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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 to it every six months on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and its linkages with the broader security situation in the region.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of the previous report ([S/2021/836](#)) and covers the period from 16 September 2021 to 15 March 2022.

II. Major developments

A. Spread and implications of the coronavirus disease pandemic

2. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic remained a cause for concern in the Great Lakes region, with several countries recording increased infection rates mainly due to the Omicron variant. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework reported a total of 5,007,400 confirmed cases and 124,064 fatalities as at 18 March. Moreover, the region continued to face significant vaccine shortages. As at 18 March, a total of 119,840,280 vaccine doses had been administered. In October, Burundi joined the other signatory countries taking part in the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) Facility of WHO.

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 witnesses/guarantors of the Framework: the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the United Nations.



3. The pandemic also continued to exacerbate pre-existing socioeconomic challenges in the region, such as the debt burden, lack of economic diversification, youth unemployment, extreme poverty and climate vulnerability. However, despite the slow vaccine roll-out and new waves of infections, 10 of the 13 signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework recorded over 3 per cent growth of their gross domestic product in 2021, according to the African Development Bank.² Factors that contributed to this growth include the global economic recovery, rising commodity prices and the rollback of some pandemic-induced restrictions, including border closures.

B. Security situation

4. The overall security situation in the Great Lakes region remained fragile, with six reported cross-border incidents compared with four during the previous reporting period. Armed group activity increased, particularly in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and attacks targeted at State agents and civilians were recorded in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. In response, security agencies pursued bilateral and multilateral cooperation, resulting, among other things, in the launch of joint operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on 30 November.

5. On 26 September, UPDF stated that it had pursued combatants of the Uganda Homeland Liberation Force reportedly linked to the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), which was suspected of having perpetrated an attack against a UPDF position in Zombo, in West Nile subregion of Uganda, in July 2021.

6. On 5 October, FARDC announced the arrest of 32 Burundian citizens in Uvira Territory, South Kivu Province, for illegally crossing the border, allegedly with the intention of joining Burundian armed groups, notably the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara).

7. On 18 October, FARDC stated that troops of the Rwanda Defence Force had crossed into Kibumba, North Kivu Province, while pursuing smugglers, before withdrawing under pressure from FARDC. On the same day, the Democratic Republic of the Congo referred the matter to the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) for further investigation.

8. Two incidents reportedly occurred in the border area between Rwanda and Uganda. A UPDF soldier on leave was arrested by Rwandan security forces in Rwanda on 27 November 2021. He was released on 22 January, on the occasion of the visit to Kigali by the Senior Presidential Adviser on Special Operations to the President of Uganda and Commander of the UPDF land forces, Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba. On 18 December, a Rwandan soldier was reportedly captured in Kabale District, Uganda, and later handed over to the Embassy of Rwanda in Kampala.

9. On 21 October, Burundi handed over to Rwanda 11 members of the armed group Forces nationales de libération (FNL), who had been captured by Burundian authorities in Cibitoke Province in September. The handover was witnessed by the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism.

10. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, insecurity persisted and intensified in some areas, with increased ADF attacks on civilians and FARDC,

² See African Development Bank, *African Economic Outlook 2021*. The 10 countries are Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

particularly in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, where a state of siege has been in force since 6 May 2021. Between 16 September and 13 February, ADF combatants reportedly killed an estimated 257 civilians in 61 attacks in Ituri Province, including in Mambasa Territory. In North Kivu Province, 47 attacks attributed to ADF resulted in more than 195 fatalities, including 13 FARDC soldiers.

11. The reporting period also saw a resurgence in attacks in North Kivu Province attributed to combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) under the leadership of Sultani Makenga. Suspected M23 combatants carried out six attacks against FARDC positions in the Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu Province, killing around 45 soldiers and an unknown number of civilians. In a counteroffensive by FARDC on 26 December to dislodge M23 from Ndiza village, 17 M23 combatants were killed and one was captured. An attack on 24 January against FARDC positions in Nyesisi village resulted in the killing of at least 31 soldiers. It was followed by a counteroffensive by FARDC on 26 January, during which FARDC recovered its former positions and forced the group to retreat to the Sarambwe-Sabinyo mountains in the border area shared by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. At least 12 M23 combatants were killed during the counteroffensive. While no further M23 attacks were reported in the area, the group reportedly remained active in North Kivu Province and continued to recruit young people, particularly in Rutshuru and Masisi Territories.

