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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

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I. Summary

1. Key developments in the Great Lakes region included sustained diplomatic engagement to resolve the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the delayed implementation by the parties of their commitments, compounded by continued hostilities, highlighted the persistent gap between diplomatic progress and the reality in the conflict area.

2. Armed groups remained a major source of insecurity. The Alliance Fleuve Congo/Mouvement du 23 mars (AFC/M23), supported by the Rwanda Defence Force, expanded and reinforced positions in parts of North and South Kivu Provinces. Other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Resistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara), also remained active. The increasing use of drones by conflict actors heightened threats to civilians.

3. The humanitarian and human rights situation remained alarming. Continued violence contributed to further population displacement and food insecurity, while also hindering efforts to respond to the Ebola virus outbreak in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Across the region, restrictions on civic space, political activity and media freedom persisted.

4. The conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo retained a pronounced regional dimension. Mistrust between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and between Burundi and Rwanda, continued to shape conflict and peace dynamics.

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5. Ongoing efforts to revitalize the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework helped to expand cooperation among signatory States, notably through joint security mechanisms, trade and infrastructure agreements, energy partnerships and investment in strategic transport corridors. Those steps contributed to strengthening regional connectivity and economic integration.

6. The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and his office continued to support de-escalation and dialogue, provide support to the African Union-led mediation, advocate coordination among peace initiatives and international support for those endeavours. He also continued to champion the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which remains the principal instrument to strengthen peace, trust and cooperation and address the root causes of conflict in the region, in line with the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

II. Key developments

A. Key developments in the region

Peace efforts on eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

7. Efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continued through the Washington and Doha processes and the African Union-led mediation. In follow-up to the 2025 Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, the United States of America facilitated five meetings between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda (see table below), including two meetings of the Joint Oversight Committee, held on 23 April and 24 June, and two meetings of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism, held on 15 and 16 July and on 12 and 13 August. The parties committed themselves to de-escalating, restricting drone strikes and taking coordinated steps towards the disengagement of forces, the lifting of "defensive measures" put in place by Rwanda in "defined areas" and the "neutralization" of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They further reviewed ways to ensure monitoring and verification of their agreements and emphasized the importance of sustained dialogue.

8. Following sanctions imposed at the beginning of March, the United States introduced additional targeted measures in April and June, including sanctions against senior FDLR and M23 commanders, a network allegedly involved in mineral smuggling in support of M23 and the former President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, for his alleged support to AFC/M23. While implementation of the Washington Accords remained uneven, sustained diplomatic engagement increased pressure on the parties and contributed to efforts to contain a further escalation of violence and advance implementation of the Accords. On 28 July, the Congolese authorities announced the signing with FDLR elements of a protocol for disarmament, demobilization and cantonment through awareness-raising. This was subsequently described by Rwandan authorities as non-compliant with the Washington Accords. On 13 August, the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region noted the signing of the protocol and urged the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement it in line with its commitments under the Washington Accords, while calling upon all parties to protect civilians and de-escalate tensions.

9. Under the Doha process, a new round of talks, facilitated by Qatar in April between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and AFC/M23, with support from Switzerland and the United States, advanced discussions on a protocol on humanitarian access and judicial protection. The parties signed a

memorandum of understanding with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to operationalize the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus and "integrate" it with the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism. They further agreed on prisoner releases, following which, on 6 and 7 August, the International Committee of the Red Cross facilitated the transfer of 15 detainees, previously held by the Congolese authorities, to AFC/M23. While the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 7 August, described the transfer as a demonstration of good faith and commitment to implementing the understandings reached in the Doha process, AFC/M23 welcomed the measure as an encouraging signal but maintained that it fell short of the parties' commitments. A retreat between the parties, held from 17 to 21 August in Switzerland, focused on implementation progress and challenges.

10. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus held its inaugural meeting on 13 July in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and conducted verification missions to the Minembwe area, South Kivu Province, on 24 August and to Masisi, North Kivu Province, from 10 to 12 September.

