



Security Council

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Letter dated 24 April 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith copies of the briefing provided by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of Belgium, China, the Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Indonesia, the Russian Federation, Tunisia (on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam, in connection with the video-teleconference convened on Wednesday, 22 April 2020. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter dated 2 April 2020 from the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council (S/2020/273), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the briefing and statements will be issued as an official document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) José Singer Weisinger
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Statement by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia**

[Original: French]

I thank you for this opportunity to present the Secretary-General's latest report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2020/272).

At the outset, at a time when our world is going through an extraordinary public health crisis, allow me to express my solidarity and offer my condolences to the Governments and the peoples of the Great Lakes countries, as well as to those elsewhere in the world, for the many victims of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The pandemic has not spared the Great Lakes region, where the number of contaminations is growing, albeit at a moderate rate compared to other regions in the world. To date, according to the World Health Organization, more than 4,766 cases and nearly 131 deaths have been reported in the region. While the capacity to contain the pandemic differs among the Member States in the region, approaches to limiting its spread are similar, including restrictions of movement, quarantine measures, social distancing, curfews, suspension of international flights and the closing of borders, except for the movement of cargo.

At this stage, the measures seem to have enabled the region to curb the progression of the pandemic. However, on the economic front, the negative repercussions of the public health crisis are already significant. There has been an almost complete cessation of activities in critical sectors, such as air transport, tourism, agriculture and petroleum and other extractive industries. In the long term, the preventive measures, combined with the reallocation of resources to address the health crisis, are likely to weaken the already fragile economies, with possible implications for the peace, security and development of the region. I would like to congratulate the countries and institutions of the region on their diligence in taking actions to contain the pandemic, including measures to stimulate the economy, targeting vulnerable populations and the private sector alike.

While encouraging, those measures should be bolstered. The countries of the region, some of which are emerging from decades of conflict, will need the steadfast and resolute support of the international community in order to deal with and recover, in a sustainable manner, from the pandemic and its consequences. I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the Secretary-General for his foresight, leadership and unwavering mobilization of the international community to foster greater solidarity in the fight against the pandemic, including through the alleviation of debt. I would like to welcome the decision of the Group of 20 to institute a debt moratorium until the end of this year, which should greatly relieve low-income African countries and thus help them, I hope, to strengthen their health infrastructure. I also thank the partners and donors who have already announced significant donations for the African continent.

Like elsewhere, the pandemic has forced the countries of the region to redirect their priorities. That has affected the implementation of the Framework, resulting in the postponement of two major events, namely, the second Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference initially scheduled in Kigali, Rwanda, from 18 to 20 March; and the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, which was to be held in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 27 to 29 March. Despite these

postponements, I continue to work with the signatory countries and the guarantor institutions of the Framework — namely, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), as well as the Southern African Development Community — to maintain focus on the delivery of the events and to make further progress in the implementation of the Framework.

In that regard, I would like to follow up on my first address to the Council in October 2019 (see S/PV.8630), which I delivered with a note of optimism. This optimism remains, given events that have occurred over the past year with positive implications for the region. They include efforts to stabilize the governing coalition following the peaceful political transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, progress achieved to normalize relations between Uganda and Rwanda thanks to the good offices of Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the formation of a unity Government in South Sudan and the diplomatic settlement by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia of their border dispute. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Presidents Lourenço, Tshilombo Tshisekedi, Kagame and Museveni for their exemplary efforts to defuse tensions between countries of the region, in line with their commitments under the Framework. I strongly encourage them to sustain those joint efforts and would like to reassure them of my readiness to support them.

Progress has also been made in the fight against armed groups operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the initiative of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there have been efforts to increase coordination and the exchange of information among the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda in order to optimize military operations against armed groups. In support of those regional efforts, in cooperation with the other guarantors of the Framework, I facilitated discussions among the heads of the intelligence services of Burundi, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Tanzania. Those discussions enabled the countries concerned to identify non-military measures, including the proposal to establish a contact and coordination group, to complement the ongoing military operations against armed groups. That and other recommendations will be submitted for approval to the Heads of State of the region at the next summit of the Framework's Regional Oversight Mechanism. In the meantime, I would like to request the Council's support for such efforts to enable those countries to secure the necessary technical and financial assistance to implement the measures to be adopted by the Heads of State of the region.

There has also been progress in the area of regional integration. On 3 December 2019, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania signed an agreement to build a railway linking the three countries so as to boost trade in the region. The next Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, which my Office is organizing together with the ICGLR and the Government of Rwanda, under the leadership of President Paul Kagame, will also be an opportunity to promote such initiatives, as it will be held under the theme "Cross-border investment and trade as catalysts for regional integration". The conference will also be a good opportunity to promote the region's enormous economic potential through responsible investment, which should benefit the countries and peoples of the Great Lakes region.

Despite that progress, there are still challenges, the greatest of which clearly remains the activities of armed groups, including the illicit exploitation of natural resources, undermining trust among the countries of the region. The resulting insecurity caused by armed groups, especially in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where civilians continue to pay a high price, is one of the main causes of the humanitarian crisis in the region.

I urge all armed groups to immediately cease their acts of violence and atrocities against civilians, not to hamper humanitarian access and to resolutely engage in the existing disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement programmes. I would like to reiterate that their crimes will not go unpunished. Ultimately, justice will be done. In that regard, I welcome the legal proceedings brought against the leaders of armed groups in recent years at both regional and international levels. Furthermore, I call on the Governments of the region to heed the appeal launched by the Secretary-General on 23 March for a global ceasefire in their ongoing efforts for peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

We must also continue to closely follow elections in the region, which have sometimes led to unrest in the past. I strongly hope that the upcoming elections, particularly in Burundi and the Central African Republic, will be an opportunity to strengthen democratic gains and stability in the two countries. I encourage all actors to ensure peaceful, inclusive and credible electoral processes. With regard to Burundi, I am pleased to inform the Council that, in collaboration with women leaders and civil society organizations of the region, my Office conducted an awareness-raising and outreach visit to Bujumbura in March, during which there were constructive discussions with the authorities and other stakeholders on promoting the greater participation of women in the electoral process.

