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

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2612 \(2021\)](#), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report every six months on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region and its linkages with the broader security situation in the region.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments since the issuance of the previous report ([S/2022/276](#)) and covers the period from 16 March to 15 September 2022.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. The offensive of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the capture of the town of Bunangana on the border with Uganda on 12 June, constituted the main security-related development with significant implications for regional stability. A new surge in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other armed groups in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces further contributed to an overall deterioration of the security situation.

3. Nine incidents were reported in the border area between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda during the reporting period. On 19 March and 23 May, the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) reported cross-border shelling by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la

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



République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) into Musanze District, Rwanda. The Government of Rwanda stated that artillery fire from FARDC on 23 May had wounded multiple people and damaged local infrastructure. On the same day, FARDC reported that RDF had fired rockets into Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu.

4. On 28 May, FARDC reported the arrest of two RDF soldiers at Biruma, 20 km west of the border with Rwanda. On the same day, RDF stated that the two soldiers had been kidnapped by FARDC and the Forces démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) while on patrol duty in the border area. On 11 June, following mediation by the President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, RDF announced the release of their two soldiers and their repatriation to Rwanda.

5. On 8 June, FARDC reported that 500 RDF troops had crossed the border to fight alongside M23 in Tshanzu and Runyoni, North Kivu. Rwanda maintained that it had no troops on Congolese soil.

6. On 10 June, RDF accused FARDC of shelling Nyange, Northern Province, reportedly causing injuries to an unknown number of civilians and the destruction of property. On the same day, FARDC accused RDF of shelling two locations in Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu, reportedly destroying a school and killing two children while injuring one other. On 17 June, RDF announced in a statement that a FARDC soldier had been shot dead by the Rwanda National Police after crossing into Rwanda and shooting at Rwandan security personnel and civilians at the Petite Barrière border post in Gisenyi, Western Province.

7. In response to this sharp increase in cross-border incidents and the resulting tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, both countries brought the matter before the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The Mechanism conducted four verification missions to investigate the mutual accusations of cross-border shelling and the alleged seizure by FARDC of Rwandan weapons and equipment during operations in Rutshuru. During the missions, the Mechanism also questioned M23 combatants captured by FARDC during a counter-offensive that lasted from 27 to 29 March. The confidential reports were shared with the member States concerned.

8. In a press release dated 24 May, RDF reported a clash in Rusizi District, Rwanda, with combatants of the Front de libération nationale (FLN) who had allegedly come from Burundi. Two FLN fighters were reportedly killed. On 18 June, the Rwanda National Police announced that suspected FLN combatants had attacked a bus in Southern Province, Rwanda, killing the driver and a passenger and injuring six others.

9. With regard to activities of armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, ADF remained the main perpetrator of violence against civilians. Between 16 March and 14 August, ADF conducted 99 attacks, killing more than 541 civilians, mainly in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu. A significant increase in the number of attacks was registered in July, which was attributed to the security vacuum created by the redeployment of local security forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to Rutshuru Territory in response to the resurgence of M23.

10. Clashes between ADF on one hand and FARDC and the Congolese National Police on the other continued to be reported in Ituri and North Kivu. On 12 and 13 June, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and FARDC shelled ADF positions in Irumu Territory, after reports had indicated that ADF had established bases in the area in May. After a pause in operations, joint FARDC-UPDF offensives resumed with artillery strikes in the area of Beni, North Kivu, on 1 July. On 9 August, ADF attacked Kakwangura prison in Butembo, releasing more than 800 inmates and kidnapping several hundred.

11. FDLR splinter groups continued to loot, to kidnap and kill civilians, and to clash with FARDC and local armed groups in North Kivu.

12. The Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) issued statements in which it claimed that it had clashed with alleged combatants of the Burundi National Defence Force (FDNB) in Uvira Territory on 16 April, and in Fizi and Mwenga Territories, South Kivu, from 23 to 24 April. Burundian authorities did not publicly comment on those claims.

13. On 15 August, FARDC announced that, under a bilateral agreement between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an FDNB contingent had been deployed in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to quell violence perpetrated by armed groups. On 24 August, the President of Burundi, Évariste Ndayishimiye, informed the President of the Burundian Senate by letter that an FDNB infantry battalion had been deployed to South Kivu for a renewable period of three months. According to the letter, the battalion had been deployed in collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of the regional force of the East African Community (EAC).

B. Political developments

14. Despite the deterioration of the security situation and the resulting tensions between some countries in the region, enhanced diplomatic outreach and dialogue continued. Leaders responded quickly to the resurgence of M23 and its implications for the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, notably through the Nairobi process initiated by the then President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, as EAC Chairperson.