11. African Union-led mediation efforts focused on strengthening coherence among African actors and vis-à-vis international partners. At a high-level meeting held on 7 and 8 June, the African Union-designated Mediator, Faure Gnassingbé, the Panel of Facilitators and partners assessed progress in African Union-led peace efforts, calling for greater African ownership, increased resource mobilization and confidence-building measures. At a high-level harmonization meeting, organized from 24 to 26 July by the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Government of Botswana, a six-month strategic road map and action plan was developed for the Panel of Facilitators and measures were agreed to further strengthen the independent joint secretariat. The Togolese mediation team supporting the African Union-designated Mediator undertook extensive missions in all countries concerned to identify opportunities for restoring trust and strengthening dialogue.

12. Meanwhile, the Panel of Facilitators continued to engage regional and international actors on the way forward. A member of the Panel, Olusegun Obasanjo, undertook engagements in several countries aimed at building consensus on the convening of a high-level summit of relevant Heads of State with a view to restoring confidence among the parties.

13. On 7 April, another Panel of Facilitators member, Mokgweetsi Masisi, convened a meeting on economic integration and natural resources that enabled the integration of private sector perspectives into his facilitation efforts. On 19 June, another Panel member, Sahle-Work Zewde, jointly with the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security of the African Union, engaged the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region to advance support for African Union-led mediation efforts. At a meeting from 22 to 24 June, convened by another Panel member, Uhuru Kenyatta, and his team, together with the African Union Commission, options were developed for engaging armed groups not yet covered by the ongoing peace efforts. A planned visit by several Panel members to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo was postponed owing to the Ebola virus outbreak.

Key events in 2026 reported under the ongoing peace processes

Washington process	*Doha process*	*African Union-led mediation*
17 and 18 March: Meeting between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda held in Washington, D.C.	13 to 17 April: Talks between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and AFC/M23, held in Montreux, Switzerland	7 April: Briefing session by member of the Panel of Facilitators, Mokgweetsi Masisi, in Bujumbura
23 April: Fifth Joint Oversight Committee meeting, held in Washington, D.C.	14 April: Signature in Montreux of a memorandum of understanding with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region	7 and 8 June: High-level review meeting on African Union-led mediation efforts, held in in Lomé
24 June: Sixth Joint Oversight Committee meeting, held in London	13 July: First Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus meeting, held in Goma	19 June: Meeting between member of the Panel of Facilitators Sahle-Work Zewde, the African Union and the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region (Addis Ababa)
15 and 16 July: Fifth Joint Security Coordination Mechanism meeting, held in Geneva	6 and 7 August: International Committee of the Red Cross-facilitated transfer of 15 detainees	22 to 24 June: Meeting on dialogue options with armed groups, held in Nairobi
12 and 13 August: Sixth Joint Security Coordination Mechanism meeting, held in Geneva	17 to 21 August: Retreat between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and AFC/M23, held in Montreux	24 to 26 July: High-level harmonization meeting held in Gaborone
	24 August: First Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus mission, in Minembwe	
	10 to 12 September: Second Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus mission, in Masisi	

14. Separately, Angola undertook consultations with Congolese stakeholders in support of an inclusive inter-Congolese dialogue, following which it submitted a draft road map to the Congolese authorities in March. The initiative generated exchanges with Congolese authorities but did not lead to further substantive developments during the reporting period.

15. On 6 July, the President of Burundi, Évariste Ndayishimiye, in his capacity as African Union Chairperson, received a delegation of Congolese opposition and religious actors in Bujumbura, with whom he discussed the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, emphasizing the importance of constructive dialogue and unity.

16. On 27 August, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Antoine Tshisekedi, announced the launch of a national dialogue, to be conducted over three months. He stressed that actors engaged in armed conflict against the State, illegally occupying national territory or acting on behalf of foreign powers would not be included in the dialogue. He also ruled out a general amnesty for perpetrators of serious crimes.

