of women in electoral processes, held by the African Union and the other guarantors on 12 and 13 November in Addis Ababa, participants agreed on the need for concerted efforts to address the barriers limiting the role of women in political and electoral processes. Together with ICGLR, the Office of my Special Envoy also considered practical options for reviving the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum, an important mechanism for the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda and the empowerment of women, in the run-up to the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

55. My Special Envoy also continued to call attention to the importance of the economic empowerment of women in the Great Lakes region. A workshop of women business leaders, facilitated by my Special Envoy and the Executive Secretary of ICGLR, held in Nairobi on 5 and 6 December, provided participants with a platform to share best practices and led to the establishment of a regional network of women entrepreneurs, to focus on specific actions to increase the role of women entrepreneurs in regional business value chains.

Displacement

56. The Office of my Special Envoy collaborated with UNHCR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Organization for Migration and other partners to emphasize the importance of addressing forced population displacement and implementing the outcomes of the high-level ministerial meeting on the situation of refugees in the Great Lakes region, held in Kampala in March 2019. During a meeting with the UNHCR Regional Director for East and Horn of Africa, my Special Envoy reiterated his readiness to support efforts to address population displacement in the region.

Judicial cooperation

57. On 10 and 11 December, in Nairobi, the Office of my Special Envoy and the ICGLR secretariat co-chaired the fifth meeting of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, which is intended to create robust justice systems that guarantee the rule of law, peace, stability and good governance. The meeting focused on regional cooperation to prosecute cross-border corruption cases and helped to identify relevant lessons and good practices. Participants called for the acceleration of the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, adopted in May 2019, and recommended that the Judicial Cooperation Network report on its work at the tenth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

58. On 21 and 22 November, the Office of my Special Envoy, supported by the ICGLR secretariat, held a focus group meeting of prosecutors in Entebbe, Uganda. Senior prosecutors from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda identified cross-border court cases related to natural resources and corruption, which they recommended that the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network should track as priority cases. Civil society organizations also participated in the meeting.

Management of natural resources

59. My Special Envoy continued to support regional efforts to curb the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources, with a view to eliminating financial incentives for armed groups and criminal networks. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2389 \(2017\)](#) and [2502 \(2019\)](#), my Special Envoy facilitated, in October, a series of consultations with ICGLR, other regional organizations and mechanisms, MONUSCO and development partners, including the African Development Bank. These consultations contributed to promoting a shared vision for strengthening regional cooperation on the governance of natural resources.

60. In December, the Office of my Special Envoy visited the African Natural Resources Centre of the African Development Bank to seek assistance with reinforcing the ICGLR certification and traceability mechanism and to forge a strategic partnership with the Bank on the management of natural resources in the Great Lakes region. Efforts are under way to hold a workshop bringing together national, regional and international stakeholders, with the aim of developing a comprehensive regional action plan to curb the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

Economic cooperation

61. My Special Envoy advocated a shift from a conflict-dominated narrative about the Great Lakes region to a vision of a region on a development trajectory, which deserves attention and support, notably through the implementation of programmes and policies to advance regional integration and strengthen cross-border economic partnerships. In this regard, he encouraged the leaders of the region to jointly implement cross-border economic programmes geared towards development and regional stabilization and to articulate a regional approach for strengthening partnerships with multilateral financial institutions and other development and economic partners.

62. During a meeting with Mr. Kagame on 12 September, my Special Envoy secured the strong commitment of the Government of Rwanda to hosting the planned Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference. By bringing together senior government officials, business leaders and investors from Africa and beyond, the Conference aims to promote cross-border trade and investment as catalysts for strengthening regional integration and development. The Office of my Special Envoy and the ICGLR

secretariat convened a regional meeting of stakeholders in Kigali on 13 September to endorse the Conference and define its expected outcomes. This was followed by roadshows in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East to promote the Conference. Several meetings were also convened to strengthen the ownership of regional actors in the planning and organization of the conference. Initially scheduled from 18 to 20 March 2020 in Kigali, the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference had to be postponed owing to travel restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

63. To ensure the implementation of the outcomes of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, the Office of my Special Envoy helped the ICGLR secretariat to convene a general assembly of the Great Lakes Private Sector Forum in Nairobi, on 18 September. The participants elected a new Board, chaired by Kenya, with the Democratic Republic of the Congo acting as Vice-Chair. The Forum will play a prominent role in preparing for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference. It is also expected to facilitate a dialogue between public officials and the private sector on development issues in the region.

V. Partnerships with regional organizations and mechanisms, international partners and United Nations entities

Regional organizations and mechanisms

64. My Special Envoy engaged with senior African Union officials in Addis Ababa, notably the Chairperson of the Commission on 6 September and the Commissioner for Political Affairs on 11 November, in addition to regular consultations and collaboration with the African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes region. My Special Envoy met the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community in New York on 26 September. These meetings helped to enhance coordination and maximize synergy among the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

65. The Office of my Special Envoy also undertook several activities in partnership with ICGLR, including joint meetings on judicial cooperation and on women and peace and security. My Special Envoy participated in a meeting of the ICGLR Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, held in Brazzaville on 15 October. My Special Envoy and the Executive Secretary of ICGLR travelled together to the United States and China, where they met government officials and representatives of the business community and development institutions. The Office of my Special Envoy also continued its close cooperation with the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of ICGLR to enhance regional security cooperation through confidence-building initiatives, such as the meetings of the chiefs of intelligence and security services.