15. On 8 April, in Kenya, on the margins of the signing ceremony for the treaty of accession of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to EAC, the Nairobi process was launched during the first conclave summit of Heads of State, which brought together the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame and the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, under the aegis of the President of Kenya. The second conclave summit, which also included the President of Burundi, was held in Nairobi on 21 April. All armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were called upon to participate in the political process unconditionally, and all foreign armed groups were called upon to disarm and return unconditionally and immediately to their respective countries of origin. A two-track approach was decided upon, consisting of a political track involving consultations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and local armed groups, facilitated by Kenya, and a military track involving the deployment of a regional force to fight negative forces that refuse to take part in the political consultations.

16. The third conclave summit was held on 20 June and was open to all EAC partner States. At that conclave summit, the Heads of State decided to intensify the political process, and approved the concept of operations and the rules of engagement of the regional force set up by the chiefs of defence of EAC during their meetings held in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 6 June and in Nairobi on 19 June. On 22 July, at the twenty-second ordinary summit of the EAC Heads of State held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the President of Kenya was appointed facilitator of the Nairobi process. It was further decided to establish a special fund to support the process and the expeditious deployment of the joint regional force.

17. As part of the political track, a joint Kenyan-Congolese secretariat facilitated consultations between the Congolese authorities and 30 delegates representing 18 local armed groups from the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

The consultations were held in Nairobi from 23 to 27 April. A second round of consultations was held in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu from 17 to 24 May with the support of MONUSCO. A total of 56 Congolese armed groups and representatives of 40 local communities and civil society organizations took part, including women and youth leaders. The Sultani Makenga faction of M23 allegedly continued military activities during the reporting period and was excluded from the consultations.

18. As regards the military track, a delegation comprising officers from Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda visited eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from 15 to 16 July as part of a reconnaissance mission for the deployment of the regional force. On 26 August, the Minister of Information, Telecommunications and Postal Services of South Sudan, Michael Makuei Lueth, stated that his Government had approved a budget of \$6,689,500 for the deployment of a battalion of 750 troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of the regional force. On 9 September, in Kinshasa, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, and the EAC Secretary General, Peter Mathuki, signed the status-of-forces agreement for the regional force.

19. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda continued to trade accusations that the other was lending support to rebel groups. On 25 May, during the meeting of the Executive Council of the African Union ahead of the Union's sixteenth extraordinary summit, to be held in Malabo, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo accused Rwanda of supporting the M23 attack against the FARDC base in Rumangabo, Rutshuru Territory, while the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda, Vincent Biruta, denounced the continued collaboration between FARDC and FDLR. On 30 June, during his state of the nation address, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deplored "yet another aggression by Rwanda under the cover of the terrorist movement M23". During an interview broadcast on 4 July, the President of Rwanda repeated the accusations against the Democratic Republic of the Congo and added that since 2019, FDLR had repeatedly attacked Rwandan territory, killing dozens of people and damaging property.

20. On 23 May, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, issued a statement condemning the attacks by M23 against FARDC and MONUSCO in Rutshuru, North Kivu. On 30 May, the Chairperson of the African Union and President of Senegal, Macky Sall, announced on Twitter that he had engaged with the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to de-escalate tensions and had encouraged the President of Angola to pursue his efforts to mediate between the two countries.

21. During the fifty-third meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Yaoundé from 30 May to 3 June, the Committee discussed political and security challenges in the Great Lakes region, including the rising tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, encouraging bilateral discussions, with regional support, to find a peaceful solution.

22. On 6 July, the President of Angola hosted a tripartite summit meeting in Luanda with the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The meeting resulted in the adoption of a roadmap to further the pacification of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to de-escalate tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Among other things, the roadmap provided for the following: a cessation of hostilities and an immediate withdrawal of M23 from the positions it occupied; the establishment of an ad hoc mechanism led by an Angolan general to verify mutual accusations of support for non-State armed

groups; and the reconvening of the two countries' joint permanent commission and joint intelligence teams. It further included a proposal to establish a consultation mechanism between the Luanda process and the Nairobi process, and measures to revitalize the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. It was also agreed to address the escalation of hate speech against Rwandans and against Kinyarwanda speakers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

23. On 20 and 21 July, the Joint Permanent Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met in Luanda. The two delegations were led by the respective Ministers for Foreign Affairs. The parties committed to working together towards a restoration of trust between them. They agreed to resume regular exchanges between their defence and security services and convene meetings between relevant institutions with a view to revitalizing or revisiting existing bilateral agreements, notably those on the protection of investments, immigration and air transport. The parties also agreed to update the tripartite agreement signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on 17 February 2010.

24. For their part, Burundi and Rwanda pursued efforts to normalize relations. On 1 July, the President of Burundi received the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, who was carrying a message from the President of Rwanda.

