



# Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

**9165**<sup>th</sup> meeting

Wednesday, 26 October 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

*Provisional*

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*President:* Mr. Biang. . . . . (Gabon)

*Members:*

Albania . . . . .	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil . . . . .	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
France . . . . .	Mrs. Broadhurst Estival
Ghana . . . . .	Mr. Korbieh
India . . . . .	Mr. Ravindran
Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kenneally
Kenya . . . . .	Mr. Kimani
Mexico . . . . .	Mrs. Jiménez Alegría
Norway . . . . .	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Arab Emirates . . . . .	Ms. Shaheen
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America . . . . .	Mr. Wood

## Agenda

### The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2022/735)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation in the Great Lakes region**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2022/735)**

**The President** (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Africa to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/735, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Huang Xia.

**Mr. Huang Xia** (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to brief the members of the Security Council following the publication of the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

During my previous briefing (see S/PV.9023), I expressed concern about the deteriorating security situation and increasing tensions in the region as a result of the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23). Seven months later, that observation remains relevant, with the resumption of fighting just a few days ago again leading to victims and thousands of displaced persons in Rutshuru territory.

The Great Lakes region continues to experience instability due to the militancy of armed groups, which is one of its greatest challenges. The continuing activities of the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces

démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi and the M-23 fuel insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as rekindling mistrust and tensions among the countries of the region, in particular between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. That militancy jeopardizes the progress made in recent years in terms of bilateral and regional cooperation, as called for under the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement.

The illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources continue to fuel the vicious cycle of intercommunal clashes, the activities of armed groups and the use of such resources by cross-border criminal networks. The rigorous prosecution of the perpetrators of those crimes, as well as human rights violations, including those committed by armed groups, is required to end the recurring violence in the region.

The humanitarian situation continues to be of concern, with more than 4.9 million refugees and asylum-seekers having fled owing to the violence and climate-related issues, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In addition, approximately 12 million internally displaced persons are registered in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. I would like to pay tribute to the memory of all the victims of the various crises in the region, and I express my complete solidarity with the refugee and displaced populations.

In response to those challenges, and despite the continuing obstacles, the Governments and the peoples of the region have remained engaged. I commend Kenya's role in the peace process of the East African Community (EAC) on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which focuses on a dual approach, involving military and non-military efforts. I welcome the announced resumption of the third regional Heads of State conclave on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Nairobi in the coming weeks, and I reiterate here, as I did with the authorities of the countries of the region, my Office's full readiness to provide technical support to that process, alongside the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the relevant departments at Headquarters. Like my colleague Ms. Bintou Keita, who briefed the Council about a month ago (see S/PV.9142), I also wish to recall the vital importance of effective coordination between

all the troops to be deployed on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

Such coordination at the operational level is also essential to the mediation efforts. I am pleased to note that that is also the view of President Lourenço of Angola, the current Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), mandated by the African Union, President Ndayishimiye of Burundi, the current Chairperson of the EAC, and the Kenyan authorities, who all assured me of their willingness to continue their efforts in a coordinated manner. I would like to thank Angola, whose mediation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda made it possible to establish a road map towards a peaceful settlement of the dispute between the two countries. During my visits to Kinshasa and Kigali, the authorities also assured me of their willingness to achieve that objective. While there is no doubt about the will for dialogue, as shown by the many meetings between the two Presidents, concrete actions are needed to give substance to the efforts made in recent months. The appointment of a coordinator for the ad hoc verification mechanism is an encouraging step, and I sincerely hope that the other mechanisms and confidence-building measures provided for in the Luanda road map will also be promptly implemented.

Because a lasting peace can be achieved only through a political solution to the root causes of the conflict, I also welcome the commitment of States to the implementation of non-military initiatives. At the fifth meeting of the chiefs of intelligence and security services of the countries members of the Contact and Coordination Group, they called for the rapid deployment of the Group's operational cell to complement the efforts of the EAC regional force. They also called for consultations to determine the modalities for cooperation between the Contact and Coordination Group and the regional force.

In that regard, I am pleased to inform the Council that my Office facilitated the operational cell's first reconnaissance-and-contact mission to South Kivu province. The mission's goal was to engage with local actors to identify opportunities for contact with armed groups under the States' mandate to directly engage with such groups and facilitate their disarmament and voluntary repatriation without political preconditions.

Another example of the strength of cooperation is the increasing number of bilateral initiatives aimed at enhancing cooperation among the States of the region

in the areas of security, trade, energy and transport. In addition to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's membership in the EAC, we should also mention the strengthening of security cooperation between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the efforts to bring Uganda and Rwanda closer together.

Finally, I welcome the decisions taken at the ICGLR ministerial meeting on enhancing judicial cooperation in Kinshasa last June, in particular the adoption of clear guidelines for requesting mutual legal assistance in the Great Lakes region. I call on the signatory countries to expedite the implementation of the Kinshasa declaration.

The commitment by regional actors to finding political solutions to maintain stability and peaceful coexistence among States is in line with the principles of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. It demonstrates the relevance of that document, together with the ICGLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of 2006, as the basis for consultation and cooperation among the States of the region in order to meet common challenges. I would therefore like to reiterate my appeal to all the signatory countries to step up their efforts to fully implement the Framework Agreement and other regional agreements.

Stabilizing the region also depends on its ability to transform its mineral resource endowment, which is strategic for the energy transition, into a vector for sustainable and inclusive development. With this in mind, I conducted a joint advocacy mission with the Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Mr. João Samuel Caholo, in Paris and Brussels in order to increase support for better natural resource governance. However, we are aware that national and regional ownership of the Regional Initiative on Natural Resources is a prerequisite for its effectiveness. To that end, we plan to carry out joint high-level political advocacy missions in the member States of the Conference, as well as in some of the destination countries for those minerals.

Another crucial vector for peace is the ongoing mobilization of women and youth in political processes. Following a study on women's involvement in electoral management bodies, conducted jointly with the ICGLR Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy, Good Governance, Human Rights and Civic Education, my Office continues to support efforts to promote greater participation by women in electoral processes and bodies. In addition, my Office, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund and the

ICGLR, organized a workshop to build the capacity of youth networks in the region in conflict prevention and peacebuilding from 17 to 20 October in Nairobi, in which many very enthusiastic young people participated.

All of those efforts, undertaken by my Office in close collaboration with the significant United Nations system presence in the region, including the resident coordinator's office, are part of the 2022–2023 United Nations action plan for the Great Lakes region, whose flagship initiatives in the areas of peace and security, development and humanitarian action will be presented in detail to the Peacebuilding Commission on 31 October.

During my many missions to the region, high expectations were expressed to the United Nations with regard to political, technical and financial support for peace efforts. I would again like to reiterate my deep appreciation to all the partners and friends of the Great Lakes region who have continued to make financial or technical contributions to peacebuilding efforts in the region. I would also like to solicit the support of the members of the Security Council and to further appeal to the entire international community to lend more substantial multifaceted support to the regional initiatives and to the United Nations action plan for the Great Lakes region.