Cooperation with other United Nations entities

66. My Special Envoy regularly consulted and coordinated his actions with those of my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, my Special Envoy for Burundi and my Special Representative for Central Africa. He also regularly engaged with the Resident Coordinators in the region, UNDP, UNHCR, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the United Nations Global Compact, the Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the World Food Programme and the World Bank. These partnerships enhanced information-sharing and the coherence and complementarity of the actions undertaken by United Nations entities and officials in the region, pursuant to Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#).

67. On 23 and 24 October, the Office of my Special Envoy convened, in Nairobi, a regular coordination meeting of peace and development advisors and heads of political affairs units serving in the region, with a view to continuing the practice of sharing information, exchanging views and developing a shared analysis of the situation in the region.

68. At the invitation of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, my Special Envoy attended the forty-ninth meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Luanda on 28 November. My Special Envoy and my Special Representative for Central Africa met with the President of Angola and other senior government officials to discuss developments in the region and explore ways to enhance cooperation towards regional stability and economic integration.

VI. Observations and recommendations

69. The momentum for progress generated by the new leadership in the Democratic Republic of the Congo more than a year ago continues to hold promises for the country and the region. With the steadfast support of the international community, these countries can embark on a path towards lasting peace, stability and development. Peace and security are critical for development and integration, and there will be no lasting peace without sustainable and inclusive development in the region. Therefore, my Special Envoy will continue to advocate the enhancement of the peace and development nexus, with a focus on prevention and building resilience in the region.

70. Without a doubt, obstacles and challenges remain and must be addressed collectively. I call upon all national, regional and international stakeholders to redouble their efforts to implement their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to address the root causes of conflict to enable the region to achieve its immense potential.

71. I am encouraged by the steps taken by Mr. Tshisekedi to improve diplomatic relations and cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours. I also commend the steps taken by other leaders in the region to de-escalate tensions, build confidence and advance regional cooperation. I further welcome the efforts of the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda to normalize relations between the two countries through dialogue. I am also encouraged by the willingness demonstrated by Burundi and Rwanda to avail themselves of existing mechanisms, notably the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, and to address their differences through dialogue. My Special Envoy stands ready to support all regional initiatives intended to build trust and confidence among the signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

72. Given the importance of the Regional Oversight Mechanism for providing guidance on priority issues related to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, I hope that the tenth meeting of the Mechanism can be held soon. I urge all signatories and guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to remain committed to its implementation and to contribute to the functioning of its governing mechanisms.

73. I commend the renewed commitment made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to end the activities of foreign armed groups in the east of the country. I welcome the progress made by the countries concerned in implementing a comprehensive strategy, inclusive of military and non-military measures, to eliminate the threat posed by foreign armed groups. In this regard, I welcome the proposed

establishment of a contact coordination group, comprising the chiefs of the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda, to improve cross-border coordination and collaboration against negative forces. The United Nations, through my Special Envoy, together with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, will continue to support this important initiative.

74. I welcome continuing efforts to repatriate disarmed foreign combatants and to strengthen national and regional programmes for the demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, reintegration and reinsertion of former combatants. I urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to conclude the repatriation of all remaining former M23 combatants, in accordance with previous decisions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, and in full respect of international human rights and humanitarian law.

75. The positive developments witnessed during the reporting period remind us that political will is paramount in the pursuit and maintenance of peace and security in the Great Lakes region. I urge the Security Council and other international partners to continue to assist the leaders of the region in seizing present opportunities and in taking decisive steps to overcome long-standing challenges.

76. In addition to reducing tensions, building trust and deepening security cooperation, it is crucial to advance economic cooperation, cross-border trade, infrastructure development and regional integration. I welcome the actions taken to curb the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources and to promote their lawful governance and sustainable management. Promoting trade and attracting investment in the region will generate growth and development, which is critical for durable peace and stability. I encourage all stakeholders to contribute to the success of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference and to remain committed to providing ideas and funds to promote cross-border investment, trade and development once the Conference has concluded.

77. In view of the important role that women play in preventing and resolving conflicts, I commend ongoing initiatives aimed at promoting the meaningful participation and representation of women in political and electoral processes and at empowering women across the region. As 2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), I call upon all stakeholders to intensify their efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region.

78. I deplore all public statements likely to spread fear, revive past acrimony and undermine the friendly relations that prevail between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours. I urge all local and national actors to strive to promote good neighbourliness and enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the region.

79. I remain concerned about persistent restrictions on basic political freedoms and human rights in several parts of the region. I call upon Governments to prioritize the promotion and protection of human rights and the fight against impunity in the region. I further urge them to uphold their commitments under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and to take the necessary measures to ensure the respect of fundamental freedoms, including the opening of political space, and to create the conditions necessary for broad-based and inclusive local and national decision-making processes. The Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network and the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance are important assets that must serve to combat impunity and fight cross-border crime.

80. I welcome continuing preparations in Burundi for the general elections that are due to take place in May 2020. I urge the Government of Burundi and all political actors to ensure a free political space and to refrain from any actions that could jeopardize the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections. The elections could contribute to increased stability in the region and lay the basis for effective measures to address the development challenges in the country.

81. Population displacement continues to be one of the main outcomes and drivers of insecurity and instability in the region. I urge the leaders of the region to step up efforts to find durable solutions for refugees and displaced persons in line with the outcomes of the high-level ministerial meeting on the situation of refugees in the Great Lakes region, held in Kampala in March 2019.

82. I have asked my Special Envoy to develop, in close consultation with stakeholders and relevant partners, a peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. Its objective is to review United Nations support for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the region. I urge the signatories and guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and all other partners to support my Special Envoy and his Office in the formulation of the strategy.

83. I wish to thank my Special Envoy and his team for their steadfast support to the signatory States in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.