25. The rapprochement between Rwanda and Uganda also continued. Their two Presidents held bilateral exchanges in Nairobi, on 8 April, and in Kampala, on 24 April. On 16 May, Rwanda and Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at strengthening security cooperation.

C. Humanitarian situation

26. The humanitarian situation in the region continues to be of concern. According to UNHCR, as at 31 July, the region had registered more than 4.9 million refugees and asylum seekers who had fled violence and instability, as well as climate-related events. The situation was further aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, Ebola and measles outbreaks, food insecurity and natural disasters. Uganda continues to host the largest number of refugees and asylum seekers (1,528,057), followed by the Sudan (1,142,271) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (517,642). Most refugees and asylum seekers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are from Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan. There are 1,042,573 Congolese refugees, the majority of whom are hosted in Uganda (446,033), Burundi (84,754), the United Republic of Tanzania (80,743) and Rwanda (76,530).

27. In addition, as at 31 August, approximately 12.2 million internally displaced persons were registered in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. In 2022, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had recorded the largest population of internally displaced persons (5.5 million by August), followed by the Sudan (3.7 million by July) and South Sudan (2.2 million by 31 July). Over 90 per cent had been forced to flee violence and insecurity, including nearly 186,000 people displaced to Rutshuru and Nyiragongo Territories because of the resurgence of M23 since November 2021. Both internally displaced persons and local populations were affected by the violence, which led to renewed internal displacement and refugee influxes into Uganda. About 59,783 Congolese refugees crossed into Uganda between March and July.

28. As at 31 July, 261,115 Burundian refugees were registered throughout the region. That number included refugees who had fled since April 2015, as well as some 37,000 Burundian refugees who had sought asylum in the region earlier. A total of

145,888 refugees were hosted in the United Republic of Tanzania; 41,851 in Uganda; 50,133 in Rwanda; and 40,798 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Between January and June, UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 12,462 Burundian refugees, including 3,319 from Rwanda; 1,792 from the United Republic of Tanzania, 2,726 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 4,563 from Uganda.

29. Some countries in the Great Lakes region continued to face high levels of food insecurity. Key drivers remained conflict and situations of generalized violence, serious human rights violations, limited infrastructure, economic decline, natural hazards, drought and poor harvests. According to the recently published *Global Report on Food Crises 2022*, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to record at least 27 million people facing food insecurity.

D. Human rights and rule of law

30. Human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law continued to occur in the Great Lakes region, including in the context of increased activities by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

31. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented 2,631 human rights violations and cases of abuse between March and July, a 14 per cent decrease compared with the previous five months (3,069 violations and cases of abuse). Eighty-five per cent of those violations and cases of abuse were committed in conflict-affected provinces (388 in Ituri, 1,432 in North Kivu, 207 in South Kivu and 206 in Tanganyika). The overall number includes 178 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, which continues to be used as a weapon of war. Armed groups appeared to be the main perpetrators, with 61 per cent of the overall number of violations and cases of abuse, while State agents allegedly appeared to be responsible for 39 per cent. In the context of military operations, 451 violations were reported as having been committed by FARDC. ADF combatants were allegedly responsible for 298 reported cases of human rights abuses, which amounted to 11 per cent of the overall number of violations and cases of abuse documented in the country. FDLR combatants committed 81 cases of abuse (3.1 per cent of overall violations and cases of abuse). The resurgence of M23 in North Kivu led to 43 reported cases of human rights abuses committed by the group (1.2 per cent of overall violations and cases of abuse), including 62 killings (41 men, 9 women and 12 children).

32. A total of 17 cases of hate speech and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, targeted in particular at Kinyarwanda-speaking populations, were recorded between May and July; six of those had been committed by Congolese authorities and two resulted in the killing of a person each.

33. In a positive development, the Minister of Human Rights of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Albert Fabrice Puela, launched national consultations on transitional justice in four provinces, namely Tanganyika, Kongo Central, North Kivu and Kasai, seeking the views of the population on transitional justice mechanisms to be put in place.

34. After taking up his duties on 1 May, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, Fortuné Gaétan Zongo, delivered his first oral update to the Human Rights Council at its fiftieth session, on 29 June. While recognizing that positive steps had been taken by the Burundian authorities to address the shrinking of civic and democratic space, he called on the Government of Burundi to cooperate with his Office to enable him to carry out his mandate and assist in improving the human rights situation in the country.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

35. Despite the challenging domestic security context, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to implement its national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 26 May, the President appointed nine provincial coordinators of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme for Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. Furthermore, during the political consultations undertaken as part of the Nairobi process, the Congolese authorities announced their commitment to accelerate the reforms of FARDC.

36. On 10 May, the National Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region met in Kinshasa with a delegation of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, Xia Huang, to discuss the implementation of the decisions taken at the tenth summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, on 24 February.