The Great Lakes region is currently facing challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the continuing Ebola epidemic. We must therefore redouble our efforts to support the States and peoples of the region to overcome the two public health crises and to consolidate the progress made so far in implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. The fight against the pandemic could provide an opportunity to build greater solidarity and to strengthen regional cooperation. For my part, in collaboration with the guarantors of the Framework and international partners, I will focus on the following priorities in the upcoming months.

The first priority is mobilizing the international community in helping the countries of the region to address the COVID-19 pandemic, which is hampering the implementation of the Framework and could have implications for the peace and security of the region.

Secondly, we must support the ongoing facilitation processes and, where possible, foster new commitments to improving relations among the countries of the region, including through the greater involvement of women and young people.

Thirdly, we must encourage regional security cooperation by promoting a comprehensive approach, with military and non-military measures, in combating armed groups.

Fourthly, I will engage in regional and international discussions on the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources by focusing on addressing barriers to the sustainable and transparent exploitation of such resources.

Lastly, I will continue the necessary discussions on the convening of the next summit of the Framework's Regional Oversight Mechanism and of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference.

I know that I can count on the unity and support of the Security Council to assist me in implementing this road map in the coming months in support of the Great Lakes region, in accordance with my mandate.

Annex II

Statement by Mr. Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

We would like to thank Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Huang Xia for this insightful briefing. We also want to take this opportunity to table a few comments.

First of all, the regional dynamics have shown certain positive developments, but there is a risk of losing momentum. As coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is not sparing the region, widespread contagion, coupled with weak health infrastructure, will certainly adversely affect the region's development as well as the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

There are other challenges, too. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the presidential coalition has seen increased tension, with a potential impact on needed reforms. In Burundi, the modalities and outcome of upcoming elections also remain crucial for the region's stability. At the same time, the humanitarian situation and the human rights context remain dire.

Secondly, in the light of the foregoing, we reiterate our strong support for the Secretary-General's request in 2019 for a new peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. We are keen to support and participate in the open and transparent development of such a strategy, which should be sped up. The recent creation of a new contact coordination group is proof of continued momentum. As the COVID crisis has already led to the postponement of a session of the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Kinshasa and the Great Lakes Trade and Investment Conference in Kigali, we should be cautious not to lose momentum. Let us work proactively on a new regional strategy, looking at the full spectrum of the framework agreement. Such a strategy should look not only at economic development, which is undoubtedly of crucial importance, but also — and foremost — at the root causes of conflict, including human rights violations and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Thirdly, the COVID-19 crisis will make working in and reporting on the Great Lakes region more challenging. The current report contains an impressive overview of activities undertaken by the Special Envoy in implementation of the road map. We hope that the Office of the Special Envoy will be able to sustain its efforts, despite COVID-19 restrictions, by focusing, as we have been doing in the Council, on further videoconference meetings to pursue business.

Annex III

Statement by Mr. Zhang Jun, Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations

I thank Special Envoy Xia Huang for his briefing.

We are encouraged to hear of the positive developments in the Great Lakes region over the past six months, including diplomatic efforts made by regional leaders to enhance cooperation and steps taken to implement commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. China applauds the positive momentum in the region.

In the face of long-standing challenges in the region, comprehensive approaches still need to be employed to achieve sustainable peace and development. We encourage countries of the region to enhance cooperation and political trust and make further progress in implementing the PSC framework. China welcomes continued steps taken by President Tshilombo Tshisekedi to improve relations with neighbouring countries, and diplomatic efforts made by him and the Presidents of Angola, Uganda and Rwanda on the fourth quadripartite summit to facilitate the normalization of relations between Rwanda and Uganda.

We should step up efforts to promote regional peace and stability, taking both military and non-military measures to eliminate threats posed by armed groups. The meetings of chiefs of intelligence and security services of signatory countries of the PSC framework laid a good foundation for further coordinated operations. We call on all parties to respond actively to the Secretary-General's ceasefire appeal. We call for increased attention by the United Nations and regional organizations, including the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, to push forward the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of former combatants to stop the vicious circle of violence.

More efforts should be made to address the root causes of conflict by dealing with poverty and underdevelopment. China supports Special Envoy Xia's urge to advance efforts made towards regional economic integration and cooperation to overcome development challenges and his endeavour to reach out to financial institutions, notably the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank, and international community to attract investment. We note that the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we look forward to its prompt convening when conditions allow.

We agree that the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is alarming. The countries of the Great Lakes region are among the most vulnerable amid this crisis. China hereby echoes the full support, expressed by the guarantors of the PSC framework via a video-teleconference convened by the Special Envoy's Office earlier this month, for coordinated efforts and joint decisions by countries of the region in fighting the pandemic. China has offered its hand to regional countries in various forms, providing medical supplies, sharing experience and assisting with commercial procurement. On 10 April, a general hospital built by China in Haut Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was handed over by Chinese Ambassador to the national Government. We will continue to do our utmost to provide assistance to our friends in the Great Lakes region and the whole African continent.

There is still a long way to go in achieving long-term peace and security in the region. China wishes to reaffirm its strong support for the Special Envoy and his Office in delivering on his mandate. We will continue to support regional countries, the African Union and other regional organizations to implement the PSC framework.

Annex IV

Statement by Mr. José Singer Weisinger, Special Envoy to the Security Council of the Dominican Republic

First, we would like to thank Mr. Huang Xia for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/272).

I will focus my intervention on three issues: the political situation, security and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

On the political situation, the Dominican Republic is grateful to hear that the leaders of the region have taken steps, at bilateral and multilateral levels alike, to ease tensions between neighbouring countries and address differences. We applaud the quadripartite summits and the leaders who brought about these dialogues and agreements, and hope that these diplomatic initiatives serve as a starting point and baseline for solving the outstanding regional conflicts.

