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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 [2409 \(2018\)](#), by which the Council requested me to report on the implementation of the commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2018/886](#)) and covers the period from 1 September 2018 to 28 February 2019.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. The activities of foreign and domestic illegal armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, cross-border security incidents, insecurity in the Central African Republic, sporadic fighting between Government and opposition forces in South Sudan and clashes between the Burundian armed forces and armed groups had a negative impact on peace and stability in the Great Lakes region during the reporting period.

3. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, tensions were reported before and after the elections of 30 December 2018 and included instances of protests, violence, clashes between supporters of opposing parties and heavy-handed dispersion of demonstrators by security forces. On a positive note, armed groups that had been very vocal about the outcome of the elections appear to have adopted a “wait and see”

¹ In this context, the region includes the 13 signatories to 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.



approach since the proclamation of the final results of the presidential election. In the Kasai region, an uptrend in the number of Kamuina Nsapu militia members laying down their weapons was recorded during the same period. In Mai-Ndombe Province, the security situation in Yumbi territory remains of concern, after violence broke out between the Batende and Banunu ethnic groups, which a human rights investigation confirmed had resulted in 535 deaths.

4. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, suspected members of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) stepped up attacks in the Beni area, targeting civilians, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). At least 245 civilians, including 55 women and seven children, were killed in attacks attributed to ADF in 2018. The group reportedly continued to recruit followers from countries in the Great Lakes region and beyond. On 12 November, FARDC and MONUSCO launched a joint military operation against the group to prevent a potential attack on Beni town and to protect civilians. A total of 13 FARDC soldiers and seven United Nations peacekeepers were killed during the operation. On 20 November, the military spokesperson of Uganda announced the deployment of approximately 4,000 troops along the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to prevent infiltration and attacks by ADF. In Ituri Province, as dialogue on demobilization and disarmament continued between the Government and the rebel Force de résistance patriotique en Ituri, the parties met on 20 January, discussed pre-cantonment and financial issues and agreed on a security assessment of pre-cantonment sites, as well as meetings with provincial authorities. Meanwhile, subgroups of the Lord's Resistance Army have become more active in Haut-Uélé Province, and the latter half of January saw an increase in the number of incidents attributed to this armed group.

5. On 15 December, FARDC arrested the spokesperson and deputy head of intelligence of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), and media sources reported their extradition to Rwanda in January. While the extradition and repatriation of disarmed FDLR combatants weakened the group, FDLR remained active. On 16 and 17 December, seven FARDC soldiers were reportedly killed in two separate attacks by suspected FDLR rebels. Military operations in December and January against an FDLR splinter group, Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie-Ubwiyunge, forced the latter to abandon positions in North Kivu and move into South Kivu.

6. In Burundi, the security situation remained relatively calm yet unpredictable and was marked by isolated security incidents. On 4 September, unidentified armed individuals attacked Nkurubuye colline in Ruyigi Province, along the border between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania. On 19 October, suspected elements of the Burundian armed group Résistance pour un état de droit au Burundi-Tabara (RED-Tabara) attacked an army position in Bubanza Province. Burundian armed forces captured two assailants, while the others reportedly fled into the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. The security situation in the Central African Republic remained fragile. On 15 November, the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, an armed group affiliated with the ex-Séléka, together with armed civilians, attacked the camp for displaced persons in Alindao. Between 70 and 100 civilians among the estimated 18,000 civilians hosted in the camp were killed. In addition, some armed groups continued to acquire weapons and ammunition from neighbouring countries, as reported by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic in its report [S/2018/1119](#).

8. In South Sudan, sporadic fighting between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and opposition forces, as well as among opposition groups, continued.

Incidents of intercommunal and intracommunal violence were also reported, resulting in civilian casualties and displacement.

9. Cross-border security incidents were reported in the areas between Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, contributing to enhanced tensions between Burundi and Rwanda. On 15 September, suspected elements of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) reportedly entered Burundi from South Kivu to attack a border post at Gatumba. On 19 September, a local leader of the Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth wing, was killed with his wife, near the border with Rwanda. The Ministry of Public Security of Burundi attributed the attack to an armed group from Rwanda. On 7 October, unidentified armed elements reportedly from Rwanda killed three civilians in Cibitoke Province in Burundi. Also, in October, FARDC reportedly clashed with FNL in South Kivu. Furthermore, the Burundian national defence force was reported to have entered South Kivu between November and January, in pursuit of Burundian armed elements. Deadly clashes were also reported between the Burundian national defence force, supported by Imbonerakure, and RED-Tabara, as well as FNL.