The stabilization of the region and the restoration of confidence, which together represent a lengthy twofold process, require sustained and significant mobilization by the international community in support of the efforts of the Governments and the peoples of the region. Only through coordinated, cohesive and harmonious action can we support the Great Lakes on the path to peace and sustainable development.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

**Mrs. Broadhurst Estival** (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy for his presentation.

I would like to make three points.

First, it is imperative that the regional peace initiatives yield concrete results. Late last week, as was noted today, fighting between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the Movement du 23 mars (M-23) resumed, resulting in civilian deaths and massive civilian displacements. Several

other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, are increasing their attacks. France calls on all armed groups of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate unconditionally in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Foreign armed groups must immediately lay down their arms and return to their country of origin.

As a continuation of regional initiatives to try to restore peace, dialogue must be maintained between the States of the region. The commitments made, whether in the framework of the Luanda road map or at the meeting held in September in New York under the auspices of the President of the French Republic, must produce concrete results. I am thinking here of the withdrawal of the M-23 from all occupied areas, as well as enhanced cooperation in order to put an end to the action of armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

Intra-Congolese consultations must continue. When the East African Community regional force is deployed, the protection of civilians must be at the heart of its mandate. Respect for international humanitarian law and coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will also be necessary for it to be effective.

For all those processes, the support of the Special Envoy is essential and must continue. His support for the participation of civil society, women and youth in these political initiatives is invaluable.

Secondly, a lasting peace will require disarming former combatants, protecting the most vulnerable and ensuring justice. Military measures alone will not bring peace. Robust regional mechanisms must be created for the surrender and repatriation of former members of armed groups. It is therefore urgent that the Contact and Coordination Group be operational. The sustainable return of refugees and people displaced by conflict must also be ensured.

The strengthening of judicial cooperation must continue with the implementation of the Kinshasa declaration, adopted in June. The launch of national consultations on transitional justice in four Congolese provinces is a further step towards justice and peace.

That same spirit of cooperation must prevail among the States of the region to prevent and fight terrorism. France will therefore provide financial support this

year to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism in order to strengthen the capacities of the States of the region.

Finally, combating the trafficking of natural resources, an issue mentioned today by the Special Envoy, must go hand in hand with sustainable development for the benefit of the people. The illegal exploitation of natural resources continues to finance the activities of armed groups. That natural wealth must instead be used for development. For that to happen, the trade in resources must be regulated and controlled. The States of the region must adopt and apply the recommendations of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region regarding the use of minerals. As the Special Envoy's action plan indicates, local initiatives are also needed. I am thinking here of the work to be done with small-scale artisanal gold mining operations.

Development initiatives for the benefit of the population must also increase. This month, the European Union allocated €25 million to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to tackle the food crisis. By developing new agricultural sectors, food systems will be more diversified and, above all, more sustainable.

Drivers of economic growth must also be exploited. In Rwanda, the French Development Agency is allocating nearly €200 million for the current period for investment in human capital, digital technology and green finance.

On the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, the States of the region must redouble their efforts, with our support, to preserve the gains of this decade. They can count on France's support, as can the Special Envoy.

**Mr. Ravindran** (India): I thank the Special Envoy for his briefing and his updates on the developments in the Great Lakes region.

Over the past few months, there have been positive political developments in the Great Lakes region. Regular engagement among countries of the region have continued, in both bilateral and multilateral formats, including through efforts to strengthen economic cooperation and trade.

We take note of the progress on the East African Community-led Nairobi process and welcome the establishment of the consultation mechanism between the International Conference on the Great Lakes

Region-led Luanda process and the Nairobi process. We also welcome the consultation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with representatives of various armed groups and hope for the political track to yield early results.

The volatile security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to cast a shadow on the ongoing efforts to achieve peace. We condemn the violence perpetrated by armed groups, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi and others. The resurgence of M-23 and its ability to hold its ground has further complicated the security dynamics, including by having an adverse impact on relations among countries in the region. We emphasize the need for restraint, dialogue and political will in order to collectively overcome those challenges.

In that context, we reiterate that fulfilling the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remains crucial for establishing a lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. We welcome the Democratic Republic of the Congo's focus on strengthening the financial, logistical, equipment and operational capabilities of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. We also take note of further progress in operationalizing the Contact and Coordination Group to focus on non-military measures, including through an engagement strategy for facing negative forces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The success of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme will be a critical factor for ensuring that those parallel processes converge and bear results, particularly in cementing the community reintegration of armed group combatants so that they are not compelled to return to their former way of life. We welcome the adoption of the Kinshasa declaration on enhancing judicial cooperation by the Ministers of Justice of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), as well as the efforts made towards standardizing guidelines for mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

The illegal exploitation of, and trafficking and trade in, natural resources has contributed to armed conflict in many parts of the resource-rich Great Lakes



region. Existing systems and efforts at the regional level must be strengthened further, with the sustained support of international partners and the United Nations. Institution-building and regulatory compliance must be emphasized and pursued at both the local and regional levels. We reiterate the call for the effective implementation of the ICGLR Regional Initiative on Natural Resources, as well as the recommendations of the high-level regional workshop on natural resources held in Khartoum.

We reiterate our concern about the expanding footprint of terrorism on the African continent and the growing linkages between terrorist outfits and armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those concerns are shared by the African Union Peace and Security Council. Armed groups such as the ADF benefit from an increasingly lethal terrorist network by way of training, finances and resources. The rise in the use of improvised explosive devices in the region is also worrisome. We support strengthening the capacities of the ICGLR Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre for the monitoring of those terrorist networks.

India continues to be a reliable partner of the countries of the Great Lakes region. Those relationships are driven by close people-to-people ties over many decades, partnerships forged in the development sector and a long-standing contribution to United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region. India will continue to support the member States of the Great Lakes region as they pursue collective peace, security and development.

**Mr. Kimani** (Kenya): I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya. We thank Mr. Huang Xia, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his briefing.

The A3 remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its effect on the stability of the Great Lakes region. Our statement will focus on three areas that require urgent action to address the root causes of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region: first, the continuing threat of armed groups; secondly, reinforcing confidence-building among the leaders of the region; and thirdly, addressing the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

On the threat posed by armed groups, the A3 is alarmed by the worsening situation resulting from the recent capture of the town of Bunagana in North Kivu by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23). The A3 denounces the escalation of violence in Rutshuru since 20 October between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the rebels of the M-23, which left at least 10 people dead and dozens of people injured. We express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims and express our solidarity with the civilians affected by that violence.

We condemn the illegal and inhumane activities of the M-23, the ADF, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes Abacunguzi and the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi. Those groups are perpetrating mass atrocities and grave human rights violations. We note with concern that some of them, particularly the ADF, have links to terrorist networks, including the Islamic State. The threat they pose to regional peace and security calls for a robust regional response.

We call for the swift implementation of the action plan of the 2021–2023 United Nations Strategy for Peace, Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, as well as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

We welcome the inter-Congolese peace dialogue initiated by the East African Community (EAC) and the fact that many armed groups are already participating in it. We further welcome the convening of the third inter-Congolese peace dialogue in Nairobi from 4 to 13 November. The A3 commends Angola, Senegal and Kenya for their contribution to the EAC peace fund based in Arusha to support the political process. We invite other countries to partner with the EAC by contributing to the fund.