With regard to the security situation, the Dominican Republic regrets that in spite of the increased military operations, the commitment of President Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi to delivering peace and stability and the efforts of the leaders of the region, the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have deteriorated. We also lament that the tensions between Burundi and Rwanda persist and that the armed groups in the Central African Republic continue to violate the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

Nonetheless, we are encouraged by the treaties signed between Rwanda and Uganda and between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to repatriate former combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars, as well as the treaty signed between the Sudan and South Sudan to define their common borders and uphold the ceasefire in South Sudan.

It is unfortunate that this positive momentum is being undermined by the growing concern about the unprecedented magnitude of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on people, the health system and a constrained economy. In that regard, the Dominican Republic calls for an urgent, coordinated and united regional and global response to meet the global challenges of COVID-19. We call for international cooperation to help Africa and the Great Lakes region mitigate the effects of the pandemic and reactivate its economy. We also echo the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire.

Finally, we welcome the development of a peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. In addition, we commend Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the leaders of the region, the regional organizations and the international community for their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

We encourage them all to continue working together to improve the regional humanitarian situation and deter human rights violations, such as sexual and gender-based violence, and to better manage their natural resources to ensure a peaceful, prosperous and integrated Great Lakes region.

Annex V**Statement by Mr. Gert Auväär, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia to the United Nations**

I would like to thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing, which highlighted the numerous interconnected challenges in the region: conflicts with armed groups, human rights violations and abuses, health epidemics and socioeconomic difficulties.

Even under normal circumstances, addressing their root causes would require a coordinated, comprehensive approach. As noted in yesterday's Council discussion on conflict and hunger, the far-reaching spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can act as a risk multiplier in the region and actions must be taken to ensure that humanitarian actors are coordinated, ready and able to scale-up response efforts. In that connection, it must be noted that the region is already combating several epidemics, including malaria, Ebola and measles. Correspondingly, Governments and other stakeholders should prioritize the pandemic response and avoid impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

Estonia remains concerned about restrictions on basic political freedoms and human rights in several parts of the region. In anticipation of several upcoming elections this year, we call upon all stakeholders to ensure that the elections remain peaceful, free and credible.

Estonia condemns the violence perpetrated by armed groups in the region, in particular by the Allied Democratic Forces, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the conflict is compounded by high numbers of grave human rights violations and abuses. During the last year alone, more than 1 million people were displaced from their homes due to conflicts in the Great Lakes region. It is also very worrying to see the increase in conflict-related sexual violence and in the number of serious violations of children's rights.

Perpetrators of such crimes must be held accountable in order to fight a culture of impunity that, if left unchecked, will only breed more violence. Rapid and robust implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance would greatly assist those efforts.

Estonia commends the positive steps taken by countries and stakeholders of the region to alleviate tensions and strengthen relations, and welcomes further efforts in that direction under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. We also underline the importance of initiatives to promote the meaningful participation of women in political and electoral processes and to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region.

Given the current circumstances, Estonia reiterates the call of the Secretary-General for all to commit to a humanitarian ceasefire and to resolve their differences peacefully.

Annex VI

Statement by Mr. Nicolas de Rivière, Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations

I would like to thank the Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his briefing. I would like to briefly underscore three points.

First of all, we welcome the positive developments over the past six months. It is crucial to continue to build on the encouraging momentum that followed the election of President Tshilombo Tshisekedi in order to further reduce tensions, build confidence and achieve progress on the other fronts. In particular, we commend the involvement of Presidents Tshisekedi and Lourenço, which has been crucial to advancing reconciliation efforts between Rwanda and Uganda, thereby leading to renewed commitments through the finalization of an extradition treaty. We welcome that significant development in furtherance of the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Several areas that have shown less progress remain concerning. There is continued violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a troubling human rights situation and grave violations of human rights, including an additional 1 million displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In his report (S/2020/272), the Secretary-General describes the scale of the remaining challenges, which I will not repeat here.

I would, however, like to express France's vigilance with regard to the situation in Burundi, in particular. Given the decision of the Government of Burundi to move ahead with the elections in the current context, we note that it is paramount to ensure a free political space and that all actors refrain from actions that could jeopardize the holding of peaceful, inclusive and credible elections, as these would contribute to the region's path towards political stability and peace. The Burundian people's confidence in the ability of the justice system to respond to the victims' aspirations and prosecute crimes in an independent manner is key to meeting the long-term objectives of unity and stability.

Secondly, we share the concern expressed by all about the threat that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic poses to the region, in a context where the Ebola virus, in particular, has still not been eradicated. The countries of the Great Lakes region remain particularly vulnerable to large-scale pandemics due to the high number of people displaced by the persistence of hostile group operations. The international community stands to benefit from the countries' past experience with outbreaks of the Ebola and Marburg viruses. I welcome the measures taken by national Governments to combat the spread of the epidemic, pursuant to the recommendations of the World Health Organization, and I note that their implementation must respect human rights.

Taking into account this new and dramatic global challenge, France wishes once again to express its solidarity with the countries of the region; they can count on our support. We have mobilized €1.2 billion to support African countries' efforts aimed at fighting the pandemic. The health threat needs to be addressed both by strengthening barrier measures designed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease today and by refocusing support for enhancing African capabilities in the health sector in the long term.

Furthermore, the disruption caused by the pandemic will undoubtedly have a significant socioeconomic impact — one that needs to be anticipated. For

this reason, President Macron has been strongly advocating a collective effort to reschedule the public debt of African countries. We therefore welcome the Group of 20's endorsement of our proposal for a debt moratorium.

Thirdly and finally, I would like to stress that the context created by the pandemic further reinforces the need for regional cooperation. At a time when borders are closed, communications disrupted and attitudes of mistrust are spreading, the pandemic complicates regional cooperation, which nevertheless remains crucial because it is only through cooperation that the root causes of the conflicts that undermine the Great Lakes, from armed groups to the illicit exploitation of natural resources, will be addressed. The countries of the region are facing a shared test. By supporting each other in their common struggle, they can build the foundation of mutual trust that will be decisive for success in future steps.

The Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and his Office must undertake all necessary measures to that end. France reaffirms its support for the Special Envoy and reiterates that it stands ready to continue to assist him in the fulfilment of his mission. As a road map upon which to build, the regional peace and security strategy will be a useful tool in identifying and implementing concrete measures to strengthen political stability and peace in the region. We stand ready to actively participate in the shaping of this new collective peace and security instrument and we look forward to seeing it develop in time.