Bilateral and regional cooperation

17. Regional dynamics remained dominated by tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. On 2 April, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alleged that Rwanda and AFC/M23 had carried out attacks and acts of intimidation against the Banyamulenge community in South Kivu Province. Rwanda rejected the allegations, claiming that those responsible were falsely attributing their own crimes. On 3 April, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, reiterated concern over an alleged collaboration between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and FDLR, stating that Rwanda's "defensive measures" would remain in place until security threats were eliminated. In response, Congolese officials accused Rwanda of seeking to justify its role in the conflict. Differing interpretations by the parties of the aforementioned FDLR protocol underscored a continued disagreement over how best to address the FDLR issue. Discussions on the return of Congolese refugees were held at a June tripartite commission meeting involving the two countries and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

18. Relations between Burundi and Rwanda remained strained, shaped by mutual allegations of support to armed groups and cross-border security threats. The activities of RED Tabara and FDLR remained a source of mistrust, and no significant progress was reported with regard to the reopening of their common land border, closed since January 2024.

19. Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda continued to strengthen bilateral cooperation. In May, the two countries convened the ninth meeting of their bilateral permanent commission and signed agreements on security, infrastructure development and digital and economic cooperation, while reaffirming their commitment to continuing Operation Shujaa against ADF.

20. Bilateral relations between Rwanda and Uganda also remained steady. In July, President Kagame received the Chief of Defence Forces of the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces and the Senior Presidential Adviser for Special Operations, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, in Kigali. Their discussions reportedly focused on regional security and bilateral relations, described by General Kainerugaba as "warmer and stronger than ever".

21. Other signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework also advanced cooperation. On 4 May, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania signed agreements on agriculture, energy, transport, defence and public service, and committed themselves to addressing non-tariff barriers. From 1 to 6 May, Angola and Zambia convened their permanent joint commission on defence and security. On 23 June, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo agreed to further strengthen military cooperation. In addition, on 29 June, Kenya and Rwanda signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance economic cooperation through the Northern Corridor, while on 3 July Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania concluded an agreement facilitating the importation and storage of refined petroleum products through the port of Tanga in the United Republic of Tanzania. On 6 August, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop the Tanga regional energy hub, aimed at strengthening regional energy security and economic integration. South Sudan and Uganda convened a joint border meeting on 23 and 24 July to enhance bilateral economic and security cooperation. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola also advanced their collaboration on the Lobito Corridor during the period under review.

22. In addition to the concerted efforts undertaken under the African Union-led mediation, subregional organizations remained engaged in support of peace,

development and cooperation in the region. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region continued to support the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus and engaged the African Union-led mediation, including through its participation in the independent joint secretariat headed by the African Union Commission and all related meetings. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region also advanced its early warning capacities and the women and peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas through inclusive peacebuilding initiatives and training in March and April.

23. SADC pursued its collaboration with the African Union, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners in support of African-driven initiatives on peace and development. In June, the SADC Organ Troika on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation approved a regional goodwill mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in support of ongoing peace and stabilization efforts. During the SADC Council of Ministers meeting, held in Durban, South Africa, from 12 to 14 August, South Africa formally assumed the Chairpersonship for a one-year-term and underscored the importance of peace, security and good governance, noting progress made in addressing political and security challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo informed ministers of progress made in implementing its commitments under the United States-facilitated peace agreement with Rwanda and regained its speaking rights within SADC, which had been suspended since 2024 owing to arrears in assessed contributions.

24. At the forty-sixth Ordinary Summit, held on 17 August, the SADC Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their support for coordinated regional and international efforts to restore peace and security, promote inclusive dialogue and enhance resilience to ongoing challenges in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Summit participants also called for continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in responding to the Ebola virus outbreak.

25. The East African Community continued to work on regional integration and trade, the envisaged political confederation and one-stop border posts. In response to the Ebola virus outbreak, the East African Community convened an extraordinary meeting of ministers of health in June, which contributed to harmonizing Ebola virus screening measures across borders.

Elections

26. Elections were held in the Congo on 15 March and in Zambia on 13 August. The incumbent President, Denis Sassou Nguesso, won a fifth consecutive mandate in the Congo, with 95 per cent of the votes, and the incumbent President, Hakainde Hichilema, was re-elected for a second term in Zambia.

Security developments

27. The security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remained of serious concern, driven by intensified hostilities in some areas, which had a dire impact on civilians.

28. Clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and AFC/M23 and their allies intensified in Mwenga and Fizi territories in South Kivu Province, involving the use of armed drones, heavy artillery and other explosive weapons in populated areas. AFC/M23 and Twirwaneho elements reportedly gained control of Minembwe and Point Zero in Fizi territory.