The success of the Nairobi processes depends on the effectiveness of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. We urge the United Nations and the international community to make available the necessary resources for that exercise. We urge the Secretary-General to strengthen the coordination gap between the Contact and Coordination Group and the Nairobi process to best support the peace dialogue.

We further urge the provision of enhanced support to strengthen the capacity of the FARDC to consolidate State authority in conflict areas. We encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to initiate a strategy for the ambitious reform of the FARDC and its security sector so that it may assume responsibility for the protection of civilians and ensure the rights and needs of all Congolese people after the withdrawal of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

On confidence-building among leaders of the Great Lakes region, the A3 underscores that political will is the key ingredient for resolving the conflicts in the region. We note with concern the heightened levels of mistrust between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which serve only to fuel unsustainable regional tensions. Both countries need each other for peace, security and prosperity. It is therefore crucial that they employ all efforts to prevent misunderstandings, build confidence and strengthen cooperation.

We also strongly condemn the use of hate speech, disinformation and misinformation by some leaders, which contributes to mistrust, tension and animosity and even incites violence. We urge the Special Envoy and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to proactively engage the major social media companies to encourage them to take swift and comprehensive action on hate speech. Regional and national authorities should also ensure that those engaging in hate speech and incitement are held accountable, especially if they are political leaders.

We welcome the Luanda road map aimed at normalizing the political relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We commend the increasing coordination between the Nairobi and Luanda processes and call for that coordination to be strengthened in support of the priorities of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage further regional confidence-building measures, particularly through economic cooperation.

We urge States in the region to strengthen governance frameworks, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Pact on Security, Stability and Development, in order to promote a regional vision for addressing the root causes of conflict. There is a need to reinvigorate the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre and

the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism in order to ensure the collection of intelligence on armed group activities and the dissemination of that intelligence to national law enforcement agencies.

On addressing the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources, the region must address with urgency the alarming competition for natural resources among illegal transnational actors and armed groups. The A3 encourages States in the region to implement regulatory frameworks and strengthen accountability measures in order to manage the sustainable use of natural resources. We also urge States to effect necessary legislation and rules against conflicts of interest. We urge all entities all over the world importing and exporting natural resources to put in place conflict-mineral awareness and monitoring systems. We further urge States, particularly those that receive minerals from the Great Lakes region, to ensure compliance oversight, transparency in mineral flows and fair play to enable responsible mineral supply chains during the extraction, transport and sale of natural resources. Meanwhile, the United Nations and regional organizations should forge collaborative efforts to support States emerging from conflict in the region, with due respect for their sovereignty over their natural resources. That can be achieved through capacity-building to strengthen national regulatory and law-enforcement capacities based on national priorities to lay the foundation for the lawful, transparent and sustainable use of natural resources.

The A3 recognizes the valuable role of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in supporting cross-border cooperation in the region. We therefore welcome the written advisory from the Peacebuilding Commission and urge for the Council's support in the identified areas of work, including the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for the Great Lakes region.

In conclusion, we note with appreciation the Security Council's support to the Nairobi and Luanda processes and encourage the continued partnership of the Secretary-General and the United Nations, including funding support. We commend and support the efforts of the Special Envoy and his able team in promoting peace and security in the region through good offices and advocacy and capacity-building programmes, which are beneficial to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. The A3 and France have submitted a draft press statement for the

Council's consideration, and we hope to see a strong endorsement of that initiative by the Security Council.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing and welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Rwanda and Burundi to this meeting.

There is no question that the dire situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is having a major impact on the situation in the Great Lakes region. Unfortunately, as some of our colleagues have already noted, hostilities between the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) and Government forces recently began again. That is having a considerable impact on the deteriorating security situation and is exacerbating the situation in the region. Numerous illegal armed groups that are active in the eastern part of the country are taking advantage of it to promote their own interests. The worsening of the already serious problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the diversion of the attention of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo towards combating the well-armed M-23 makes it possible for other illegal armed groups to expand their illicit activities and continue attacking civilians and exploiting natural resources with impunity.

In those conditions, it is clear that close coordination between the Government forces and the contingents of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is more crucial than ever. However, it is also clear that long-term normalization of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be achieved through military measures alone. It requires dialogue, effective confidence-building measures, consolidation of understanding among regional States and their recognition of their shared interest in stabilizing the situation in the Great Lakes region. Ultimately, peaceful and sustainable development, mutually beneficial cooperation and a determination to resolve long-standing issues collectively is in everyone's interests. In that regard, we urge for stepping up the work to ensure the full implementation of the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. These joint efforts demand transparency, a strong focus on results and a full commitment to obligations undertaken.

We welcome the important decisions reached at the Nairobi process consultations, including the one

establishing the regional forces. It will be vital to ensure that they are implemented with the support of the international community, in direct coordination with MONUSCO and with Kinshasa playing a leading role. We also welcome the peacemaking efforts of the President João Manuel Goncalves Lourenço of Angola and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We believe that pooling these various efforts and initiatives can help to achieve quality results with regards to regional cooperation. In essence, they are mutually reinforcing and serve the goal of ensuring peace, socioeconomic development and an opportunity for all Africans in the Great Lakes region to realize their potential.

For our part, we affirm our readiness to promote stabilization in the Great Lakes region by encouraging dialogue and constructive cooperation among the countries of the region. We are committed to meaningful cooperation with the relevant institutions of the United Nations system and its representatives. We support the efforts of the United Nations to promote the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and the work of United Nations officials aimed at implementing its action plan. And we fully support the work being done by Special Envoy Huang Xia to promote inter-State cooperation and facilitate regional efforts to ease tensions in the Great Lakes region.

**Mr. Wood** (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Xia for his informative briefing. I would also like to welcome to this meeting the representatives from South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region is an important means of bringing peace to the region, and we appreciate the Special Envoy's use of his good offices to generate international support for the Nairobi process. Despite those efforts, the humanitarian and security situation in the Great Lakes region remains deeply troubling. Attacks by armed groups, including the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria- Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), have killed more than 2,000 civilians this year. That violence is unacceptable, and the United States calls on armed groups to cease their assaults on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's most vulnerable populations. We also call on



State actors to stop supporting those groups, and that includes the Rwandan Defence Force's assistance to the M-23.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) remains critical to bringing peace to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader region, and it deserves our complete and unequivocal support. It too has suffered losses as the security situation worsens, including the death of a Pakistani peacekeeper just last month in a heinous attack. I want to extend my condolences to the Mission, Pakistan and the peacekeeper's family. Anti-MONUSCO rhetoric increases the already significant risk to peacekeepers. We are therefore concerned about the calls being made for MONUSCO's immediate withdrawal, and we urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work with MONUSCO towards a gradual, responsible, conditions-based withdrawal guided by benchmarks in the joint transition plan. No one would argue that MONUSCO should remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo forever, but it serves an important purpose that aligns with the interests of the entire Great Lakes region — protecting civilians, disrupting illicit networks and helping stabilize governance and security institutions.