37. On 28 July, the President signed an ordinance-law on the military programming bill (2022–2025), which is focused on strengthening the financial, logistical, equipment-related and operational capacities of FARDC. The Government estimates the implementation cost of such measures at \$1 billion per year. On 17 August, with the support of MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme held a workshop at which it presented the national operational plan for the implementation programme for the period 2022 and 2023, with a budget of \$19,998,424.51.

B. Commitments of the region and engagements by the guarantor institutions

38. Efforts to strengthen bilateral security cooperation continued. On 30 March, the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a military and technical cooperation agreement during the eighth meeting of their special commission on defence and security. The chiefs of the defence forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda met on 16 April in Bunia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to review Operation Shujaa, a joint operation of FARDC and UPDF against ADF. On 13 August, the President of Uganda received a FARDC delegation led by the Chief of General Staff, General Célestin Mbala Munsense, in Entebbe, Uganda. On 6 May, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania held the first meeting of their inter-governmental security committee in Kampala, which resulted in, among other things, the signing of a memorandum of understanding on defence and security cooperation in support of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline, by which crude oil produced in Uganda will be transported to the port of Tanga in the United Republic of Tanzania.

39. Strengthening economic cooperation and trade remained a priority for countries in the region. The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo conducted State visits to Burundi, South Sudan and Zambia to promote joint economic and infrastructure projects. The visit to Zambia, on 29 April, resulted in the signing of a bilateral agreement for the joint manufacturing of electric batteries in the province of Upper Katanga in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the visit to Burundi,

from 21 to 23 May, bilateral agreements were signed on cooperation in agriculture, defence and security, and on a railway project linking Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Republic of Tanzania. State visits conducted by the President of Rwanda to Zambia, from 4 to 6 April, and to the Congo, from 11 to 13 April, resulted in the signing of a series of bilateral cooperation agreements. During a State visit to Uganda from 10 to 12 May by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan, an agreement was signed on the construction of a 400 kV electricity transmission line from Masaka in Uganda to the port of Mwanza in the United Republic of Tanzania, and a commitment was expressed to remove non-tariff trade barriers on bilateral trade. The second bilateral business summit, between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, was held in Kinshasa from 31 May to 8 June. On 16 July, the Minister of Transport of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chérubin Okende Senga, and his South African counterpart, Fikile April Mbalula, signed an agreement for the rehabilitation and modernization of transport infrastructure.

40. Several joint permanent commissions met during the reporting period, including those of Burundi and Uganda, of Angola and Zambia, of Angola and Rwanda, and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The meetings resulted in agreements in areas such as political and diplomatic consultations, mineral resources, trade and investment, and energy.

41. Efforts were pursued to advance regional integration. On 28 March, during an extraordinary EAC summit, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was admitted as the Community's seventh member. After the signing of the accession treaty on 8 April in Nairobi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo deposited its instrument of ratification on 11 July. The Community, at its twenty-second ordinary summit of Heads of State, held on 22 July in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, decided to finalize and expedite the roadmap for the integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

42. The guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework – the United Nations, the African Union, ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community, also remained engaged. On 5 April, following a series of consultations facilitated by the Office of the Special Envoy, the guarantor institutions adopted a joint communiqué in which they called on M23 to cease all hostilities and to engage resolutely and peacefully in the process of voluntary and unconditional disarmament.

43. On 6 July, the guarantor institutions held their ninth meeting in Nairobi to review recent developments and explore options for enhanced support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the representatives of the guarantor institutions reiterated their concern over the implications of the M23 resurgence for regional stability and welcomed the efforts deployed in the context of the Nairobi process and the Luanda process. They identified priorities for the coming months, notably support for the de-escalation of tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, the implementation of non-military measures through the deployment of the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group, support for the transparent management of natural resources, the promotion of the rule of law and the advancement of the women and peace and security agenda.

44. The thirty-first meeting of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was held in Nairobi on 7 and 8 July. The members of the Committee condemned the continued attacks perpetrated by armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the resurgence of M23 military activity, and stressed the importance of strengthening the capacities of

ICGLR, the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre. Concerned with the heightened tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, they committed to supporting ongoing political and diplomatic processes in the region, including the Nairobi process and the mediation efforts undertaken by the President of Angola. They agreed to advance the implementation of eight updated priorities of the regional plan of action for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, which had been adopted by the Regional Oversight Mechanism at its eighth summit, held in Brazzaville in 2017. Women representatives of civil society and the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum gave a briefing to the Committee on the impact of armed group activity on women and girls. The Committee welcomed the proposal by Burundi to hold the eleventh summit of the Mechanism on 24 February 2023.