Annex VII

Statement by Mr. Jürgen Schulz, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations

Germany thanks the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region for his briefing and for presenting 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 (S/2020/272). We share the overall assessment of certain positive political trends in the region as outlined in the report, in particular with regard to regional agreements designed to support cross-border cooperation. It is our hope that these agreements will contribute to decreasing tensions in the region. We also commend the enhanced regional cooperation embodied in efforts aimed at implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including the positive outcomes of the quadripartite summits. We further welcome the strengthening of cooperation on judicial matters within the region.

Yet significant challenges remain, especially with regard to the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including repeated cross-border security incidents. The fight against armed groups must be continued. Socioeconomic development and integration remain a challenge.

We are concerned at present about the potential impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on stability in the Great Lakes region and on the lives of the people there. Given this new threat, concerted efforts and close collaboration among the countries of the region are needed now more than ever. Such regional organizations as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union play a crucial role in supporting these efforts. This context provides an opportunity for converting positive regional rhetoric and dynamics into concrete and constructive action in the fight against the pandemic.

We call on the international community to support these efforts. The United Nations, and the World Health Organization (WHO) in particular, have our full support in their efforts to fight the pandemic. It is crucial that health infrastructure be strengthened in order to quickly and effectively treat COVID-19 patients and mitigate the pandemic's negative impact on the socioeconomic and security situation in the region. In this regard, it is important to promote accuracy and accessibility in the dissemination of information about the pandemic. It is also important to provide guidelines on the effective measures to take to prevent the spread of the virus. We encourage the Special Envoy to use his presence in the region to support such efforts.

We should not forget that the fight against Ebola is not yet over. The same is true for the continued outbreaks of measles that cost the lives of more than 6,000 children last year. Massive investments in critical health infrastructure are needed.

We remain concerned about violations of human rights and continuing reports of sexual and gender-based violence. The numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to be staggering. The advent of COVID-19 is endangering the most vulnerable even further. We therefore fully support the Secretary-General's call for a stop to all fighting and hostilities to avoid a further surge in humanitarian needs. It is also crucial to underscore that any efforts aimed at fighting and containing the pandemic must not be used to serve as a pretext for limiting or curbing human rights or for allowing for impunity in cases of human rights violations.

Let me make a short comment on the situation in Burundi. We take note of the ongoing preparations for the elections in May. However, we remain concerned about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic could have on the elections. All necessary

measures must be taken to ensure inclusive, credible and safe elections without health risks for the general public. All actors must cooperate with the WHO and with humanitarian organizations.

Last but not least, with regard to the new strategy for the region, Germany supports the development of a new peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. We understand from the report of the Secretary-General that various activities in support of peace and security have been undertaken. Germany strongly encourages the Special Envoy to continue in this direction and complete the process by involving all stakeholders in an inclusive and transparent manner.

Annex VIII

Statement by Mr. Muhsin Syihab, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia

At the outset, we wish to thank Ambassador Huang Xia, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for his briefing and hope that he is safe and well in Nairobi.

We take note of 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 (S/2020/272), dated 3 April 2020.

While tensions remain, the Great Lakes region has witnessed positive developments in the security and political fields. Now that the Ebola crises appear to have winded down, the region is faced with a new challenge in the form of the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. We must seize the current momentum to make progress in overcoming old and new challenges for peace and sustainable development.

Allow me to make a number of pertinent points.

First, we welcome the substantial positive progress that has been made in the region. We are encouraged by the steps taken by President Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi to improve diplomatic relations and cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours. We commend the steps taken by other leaders in the region to de-escalate tensions, including the peaceful negotiations commenced between Rwanda and Uganda and the progress achieved in the regional context by Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania.

However, obstacles and challenges persist and must be collectively addressed. It is crucial that the root causes of the conflict be tackled. Life in the Great Lakes region has been marred by conflict, distrust and humanitarian challenges for years. We join in the concern voiced by the Secretary-General with respect to the persistent threats to human rights in the region, as well as the efforts some have made to undermine friendly relations among countries in the region. Peace and stability remain fragile. Threats by armed groups and the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources continue to be the source of much of this fragility.

I joined the Secretary-General in calling on all national, regional and international stakeholders to redouble their efforts to implement their commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to address the root causes of conflict so as to enable the region to achieve its immense potential.

Secondly, the work of regional organizations and the United Nations missions in the region should be supported by the Council. We recognize the role played by regional and subregional organizations, including the guarantors of the PSC framework agreement, which was signed by 13 countries in the region.

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region is playing an important role for peace by preventing the illicit movement of natural resources. Peacekeepers are playing their role in winning the hearts and minds of the locals to support the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process.

We are proud to inform the Council that Indonesian peacekeepers in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been successful in assisting the DDR process by engaging with the local communities, winning their hearts and minds. The support of the international community, through regional and subregional organizations, will enable the Government to reintegrate them into society with a view to preventing a relapse.

Thirdly, during this global COVID-19 crisis, the provision of relief in connection with the humanitarian situation must be prioritized. We must pay attention to those in dire need of assistance, who include 5 million displaced Congolese, 330,000 Burundian refugees and other vulnerable persons — women, children and the disabled. Partnership by the international community is needed to overcome this challenge.

For its part, Indonesia will continue its cooperation with countries in the region through the Bandung Spirit of 1955 as we celebrate the sixty-fifth year of the Asian-African Conference. Addressing the complex peace and security challenges in the region is indeed not an easy task. We will therefore continue our support for the efforts made by the Special Envoy to pursue lasting peace and positive progress in the region.

For its part, Indonesia will remain committed as a true partner for Africa in maintaining peace and security.

Annex IX

Statement by Mr. Dmitry Polyanskiy, First Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

At the outset, let me thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his detailed briefing on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

We continue to view the Treaty as the cornerstone of regional stability. We urge all its signatories to honour the commitments taken, including in terms of respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in countries' internal affairs, as well as the strengthening of confidence-building measures. We are convinced that the full implementation of the framework, in particular its military provisions, could have a decisive impact on the overall situation in the Great Lakes region.