12. Between October and February, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and their ally Nyatura-Collectif des mouvements pour le changement-Forces de défense du peuple (CMC-FDP) continued to clash with the splinter group Nyatura-Collectif des mouvements pour le changement-Forces armées du peuple congolais (CMC-FAPC) over control of certain villages in Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement of the population. These armed groups continued to be involved in cases of killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and illegal taxation of civilians in the operating areas.

13. On 5 and 19 January, RED Tabara issued two communiqués in which it stated that it had been engaged in clashes with a coalition of the Burundi National Defence Force, the Imbonerakure and militias in South Kivu Province. Burundian authorities have not publicly reacted to these allegations.

14. In Burundi, a mortar attack that occurred on 18 September against the airport in Bujumbura was claimed by RED Tabara. The attack caused only structural damage. On 20 December, RED Tabara claimed responsibility for another attack, carried out on 19 December against a position of the Burundian armed forces in Gatumba, Burundi, which allegedly resulted in 10 fatalities and 15 casualties. Two grenade attacks carried out by unidentified assailants on 21 and 24 September in Bujumbura resulted in 7 fatalities and 50 casualties. In another incident, on 22 December, a grenade exploded in a movie theatre in Bujumbura, injuring 16 people. One person among the injured was arrested as a suspect.

15. In Rwanda, national security services on 1 October announced the arrest, in September, of 13 individuals accused of planning terrorist attacks in Kigali. The Rwandan authorities linked the suspects to ADF and, according to the Rwandan police, the attacks had been planned in retaliation for the deployment of Rwandan troops to Cabo Delgado, Mozambique.

16. In Uganda, four bomb attacks were recorded in October and November, including two suicide attacks on 16 November in Kampala, in the vicinity of the office of the Inspector General of the Government and the central police station. The attacks reportedly killed 10 persons and injured at least 40 others. Ugandan authorities attributed the attacks to ADF, describing them as acts of domestic terrorism. While ADF did not publicly react, Da'esh claimed responsibility for three of the four attacks.

On 30 November, FARDC and UPDF launched joint military operations against ADF in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

C. Political developments

17. The positive trend of enhanced diplomatic outreach and dialogue among countries in the Great Lakes region continued during the reporting period, as illustrated by visits of Heads of State and other senior government officials, new agreements to strengthen bilateral cooperation and efforts to implement previous commitments.

18. Rwanda and Uganda took an important step towards the normalization of their relations with the partial reopening of the Gatuna/Katuna border post on 31 January, followed by its full reopening on 7 March. The decision followed the dispatch by the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, of the Commander of the UPDF land forces and of the Permanent Representative of Uganda to the United Nations, Adonia Ayebare, to Kigali on 22 and 17 January, respectively. After another visit to Rwanda by the Commander of the UPDF land forces on 14 and 15 March, the Prime Minister of Rwanda, Édouard Ngirente, reportedly said at a press conference on 16 March that the restoration of relations between Rwanda and Uganda was a process and expressed confidence about the continuous interactions between the two countries. On 25 October, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda, Vincent Biruta, discussed bilateral relations with his counterpart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, Jeje Odongo, on the margins of a ministerial meeting between the African Union and the European Union.

19. Similarly, Burundi and Rwanda demonstrated a continued commitment to normalizing their bilateral relations. On 22 September, Mr. Biruta reportedly discussed ongoing rapprochement efforts with his counterpart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, Albert Shingiro, on the sidelines of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly. In September and October, governors of neighbouring provinces in Burundi and Rwanda met on three separate occasions to address issues of mutual interest. On 10 January, the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, received the Minister of East African Community Affairs of Burundi, Ezéchiel Nibigira, who delivered a message from the President of Burundi, Evariste Ndayishimiye, that was reportedly focused on bilateral relations. On 15 March, Mr. Ndayishimiye received a delegation from Rwanda led by the Minister of Defence of Rwanda, Major General Albert Murasira, who reportedly relayed a message from Mr. Kagame.

20. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda also took further steps towards strengthening bilateral relations. The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, and the President of Rwanda met on 25 November in Kinshasa, on 18 December in Brussels and on 24 March in Aqaba, Jordan, where they discussed bilateral cooperation, including in the area of security. Meetings between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda and his counterpart, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christophe Lutundula, in October and the Minister of Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Didier Mazenga, in January, as well as the visit by the Chief of General Staff of FARDC, General Célestin Mbala Munsense, to Rwanda in November and the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the police forces of both countries on 13 December in Kigali further illustrated this trend of enhanced cooperation.

21. Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania also continued to strengthen their mutual relations. Further to the visit by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Samia Suluhu Hassan, to Rwanda in August, the joint permanent commission of the two countries convened from 25 to 28 October in the United

Republic of Tanzania to review progress in the implementation of the agreements signed by the Presidents of the countries on 2 August and to further deepen bilateral ties. On 9 December, the President of Rwanda attended the celebrations for sixtieth anniversary of the independence of the United Republic of Tanzania in Dar es Salaam.

22. Rwanda and the Congo also continued to strengthen their partnership, including in the context of the fifth meeting of their mixed commission in November and meetings between the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda and the Minister of International Cooperation of the Congo, Denis Christel Sassou Nguesso, in Brazzaville, in January. In addition, the President of Rwanda met with his counterpart, the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, in Nairobi, on 3 February, where they discussed a wide range of areas of cooperation between their two countries, including trade and transport.

23. In addition to its engagements with Rwanda and Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo discussed trade and military cooperation with Kenya and signed two trade agreements with Angola in the context of their bilateral joint commission, which convened from 27 to 29 October in Kinshasa, followed by a visit by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Luanda on 27 November. The President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo further pursued bilateral discussions with his counterpart, the President of Zambia, Hakainde Hichilema, who visited Kinshasa on 23 November. He also signed a cooperation agreement on energy production with the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, on 6 December in Brazzaville. On 18 January, the Ministers of Defence of the Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo held an exchange on common security challenges and bilateral security cooperation.

24. The President of Burundi continued his regional and international diplomatic outreach efforts. From 22 to 24 October, he visited the United Republic of Tanzania, where he held discussions with his counterpart on opportunities for further strengthening bilateral cooperation, as well as progress in implementing existing cooperation agreements. On 12 January, he received the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs of Uganda, Vincent Bamulangaki Ssempijja.

25. The President of the United Republic of Tanzania received several Heads of State or their emissaries from the region, including the Presidents of Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. They discussed bilateral cooperation and regional issues of mutual interest, notably infrastructure, trade and energy.

D. Humanitarian situation

26. The humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region remained dire, with large-scale forced displacement of over 16 million persons, mainly as a result of violence and insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, compounded by climate change. The economic resilience of communities had already been weakened by the COVID-19 pandemic and was further eroded, particularly in areas dependent on food assistance that were hosting refugees and internally displaced persons.

27. At the end of January, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported more than 4.8 million refugees and asylum seekers in the 13 signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In addition, approximately 13.6 million internally displaced persons were registered in the region as at 31 December. The Democratic Republic of the Congo recorded the largest population of internally displaced persons (6.7 million), followed by the Sudan (3 million) and South Sudan (2 million). Overall, almost 1 million internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 201 refugees from that country

returned to their homes between 1 January and 31 December 2021. During 2021, more than 24,300 people were temporarily displaced by climate emergencies in Uganda.

28. Burundian refugees also continued to repatriate voluntarily. As at 31 January, 263,846 Burundian refugees were registered in the region. UNHCR facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 65,279 Burundian refugees, including 30,061 from the United Republic of Tanzania; 22,973 from Rwanda; 7,565 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo; 3,856 from Uganda and 1,024 from Kenya. In addition, UNHCR facilitated over 1,700 refugee returns to Rwanda.

29. On 8 October, the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared the thirteenth outbreak of the Ebola virus disease. Eleven cases and six deaths were recorded in North Kivu Province before the end of the outbreak was announced on 16 December.

E. Human rights and the rule of law

30. Human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law continued to be reported, including in the context of increased activity by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other parts of the region.

31. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) documented 2,952 human rights violations and abuses between September and January, a 24 per cent increase compared with the previous five months. Armed groups, ADF and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda in particular, were the main perpetrators with 57 per cent of the violations, while State agents were reportedly responsible for 43 per cent. Over 92 per cent of those violations were committed in conflict-affected provinces. The ongoing state of siege and the joint military operations by FARDC and UPDF had a limited impact on abuses committed by armed groups in both provinces, which remained high overall.

32. In the context of the joint operations by FARDC and UPDF, reprisal attacks by ADF were a cause for concern. In December, ADF reportedly killed at least 96 civilians (including 14 women and 7 children), injured 33 (including 5 women and 6 children) and abducted 46 others (3 women and 6 children), in addition to looting and destroying property. In January, another 55 civilians were killed (46 men, 8 women and 1 child), 13 were injured (7 men, five women and one child) and 77 were abducted (69 men, 5 women and 3 children). In addition, human rights observers raised concerns about the safety and security of ADF dependents, as well as that of victims of abductions in ADF camps. FARDC and UPDF emphasized their adherence to human rights law and international humanitarian law. In a separate development, FARDC arrested Benjamin Kisokeranio, one of the founders and former intelligence chiefs of ADF, on 11 January; Salim Mohamed, an ADF leader of Kenyan nationality, on 29 January; and three more ADF members of Tanzanian nationality, on 6 February.