29. In North Kivu Province, fighting was reported in Masisi, Lubero and Walikale. Withdrawals by AFC/M23 from some front-line areas remained limited in scope and appeared tactical in nature. No FARDC operations against FDLR were reported.

30. Other armed groups also remained active. ADF continued to carry out attacks, abductions and abuses against civilians, notably in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, resulting in 211 incidents and 468 civilian fatalities. FDLR was reportedly responsible for 94 incidents and 40 civilian fatalities. RED Tabara reportedly continued to fight alongside AFC/M23 and Twirwaneho in South Kivu, contributing to cross-border security concerns in Burundi. The Convention pour la révolution populaire, led by Thomas Lubanga, also remained active, expanding its presence in parts of Djugu territory.

31. Three cross-border security incidents involving casualties were recorded. Two incidents reportedly occurred at the border between Burundi and Rwanda on 31 August and 5 September. While the first allegedly involved Burundian fishers and Rwandan security forces, the second allegedly involved security forces from both countries. Neither Government publicly commented on the incidents. Separately, on 27 August, armed forces from the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reportedly exchanged fire, resulting in an undetermined number of casualties. Both Governments responded through dialogue, underscoring the importance of strengthened border security cooperation, transparent investigations and accountability

Humanitarian developments

32. The humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remained critical. As at 30 June, the country hosted approximately 6.1 million internally displaced persons. According to UNHCR, some 15,700 Congolese refugees and asylum-seekers have fled to neighbouring countries since January, while more than 1.24 million remained hosted across the region. At the same time, voluntary returns from Burundi continued, with more than 58,000 Congolese refugees having returned in June. Following the tripartite meeting between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and UNHCR in June, approximately 520 refugees had reportedly returned voluntarily to Rwanda as at 31 July, bringing the total number of voluntary returnees to 3,057 since January.

33. Food insecurity remained severe. According to the World Food Programme, more than 26.5 million people faced acute food insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including 3.6 million at Integrated Food Security Phase Classification phase 4 (emergency level of hunger). An estimated 1.3 million children under five years of age required treatment for severe malnutrition. Funding shortfalls continued to limit humanitarian response efforts across all sectors.

34. On 17 May, the World Health Organization declared the Ebola virus outbreak in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern. As at 19 September, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had reported 7,672 confirmed cases and 3,699 deaths. On 27 August, the World Health Organization declared Uganda, which had recorded 20 confirmed cases and 2 deaths, free of the virus. Response efforts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo were hampered by insecurity, limited access, population movements, mistrust and funding constraints. Displaced persons continue to face heightened vulnerability owing to barriers to access to health services, limited surveillance capacities and overcrowding in displacement sites.

Human rights developments

35. The human rights situation remained of serious concern. On 29 June, the independent United Nations commission of inquiry on North and South Kivu Provinces described the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as one of "exceptional gravity". It reported allegations of conflict-related sexual violence consistent with the findings in the annual report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2026/321), as well as reports of unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and attacks on schools and health facilities. The Commission noted that displacement and disease weakened institutions and that the regional dimensions of the conflict heightened risks to civilians. Investigations remain ongoing.

36. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups were responsible for 2,186 violations, or 70 per cent of documented human rights violations and abuses, with 1,273 individuals, including 177 women and 113 children, reportedly killed during the reporting period. AFC/M23 were allegedly responsible for 1,078 violations, including against 555 women and 236 children. State actors, including FARDC and the Congolese National Police, were allegedly responsible for 891 human rights violations. Both armed groups and State actors continued to commit grave violations against children.

37. Restrictions on civic space, political activity and media freedom remained a concern in several countries in the region. With regard to Burundi, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi reported no significant improvement and cited allegations of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, detention and undue restrictions on fundamental freedoms, findings rejected by the Government. The Special Rapporteur also warned that the increased militarization of the Imbonerakure heightened the risk of violence in the context of the 2027 presidential elections. In Uganda, concerns persisted following the January 2026 elections, including allegations of enforced disappearances, arrests and intimidation of opposition supporters, human rights defenders and journalists. In the United Republic of Tanzania, concerns persisted over shrinking civic space characterized by reports of restrictions on public rallies, as well as the continued curtailment of political activity, freedom of expression and demands for accountability for post-election abuses and violations.