The States of the region, both bilaterally and through the East African Community, have also deployed troops to address the growing insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. As those efforts advance, it is imperative that they not aggravate an already tense situation. In that regard, we call on regional leaders to ensure that both bilateral and multilateral forces respect human rights, prioritize the safety of civilians and refrain from illicit activities such as the extraction of natural resources. It is equally critical that they coordinate with and complement the important work of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, MONUSCO, United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. States must also formally notify the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) of that assistance, in line with existing Security Council resolutions. Such assistance includes the Burundian forces deployed bilaterally and under the East African Community regional force.

As is often the case, we have spent significant time today speaking about military solutions to a political problem. Of course, achieving peace in the Great Lakes

region will not come by force. Peace is contingent on a political process, political will and political solutions. To that end, in September the United States announced an additional \$13 million in funding to support a transparent electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That funding is in addition to the \$10.75 million we have already allocated for that effort. We look forward to an inclusive electoral process, ultimately concluding in free and fair elections.

Strengthening democratic institutions, bringing justice to victims, holding bad actors to account, respecting States' territorial sovereignty and integrity, and prioritizing civilians will help bring peace to the Great Lakes. The people of the region deserve nothing less.

**Ms. Shaheen** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his thorough briefing and appreciate his endeavours to support peace efforts in the region. We also welcome the participation of the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Africa in today's meeting.

The Great Lakes region has recently witnessed alarming security developments due to the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the continued activities of armed groups in the region, their illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continued attacks against civilians and humanitarian workers. There are also growing concerns at the spread in the region of hate speech, misleading information, inaccurate information and incitement to discrimination. Efforts must be promoted to address all those challenges.

We note the hopeful signs represented by the recent positive efforts made by the States of the region, including the continuation of confidence-building measures and improvements in their coordination and cooperation with each other. For example, the meetings held by Burundi, Uganda, Angola, Zambia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo resulted in agreements in the areas of political consultation, natural resources, investment and energy, among others. My country encourages such endeavours.

The United Arab Emirates believes that achieving stability in the Great Lakes region in the long term requires a continued commitment to implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and

to addressing the root causes of conflicts by taking the following actions.

First, it is necessary to continue to strengthen regional efforts, dialogue and support for confidence-building measures among the countries and leaders of the region. That will help to ensure that the challenges they face are addressed in a comprehensive manner. We stress here the need to continue following the political track in order to facilitate consultations among leaders and parties to the conflict, including through the Nairobi peace process and the Luanda road map.

It is important to assess the progress made and determine the best practices for supporting those processes. The role of regional and subregional organizations remains vital in supporting efforts to secure peace and stability for all the countries of the region. Regional cooperation must also be intensified in order to address the cross-border threats to the security of the region posed by the activities of armed and terrorist groups, in particular the recruitment of foreign fighters in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, we must build the capacities of the States of the region to sustainably manage their natural resources and protect them from illegal exploitation, while taking into consideration the willingness of the countries concerned to receive such support and assistance. We also encourage joint efforts to prevent armed and terrorist groups from using the proceeds of natural resources. We must ensure that such proceeds are instead used to serve, advance and develop communities and support their security and stability, whether in the Great Lakes region or across the continent.

Thirdly, the United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of women and their active role in building peaceful and prosperous communities that can withstand the various challenges they face. That calls for following up the joint work of the United Nations, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as strengthening their close cooperation with the region's women leaders in order to empower women to participate in political processes and ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation at all levels, including the social and economic levels, while providing them with the necessary protection and ensuring that their basic needs are met.

We underscore the urgent need to continue providing humanitarian aid to the countries of the region, given the worsening humanitarian crisis and the high levels of displacement and food insecurity that have resulted from the violence prevalent in the region and the high prices of basic commodities around the world.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates affirms its commitment to supporting the efforts of the United Nations and all regional partners, as well as other efforts to consolidate peace in the region, while allowing its peoples to take the lead in their quest to achieve prosperity and stability.

**Ms. Heimerback** (Norway): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing.

The deteriorating situation on both the security and humanitarian fronts in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is deeply concerning and has serious regional implications. Violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights continue to be reported that involve brutal attacks against the civilian population, including children. It is imperative that those violations and abuses be investigated and those responsible held accountable.

We also note with concern the rising tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We call on both countries to exercise restraint and pursue a diplomatic solution. We welcome the political and diplomatic efforts of the region to address security challenges and promote dialogue, including the holding of several summits of Heads of State of the East African Community (EAC); the initiative taken by President Lourenço of Angola; and the leadership of the Nairobi process by former President Kenyatta of Kenya. We stress the importance of coordination among the Nairobi process, the Luanda process and the efforts of the United Nations.

The deployment of the EAC regional force must be closely coordinated with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined, and we reiterate that all countries must respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway urges all armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Allied Democratic Forces, to lay down their weapons. We welcome the roll-out of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme

and the appointment of provincial coordinators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We stress the importance of a common understanding of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) at the national and provincial levels in order to avoid repeating mistakes committed in previous rounds of DDR.

The involvement of women is essential to promote sustainable peace in the region. We welcome the efforts to strengthen cooperation with women's networks in peacebuilding, as well as the engagement of women and young people in ongoing dialogue and confidence-building activities.

To reduce the level of violence and protect civilians, we must address the root causes of conflict in the region. The illicit trafficking of natural resources constitutes a significant revenue source for armed groups, fuelling violence and other conflict drivers locally and in the region. The rivalry related to natural resources and their illicit exploitation and trafficking must come to an end.

We encourage Special Envoy Huang Xia to continue his valuable support for regional initiatives aimed at addressing security challenges, as well as his commitment to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Norway will continue to support his efforts, including through ongoing cooperation with his Office.

**Mr. De Almeida Filho** (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation is grateful to today's briefer for his informative statement and his valuable efforts. We welcome the delegations of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Africa to today's meeting.

We have been closely following the most recent developments in the Great Lakes region and would like to make a few remarks on the security situation. Security remains a matter of great concern to us. The threat posed by armed groups to the countries of the Great Lakes region is still tangible, as was demonstrated in July by the tragic events in North Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, I first want to reiterate our condemnation of such ominous acts and of any attacks and provocations against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Secondly, I also want to reiterate our call for equipping peacekeeping operations with the proper strategic communications

tools to counter hate speech and disinformation and ensure the protection of both military and civilian United Nations personnel. The increased activity by armed groups in recent months not only represents a threat to the lives of peacekeepers, but it also has a destabilizing effect on local communities and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons from various perspectives, ranging from human rights to economic development, such as through cases of sexual violence, the recruitment of children into armed conflict and the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

The efforts for peace deserve our encouragement and full support. In that regard, we commend the leading and constructive role played by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the mediation efforts carried out by Angola. Moreover, we commend the leadership provided by Kenya in the Heads of State Conclaves on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while hoping that its role as facilitator in the dialogue between the armed groups and the Government in Kinshasa will soon bear fruit.