33. On 9 February, the International Court of Justice rendered its verdict in a case concerning armed activities of Ugandan soldiers on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1998 and 2003. The Court ordered Uganda to pay a total of \$325 million in reparations to compensate for damage to persons, property and natural resources. On 11 February, Uganda issued a statement rejecting the findings of UPDF wrongdoing and noting that Uganda continues to discuss the matter with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for purposes of securing a lasting and mutually acceptable solution.

34. In Uganda, following the suicide bomb attacks of 16 November, investigations led to the arrest of 106 persons with suspected links to ADF. During those operations, at least five suspects were reportedly killed by national security combatants. On

7 December, the United States of America imposed financial sanctions on the Chief of Military Intelligence of Uganda, Major General Abel Kandiho, over alleged human rights abuses. He was removed from his post on 25 January and subsequently appointed Chief of the Joint Staff of the Ugandan Police Force on 9 February.

35. In Burundi, on 22 September, the prosecutor general accused a “group of terrorists” comprising prominent political and civil society figures of being responsible for the attacks in Bujumbura of 18 and 21 September. International arrest warrants were issued against these individuals. The Commission of Inquiry on Burundi concluded its mandate in September and was replaced by a special rapporteur. The Government of Burundi rejected the decision, which it viewed as standing in contradiction to progress achieved on human rights since 2015 and announced its intention not to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur.

36. On 8 February 2022, the European Union announced the lifting of restrictions imposed on Burundi, under Article 96 of the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States of the other part, on the suspension of financial support and disbursements of funds directly to the Burundian administration or institutions. While the European Union indicated that the decision was based on the peaceful political process that had started with the May 2020 elections, it also noted that challenges remained in the areas of human rights, good governance, reconciliation and the rule of law. This development followed the lifting of sanctions by the United States against four individuals in November 2021.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

37. The state of siege in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces, Democratic Republic of the Congo, was extended 17 times since it took effect on 6 May 2021. On 29 September, the National Assembly adopted a report by the Defence and Security Standing Committee containing an assessment of the state of siege and recommendations for the development of an exit strategy. A number of recommendations were implemented, including the recommendation to appoint new FARDC commanders in Ituri. In early December, an inter-institutional mission composed of representatives of Parliament and the Government and led by the Ministry of Defence undertook a mission to North Kivu and Ituri Provinces to assess the implementation of the state of siege and make recommendations to the Head of State. During his state of the nation address on 13 December, the President reiterated the relevance of the state of siege, noting its achievements, namely the elimination of positions of several armed groups and the neutralization and surrender of some armed group members.

38. Meanwhile, efforts to operationalize the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, promulgated on 5 July 2021, continued, including through the development of a draft national strategy to implement the Programme.

39. In addition, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took steps to further economic development, including by convening, on 24 and 25 November in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Africa Business Forum in partnership with the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, among others. Chaired by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Business Forum resulted in a set of recommendations to promote the

regional value chain for batteries, electric vehicles and local processing of strategic minerals.

B. Commitments of the region

40. Efforts to strengthen regional cooperation have continued. In the area of security cooperation, several countries signed new bilateral agreements, including Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania; the Congo and Rwanda; the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda; and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. In the area of regional economic integration, 11 signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework had deposited their instruments of ratification for the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area with the depositary, the Chair of the African Union Commission, as of 7 February 2022.³

41. At the regional level, the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures to complement ongoing military operations against negative forces, commenced its work, with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy and MONUSCO. The cell brings together representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to support the Group in preparing and implementing an engagement strategy with negative forces with a view to promoting their demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement.

42. Strengthening trade relations remained a priority for countries in the region. Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a trade agreement during the tenth session of their joint mixed commission, held from 27 to 29 October. Meanwhile, Kenya and Uganda resumed bilateral talks in December to eliminate trade barriers between the two countries. Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, during the fourth meeting of their joint permanent commission in January, agreed to resume talks to eliminate trade barriers and to pursue joint infrastructure projects. In addition, Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, on 17 January, agreed on the construction of a cross-border railway.