B. Progress in mandate implementation

38. Efforts by the Special Envoy and his Office focused on supporting ongoing peace processes, providing political, advisory and technical support, and facilitating the coordination of international support to the African Union-led mediation and advancing the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, with a view to helping to address the root causes of instability in the region. Support for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and the strengthening of partnerships with regional partners and other United Nations actors also remained priorities.

39. In support of the ongoing peace processes, the Special Envoy continued his advocacy for immediate de-escalation and dialogue. Through good offices missions to Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Togo and Uganda, the Special Envoy contributed to maintaining communication channels, while calling attention to the potential role of regional partners in supporting the implementation of agreements.

40. To facilitate the coordination of international support for the African Union-led mediation, the Special Envoy and his Office continued to engage Togo and the African Union Commission. They supported the Panel of Facilitators, including the April briefing by Panel member Mokgweetsi Masisi and the technical consultation convened by Panel member Uhuru Kenyatta. On 3 and 4 June, the Office, together with the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region and the Special Envoy of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, convened high-level consultations in Nairobi bringing together the Panel of Facilitators, members of the FemWise-Africa network, women- and youth-led organizations and civil society actors. The consultations helped to strengthen the inclusivity of mediation efforts by connecting grass-roots perspectives with formal mediation processes and promoting gender-responsive and community-driven approaches to peacebuilding.

41. The Special Envoy also participated in the meeting in Lomé on 7 and 8 June and a meeting between the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region and African Union partners in Addis Ababa on 19 June. The seventh Great Lakes stakeholders and experts retreat, organized jointly with Switzerland in Nairobi on 17 and 18 June, highlighted broad convergence among participants on the centrality of African ownership and the need to support a unified African Union-led mediation process, complemented by international partners. In addition, the Office of the Special Envoy provided technical advice to the African Union-led mediation.

42. Efforts to advance the revitalization of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework continued. At the fortieth meeting of the Technical Support Committee, held in Nairobi on 15 and 16 June, participants reviewed the revitalization action plan, discussed related initiatives undertaken at the national and regional levels and identified next steps in preparation for the thirteenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to be chaired by South Africa, at a date to be determined. A working session with international partners enabled exchanges on ways to advance international commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, highlighting the need to better align partner initiatives with the Framework and strengthen coordination and synergies among existing regional initiatives.

43. To address some of the root causes of instability, the Office continued to support regional cooperation on security and natural resource governance, among other areas. Through the Contact and Coordination Group and its operational cell, a regional minimum standard operating procedure on the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration of foreign combatants was finalized and is pending adoption at the ministerial level. The standard operating procedure is expected to strengthen coordination and cooperation among relevant national authorities, facilitate the implementation of non-military measures and support ongoing efforts to address the threat posed by foreign armed groups. A training programme for representatives of the five Contact and Coordination Group member States, held in Beijing in June, strengthened national capabilities in small arms and light weapons control.

44. The Office of the Special Envoy also supported the ongoing reform of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Certification Mechanism and the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources by promoting measures aimed at strengthening traceability, data reconciliation, certification, compliance and regional oversight mechanisms, while mobilizing support from regional and international partners for their implementation.

45. Regional accountability for women and peace and security commitments was further strengthened through the validation of the second gender barometer for the

Great Lakes Region and the launch in March of the second-generation regional women and peace and security action plan for 2026–2030.

46. The implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region was supported through strengthened communication and collaboration. A new communications package prepared by the Office enhanced the Strategy's outreach and visibility. The Office also enhanced inter-agency collaboration with UNHCR on durable solutions for refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the prevention of hate speech and human rights violations and the United Nations Development Programme on regional economic integration.

47. To strengthen cooperation with regional organizations and other partners, the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region secretariat held a joint retreat on 24 and 25 March. Discussions focused on identifying opportunities for greater coordination and alignment of efforts in support of the implementation of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and other relevant regional strategic frameworks. The meeting resulted in agreement on three joint priorities for 2026, namely, mediation and facilitation support, joint planning and resource mobilization, and recommendations to implement the joint activity plan.