Both the Luanda and Nairobi processes are examples of the kind of contribution that regional actors can make and for which they should hope. The admission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the East African Community and its engagement in it provide yet another avenue for strengthening regional cooperation and therefore the long-term perspectives of the peace process. In order to protect the achievements of the peace process that we have made so far, it will be imperative to expedite the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. At the same time, it is crucial to ensure that former combatants, women and young people have access to economic opportunities that can provide them with the tools to improve their livelihoods in the post-pandemic period.

In that vein, I would like to voice our support to the Special Envoy and highlight the contribution of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region in bringing coherence and comprehensiveness to peacebuilding initiatives. We also want to emphasize the importance of local ownership in attaining lasting peace and prosperity in the region. In that sense, we welcome and echo the Peacebuilding

Commission's advice encouraging the countries of the Great Lakes

“to create a political and social environment conducive to the promotion of sustainable economic development that will bring prosperity to the entire region [and] is necessary for building peace”.

Finally, we call on all States in the region to persevere on the path of an all-inclusive political dialogue. No durable solution can be found without the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including women.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing today and welcome the participation of the representatives of countries of the region in this meeting.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the security situation in the Great Lakes region, in particular the resurgence of violence by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in the past week. We call for the immediate cessation of the violence and for the M-23's withdrawal from its current position. All parties must respect national sovereignty and uphold the principle of territorial integrity. We call on the countries in the region, with the support of the Special Envoy, to continue to work in close coordination with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to bring lasting peace to the country.

We have said many times that political and diplomatic efforts should have primacy over a military solution. Humanitarian considerations should have equal priority. Military action alone will not bring peace to the Great Lakes. We therefore encourage a resumption of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. The United Nations, including through the offices of the Special Envoy, should actively support those efforts and ensure coordination with existing efforts, such as the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme process of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Any military action in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo requires careful planning, coordination with MONUSCO, adherence to international law and a clear exit plan. The East African Community regional force and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo must engage substantively with MONUSCO on the de-confliction of forces, to ensure

the protection of civilians first and foremost. We trust that Special Envoy Xia will support that coordination.

The United Kingdom remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is suffering from the world's largest food security emergency, with 26 million people at crisis levels of food insecurity. The recent violence is adding to the 5.9 million people already displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and access to those who need relief is severely limited. Coordination between military and humanitarian operations is vital and we call on all the parties to facilitate humanitarian access.

In conclusion, we call on the countries of the region to intensify efforts to improve their regional cooperation, address shared security challenges through political and diplomatic means, improve humanitarian access and bring an end to the violence.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing and welcome the presence of the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Africa in today's meeting.

For some time now the countries of the Great Lakes region have been strengthening their solidarity and cooperation in a joint response to security challenges, while promoting regional cooperation and sustainable development, solving African problems with African solutions and demonstrating resilience and wisdom. China highly commends that approach. That said, it must also be noted that there is still a long way to go to achieve peace and development in the region.

The violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is ongoing. The terrorism and ethnic tensions there are difficult to resolve in the short run and issues related to livelihoods and development have become more acute. In order to deal with those challenges on the ground, the countries of the region should intensify their coordination efforts and deepen their cooperation in the areas of security and development.

The Security Council and the international community should invest more attention in the subregion and increase their constructive support.

First, we must support the countries of the region in standing together and staying the right course towards shared security. The Great Lakes region is an interdependent security community with a shared



future. Only by upholding the concept of common, comprehensive cooperative and sustainable security, and working together with collective determination can the common security threats be effectively addressed.

The East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region have been actively engaged in providing their good offices with regard to the issue of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through the launch of the Nairobi peace process and the Luanda road map. Kenya, Angola and others have also done a great deal of work leading to positive outcomes.

The countries of the region must remain on the right track towards maintaining their common security and resolving their differences through dialogue and consultations on the basis of respect for their mutual interests and concerns. The international community should fully support the lead role played by the countries of the region and the coordinated progress of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. In February 2023, Burundi will host the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. China looks forward to its successful outcome, which will add positive energy to the pursuit of regional peace and stability.

Secondly, we must support a multipronged approach by combining military and non-military means to eliminate threats to regional security as soon as possible. In their response to the unrest caused by the rebel groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the countries of the region took prompt action. The EAC and the Democratic Republic of the Congo pushed for the deployment of joint forces. Burundi provided bilateral military support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the framework of the Nairobi process, and Uganda conducted joint military operations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such independent initiatives to maintain stability deserve our full recognition, and the international community should provide the necessary support in terms of funding and equipment.

At the same time, non-military means must also be encouraged in parallel to create synergy. In August, Uganda convened a meeting of the heads of regional intelligence and security services to facilitate the work of the Contact and Coordination Group, thereby contributing to regional cooperation in addressing security challenges. The disarmament, demobilization

and reintegration of armed groups is the only way to defuse regional security threats. The countries of the region have developed appropriate plans and have gradually implemented them. The international community should provide the necessary political and financial support to that end.

The unlawful exploitation of natural resources is another important factor that affects regional stability. The Security Council convened a thematic meeting on the issue under Gabon's presidency (see S/PV.9147) earlier this month. Special Envoy Huang Xia has also made tremendous efforts to reach a solution. The international community must work together to implement the recommendations of the high-level Khartoum workshop on natural resources, held in 2021, in order to end the illicit financing of terrorist organizations and armed groups and actively foster lawful trade in order to make natural resources a hallmark of regional cooperation.

Thirdly, we need to push forward towards peace through development and tackle the root causes of regional instability and conflicts. The countries of the region have come to a profound understanding on the dialectic relationship between development and security and have initiated a number of results-based cooperation initiatives.

In his report (S/2022/735), the Secretary-General notes that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, South Sudan, Zambia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and other countries have cooperated extensively in the areas of production capacity, infrastructure development, trade, investment and agricultural development. Those efforts will help to unlock the potential for economic growth, build stronger indigenous drivers for development, tighten bonds based on regional interests and increase the resources and means for maintaining regional peace and security.

China is an important partner in the sustainable development of the region and has helped countries there implement a wide variety of development projects in the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. China recently announced the first list of projects in the project pool of its global development initiative for the benefit of the countries of the region. We will continue to deepen our cooperation with the countries of the region in the area of development and promote the timely achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Special Envoy Huang Xia has travelled extensively to the countries of the region, actively provided his good offices at the political level and diligently worked to promote regional cooperation and address shared challenges. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region has actively promoted the implementation of the new strategy and action plan for the region and has achieved a series of significant results.

China commends that and looks forward to the United Nations regional presence in fully mobilizing resources in order to achieve greater progress in the implementation of the new strategy and action plan and achieve an increase in early outcomes. China stands ready to work with the international community to increase its contribution to the achievement of lasting peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

**Ms. Dautllari** (Albania): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Envoy for his briefing and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for the written recommendations provided to the Security Council. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Rwanda and Burundi at this meeting. Albania supports the United Nations regional strategy for the Great Lakes and the Special Envoy in his efforts.

Allow me to stress three points.