45. On 19 April, at its 1,078th meeting, the African Union Peace and Security Council discussed the Great Lakes region. It expressed serious concern about the deterioration of the security situation, strongly condemned the atrocities committed by the ex-M23, ADF and other armed and terrorist groups, recognized the situation and the atrocities committed in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as terrorism, and requested the Commission to take steps to support ongoing efforts, including through the rapid deployment of experts in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and in security sector reform; support for the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre; and the development of a strategy for post-conflict reconstruction and development. It further stressed the need to evaluate and assess the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and called on the guarantor institutions to initiate the process in consultation with key stakeholders.

46. From 20 to 22 June, the Peace and Security Council visited Burundi, where it met with, among others, the President of Burundi and representatives of the ICGLR Secretariat. In a statement issued after the visit, the Peace and Security Council called on all stakeholders in the region to prioritize dialogue and to redouble efforts to further enhance collaboration within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

47. On 31 August, the African Union Peace and Security Council held its 1103rd meeting, the topic of which was the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the communiqué issued after the meeting, the Council welcomed the adoption of the roadmap for the pacification process in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo during the tripartite summit held in Luanda on 6 July. The Council further endorsed the decision of the EAC Heads of State to deploy a regional force and appoint the President of Kenya as facilitator of the Nairobi process. Underscoring the need to ensure synergy and alignment among the Nairobi and Luanda processes, the Council requested the African Union Commission to facilitate consultations among EAC, the Economic Community of Central African States, ICGLR and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to agree on a joint peace framework and modalities.

48. On 24 March, the ICGLR Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee, at its seventeenth meeting, focused on peace and security. From 25 to 28 April, the ICGLR Regional Committee on the Fight against Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, at its twenty-fourth meeting, held in Kinshasa, evaluated the progress made in the implementation of the regional initiative against the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources and reviewed activities proposed to implement the recommendations of the high-level workshop on natural resources held in Khartoum in September 2021. The ICGLR Regional Women's Forum held its third general assembly from 18 to 20 May in Bujumbura, during which it elected a new Bureau, chaired by Burundi.

49. During the forty-second ordinary summit of SADC Heads of State and Government, held in Kinshasa on 17 August, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took over the Chair from the President of Malawi, Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, while the President of Angola was elected as the incoming Chair. At the summit, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, was mandated to engage – with the United Nations Secretary-General with a view to exploring all avenues available in support of efforts to improve the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Minister is to be supported by the Troika of the Organ and the countries contributing troops to the MONUSCO force Intervention Brigade in fulfilling the mandate given at the summit.

C. International commitments

50. During the reporting period, the international community actively maintained its support for the efforts undertaken in the region to enhance regional cooperation and stability. On 22 June, the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region convened to discuss regional developments. It was focused on further strengthening support for ongoing political processes led by regional actors. On 30 June and 4 July, respectively, the Department of State of the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs released statements in which they condemned the activities of non-State armed groups and expressed support for ongoing dialogue initiatives.

51. The Special Envoy engaged in bilateral consultations with international partners to advocate for concerted financial and technical support for the Nairobi process. As part of those efforts, his Office facilitated a briefing for international parties on the Nairobi process held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya in Nairobi on 11 May.

IV. Implementation of the action plan of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region

52. The Special Envoy and his Office continued to lead efforts to implement the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, most notably by coordinating the implementation of its action plan and by ensuring a sustained engagement of all concerned United Nations entities through the Senior Policy Group and its technical arm, the Implementation Support Mechanism.

53. From 19 to 20 May, the Special Envoy convened the first retreat of the Senior Policy Group in Bujumbura. Participants reviewed the progress made and provided guidance on ways to further accelerate the implementation of the regional strategy. The retreat afforded an opportunity to exchange information and analyses on recent political, security, economic and humanitarian developments and to discuss ways to further enhance support for regional efforts that were under way. The members of the Group reviewed and approved 13 flagship initiatives, a resource mobilization and partnership framework, and a communication strategy.

54. During his good-offices missions in the region, the Special Envoy gave briefings on progress in the Strategy's implementation while calling for continued regional and national ownership of the Strategy's action plan.

A. Promoting dialogue and strengthening trust

55. In response to the unfolding crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, the Special Envoy embarked on a series of good-offices missions in the region. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the various views being held on the unfolding developments related to M23 and to call for a de-escalation of tensions. In his engagements with senior officials of the Governments of Angola, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, the Special Envoy advocated for a political solution to the tensions and highlighted the need for coordination between ongoing dialogue and peace processes in the region. He further urged continued restraint and confidence-building measures so as to safeguard the gains made in recent years in the area of peace, dialogue and cooperation. The Special Envoy visited Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 3 June to meet with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO to discuss ways to address regional-level developments.