48. Two joint missions in the region with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 6 to 10 June in Togo and Ethiopia and from 25 August to 2 September in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, promoted coherent United Nations messaging and helped to enhance coordinated support for African-led peace efforts.

49. The Special Envoy participated in the preparatory summit held in Nairobi on 12 May and in the donors' round table on the Congo Basin Climate Commission, convened in Brazzaville on 26 May. The round table constituted a significant step towards the operationalization of the Blue Fund for the Congo Basin, with participants announcing financing commitments totalling $3.65 billion, including $850 million in financial guarantees.

III. Analysis

50. Three interrelated trends dominated developments during the reporting period.

(a) Diplomatic engagements regarding the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo became more interconnected, reflecting a shared interest in preventing the fragmentation of peace efforts and enhancing their effectiveness. The Washington and Doha tracks continued to yield commitments by the parties, including thanks to regular meetings of their implementation mechanisms, while the African Union-led mediation focused on promoting greater coherence among initiatives and African ownership. High-level consultations in May and June, involving mediation actors and regional and international partners, contributed to the growing recognition that lasting progress would depend on the extent to which the various tracks reinforced and complemented one other. Broad consensus emerged on the importance of strong African leadership in peace efforts, notably on sustaining the implementation of the agreements;

(b) The diplomatic momentum has yet to produce a commensurate improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in relations among conflict actors. While the parties have continued to engage politically, the fighting in North Kivu and South Kivu continued

unabated and mistrust and implementation challenges remain significant, highlighting the contrast between commitments made in talks and the lived experiences of conflict-affected populations. Although efforts continued to operationalize oversight and monitoring mechanisms, including the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus, progress on core security provisions, most importantly, the observance of a ceasefire, remained insufficient and uneven. Contrasting positions by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to the protocol agreed by the Congolese authorities and FDLR underscored persistent divergences between the two sides regarding their threat assessments and the implementation of the Washington Accords. Similarly, protracted discussions within the ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism on the location of the first mission of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus demonstrated that confidence-building measures remained vulnerable to tensions and mistrust. While the creation of coordination and verification mechanisms constitutes an important step forward, the impact of these mechanisms will ultimately hinge on mutual trust, political will and readiness by the parties to honour their commitments;

(c) The structural conflict drivers continue to hamper peace efforts. Enduring mistrust, competing security interests and narratives and the parties' primary focus on military and economic calculations limit the effectiveness of confidence-building measures and complicate the implementation of agreements. At the same time, the related presence of armed groups, the illicit exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources, unresolved grievances, including ethnic tensions, land issues and governance-related challenges remain powerful drivers of instability. These dynamics are compounded by the regional dimension of the conflict, particularly the security concerns and threat perceptions of neighbouring States. Although no major military escalation occurred during the period under review, tensions remained elevated and the risk of direct military confrontation between Great Lakes countries persisted. As a result, a localized incident, misunderstanding or miscalculation could still trigger a severe regional crisis.

IV. Implications

51. Improving coordination among the Washington, Doha and African Union-led tracks will enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peace efforts, while stronger African ownership is important for the sustainability of existing and future arrangements. Greater support to the Mediator, the facilitators, the independent joint secretariat supporting them and related coordination mechanisms remains essential. In this context, the Office of the Special Envoy will continue to intensify its political and technical support for African-led and international peace efforts, in close coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Office to the African Union. This includes targeted resource mobilization for the African-led track and joint engagements with the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region.

52. The continued gap between political commitments and developments on the ground highlights the importance of incremental confidence-building measures, verifiable actions and changing incentives structures in a way more conducive to sustainable peace. Deep mistrust among the parties and persistent disagreements over the implementation of agreements underscore the need for sustained engagement beyond formal negotiations. Continued political engagement, good offices and support for dialogue by the Special Envoy will remain important to help to prevent setbacks, manage mistrust and tensions and maintain communication channels among the parties.