We fully agree with the point made in the Secretary-General's report (S/2020/272) that the momentum generated by the new leadership in Kinshasa in implementation of the framework more than a year ago is continuing and that our common task is to support it in every possible way. We commend the political will that the regional leaders are demonstrating to settle their differences through negotiation and to resolve cross-border security incidents through existing mechanisms. We particularly welcome the arrangements reached between Rwanda and Uganda with the help of the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

We continue to believe that the instability in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be the most important factor in regional security. We remain seriously concerned over the military and political situation there, the continued activities of armed groups, intercommunal clashes and cases of Ebola. The situation has now been further complicated by the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We welcome the results achieved by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in fighting some of the armed groups, in particular the Forces démocratiques alliées, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie. We also commend the resumed repatriation to the Democratic Republic of the Congo of former combatants from the Mouvement du 23 mars.

We thank the Special Envoy for his tireless efforts to promote a comprehensive approach to the neutralization of the negative forces in the region. Efforts to foster exchanges between the chiefs of intelligence and security services of the States of the region, as well as to uphold dialogue within the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, are deserving of full support. We took note of the video-teleconference meeting of the guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework held earlier this month with the assistance of the Office of the Special Envoy. We hope that the postponed tenth meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism will also take place soon.

We also took note of the work that the Special Envoy has begun on a peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. We stand ready to support that effort and hope that it will be carried out in full transparency.

Many countries in the region are going through pivotal times in their political history. Some of them, such as Burundi, are entering a period of general elections. There is no doubt that political decisions can lead to long-term stability only if they are taken by the countries themselves. Imposing solutions on sovereign States is unacceptable. In that regard, we fully support the call made by the International

Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee of Ministers for Foreign Affairs for the lifting of the unilateral sanctions imposed on the countries of the region by the European Union and the United States. We believe that in the time of the coronavirus, such a decision would be particularly relevant. It would also echo the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to fight the pandemic.

As a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, the Russian Federation intends to further contribute to the quest for a peaceful settlement for the region.

Annex X

Statement by Mr. Kais Kabtani, Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations

I thank the President of the Security Council for having convened this meeting to discuss the situation in the Great Lakes region. We thank Special Envoy Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

I deliver this statement on behalf of the three African countries that are members of the Security Council — Tunisia, South Africa and the Niger — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The positive trends that have the potential to usher in a new era in the region run a high risk of being undermined by the spread of the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Our immediate task is to further consolidate those achievements in order to mitigate the potential threat of the pandemic.

Those achievements include the peaceful democratic transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the new dynamic that emerged in the region at the initiative of the country's new leadership. The finalization of the Government's national plan, in December 2019, is also a positive development.

In addition, the efforts made by the leaders of the region to promote regional cooperation and the de-escalation of tensions reflect a strong commitment to the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

We also commend the convening of the quadripartite ministerial summits and welcome the latest outcome of the fourth quadripartite summit among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Angola. These developments clearly reflect the new spirit of cooperation prevailing in the region.

We share the concerns of the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2020/272) that the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains fragile given the continued challenges in the eastern part of the country. However, we commend the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its commitment to end the activities of foreign armed groups in the east of the country, as well as the joint efforts of countries in the region aimed at the neutralization of foreign armed forces. In addition, we welcome the progress made towards a comprehensive approach, including military and non-military measures, to prevent a regrouping and remobilization of those forces. We call on all stakeholders, including the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, to strongly support the recently established contact coordination group, designed to promote cross-border coordination and collaboration to neutralize those negative forces.

We note some relatively positive political developments in South Sudan, with the appointment of the Transitional Government of National Unity and the improved relations between the Sudan and South Sudan, which have led to the reopening of their common border to facilitate bilateral trade.

In the same vein, we encourage the positive developments in the Central African Republic, with all the efforts under way, including the electoral process in December, and call on the armed groups not to obstruct the holding of elections. We reaffirm our support for the initiative of the African Union and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic with regard to the stabilization of the country in the particular context of COVID-19.

We also note the ongoing preparations for the general elections in Burundi as the only viable alternative to lead the country to consolidate a peaceful and stable political environment.

With all those developments, the region is on a path to sustainable stability. Accordingly, the three African members and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines call upon the international community to continue to support countries in the region to preserve those gains and push forward regional cooperation.

We share the sentiments of the Special Envoy that it is imperative to shift the narrative of the Great Lakes from a conflict-dominated region to that of a region on a development trajectory. In that respect, we commend the work done thus far in preparation for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference to promote the Conference and its overarching development and integration objectives. Countries of the region should seize this opportunity to promote solidarity and cooperation through advancing economic cooperation, cross-border trade, infrastructure development and regional integration and by curbing the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

The African members and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines call on the international community to provide the necessary development funding in accordance with national plans and needs in order to provide opportunities for legitimate socioeconomic activity. We emphasize that all efforts to bring development to the region must work in the best interests of the peoples of the region. As we continue to work towards silencing the guns in Africa, we must remain resolute in our efforts to bring peace and stability to the Great Lakes region.

We are deeply concerned by the impact of the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic on the countries and the peoples of the Great Lakes region and by the unprecedented and unpredictable consequences it may bring to an already fragile situation there. We echo the concerns raised at the seventh meeting of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held on 2 April, that, if not well contained, the pandemic could cause considerable economic disruption, social tensions and human suffering. In that spirit, we would like to express our full support to the joint efforts by the countries of the region to fight the pandemic, both at the national and regional levels, including the outcome of the meetings of Ministers of Health of the Southern African Development Community and of the East African Community, held on 9 March and 25 March, respectively.

We reiterate the calls made by the African Union Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of States and Government on 2 April, identifying the need for rapid and concrete support by the international community to the local Governments with a view to assisting them to contain the spread of the deadly disease and to ensure regional supply of necessary and vital goods. It is therefore of critical importance that the provision of humanitarian support be unhindered and that special measures be put in place to allow for direct support to those countries vulnerable to the possible destabilizing impact of the virus and the possible undermining of peacebuilding efforts.