56. The Special Envoy provided support for the Nairobi process and the mediation efforts undertaken by the President of Angola. In addition to participating in the consultations between the Congolese authorities and local armed groups as an observer, his Office provided political, technical and financial support to the joint secretariat of the Nairobi process, including by funding interpretation and translation services, in close collaboration with MONUSCO. On 26 May, the Special Envoy exchanged views with the Special Envoy of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the Nairobi process, Serge Tshibangu, and on 31 May, he met with the Special Envoy of the President of Kenya for the Nairobi process, Macharia Kamau. Both meetings were focused on progress made along the political and military tracks and on support to be provided for the consultations by the Office of the Special Envoy. On 16 August, the Special Envoy discussed support options with the President of Burundi in his capacity as EAC Chairperson and reviewed preparations for the next summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

57. The Special Envoy visited Luanda from 22 to 25 June to consult the President of Angola, who is the ICGLR Chairperson, and offer support for his mediation efforts. The Special Envoy suggested confidence-building measures that could be envisaged to facilitate a rapprochement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

58. As part of his regional tour, the Special Envoy pursued his efforts to strengthen security cooperation against foreign armed groups. In that regard, he advocated for close consultation and coordination between the various military efforts under way in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including with MONUSCO. He further drew the attention of all stakeholders to the continued need for non-military measures, including through the rapid deployment of the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group.

59. The Special Envoy and his Office continued to engage with representatives of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on preparations for the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and the follow-up given to the decisions adopted at the Mechanism's tenth summit.

B. Reducing the threat posed by armed groups

60. The Office of the Special Envoy, with the support of MONUSCO and the Secretariat, convened the first retreat of the operational cell of the Contact and

Coordination Group in Naivasha, Kenya, from 24 to 28 May. The purpose of the retreat was to translate the Group's action plan into concrete activities by developing a strategy to engage with negative forces operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo that includes a timeline of short- and medium-term activities targeted at foreign armed groups that outlines priorities and sequences of events.

61. At the fifth meeting of the chiefs of intelligence and security services of participating member States, held in Kampala on 24 August, participants took note of the engagement strategy and adopted the terms of reference of the operational cell, together with its budget for the first year. The meeting had been preceded by a preparatory meeting of the Contact and Coordination Group on 22 and 23 August. Having reviewed recent security-related developments, the chiefs of intelligence and security services reiterated that there was a need for close cooperation among their countries to formulate concerted responses to security challenges. They further agreed to explore options and identify modalities for potential support to be provided by the Contact and Coordination Group for the implementation of the Nairobi process. Both meetings were held with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy and with the participation of the guarantor institutions.

62. Between March and July, the Office of Counter-Terrorism delivered five training courses to Ugandan security and law enforcement officials and the Regional Counter-Terrorism Centre of the Southern African Development Community. The specialized trainings aimed to strengthen inter-agency counter-terrorism coordination and early warning mechanism.

C. Promoting a sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, as well as trade and investment

63. The Special Envoy continued to support efforts to promote the sustainable management of natural resources. On 2 May, he participated in a panel meeting on the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Great Lakes region, which was held during the fifteenth Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, organized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and ICGLR. From 5 to 9 September, the Special Envoy and the Executive Secretary of ICGLR, João Caholo, jointly led an advocacy mission to the European Union and OECD intended to increase international support for the effective implementation of the recommendations adopted at the high-level regional workshop on natural resources in the Great Lakes Region, held in Khartoum from 31 August to 2 September 2021.

D. Finding durable solutions to forced displacement

64. In line with the action plan's priority cluster on durable solutions for forced displacement, the Office of the Special Envoy continued to collaborate closely with UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNHCR supported the finalization of the ICGLR regional study on protracted displacement and statelessness carried out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The study will inform the development of an ICGLR strategy of durable solutions for refugees in the Great Lakes region. In a meeting held on 30 June, the Regional Advisory Group reviewed and endorsed the results of the study and its recommendations.

65. In support of the sustainable return and reintegration of Burundian refugees in Burundi, a joint delegation of the United Nations and the Government of Burundi visited Nairobi on 7 July for an awareness-raising mission. The delegation appealed

for greater commitment on the part of donors and to enable an adequate response to the increase in the number of refugees who had been returning to Burundi since 2017 and the challenges faced in their reintegration.

66. IOM provided long-term assistance to communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo affected by displacement. Efforts to strengthen community resilience and address key drivers of instability strengthened social cohesion, socioeconomic reintegration and recovery support. This was achieved through improved local governance structures, and mental health and psychosocial support. In addition, IOM supported the closure of displacement sites, thus enabling 1,276 households to return and relocate with dignity to localities of their choice. In Burundi, IOM promoted social cohesion and sustainable reintegration, particularly among communities hosting internally displaced persons and receiving returnees.