53. Greater progress on ceasefire implementation, the disengagement of forces, verification arrangements and humanitarian measures is critical to help to sustain the momentum generated by the ongoing talks and lower the risk of renewed escalation. The operationalization of mechanisms such as the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus constitutes an important step towards strengthening monitoring and building confidence among the parties. The effectiveness of these mechanisms, however, will depend on increased cooperation among the parties, adequate political and financial support and the ability to address disputes early through agreed procedures. Moreover, existing regional instruments, such as the regional standard operating procedure on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, should be applied to their full extent, once adopted, to help to address the regional dimension of the conflict. Efforts to protect the integrity, neutrality and credibility of such mechanisms remain critical.

54. The persistence of conflict economies, ongoing armed mobilization and intercommunal tensions underscore the necessity of addressing the root causes of instability. The regional dimension of the conflict reinforces the importance of approaches that extend beyond eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remains an unparalleled platform for addressing these root causes and advancing regional cooperation on security, economic governance and justice, among others. The Office of the Special Envoy will therefore continue to back related regional initiatives, while promoting the participation of women and young people in peace and decision-making processes.

V. Observations

55. I welcome the sustained diplomatic engagement under the Washington and Doha processes and the role of the African Union-led mediation. The establishment of the Ceasefire Oversight and Verification Mechanism, the successful conclusion of the first two verification missions of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism Plus, the progress made in Montreux and the road map developed at the high-level harmonization meeting on African-led peace efforts in Gaborone constitute important steps forward. I encourage all parties concerned to move forward hand in hand and ensure complementarity in the implementation of existing agreements.

56. Notwithstanding these efforts, the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains deeply alarming. Repeated calls by the Security Council for an end to hostilities and the implementation of the parties' commitments have gone largely unheeded. Persistent hostilities and the increasing use of armed drones by the parties not only put civilians at severe harm, but also reflect a continued focus on military solutions, which risks jeopardizing fragile diplomatic gains.

57. I am deeply concerned by the resurgence of the Ebola virus, which has compounded vulnerabilities and constrained humanitarian operations. I urge the parties to swiftly operationalize the agreed security and humanitarian arrangements to ease the suffering of civilians.

58. I call upon the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to fully implement their obligations under the Washington Accords and relevant Security Council resolutions, including through the lifting of Rwanda's "defensive measures" and progress on the "neutralization" of FDLR. Continued delays risk deepening mistrust, weakening verification efforts and widening the conflict.

59. I call upon FARDC, AFC/M23 and all other State and non-State actors to cease hostilities, respect international humanitarian and human rights law and allow safe,

rapid and unhindered humanitarian access. All parties must protect civilians, humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure. I further call upon the parties to the Doha peace talks to reconvene as soon as possible to continue negotiations on outstanding protocols under the Doha Framework for Peace.

60. The illegal exploitation of and trade in minerals continue to fuel conflict and undermine regional trust. Addressing this challenge requires stronger links between political approaches, securitized responses, responsible mineral governance, accountability measures, supply chain due diligence and regional confidence-building. In this regard, the ongoing reform of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Certification Mechanism offers an important opportunity to strengthen traceability and accountability. These efforts should be complemented by support for the African Union-led mediation, regional economic integration initiatives and cross-border projects to foster positive economic interdependence.

61. I remain concerned by restrictions on civic space across the region and encourage relevant Member States to give priority to inclusive political and electoral processes and respect for fundamental freedoms as cornerstones of sustainable peace and development.

62. I welcome efforts to deepen the participation of women and young people in ongoing peace processes, including through the high-level consultations held in Nairobi in June and the high-level women and peace and security event in New York in September. I encourage national and regional actors to ensure the full, effective and meaningful participation of affected communities, women and young people in peace efforts.

63. I am encouraged by the continued efforts to revitalize the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and urge signatory States to fully uphold their commitments. The Framework remains the principal regional instrument for addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting peaceful coexistence, sustainable stability and long-term prosperity.

64. I commend the Special Envoy and his Office for their continued efforts to advance the revitalization and implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, support the African Union-led mediation and other peace efforts, enhance coordination among regional and international partners` and mobilize sustained international support for comprehensive approaches that address the root causes of conflict in the Great Lakes region.