10. Armed groups also staged attacks targeting Rwanda. On 10 December, the FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi made a cross-border incursion into Busesamana village, in Rubavu district in Rwanda, and killed at least three soldiers, according to the Government of Rwanda. On 15 December, unidentified armed attackers, reportedly coming from Burundi, launched an attack in Kitabi Sector, southern Rwanda, setting fire to three passenger vehicles and killing two civilians. According to Rwanda's military spokesperson, three of the attackers were killed, while the rest fled to Burundi.

11. The Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported the presence of an armed coalition known as "P5" associated with Rwandan opposition groups, which was active in South Kivu and reportedly received arms and ammunition from Burundi.

12. In September, the follow-up mechanism for the repatriation of former combatants, launched on 24 April 2018, facilitated the repatriation of 11 disarmed FDLR combatants to Rwanda from the Walungu transit camp, in South Kivu. In November, another 52 disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants volunteered for repatriation. This brought the total number of disarmed FDLR combatants repatriated through the follow-up mechanism since April 2018 to 98.

13. Between 20 and 27 November, Congolese authorities, through bilateral arrangements with the Government of Rwanda, repatriated 1,392 disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants, following the closure of transit camps in Kanyobagonga, Kisangani and Walungu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, 242 FDLR elements previously detained in the Angenga prison, in Equateur Province, were handed over to Rwanda. All disarmed combatants were transferred to the Mutobo Demobilization and Reintegration Camp in Rwanda.

14. In another positive development, in October, cooperation between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO resulted in the relocation out of MONUSCO premises of the remaining 51 members of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition, who had been in the care of MONUSCO since August 2016.

B. Political developments

15. The elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the inconclusive inter-Burundian dialogue were key political developments during the reporting

period. Tensions between some countries and insecurity in the Central African Republic and South Sudan also remained issues of concern.

16. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political tensions increased ahead of presidential, national and provincial legislative elections, which took place on 30 December. While polling unfolded in a largely peaceful atmosphere in most of the country, the Independent National Electoral Commission postponed voting until March 2019 in four constituencies, namely, Beni territory, Beni town, Butembo and Yumbi, citing the Ebola outbreak and security-related concerns. On 10 January, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the provisional results of the presidential election and declared opposition leader Félix Tshisekedi the winner, ahead of another opposition candidate, Martin Fayulu, and the candidate of the ruling coalition, Front commun pour le Congo, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. The provisional results of the presidential election were disputed by the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which indicated that they were at variance with data collected through its more than 40,000 national electoral observers. The Independent National Electoral Commission also announced the results of legislative elections on the basis of which Front commun pour le Congo would maintain a majority in the National Assembly, as well as in provincial assemblies. Several challenges to the results of legislative elections will be decided by the courts at the end of March. A legal challenge of the provisional results of the presidential election presented by Mr. Fayulu was rejected by the Constitutional Court, which has confirmed the results declaring the victory of Mr Tshisekedi. On 24 January, Mr. Tshisekedi was sworn in as President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

17. Regional and international actors remained closely engaged throughout the electoral process. On 3 November, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) dispatched an electoral advisory mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which received assurances from the Government that the polls would be held in conformity with international standards and relevant SADC principles. The African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, visited Kinshasa from 8 to 10 November to engage Congolese stakeholders. Following a meeting on 19 November, the African Union Peace and Security Council called on the Congolese to bridge their differences over the elections.

18. On 26 December, President Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, convened a joint International Conference on the Great Lakes Region-SADC summit, at which strong concern was expressed about the tense political climate in the run-up to the polls and all Congolese actors were called upon to exercise restraint.

19. The African Union, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC each deployed observation missions. In their preliminary reports dated 2 January, the observation missions deployed by the African Union and SADC noted that the elections had taken place in largely peaceful and acceptable conditions, despite some challenges.

20. On 13 January, President Edgar Lungu of Zambia and President Sassou Nguesso issued separate statements, in their capacities as Chairs of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, respectively, in which they noted disputes over the results and called for both a recount and the formation of an inclusive government.

21. On 17 January, the Double Troika of SADC held a consultation meeting at which the role of the Congolese Constitutional Court was reaffirmed and the international community was called upon to respect the Constitution of the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, as well as its sovereignty and territorial integrity. On the same day, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union, convened a high-level consultation with some States members of the African Union to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the communiqué of this high-level consultation, serious doubts were expressed about the conformity of the provisional results of the presidential election with the votes cast and a call was made for the suspension of the proclamation of the final results of the elections. It was further indicated in the communiqué that a high-level delegation would travel to Kinshasa to interact with Congolese stakeholders, with a view to reaching a consensus on a way out of the post-electoral crisis in the country. Following the ruling by the Constitutional Court on 19 January, which upheld the preliminary results of the presidential election, however, the planned mission was postponed *sine die*.