E. Promoting regional preparedness to public health crises

67. The United Nations and its partners continued to support countries that had signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in strengthening their national response plans to public health crises, including by building on lessons learned from the pandemic. In view of the development and the roll-out of a comprehensive health protocol for the region, the World Health Organization released the third edition of the technical guidelines for integrated disease surveillance and response. In addition, Angola, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania received support to strengthen health protection programmes for refugees and other vulnerable populations.

68. In partnership with the EAC secretariat, IOM implemented the regional project entitled “Wash and health promotion sensitization and awareness on COVID-19 and other communicable diseases in the EAC region” under the regional strategy’s action plan. The project reached 5.5 million people and included the training of 720 influencers at key points of entry, cross-border communities and transport corridors.

F. Advancing the inclusion, participation and empowerment of women and youth

69. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to collaborate closely with regional women leaders to promote the inclusion of women in political processes. On 26 April, the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region, co-chaired by the Special Envoy and the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the African Union, issued a statement in which they called on States to redouble their efforts to strengthen the rights of women and girls and to ensure that the gender dimension is considered in the ongoing dialogue processes.

70. Between 12 and 15 July, a joint United Nations-African Union-ICGLR advocacy mission, led by the co-Chair of the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), Catherine Samba-Panza, and facilitated by the Office of the Special Envoy, visited Kinshasa to support efforts to address the situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to promote women’s participation in the forthcoming electoral process. The delegation included women leaders of the ICGLR Regional Women’s Forum, as well as women mediators trained with support from the Office of the Special Envoy in 2021. The delegation interacted with representatives of the Congolese authorities, who committed to supporting efforts to facilitate women’s participation in the Nairobi process.

71. On 19 and 20 July, a peer learning and experience-sharing workshop on women in electoral management bodies was held in Lusaka, facilitated by the Office of the Special Envoy, in collaboration with ICGLR, the African Union, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme. Participants assessed the needs and capacity gaps of women administrators in electoral management bodies and signed a note of intention concerning the establishment of a regional peer learning network.

G. Promotion and protection of human rights and the fight against impunity

72. In an effort to advance the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance of 2019, the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law supported ICGLR in holding a meeting of its Ministers of Justice in Kinshasa on 16 June. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the Kinshasa declaration on enhancing regional judicial cooperation, and in standardized guidelines for requesting mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. The guidelines are expected to contribute to harmonizing procedures for judicial cooperation in the region, thereby reducing obstacles to the cross-border exchange of intelligence and/or evidence and, in turn, enhancing the effectiveness of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

73. The Ministerial meeting was prepared at the seventh meeting of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, held on 13 and 14 June. Participants discussed achievements and challenges related to judicial cooperation and the fight against impunity, as well as opportunities for enhanced coordination with other existing regional mechanisms, such as the Contact and Coordination Group and the ICGLR Regional Committee on the Fight against Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. The Network was given a briefing on actions undertaken to fight sexual and gender-based violence. Network members agreed on a set of recommendations that included the enhanced exchange of information among themselves, continued capacity-building initiatives and a sustained process to harmonize national legal frameworks related to judicial cooperation.

74. From 19 to 28 April, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect conducted a mission to assess the risk of atrocity crimes in South Kivu. The Office concluded that almost all risk factors for atrocity crimes were present and urged quick remedial measures, including high-level advocacy to reduce intercommunal tensions in the region. On 17 June, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Alice Wairimu Nderitu, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, issued a joint statement in which they condemned the increase in violence and hate speech in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and welcomed public statements by the Government in which it had condemned the dissemination of hate speech. They called on the Government to strengthen prevention mechanisms, including of the national and provincial committees on genocide prevention, and for redoubled efforts to address intercommunal violence across the country.

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

A. Regional organizations and mechanisms

75. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to collaborate closely with the guarantor institutions. In addition to convening the ninth meeting of the guarantor institutions on 6 July, the Special Envoy visited Addis Ababa from 11 to 13 July for meetings with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security, Bankole Adeoye. The meetings were focused on ways to support the political processes under way to address the regional implications of the crisis triggered by the resurgence of M23. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to support the ICGLR Executive Secretariat through joint initiatives on judicial cooperation, on women and peace and security and on the fight against the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources.

B. International partners

76. The Special Envoy continued to consult international partners. Among other things, he conducted several missions to Geneva, New York, Paris and Brussels and engaged with representatives of the diplomatic community as part of his regional good-offices tour. In all his meetings, the Special Envoy conveyed the support of the United Nations to the ongoing mediation efforts undertaken by the President of Angola and to the Nairobi process, while calling for enhanced engagement to curb all forms of hate speech and incitement to violence.