We welcome ongoing initiatives, including the revival of the Regional Women's Forum under the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, designed to promote women's empowerment across the Great Lakes region, as well as their equal and meaningful participation and representation in political and electoral processes.

In conclusion, we would like to express our full support to the Secretary-General's initiative to be led by his Special Envoy to develop, in close consultation with stakeholders and relevant partners, such as the signatories and guarantors of

the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, a peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region designed to review the United Nations support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the region.

Annex XI

Statement by Mr. James Roscoe, Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations

Let me join others in thanking Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing to the Council today. It has also been good to hear such broad consensus in the Council, particularly on the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) situation across the region and, as others have mentioned, on the elections in Burundi.

First, on COVID-19, it is really encouraging to see, as detailed in the Special Envoy's briefing, renewed regional momentum towards the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region by the countries in the Great Lakes region, particularly over the last year or so. Hopefully, we can continue to capitalize on that. But as others have said, we are meeting during uncertain times because of the COVID-19 pandemic, which will undoubtedly create challenges for maintaining that momentum. The pandemic demonstrates once again the necessity for truly effective regional cooperation. I was very glad to hear the Special Envoy speak about his role in engaging countries to try to address the challenges of COVID-19 together. I think that will be critical. Therefore, we encourage the Special Envoy and his team to consider innovative ways to support the Great Lakes region to ensure there is continued progress during this period. The threat of the pandemic might engender cooperation in combating COVID-19 across the region, in line with the spirit of the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. I was also very glad to hear the Special Envoy talk about how he was seeing real progress, not just in the main conflict areas but in the States across the region, which are trying to do more to enhance their security cooperation as well.

The other thing we need to think about in this format is how we come together at some point to begin to analyse the impact that COVID-19 is having and what we can do to address some of the longer-term impacts that it will have on regional stability and on the economic and humanitarian situation.

Looking at the security situation specifically, we also think that it is critical to continue to address the underlying security challenges across the Great Lakes region. We have seen increased reporting of cross-border incursions, as others have mentioned, and also other security spikes across the region. I believe that this underscores the need for the full and swift implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It was very good to hear Special Envoy Xia's list of priorities, focusing on advancing regional security cooperation, including military and non-military measures.

While we commend Special Envoy Xia's efforts to promote economic integration, we would just like to reiterate that economic initiatives will be successful only if we simultaneously tackle the underlying drivers of the conflict: challenging aspects, such as the illicit cross-border trade of natural resources and the war economy. Those things should not be overlooked.

I want to touch briefly on the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The United Kingdom encourages the Special Envoy and his team to work closely with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to develop a joint strategy on the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We believe that the Special Envoy can provide an important link between MONUSCO's efforts within the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and the regional efforts that need to be built around that. This will be critical to ending the conflict.

We had hoped to receive more information in this briefing on the status of the United Nations peace and security strategy for the Great Lakes region. This has been under development for quite some time now, and we would be grateful for more information from the Special Envoy, including whether MONUSCO and the international community will be consulted on the strategy relatively soon.

Finally, the United Kingdom is concerned about the electoral environment surrounding Burundi's May elections. It is vital that all political parties be given equal access to the media and that special measures be implemented by the Government in response to COVID-19 to ensure that the elections are fair in that regard.

Annex XII

Statement by Mrs. Kelly Craft, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations

More than six years since the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, the United States remains optimistic that the countries of the Great Lakes region can engage constructively on issues related to insecurity. These include tackling illicit flows of goods, which contribute to corruption, and addressing the threat posed by armed groups. I want to note that our confidence has been rewarded by positive regional momentum over the past year.

As the international community responds to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we recall the extraordinary measures taken in the past year and a half by Congolese and international actors to contain the Ebola outbreak in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo. We were saddened to learn of the resurgence of Ebola cases just days before being able to declare an end to the outbreak, but we believe that there will be progress again in the very near future.

Today the United States again reiterates the need for transparency and the timely sharing of public health data with neighbours, and with the international community, in order to tackle public health challenges.

This is a difficult moment, and Special Envoy Xia's role is more critical than ever. We urge his Office to innovate, including by using video-teleconferencing technology to support the Great Lakes Governments. They will need that support, especially as they balance their focus on both the COVID-19 response and the political, security and economic needs that remain essential to regional peace and security. Currently, the positive momentum for peace and economic integration will surely be slowed by the pandemic, but it must not be reversed. To prevent any such reversal and improve progress, we would encourage more regular reporting, in standard United Nations products, on the efforts of the Office of the Special Envoy.

The United States emphasizes the importance of follow-through on the quadripartite outcomes between Rwanda and Uganda. We express our sincere appreciation to the Governments of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo for their leadership in mediating this dispute, and for encouraging the Governments of Rwanda and Uganda to continue to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve their differences.

Turning to Burundi, we note that, as the May elections rapidly approach, there is an increasing COVID-19 caseload. The potential impact of the pandemic on the ability of Burundian citizens to fully participate in the electoral process raises new concerns. We are therefore encouraged by the Government of Burundi ensuring that all citizens can fully and safely participate in the 20 May elections.

Beyond elections, we are gravely concerned by the reports of repression of freedom of expression, assembly and association. These come in addition to reports of other serious human rights abuses and violations, including arrests, disappearances, killings, torture and sexual violence. Our message to the Government of Burundi remains clear: inclusive, peaceful, transparent and credible elections that reflect the will of the Burundian people are critical to reducing long-term grievances, improving security and enabling economic growth.

In conclusion, the United States commends the countries of the Great Lakes for continuing to engage constructively as they work towards lasting peace and stronger economic ties. Just as they have worked together, the United States will

continue to work closely with the Great Lakes countries to address COVID-19. We are fully committed to helping save lives and to ensuring that the progress made since the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework is not lost.

Annex XIII

Statement by Mr. Dang Dinh Quy, Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations

I would like to thank Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for his briefing.