22. In Burundi, tensions between the Government and the opposition remained high, with the latter denouncing continuing violations of political freedom and human rights. Similarly, strained relations between Burundi and the East African Community persisted over the status of the inter-Burundian dialogue.

23. Security-related incidents at the border between Burundi and Rwanda and a call by President Nkurunziza for an extraordinary East African Community Summit on Burundi-Rwanda relations strained ties between the two countries. During a press conference on 14 December, President Kagame maintained that some neighbouring countries were supporting Rwandan opposition groups, notably FDLR and the Rwanda National Congress. He affirmed that, while Rwanda was ready to address any security challenge at its borders, his country would not react to what he described as provocations from Burundi. On 1 February, Rwanda took over the leadership of the East African Community from Uganda, during an ordinary summit, at which it was decided to postpone deliberations on the situation in Burundi.

24. In the Central African Republic, efforts continued through the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation to advance the dialogue between the Government and armed groups. On 18 September, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission met President Faustin Archange Touadera in Bangui and stressed the need to accelerate the implementation of the African Initiative. From 8 to 10 January, a ministerial delegation from the region, led by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security and my Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, visited Bangui. Following the visit, talks between the Government and 14 armed groups commenced on 24 January in Khartoum and culminated in a peace agreement signed on 5 February.

25. In South Sudan, despite progress in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, signed on 12 September in Addis Ababa, the parties have yet to meet several benchmarks, including compliance with a permanent ceasefire and the release of political prisoners. On 16 November, the Council of Ministers of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development directed its Special Envoy to reach out to warring groups that were not signatories to the Revitalized Agreement, so that they might also participate in its implementation.

C. Humanitarian situation

26. The high number of displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, notably from Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, remained a major concern. As at 31 December 2018, approximately 11.2 million people were forcibly displaced, including 7.2 million internally displaced and

more than 4 million refugees and asylum seekers. The 4 million refugees and asylum seekers came mostly from South Sudan (2.28 million), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (619,500), Burundi (402,300), the Sudan (328,300) and Rwanda (236,400). Furthermore, more than 22.7 million people needed food assistance. Uganda remained the largest refugee host country in the region, with 1.19 million refugees, followed by the Sudan (1.1 million) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (534,828).

27. From 1 January to 31 December 2018 alone, some 159,000 Congolese fled to neighbouring countries, with a particularly significant increase in refugee flows to Uganda, Burundi, Kenya and Zambia. On 16 December, intercommunal clashes in the province of Mai-Ndombe in the Democratic Republic of the Congo led to the largest influx of Congolese refugees into the Republic of the Congo in almost a decade.

28. As at December, some 350,000 Burundian refugees were hosted in other countries in the region, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Voluntary returns supported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees continued, however, and some 44,773 Burundian refugees voluntarily returned from the United Republic of Tanzania in 2018.

29. Since October 2018, Angola has reportedly returned some 370,000 irregular Congolese migrants to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Around 2,000 Congolese refugees were also expelled, fuelling tensions between the two countries.

30. Another worrisome development was the latest outbreak, in August 2018, of the Ebola virus disease in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the World Health Organization, the risk of a regional spread is very high, although no cases have been reported in neighbouring countries to date. In response, Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, among others, have strengthened surveillance, information exchange and contingency plans, whereas the United Republic of Tanzania closed its borders. Response to the outbreak was hampered by continued insecurity in the Beni area, notably owing to attacks by ADF, as well as several days of general strikes in Beni town, in September and October 2018.

31. The underfunding of humanitarian responses continued to impact the delivery of assistance to those in need. As at 31 December 2018, the regional refugee response plans for Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in 2018 were funded at 33 per cent, 34 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively.

D. Human rights

32. Tense political processes, accompanied by shrinking political space and restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms, continued to mark the human rights situation in some countries in the region. Attacks on civilians by armed groups and, in some cases, State security forces, including sexual-based and gender-based violence, were reported, while accountability for serious human rights violations and respect for the rule of law remained weak. International actors, including United Nations humanitarian actors and peacekeepers, were deliberately targeted on several occasions.

33. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, human rights violations, including those linked to restrictions on democratic space, continued, particularly during the electoral campaign. On 14 December, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights denounced the violent suppression of demonstrations and the disproportionate use of force by Congolese police and security forces. The electoral period exacerbated various inter-ethnic tensions during the campaign as well as

following the announcement of the provisional results. There were also reports of intimidation and harassment of journalists and human rights defenders, while some opposition-affiliated media outlets were suspended by the authorities. Furthermore, between 31 December and 19 January, the Government shut down access to the Internet and text messaging throughout the country.