43. Countries furthermore committed to enhancing cooperation in the area of natural resources and energy. On 21 September, the Minister of Mineral Resources, Petroleum and Gas of Angola and his counterpart, the Minister of Hydrocarbons of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, agreed to revitalize the technical commission on their countries' common oil exploration zone project and to work towards a joint marketing mechanism for petroleum products to combat illicit trade and smuggling. On 9 October and 25 January, representatives of the Governments of Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania met in the United Republic of Tanzania to assess progress in the implementation of a cross-border hydroelectric project. During his State visit to the United Republic of Tanzania in November, the President of Uganda discussed follow-up to the agreements signed in April with his counterpart, the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, on the East African Crude Oil Pipeline.

44. Regional and continental organizations, including the co-guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, continued their efforts in support of the region. On 29 November, the sixth meeting of the Ministers in charge of mines

³ The 11 signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework that deposited their instruments of ratification for the Agreement the African Continental Free Trade Area are: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia.

of States members of ICGLR, convened by Angola, assessed the status of implementation of the ICGLR Regional Initiative on Natural Resources and recommended, among other things, an in-depth evaluation of the implementation of the Regional Initiative in each country to inform measures to ensure further progress. The Ministers further approved the recommendations of the high-level workshop on natural resources held from 31 August to 2 September in Khartoum to address the illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources and the financing of armed groups. They urged States members of ICGLR and the ICGLR secretariat to integrate the recommendations into their national and regional mineral strategic plans.

45. In an effort to further advance the women and peace and security agenda in the Great Lakes region, the Ministers in charge of gender issues of the States members of ICGLR adopted, on 13 November, a regional plan of action on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), as well as a revised ICGLR regional gender policy, among other documents. The Ministers committed to mobilizing funds for the economic empowerment of women, while highlighting the need for more data from the States members of ICGLR on women's effective participation in peace and political processes.

46. On 11 February, the President of the Congo convened his counterparts, the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Togo and Uganda, in the town of Oyo for a mini-summit on peace and security in the Great Lakes region and in Central and West Africa. The Heads of State, inter alia, welcomed progress made in the ongoing joint military operation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda against ADF and welcomed the fact that Rwanda and Uganda had expressed their willingness to resolve contentious issues in their bilateral relations solely by political and diplomatic means.

47. Another critical development was the recommendation addressed to the Heads of State of the East African Community by the Community's Council of Ministers on 8 February to admit the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the regional bloc. On 19 January, the Democratic Republic of the Congo assumed the chairpersonship of the Economic Community of Central African States at its twentieth ordinary summit, held in Brazzaville.

48. On 5 October, the African Union convened representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia to discuss the delimitation of international borders on Lake Tanganyika and to agree on the technology to be used for the delimitation process. The African Union Border Programme further facilitated bilateral discussions of the joint technical committee of South Sudan and Uganda on their shared border delimitation and demarcation, from 13 to 15 December. The meeting was followed by the third meeting of the tripartite technical boundary committee of Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda, on 16 December, equally facilitated by the African Union, which resulted in the reinvigoration of a joint technical subcommittee to further investigate remaining issues in the delimitation and demarcation process.

49. With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, regional efforts continued to facilitate trade and economic recovery, harmonize health measures and advocate for an equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies. On 10 January, the Secretary-General of the East African Community, Peter Mathuki, called for collective vaccination efforts to contain the spread of the pandemic and gave information about the development of EACPass, which will integrate, among other things, data on COVID-19 test results and vaccination status to ease travelling in the region.

50. The tenth summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework was held on 24 February in Kinshasa. It coincided with the Framework's ninth anniversary. The summit deliberations were centred around

efforts to strengthen good-neighbourly relations as well as cooperation to eliminate the threat posed by foreign armed groups and other negative forces in the region and to enhance regional economic integration. Among other decisions, the participating delegations welcomed the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region for the period 2020–2030 (hereinafter, the regional strategy) and urged the rapid implementation of the action plan to implement the regional strategy, for the period 2021–2023, endorsed the second progress report on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and requested the Technical Support Committee to update the regional action plan on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to harmonize it with other existing action plans. In addition, the delegations committed to deepening dialogue and resorting to peaceful means with a view to further strengthening bilateral relations and good-neighbourliness.

51. Welcoming the establishment of the Contact and Coordination Group, the summit encouraged close collaboration between the Contact and Coordination Group and the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network to ensure accountability for cross-border crimes committed by armed groups. In addition, the summit agreed to enhance cooperation on integrative cross-border projects and to strengthen partnerships with international financial institutions and other partners in that regard. Burundi offered to host the eleventh high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism in 2023. The summit was preceded by a meeting of ministers of foreign affairs on 22 February as well as the twenty-ninth and thirtieth meetings of the Technical Support Committee, held on 23 November and on 19 and 20 February, respectively.