First, Albania remains extremely concerned about the fragile situation in the Great Lakes region, despite the continued diplomatic outreach and dialogue. The activities of armed groups, mainly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have a devastating impact on the civilian population and undermine efforts to encourage the countries of the region. Those activities should cease, and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law is vital.

Secondly, Albania commends the positive trends to promote peace through the Nairobi and Luanda processes, as well as the efforts to ensure proper coordination between them. In that vein, we acknowledge the initiatives for rapprochement between Burundi and Rwanda, between Rwanda and Uganda, and especially between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, in particular the meetings convened by the Joint Permanent Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which led to the signing of several agreements.

In addition, the countries of the region should not underestimate the need for regional integration, especially to maximize profits from the increased demand for critical minerals, while also pursuing economic diversification. We are encouraged by the continued efforts to counter the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which is one of the root causes of regional instability. But more needs to be done to effectively implement the recommendations of the high-level Khartoum workshop on natural resources, held in 2021.

Thirdly, regional efforts to promote peace and security require careful attention and support. The military track of the Nairobi process cannot be the only solution to tackle the root causes of the conflict. A much more comprehensive political track is necessary. Women and youth's engagement in the ongoing dialogue and confidence-building initiatives are an example of the essential components on which the strategy should rest.

Albania welcomes the progress made in making operational the Contact and Coordination Group, which has become an important tool for dismantling the networks of foreign armed groups. In line with building trust, we welcome the public statements of national authorities condemning the dissemination of hate speech, and we share the call of the Secretary-General for authorities to ensure accountability for violations and strengthen legal frameworks on hate speech.

An additional pillar to be advanced through regional cooperation is transitional justice. We commend the adoption of the Kinshasa declaration on enhancing regional judicial cooperation, which set new standards for mutual legal assistance at the regional level, and we hope to see the timely implementation of its priorities in order to fight impunity.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate our appreciation for the work of the Special Envoy. In cooperation with the Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he has been a strong advocate for peace and for implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

**Mrs. Jiménez Alegría** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Huang Xia for his briefing. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Burundi, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and South Africa at this meeting.

It is clear that almost 10 years after its adoption, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region continues to be an integral component in addressing the shared challenges in the region. The continued activities of armed groups, such as the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo*, the Allied Democratic Forces, the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*, and in particular the strengthening of the *Mouvement du 23 mars* in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are of great concern owing to both the impact on the civilian population and the regional tensions that they create.

In that regard, we acknowledge the regional efforts to respond to the escalating violence, in particular the Nairobi process, led by Kenya in the context of the East African Community. We note the recent signing of the status-of-forces agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Secretary-General of the East African Community, which provides the basis for the deployment of the regional force. We reiterate our call for that force to coordinate with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the national security forces.

We believe that, in order to end the cycle of violence in the region, military cooperation must be accompanied by strategies that promote economic development. The implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes is also essential to advancing stability and preventing setbacks. We acknowledge the good offices of the President of Angola, Mr. João Lourenço, whose role was instrumental in getting the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to commit to improving their bilateral relations through the Luanda road map.

Thanks to that initiative, the joint permanent commission between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was reactivated 10 years after its last meeting. In that regard, we also acknowledge the work that the Peacebuilding Commission has carried out in the countries of the Great Lakes region. The investment of the Peacebuilding Fund in projects in the region has helped to strengthen the participation of women and young people.

In addition to addressing the structural causes of violence, the countries of the Great Lakes region must

strengthen their cooperation to combat illicit arms trafficking and the networks funding armed groups. In particular, it is key to share intelligence and pool efforts to combat the exploitation and trafficking of natural resources, which provide armed groups with the means to carry out criminal activities and terrorize the civilian population.

We believe that the adoption of the Kinshasa declaration on enhancing regional judicial cooperation is a step in the right direction towards combating those criminal networks. We urge all signatories to work towards its implementation in a coordinated manner.

**Mr. Kenneally** (Ireland): I would like to begin by expressing our appreciation to Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing today. I also welcome the participation in this discussion of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Rwanda and Burundi.

The Great Lakes region has long faced a range of overlapping challenges, with the security, humanitarian and human rights situations undermining progress and peace. There are positive examples of regional cooperation, including the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. We commend the Member States of the region, United Nations entities, regional organizations and the Special Envoy for their efforts to foster peace and security in the region. However, there is a danger that progress on such initiatives could be hampered by the kind of public rhetoric that we have seen in recent days. It is important to refrain from increasing tensions in the region. Today I will focus on four main points.

First, conflict and hunger exist in a vicious cycle, and several countries in the region face high levels of food insecurity. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 27 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. Large numbers of people have been forced to flee the violence and are displaced across the region.

Urgent efforts are needed to address the suffering that people are experiencing; yet there are persistent barriers to the humanitarian response. All parties must ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance. Ireland remains concerned about the documented human rights violations and abuses that

continue to occur. We call on all countries in the Great Lakes region to pursue accountability for the perpetrators of such acts.

Secondly, the negative impacts of climate change on security are being felt across the continent and the region. They contribute to the increasing humanitarian need, as we heard during the debate on climate and security in Africa earlier this month (see S/PV.9150). The Council must integrate climate-related security risks into its work.

Thirdly, on the struggle for control of natural resources, the region is home to a significant number of armed groups that benefit from the illegal exploitation of and trade in some of the world's most valuable resources. Those illegal activities fund their operations and destabilize communities and regions. Natural resources should be a driver for sustainable development across the region; yet instead they fuel conflict and instability.

It is important to continue to make progress on transparency issues, including through the regional certification mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The implementation of the recommendations adopted at the 2021 Khartoum high-level regional workshop on natural resources can also have an important impact. We call on all States to hold to account those that are complicit in that illicit trade.

Fourthly, we believe that dialogue, partnership and cooperation can build lasting peace in the region. Ireland welcomes the Nairobi process initiative of the East African Community to promote political dialogue through an inclusive coordinated regional approach, as agreed at the June Heads of State conclave. We also welcome the Luanda process, convened by the President of Angola. Those processes are evidence of the regional commitment to working together to defuse tensions and promoting regional peace and security.

There can be no military solution to the region's challenges. We welcome the commitment of the East African Community to closely coordinate its regional force with MONUSCO, and encourage it to ensure that it fully complies with obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Ireland recognizes the importance of the inclusion and participation of women and young people in regional cooperation initiatives and electoral processes. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women

in all peacebuilding and political efforts is essential. In that regard, we welcome the positive role played by the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes region, and encourage continued efforts in that regard.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa): We thank the briefers for their insightful briefings this morning. We wish to highlight the following points.

First, we commend the countries of the region for their efforts to advance the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/735). We encourage the region to strengthen its efforts amid the challenges posed by the coronavirus disease pandemic, violence against marginalized groups, forced displacement and non-State armed groups, which continue to undermine peacebuilding, stability and development. We support the enhanced diplomatic engagements and outreach among the countries of the region, and we stress the need for the political commitments made to be honoured by all.