We welcome the continued political commitments by countries in the region and are pleased to see important steps being taken by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the national level and, together with his counterparts, at the regional level in order to create a peaceful environment. Accordingly, we take note of the efforts of the coalition Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to stabilize the country and efforts to implement the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, as well as the easing of tensions between Rwanda and Uganda with the signing of the memorandum of understanding in August last year and the recent signing of the extradition treaty this February, et cetera.

However, the security situation in some parts of the region continues to remain a concern. The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is still unstable. The Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation is still violated by signatories in the Central African Republic. Armed elements in Burundi and in Rwanda still carry out attacks.

The lack of security is clearly hampering humanitarian efforts, as well as the development of the region, aggravating the suffering of millions of people from food insecurity, displacement, disease and natural disasters. We are gravely concerned over the new displacement of nearly 1 million people in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019. The country is now hosting the largest population of internally displaced persons in Africa, as well as several hundred thousand refugees. With the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the humanitarian situation is now even more precarious, given the weak health-care infrastructure in the region. This new enemy does not spare anyone, and it ruthlessly targets the most vulnerable.

The region is now at a very important juncture. Considerable achievements are being made. Confidence and trust are being rebuilt. Political processes and preparations for elections are happening in various countries. The current situation is no justification for any of us — that is, the countries of the region, the United Nations or other international partners — to lose sight of the long-awaited goal of peace. Against this backdrop, we would like to highlight the following points.

First, we stress the immense importance of addressing the root causes of instability in the region in a comprehensive and collective manner by supporting the ongoing diplomatic and political efforts, enhancing the process of reconciliation at the national and regional levels, addressing threats caused by armed groups, strengthening the governance of natural resources and providing development opportunities for countries, among other things. On the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we would like to reiterate the need for continued support to the Government, especially in strengthening State authority at the local level and tackling the threat posed by armed groups in the east.

Secondly, we are confident in the commitment of, and work achieved by, the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, including the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations. We would also like to emphasize the central

role of regional actors in this endeavour and voice our support for the good offices of the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy.

Thirdly, we call on all international partners to continue, through bilateral and multilateral frameworks, to provide technical and financial support to countries in the region in order to achieve sustainable peace and development.

Last but not least, we urge all relevant actors to heed the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire in order to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and support the most vulnerable populations.

Annex XIV

Statement by Mr. Paul Losoko Efambe Empole, Chargé d'affaires ad interim of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations

[Original: French]

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and to express what an honour it is to see the Dominican Republic, a friendly country, lead today's deliberations.

I would also like to thank you for the initiative of convening this meeting on the Great Lakes region and the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region during this particularly difficult period dominated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to my country and for his report on the Great Lakes region before the Council today (S/2020/272).

I should also like to thank all the members of the Security Council for the exemplary readiness and willingness they have always shown whenever called upon to address questions related to the situation in my country.

My delegation welcomes 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 just introduced to us by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. On the whole, the report calls for no particular remarks from our part. However, we would like to take the opportunity of its presentation here to make a few comments my delegation deems useful. I shall therefore briefly run through some points relating to the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation before concluding on the implementation of the Framework.

At the political level, the situation in the Great Lakes region remains dominated by the new momentum driven by the diplomatic efforts made by President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, President João Lourenço of Angola, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, which have contributed significantly to easing tensions in the region. The region's leaders have taken steps at the national, bilateral and multilateral levels to ease tensions, settle disputes, strengthen relations among their countries and restore confidence among their respective Governments.

My delegation therefore welcomes the call on 2 April by the representatives of the Framework guarantors on all actors to continue to refrain from any action likely to jeopardize the progress achieved in political processes at the national and regional levels, and encouraging them to demonstrate their dedication to regional cooperation and integration.

Turning in particular to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the first peaceful transfer of power at the highest State level led to an easing of tensions in the political sphere and to the establishment of new institutions following the democratic elections of 30 December 2018. This easing of tensions has enabled the Government, with the assistance of its many partners — bilateral and multilateral alike — to launch reforms on several fronts.

In general, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is calm. However, it is important to point out the national and foreign armed groups active in the eastern part of the country as well as the inter-ethnic fighting there, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report. Those armed groups attack not only civilians but also our armed forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with the aim of undermining Government efforts for stability in my country and the region.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the efforts made by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), in collaboration with MONUSCO, to neutralize those armed groups. My delegation reassures the Security Council that these efforts will continue until those groups are completely eradicated, since peace and security remain essential factors for the stability of the Great Lakes region, thereby requiring the eradication of armed groups.

As stated in the report under consideration, the FARDC has stepped up military operations against armed groups in the provinces of North and South Kivu, in accordance with the commitment made by President Tshilombo Tshisekedi to restore peace and stability, particularly to the east of the country.

On 30 October 2019, the FARDC launched large-scale military operations in North and South Kivu provinces, which enabled them to seize several bases held by the Allied Democratic Forces. The FARDC also conducted military operations against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), including in Rutshuru territory, also in North Kivu, on 17 September 2019, during which a senior military leader of that negative force, General Sylvestre Mudacumura, and other senior lieutenants lost their lives. As a result of those operations, we have seen the destruction in South Kivu of more than 95 per cent of the bases of the destructive forces of the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie, a Rwandan rebel FDLR splinter group, and the neutralization of more than 200 combatants, including their leader, Wilson Iratengeka, as well as the recovery of his dependants and 147 weapons and ammunition of all calibres. At the end of that operation, more than 1,877 members of the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie were taken prisoner or surrendered in Kalehe, South Kivu province, and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo repatriated 390 combatants and 2,241 dependants to Rwanda at the Ruzizi border. About 100 combatants of the same group are wandering between the Uvira highlands and the Itombwe forest in the Mwenga territory.

In addition, on 9 November 2019 the commander of the Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie, General Juvenal Musabimana, also known as Jean-Michel Africa, was killed during an FARDC operation in Binza, in Rutshuru territory, and the commander of the Front de libération nationale, Jean Pierre Gaseni, was also killed during FARDC operations, on 30 November, in Kalehe territory.

From all of that it should be noted that the military offensive by the FARDC in North and South Kivu against the armed groups has significantly contributed to their weakening. The enemy, in distress, has increased retaliatory attacks against the civilian population.