C. International commitments

52. On 14 October and on 10 February, the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region convened to discuss regional developments, as well as the action plan to implement the regional strategy and related support requirements. The Group's members reiterated their full support for the action plan while also highlighting the importance of regional ownership and effective coordination between the United Nations and the international community.

53. Furthermore, in follow-up to the high-level debate of the Security Council on the Great Lakes region, held on 20 October under the presidency of Kenya, the Special Envoy engaged in bilateral discussions with members of the Council and other partners with a view to promoting concerted financial and technical support for the implementation of the action plan.

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

54. The Special Envoy and his Office continued to lead efforts to implement the regional strategy, most notably by coordinating the implementation of the related action plan and by ensuring a sustained engagement of all United Nations system entities concerned through the Senior Policy Group and its technical arm, the Implementation Support Mechanism.

55. On 15 February, the Special Envoy convened the third meeting of the Senior Policy Group, during which participants reviewed the status of implementation of priority initiatives for 2021 and discussed options for strengthening the coordination

mechanisms and follow-up to the implementation of the regional strategy and its action plan. Participants also agreed to hold a retreat in the second half of May 2022 to further their reflections on coordination between United Nations system entities, external partnerships and the governance and implementation structures of the regional strategy and to subsequently adopt a common resource mobilization strategy and a communications strategy.

A. Promoting dialogue and strengthening trust

56. The Special Envoy continued to advocate for and promote dialogue and enhanced cooperation between countries in the region in support of the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. He engaged senior officials of the Governments of Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Uganda on political and security dynamics in the region, as well as on opportunities for advancing recent gains made in the area of peace, dialogue and cooperation.

57. As part of his good offices mandate, the Special Envoy continued his discreet shuttle diplomacy and consultations with various stakeholders in support of the ongoing rapprochement process between Burundi and Rwanda. In his engagement with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi in November and on the margins of the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, he discussed recent progress, such as the continued bilateral exchanges on political and security issues at various levels, as well as envisaged next steps. He also engaged senior officials of Rwanda and Uganda on the recent progress in the normalization of their bilateral relations, offering his continued support in that regard.

58. Following the adoption of the action plan to implement the regional strategy, in July, the Special Envoy briefed leaders in the region on progress in its implementation and on forthcoming initiatives in support of the region. He further encouraged regional and national ownership of the action plan so as to ensure a sustainable and lasting impact of the efforts undertaken by the United Nations in partnership with the countries of the region, regional organizations and international partners.

59. The Office of the Special Envoy provided operational and substantive support for the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. This included regular consultations by the Special Envoy with the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other senior stakeholders in the country.

B. Reducing the threat posed by armed groups

60. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to support regional efforts to neutralize negative forces through non-military measures in complement to ongoing military operations, notably through the Contact and Coordination Group. In that regard, the Group's operational cell launched its preliminary activities in January. The cell comprises eleven experts from the five member countries, and one coordinator representing the guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, who was deployed to Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, to accelerate the operationalization of the cell.

61. An expert meeting was held from 13 to 17 December in Goma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy, resulting in the adoption of the terms of reference for the operational cell. The meeting brought together, inter alia, the Contact and Coordination Group, the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the seconded experts to the operational cell, members of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community

Recovery and Stabilization Programme, representatives of local civil society organizations, and regional and international partners, including MONUSCO, the African Union and ICGLR.

C. Promoting trade, investment and the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources

62. The Special Envoy continued to promote and support trade, investment and the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources as ways to contribute to durable peace and development. In that regard, he liaised with ICGLR and other partners to promote the swift implementation of the recommendations of the Khartoum workshop on natural resources.

63. In the context of ongoing preparations for the second edition of the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, the Office of the Special Envoy further engaged with private and public investors in February and March with a view to promoting responsible cross-border investment opportunities in the region with the potential of contributing to regional integration and developing an investor community for the Great Lakes region.

D. Finding durable solutions to forced displacement

64. The Office of the Special Envoy remained engaged in supporting regional efforts in coordination with UNHCR, ICGLR and Member States in the region to address protracted displacement by promoting durable solutions. In that regard, the Office of the Special Envoy participated in the second meeting of the Regional Advisory Group convened by ICGLR on 19 November. The meeting constitutes another step towards the development of a regional strategy on durable solutions for displaced populations in the Great Lakes region, in line with the action plan to implement the regional strategy.