C. Other United Nations entities

77. In connection with the implementation of the regional strategy, the Special Envoy continued to collaborate closely with the Heads of MONUSCO, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, the resident coordinators of countries in the region and other United Nations entities to ensure the alignment of initiatives in support of the region.

78. On 21 April, the Special Envoy met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. The consultations were centred on the implementation of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and on ways to promote a resumption of the collaboration between the Office of the High Commissioner and Burundi. On 14 July, the Special Envoy held a video teleconference with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi, appointed by the Human Rights Council. They agreed to cooperate to support the efforts of Burundi aimed at improving the situation of human rights in the country.

79. From 18 to 22 July, the Special Envoy undertook a joint mission with the Head of MONUSCO to Brussels and Paris. The purpose was to step up advocacy for dialogue and a de-escalation of the crisis triggered by the resurgence of M23, and to mobilize international partners in support of regional peace efforts.

VI. Observations

80. On the eve of the tenth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the deterioration of the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and its regional implications serve as a stark reminder of the need to address, once and for all, the root causes of recurrent conflict in the region. Reducing the persistent threat posed by armed groups, reinforcing trust-building efforts among the leaders of the region and putting a stop to the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources have become even more urgent today if the gains made in recent years are to be preserved. As the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remains a pertinent vehicle in that regard, I call on all signatory countries to renew and fully implement their commitments ago to create an environment conducive to sustainable peace and development in the region.

81. I am deeply concerned by the resurgence of M23 and the continued activities of other armed groups, including ADF, the Coalition des Démocrates Congolais (CODECO), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) and RED Tabara, which have a devastating impact on the civilian population and have adversely affected bilateral relations among countries of the region. All armed groups must immediately cease all forms of violence and destabilizing activities, and permanently lay down their arms.

82. While it is a positive development that efforts are being undertaken to enhance military cooperation and thereby address the threat posed by armed groups in the region, I reiterate the importance of non-military measures to address the existing challenges. In that regard, I welcome the progress made in the operationalization of the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group as an important vehicle to contribute to ongoing regional processes through support for the dismantling of networks of foreign armed groups. The finalization of the strategy to engage with negative forces operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is another important step. My Special Envoy, in collaboration with my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will continue to provide full support to the Contact and Coordination Group.

83. I am further concerned by the tensions that have re-emerged between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The commitment of the leaders of the two countries to engage in dialogue to rebuild trust and confidence is encouraging. The resumption of their Joint Permanent Commission is also a positive signal.

84. I commend the political and diplomatic efforts undertaken by the leaders of the region, notably the EAC-led Nairobi process and the ongoing mediation under the aegis of the President of Angola, to address this crisis and promote dialogue amongst the countries concerned. I welcome ongoing efforts to ensure coordination and complementarity between the two processes. My Special Envoy will continue to support those efforts both through his shuttle diplomacy and through the provision of technical assistance, as required.

85. I deplore the rise of hate speech and incitement to hostility, discrimination or violence; it seriously threatens social cohesion and stability in the region. On 17 June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and my Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide called upon all parties to respect international humanitarian law and welcomed public statements made by national authorities to condemn the dissemination of hate speech. I add my voice to that call and urge all authorities to ensure accountability for violations committed and to strengthen legal frameworks on hate speech.

86. I reiterate the imperative of ensuring that national and international human rights and humanitarian law and standards be fully respected, and synergies between security and judicial processes promoted, including with regard to transitional justice. I commend in that regard the adoption of the Kinshasa declaration on enhancing judicial cooperation by the ICGLR Ministers of Justice, by which they set new standards in mutual legal assistance at the regional level. I encourage the timely implementation of the priorities identified in the Declaration to contribute effectively to the fight against impunity.

87. I am encouraged by continued efforts to address the illegal exploitation of natural resources as one of the root causes of regional instability. Against the backdrop of increased demand for critical minerals, notably from the Great Lakes region, I call for committed action at the national and regional levels for structural transformation, inclusive development and economic diversification as essential steps towards sustained peace and prosperity in the region. In that regard I welcome the agreement between, among others, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia on the development of the clean energy sector and a regional value chain in electric battery production.

88. My Special Envoy and his Office will continue to strengthen cooperation with women's networks to contribute effectively to peacebuilding and an inclusive approach to security cooperation. I further commend efforts aimed at including women in regional governance mechanisms and in electoral processes. However, more efforts are needed, including strategies to further increase the engagement of women and young people in ongoing dialogue and confidence-building initiatives.

89. The international community should continue to support the countries of the region and regional organizations in their efforts to advance towards peace, security and development, including through regional peace processes and sustained support for the implementation of the action plan of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

90. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the efforts of my Special Envoy and my Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO to advocate for dialogue and concerted support for peace efforts. I wish to thank my Special Envoy and his Office for their commitment to supporting the signatory countries in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.