Secondly, we note the ongoing regional mediation efforts, in particular those within the East African Community-led Nairobi process, as well as the trust-building efforts led by Angola to strengthen political and diplomatic cooperation. We hope that all such efforts under way to advance the political processes in the region will complement each other and be inclusive of all stakeholders, such as civil society, including women and youth peacebuilding organizations. In that regard, we also note the recent operationalization of the Great Lakes Women Entrepreneurs Network, the efforts of which support the participation of all segments of society in regional efforts, including domestic efforts to increase the participation of women. We also believe that community and traditional leaders can support peace and foster social cohesion at all levels, including through the reintegration of former combatants.

Thirdly, we continue to urge that the deployment of the East African Community troops to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo be done in close coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure coherence and complementarity.



Fourthly and lastly, we appreciate the support provided by the good offices of the United Nations, most notably the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, who briefed us this morning, for the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

**Mr. Kayinamura** (Rwanda): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the floor to contribute to this meeting. I join others in thanking the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region for his briefing. Rwanda commends the Special Envoy's dedication to peace, development and security in our subregion.

Rwanda welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/735) and appreciates the recognition that the security and humanitarian situation in the subregion is not solely attributable to one armed group. Similarly, we echo his call on all warring parties to cease hostilities and take advantage of the several existing agreements and the peace and security road map devised for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Rwanda reiterates its readiness to execute the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in good faith.

Rwanda knows first-hand what it takes to build a nation from the ashes. We know that attention should be given to national reforms, the reintegration of former combatants, the neutralization of remaining groups and the establishment of State authority. That is why we are committed to carrying out all tasks required of us under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in order to ensure that the region is moving towards peace and stability throughout our borders.

Addressing the root causes of conflict remains a crucial factor. That brings me to the dangerous classification of specific communities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as foreigners who should go back to where they came from. That stance is a seed of unending conflict. It promotes hate, marginalization and violence. Such dangerous rhetoric undermines the United Nations and the subregional efforts to find a lasting solution.

There is another area of extreme importance that, unfortunately, has not seen progress — namely, the neutralization of the 1994 genocidal force, the Forces

démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). The FDLR is one of the oldest armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It settled in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after committing the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Despite several Security Council resolutions and presidential statements calling for its disarmament and disbandment, the FDLR continues to recruit and train combatants, and it has committed grave human rights violations, including promoting and committing ethnically based and other killings in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Supporting that genocidal force therefore further complicates and prolongs a conflict for which the region has already paid a heavy cost. Even more disturbing is that supporting the FDLR might set the stage for further conflicts in the region. If the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo chooses to defeat armed groups militarily, we have no problem with that. Our main concern remains that the Government is choosing to side with the FDLR. That kind of relationship will always draw Rwanda's close attention and alertness.

Rwanda firmly believes the international community should engage with the signatories in genuine collaborative terms. Together, they should build on regional initiatives in order to achieve sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict in the region. Chief among those causes is the active presence of the FDLR in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for over two decades.

The harmonization and synchronization of international and regional efforts are paramount to avoid diluting or reversing the progress achieved under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. For example, the implementation of concrete resolutions agreed upon this year was, unfortunately, diverted by unrelated agendas, some of which serve only to worsen existing problems. The international community, through its special envoys or other channels, should make greater use of the good offices of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region in order to ensure that the signatories to the Framework continue to work in the spirit of confidence-building, ownership and accountability.

I have several questions. After our collective resolve, reflected by the often-abused phrase “never again”, the Security Council is still struggling to find a lasting solution to the FDLR, the leaders and members of which are among the perpetrators of the

1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Instead of addressing the leading root cause of insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, we continue to choose to manage that insecurity and focus on the consequences of the presence of the FDLR in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Why does the Security Council not follow up on the implementation of the multiple resolutions it has adopted and hold accountable whoever collaborates with the FDLR? Why the long silence and tolerance of hate speech and xenophobia? Those questions are legitimate not only from a Rwandan or regional perspective, but also from a broad perspective of maintaining international peace and security.

In that regard, it would be unfortunate if the Council were to spend another 28 years dealing with the FDLR and its consequences for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. Indeed, beyond the absolute need to restore peace and security in the region, that collective inaction also further undermines the implementation in our region of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Despite those challenges, let me conclude on an optimistic note. Rwanda is convinced that the overall momentum for peace, security and cooperation in the Great Lakes region is so strong that it will eventually enable us to address the root causes of conflict, under the supervision of the Council, so that we can live up to our collective expectations of a secure and stable Great Lakes region that is free of armed groups, including the remaining genocidal force on our continent.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

**Mr. Maniratanga** (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Burundi would like to congratulate the Gabonese presidency of the Security Council for October and reaffirm its support for Gabon's mandate.

The Burundi delegation welcomes the briefing delivered by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and thanks him for the work and the results achieved, particularly with respect to the implementation of the regional strategy. We take note of the Secretary-General's most recent report (S/2022/735) and commend the active engagement of his Special Envoy in the interest of peace and development in the Great Lakes region.

At a time when the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face a security and humanitarian

crisis that affects the stability of the country and the region, Burundi reaffirms the relevance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region as a solution to the challenge of ensuring stability in our subregion.

More than ever, the international community should play an effective role as a guarantor in the search for peace in the region. It is important that the members of the Security Council go beyond the framework of the presentation of reports made in New York and visit the region in order to be able to draw the necessary conclusions from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo instead of following from afar the developments in that hotbed of tensions, which could have immense consequences and threaten international peace and security.

While welcoming the efforts of the region and stressing the need to ensure the synergy and alignment of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, Burundi reaffirms the importance of cooperation and coordination in the military efforts between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the deployed regional force from the East African Community.

Burundi, which maintains excellent relations with all its neighbours, believes that when your neighbour's house is on fire you should take proactive measures to contain the fire before the flames coming from next door reach you. In the context of the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi therefore supports and will always support the quest for a lasting solution to the crisis there, as well as all good-faith initiatives to restore peace and security in the subregion.

In the light of the East African Community's decision to deploy a regional force to stabilize the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi firmly supports the Nairobi process and is deploying a military contingent of the National Defence Forces of Burundi. We need technical and financial as well as political support for the deployment if we are to enable the force to effectively carry out its mandate and address the concerns of those in need. We believe that the international community should work together to eradicate the negative forces that the region is crawling with and that are obstructing peace and economic development in the Great Lakes region.

Burundi will spare no effort to ensure peace and development in the subregion. We are actively preparing to take over the chairmanship in 2023 of the regional follow-up mechanism for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February 2013 under the auspices of the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community.