E. Promoting regional preparedness to public health crises

65. The United Nations and its partners continued to support signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in strengthening their national plans and strategies in response to public health crises, including by building on lessons learned from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Uganda, the United Nations contributed to the 2022–2023 integrated refugee response plan of the Ministry of Health, whose aim is to contribute to the reform of the national health-care sector and thus improve the effectiveness of national health-care service delivery for refugees. Similar efforts are ongoing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and are under consideration in Rwanda.

66. Furthermore, United Nations system entities, including the Office of the Special Envoy, continued to advocate for equitable access to COVID-19 vaccination by promoting participation in the COVAX Facility of WHO.

F. Advancing the inclusion, participation and empowerment of women and young people

67. To further strengthen the role of women and young people in peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, the Office of the Special Envoy stepped up its partnerships with women's and youth organizations and with

regional bodies. On 1 November, the Office, together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum, facilitated a consultative meeting with regional women's organizations in preparation for the 16-day campaign against gender-based violence. Participants discussed the forthcoming elections in the region and opportunities to support the role of women in conflict prevention prior to the polling.

68. A key step towards the economic empowerment of women and young people was the launch of the Great Lakes Women Entrepreneurs Network on 2 December, facilitated by the Office of the Special Envoy in partnership with the ICGLR Private Sector Forum, UN-Women and the Economic Commission for Africa. As part of the launch event, members of the Network attended training sessions on regional markets, on knowledge about and best practices in business growth, and on gender mainstreaming in the African Continental Free Trade Area.

69. On 20 December, the Office of the Special Envoy facilitated a virtual advocacy engagement between the ICGLR Regional Parliamentary Forum and regional women and youth representatives to discuss sexual and gender-based violence and women's effective participation in political processes and decision-making. The Chair of the Forum of Parliaments pledged to lead a campaign to strengthen gender sensitivity within parliaments. Women representatives submitted recommendations outlining specific areas that require parliamentary engagement, including the elimination of existing barriers to gender equality, the repeal of discriminatory laws and the strengthening of the leadership and meaningful representation of women, marginalized groups and people with disabilities.

70. On 18 February, the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region, co-chaired by the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop, and the Special Envoy, discussed challenges and opportunities for women and young people in the region. A representative of the Advisory Board subsequently presented the recommendations of the meeting at the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism.

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

71. The Special Envoy remained engaged in promoting the rule of law and regional judicial cooperation as part of efforts to continue the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, which was adopted in 2019. In that regard, the Office of the Special Envoy supported preparations, undertaken jointly with ICGLR and the Ministry of Justice of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for a ministerial conference on enhancing judicial cooperation scheduled for 22 May 2022 in Kinshasa. Preparations include, among other things, the elaboration of a road map to strengthen regional judicial cooperation, as well as standardized procedural guidelines for mutual legal assistance in criminal cases.

72. Furthermore, the Office of the Special Envoy continued to work closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other partners to strengthen national human rights institutions and to support transitional justice efforts, including by mapping past and ongoing transitional justice processes and good practices in the Great Lakes region, to inform the development of recommendations.

73. On 10 and 11 March, the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide organized a regional conference in Uganda to address hate speech and prevent incitement to hostility, discrimination and violence in the Great Lakes region

within the framework of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. Participants agreed on an outline of the regional action plan on countering and addressing hate speech.

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

A. Regional organizations and mechanisms

74. As part of his efforts to strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, the Special Envoy engaged the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, as well as the Executive Secretary of ICGLR, João Samuel Caholo, and the new Executive Secretary of Southern African Development Community, Elias Mpedi Magosi. They discussed regional developments, joint support for the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and opportunities for further cooperation.

B. International partners

75. During the period under review, the Special Envoy continued to consult members of the Security Council and other international partners, including members of the diplomatic community, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, on regional developments, and on progress in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the regional strategy. In addition, on 5 October, he convened a meeting with key partners and donors at his office for an exchange of views on ways to further strengthen their partnership in support of the region.

C. Other United Nations entities

76. In the context of the Senior Policy Group, 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 and other United Nations system entities to ensure alignment of initiatives in support of the region. He held a further exchange with the newly appointed Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa of UN-Women, Maxime Houinato, on opportunities to mainstream the women and peace and security agenda across the priorities identified in the action plan to implement the regional strategy.

77. At the invitation of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the Special Envoy participated in the fifty-second ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held on 26 November in Libreville. Participants reviewed the political and security situation in the region.