It should also be noted that, in the face of the military pressure from the FARDC, significant armed surrenders were observed in the ranks of the Mayi Mayi, Nyatura, Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové and Raia Mutomboki armed groups in North and South Kivu.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has consequences for national peace and security, as well as for the protection

of the environment. In order to combat mafia networks, the Congolese Government has put in place appropriate mechanisms and on 9 March 2018 passed a new mining code law with the aim of increasing control over the management of the State's mining domain, mining titles and quarries, to clarify the social and environmental responsibility of mining companies with regard to the communities affected by their projects and to balance the tax, customs and exchange regime within the framework of the partnership between the State and mining operators.

To complement that reform, on 25 October 2019, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration, the Congolese Government launched a project aimed at improving security around mining sites with a view to reducing illicit mineral trafficking, child labour and gender-based violence.

In that context, the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls for the support of the international community to combat the illicit trafficking of its natural resources and to enhance the traceability of its raw materials, in particular through effective enforcement of the use and of International Conference on the Great Lakes Region export certificates by all States of the region, import countries and transit countries.

The issue of human rights violations and restrictions on the democratic space is at the heart of the actions of President Tshilombo Tshisekedi, who, upon taking office, made a commitment to promoting the rule of law. That commitment has already been translated into action through the implementation of several measures.

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is an ongoing concern of the Government, which guarantees respect for the freedoms associated with the democratic process, in particular through professional supervision of public events. As stated in paragraph 25 of the Secretary-General's report,

“[i]n the Democratic Republic of the Congo, violations of political rights and freedoms decreased compared to the previous reporting period as a result of the Government’s efforts to open the political space and address human rights abuses and impunity, including by establishing transitional justice mechanisms.”

Under the leadership of the Head of State, the Government has done a great deal to improve the human rights and social justice situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The political will to promote human rights, in accordance with the constitutional requirement to ensure the respect, defence and promotion of all human rights, has been amply demonstrated.

The humanitarian situation is dominated by the problem of displaced persons, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the resurgence of the Ebola virus disease. Ebola haemorrhagic fever, which was in the process of being declared over in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has resurfaced, with at least three new cases in North Kivu province.

On the other hand, the global COVID-19 pandemic has not spared the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region. Like other countries of the region, in order to contain the spread of the disease, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, under the leadership of the President of the Republic, immediately took concrete measures. Those include quarantining people, screening for suspicious cases, raising public awareness of preventive measures, restricting gatherings, closing borders and implementing partial containment measures.

My country, which seeks support for the coordinated efforts and measures taken to date by the countries of the region to combat the pandemic, appreciates the willingness expressed by the representatives of the guarantors on 2 April 2020, when they invited international financial institutions and partners to mobilize the

resources needed to help the region deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and make progress towards stabilization and sustainable development.

It is also important to note that population displacement remains one of the main factors of insecurity and instability in the region. That is why, in paragraph 81 of his report, the Secretary-General urges the leaders of the region to step up efforts to find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons in line with the outcomes of the high-level ministerial meeting on the situation of refugees in the Great Lakes region held in Kampala in March 2019.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains committed to the Framework agreement, which it sees as proof of the international community's determination to help find a definitive solution to the instability that has affected the country for several years and for which it continues to pay a heavy price, with several million deaths so far. Accordingly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has always endeavoured to fulfil all the commitments it has undertaken under the Framework agreement and will continue to shoulder its share of responsibility for ensuring that peace and harmony return to the region.

To that end, and, as the Secretary-General points out in paragraph 31 of his report, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken concrete steps to honour its national commitments under the Framework agreement. For example, on 27 September 2019, at the margins of the meetings held during the high-level week of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, the Framework's national follow-up mechanism organized, with the support of various United Nations entities, an international conference on peace and investment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during which it presented a road map for achieving peace and stabilizing the eastern part of the country.

The Government has also established the FARDC forward command post in Beni, North Kivu, to strengthen military operations against armed groups and deployed additional troops and police units in the east of the country. In addition, the Government has entered into partnerships with neighbouring countries and other actors, which, through the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants and other regional initiatives, have helped to advance the repatriation of unarmed foreign combatants and strengthen regional security cooperation.

Furthermore, in collaboration with MONUSCO and other partners, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has launched a campaign in Kolwezi, Lualaba province, to raise awareness of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework among local political leaders, civil society, women, youth and the local media. Moreover, a commission was established to tackle corruption, and the second decentralization forum was held in Kinshasa, from 11 to 15 December 2019, to review progress in this area. From 13 to 15 February 2020, the National Oversight Mechanism facilitated an intra-Banyamulenge forum to enable reflection and an exchange of views on the security and humanitarian situation in the localities of Fizi, Uvira and Mwenga, in South Kivu.

In addition, the agenda of the tenth High-level Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, initially scheduled for 27 to 29 March 2020 in Kinshasa, has already been drawn up. It is at that summit that President Tshilombo Tshisekedi will assume the presidency of the Regional Mechanism. The Democratic Republic of the Congo regrets the postponement of that important meeting to a later date as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. My country also regrets the postponement, for the same reason, of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, which had been scheduled for 18 to 20 March 2020 in Kigali.

These postponements are particularly regrettable in the light of the importance of those two events in the promotion of cooperation and development in the region.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to take this opportunity to call on the guarantors of the Framework agreement and the countries of the region to take advantage of the momentum seen in the region in recent months in order to implement the commitments they have all made. The Great Lakes region aspires to greater well-being, but the economic development of the region can be achieved only with peace and harmony among States and populations.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore once again that the Government and the Congolese people remain committed to the Addis Ababa Framework agreement, in which they place great hope for building lasting peace and promoting harmonious coexistence with the countries of the region, as well as for laying the foundations for stability in all of our States, without which it is difficult to pave the way for mutually beneficial regional cooperation. Accordingly, my country looks forward to the Secretary-General's strategy for peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

It is high time for us to provide a normal life for the populations of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — a normal life without the crack of weapons and the sound of boots.