The Framework Agreement is and will remain an essential platform for bringing together the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region to agree on sustainable solutions to the challenges of our subregion. Its tenth summit, scheduled to take place in Bujumbura in February 2023, will re-evaluate the principles set out in the Framework Agreement, which are based on the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which commits the Governments of the region and the international community to redoubling their efforts to restore lasting peace in the region. The summit will also involve analysing the progress made and the challenges encountered so as to map out future actions to be taken to ensure the Framework Agreement's effective implementation. We would like to take this opportunity to ask the Heads of State and Government whose countries are signatories to the Nairobi process, as well as the guarantors, to play an active part in the summit of the regional mechanism of the Framework Agreement to be held in Bujumbura on 24 February of next year.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Nzongola-Ntalaja** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Let me take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, for your presidency of the Security Council for the month of October. I would also like to thank all the members of the Council, especially the three African members, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya, for the interest they have unfailingly shown in my country's situation. My delegation greatly values the briefing just made by Ambassador Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and I welcome his presence in the Chamber. We also want to commend him for his commitment and sacrifice in his efforts for the Great Lakes region.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Claude Ibalanky, High Representative of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. He is also the coordinator of the Framework Agreement's local mechanism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We benefited from his notes in preparing for this statement. He is also accompanied here today by his Director of the Cabinet.

I would be remiss if I continued without reminding the Council that even as we are meeting here, the town of Bunangana, a beloved part of my country, is still being attacked and occupied by Rwanda, under the guise of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), and that has gone on for more than four months. Rwanda, we should remind the Council, is one of the signatories to the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. This unacceptable situation of aggression, which is undermining the confidence-building efforts and positive momentum that were beginning to take hold in the Great Lakes region, must stop. We ask the Council to urge Rwanda and its M-23 to leave that part of Congolese territory without delay.

I would like to make an important parenthetical point. The representative of Rwanda spoke about combatants from the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) being a main cause of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. That makes no sense. As a researcher who has taught for nearly 50 years in universities, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I know very well that Rwanda was in control of our entire country's national security from May 1997 until July 1998. James Kabarebe, a Rwandan military officer, was appointed the Chief of the General Staff of the Forces armées congolaises or as it is known today, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC).

First, why did Mr. Kabarebe and Rwanda do nothing to eliminate the FDLR when they had power and control over the security of the entire territory of the Congo?

Secondly, between 1998 and 2003, Rwanda occupied part of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including North Kivu. Why did they do nothing in those five years to eliminate the FDLR?

Thirdly, when Joseph Kabila was President, he authorized Rwanda to intervene in the Congo and to

pursue the FDLR. The Rwandan army were in our territory. They did not eliminate the FDLR. Why is that? The reason is very simple. Rwanda is keeping the FDLR as an excuse to plunder my country's natural resources. They are not really entering the Congo to pursue the FDLR, because their main interest is in plundering our resources. That is well known — it is in reports from the United States Treasury and other studies, as well the mapping reports of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. All of that is well known.

Regarding the armed groups, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is continuing its efforts both individually and in conjunction with all its partners to reduce the scale of the threat they pose. In that regard, the Nairobi process will be fully relaunched with the aim of tackling and eliminating all armed groups. President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo's message is very clear on that subject. He spoke about it recently here in the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.5) and has repeated it in London and elsewhere. Our most important priority is to live in peace with all our neighbours. Since he came to power, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has done his utmost to ensure peace between us and our neighbours. In that regard, I would like to thank my colleague from Burundi for mentioning that the relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi are excellent. We have allowed Burundi to enter the Democratic Republic of the Congo because we know that its interests are not that different from our own. I therefore believe that we should take things as they are and recognize that the aggression to which we are being subjected is real and that the Security Council must take the necessary action in that regard.

The humanitarian situation in our region remains very worrisome, as Ms. Keita noted in this Chamber at the end of September (see S/PV.9142). Advocacy efforts to contain the situation must continue because at least 70 per cent of the funding needs have not yet been met.

With regard to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/735), has honoured the six national commitments which it had undertaken.

The appointment on 26 May of nine provincial coordinators of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme; the reforms of the FARDC that are under way; and the signature by the President of the ordinance-law on

the military programming bill, which is focused on capacity-building, are all directed at strengthening the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement mechanism.

Moreover, it is worth recalling that, under the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been Chair of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region since 24 February, several important meetings have been held.

For example, in August, the thirty-first meeting of the Technical Support Committee was held in Nairobi. At the end of that meeting, the senior representatives of the Heads of State of signatories to the Framework Agreement recommended accelerating the implementation of the Agreement through existing mechanisms to put an end to the insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

From 22 to 24 September, the fifth meeting of the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of the Great Lakes region was held in Kampala. That meeting decided on the deployment, beginning on 5 November in Goma, of the members of the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group, which will be in charge of establishing and monitoring non-military measures to complement the ongoing military operations. The Contact and Coordination Group, in addition to contacts with the armed groups, will also be part of a community-based approach through contacts with opinion leaders, communities and civil society, not to mention women and young people. The stated objective is to raise awareness and obtain the support and effective involvement of all those stakeholders in the non-military efforts to bring about the surrender of the armed groups. The operational cell will also accompany efforts targeting foreign armed groups and their repatriation to their countries of origin, an objective clearly stated by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is important to stress that the success of that non-military component underscores the critical importance of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which was established by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We take this opportunity to ask the Special Envoy and the Security Council to participate even more proactively alongside the Democratic Republic of the Congo in efforts to



deploy substantial funding of the programme, which will contribute to changing the situation in the Great Lakes region.

Furthermore, in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020), the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also depends on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. In that regard, my Government would like to reassure the Council that it will continue its cooperation efforts at the subregional, regional and international levels for the effective implementation of the Framework Agreement.

Finally, I would like to mention that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is upholding its commitments under the Framework Agreement.

Rwanda is providing substantial support to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) and, in doing so, is contributing to the deterioration of the climate of trust and continued insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For years, that insecurity has enabled a predatory and illicit exploitation of the natural resources that abound in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which we deplore.

The Addis Ababa Framework Agreement prohibits the destabilization of a member country of the region by another State. Rwanda's position is in defiance of the conclusions of the Nairobi process and the talks in Luanda and New York. With regard to the talks in New York, I am referring to the meeting that the President of France, Mr. Macron, held with President Kagame and President Tshisekedi Tshilombo during the high-level week of the General Assembly.

Council members should know that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, its President and its people will defend the integrity of their territory and will not cede a single centimetre of their land.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to convey a few requests to the Council on behalf of my delegation.

First, I call for respect for the integrity and intangibility of the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Second, I request that the Council demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan and M-23 troops from the town of Bunangana and other parts of Rutshuru territory in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in North Kivu province.

Third, I call for the Security Council to strongly condemn, via a resolution, the Republic of Rwanda for its support to the M-23 armed group. I have heard almost everyone at today's meeting say that they deplore Rwanda's occupation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but deploring it alone will not change anything. Measures must be taken so that Rwanda knows that the international community takes that seriously.

Fourth, I call for the Security Council to impose appropriate and more severe sanctions on the M-23 and Rwandan actors who are threatening the peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region through their activism.

Fifth, I call for support for the Nairobi process.

Sixth, I call for all armed groups without exception to be required to lay down their arms and join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and for the Programme to be provided with greater support.

Seventh, I call on the Council to strengthen sanctions against domestic and foreign mafia networks — including their entire networks, from production and transit points to destinations — which illegally exploit the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My eighth and last request is for the Council to be involved in ensuring that each country in the Great Lakes region resolve its disputes with its own combatants and/or rebels.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject..

*The meeting rose at noon.*