78. During a visit to Dakar in January, the Special Envoy engaged with the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, who leads collective efforts to implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel on their experiences in the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, including best practices and lessons learned to further inform efforts to implement the regional strategy.

VI. Observations

79. Nine years after its signing, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework remains an important vehicle to bring about lasting stability and development in the Great Lakes region. I am encouraged by the decisions of the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, hosted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 24 February, in which the Heads of State of the signatory countries reiterated their commitment to the vision and objectives of the Framework and took additional measures to address the challenges that continue to impede stability in the region.

80. The first of those challenges remains the illegal and violent activities of armed groups, which continue to inflict immense suffering on the civilian population. I stress the need for renewed efforts to put an end to the suffering of the most vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons and refugees. Addressing the root causes of the conflicts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been devastated by decades of instability, requires renewed energy, political will, creativity and continuous support by the international community.

81. I welcome the continued intensification of diplomatic outreach and dialogue, which attests to the determination of the countries that are signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to further build trust and improve bilateral relations. The reopening of the Gatuna/Katuna border post between Rwanda and Uganda and the continuing exchanges between Burundi and Rwanda on matters of security along the common border and aimed at resolving outstanding issues hampering the normalization of their relations are two examples of the readiness demonstrated by the leaders of the region to move towards cooperation built on open dialogue and reconciliation.

82. I also welcome other initiatives taken to deepen the ongoing cooperation among countries, including the launch of the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group for non-military measures in complement to military operations against negative forces, as well as the review by the ministers in charge of mines of the recommendations made during the high-level workshop on natural resources in Khartoum.

83. The recent operationalization of the Great Lakes Women Entrepreneurs Network is another positive example of efforts to support the participation of all segments of society in regional economic cooperation, and I call on partners to support this Network. I further welcome the commitment expressed by regional parliamentarians to strengthen gender-related legislation, accelerate women's participation in political processes and ensure the protection of women within the Great Lakes region. It should be followed by concrete action, including the domestication of relevant regional agreements and frameworks.

84. Despite these positive dynamics, I continue to be deeply concerned by the surge in attacks carried out by some armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including ADF, whose supply and recruitment networks span across the region. The resurgence of attacks by M23 is yet another reminder of the fragility of the situation.

85. Now is the time to step up and intensify our efforts to address, once and for all, the root causes of instability in the region. I therefore call on us all – the countries of the region, the subregional and regional organizations, and the international community as a whole – to honour the commitments in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and to ensure that the enhanced political cooperation that has recently emerged translate into real change for the people and communities on the ground.

86. The renewed commitment made by the Heads of State during the tenth Summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, in Kinshasa, on the implementation of a comprehensive approach to neutralize negative forces – which places equal emphasis on military cooperation and non-military measures – is encouraging. Indeed, the Contact and Coordination Group, as conceived by the participating countries, could provide the framework necessary to promote viable disarmament and repatriation opportunities for members of foreign armed groups who are ready to surrender and reintegrate into civilian life. I call on all parties involved to honour the commitments made in relation to the Contact and Coordination Group and its operational cell, including by contributing to the timely implementation of the agreed tasks in the action plan to implement the regional strategy. I further urge partners to step up their support for this initiative. My Special Envoy, in partnership with the other guarantor institutions, will continue to support this process.

87. The repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants and the strengthening of national and regional programmes for the demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, reintegration and reinsertion of former combatants remain key. I urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to conclude the repatriation of all remaining former M23 combatants, in accordance with previous decisions of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and in full respect of international human rights and humanitarian law. My Special Envoy remains ready to support such efforts, in collaboration with MONUSCO and the other guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

88. I further take note of the ongoing joint military operations by FARDC and UPDF in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome their public commitments to respect human rights and international humanitarian law. Ensuring that human rights violations and negative humanitarian consequences are avoided during such operations is critical.

89. Recognizing the importance of justice for conflict-related crimes, I call for a swift follow-up to the call made by the Regional Oversight Mechanism for close cooperation and coordination between the Contact and Coordination Group and the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network. My Special Envoy remains ready to support efforts to promote the rule of law and achieve progress in regional judicial cooperation and the fight against impunity, including through the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, adopted in 2019.

90. I reiterate my call on the international community to continue to support the countries of the region and regional organizations in their efforts to advance towards peace, security and development, including through sustained support for the implementation of the action plan to implement the regional strategy.

91. Lastly, 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 and for their leadership in the implementation of the regional strategy.