34. In Burundi, the reported number and scale of human rights violations, the continued detention of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience and ongoing restrictions on civil and political space remained matters of serious concern. Against this backdrop, the Human Rights Council decided on 29 September 2018 to extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for another year. On 5 December, the Government formally requested the closure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Burundi, citing improved security, as well as progress in managing issues related to human rights.

35. In a separate development, on 30 November, the Attorney General of Burundi issued international arrest warrants against former President Pierre Buyoya and 16 other senior Tutsi military and civilian officials for their alleged involvement in the assassination of President Melchior Ndadaye in 1993. On 2 December, former President Buyoya asserted that the decision was a political move to divert attention from the ongoing political crisis and warned that the decision could reignite ethnic violence between Hutus and Tutsis.

36. In the Central African Republic, serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by armed groups continued, including killings, abductions and destruction of property. On 18 November, Central African authorities extradited Alfred Yekatom, a member of parliament and former anti-balaka leader, to the International Criminal Court. On 12 December, they arrested Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, the anti-balaka “National General Coordinator”, in compliance with an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court on 7 December. Both individuals are wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between 2013 and 2014.

37. In South Sudan, the human rights situation remained worrisome, with violations perpetrated by warring parties against civilians, including women and children, in a climate of impunity. Between 19 and 29 November, more than 150 women and girls were attacked by unidentified individuals near Bentiu in northern South Sudan. Experts mandated by the Human Rights Council are investigating the attacks and are expected to present their findings to the Council in March 2019. Humanitarian workers and assets also remained targets of violence.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

38. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region continued to engage with national and regional leaders, the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and other partners, with a view to advancing the implementation of national, regional and international commitments, as well as the decisions adopted at the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, held on 8 October in Kampala.

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

39. The leadership of the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been undergoing several changes, which have had a negative impact on the monitoring of the implementation of the national commitments in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework by ministries and other relevant national institutions.

40. In furtherance of the second national commitment, namely, to “consolidate State authority, particularly in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including to prevent armed groups from destabilizing neighbouring countries”, Congolese authorities closed FDLR transit camps in the east in November 2018 and repatriated 1,634 disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants, some of whom were previously detained, pursuant to a bilateral agreement with Rwanda.

41. In implementation of the sixth national commitment, namely, to “further the agenda of national reconciliation, tolerance and democratization” and the electoral process, MONUSCO and United Nations agencies supported the training of women candidates and youth organizations by strengthening their communication skills, as part of the United Nations contribution to the holding of peaceful and inclusive elections. Several training workshops were organized across the country in that context.

B. Commitments of the region

42. Progress was registered in strengthening cooperation between the signatories to neutralize negative forces and repatriate disarmed foreign combatants, as indicated in paragraphs 13 and 14. Regional leaders and organizations also continued their engagement in support of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the inter-Burundian dialogue, respectively. The reporting period further saw progress towards economic integration and judicial cooperation, although strained relations between some countries, characterized by mutual accusations of interference and support to armed groups, had a negative impact on cohesion and cooperation in the region.

43. In addition to progress in the repatriation of disarmed combatants, leaders of the region agreed, during the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to strengthen relevant mechanisms of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, notably the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on ADF, based in Kasese, Uganda. They further underscored the need for greater regional cooperation towards the complete and rapid neutralization of negative forces.

44. Countries of the region also engaged bilaterally to address cross-border security incidents. After several security incidents in disputed areas of Lake Edward, between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, military officials from both countries agreed in December to conduct joint border patrols in the affected areas. Following the attack of 10 December reported in paragraph 10, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo established a bilateral commission to investigate the incident.

45. On the political front, on 17 October, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Africa met, within the framework of their binational commission, to discuss political developments and other issues of mutual concern. Similarly, the Sudan and Uganda convened their bilateral joint permanent commission from 5 to 7 December. Furthermore, as previously noted, leaders and organizations in the region reached out to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and political actors, to contribute to peaceful and credible elections in the country.

46. With regard to regional economic cooperation, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo signed an agreement on 8 November to develop the first road-rail bridge project linking their capital cities of Kinshasa and Brazzaville. On 22 November, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania committed during a meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts of the Economic Commission for Africa to strengthen regional integration, through the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, adopted by States members of the African Union on 21 March. To date, Kenya, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda have ratified the Agreement.

47. On 30 November, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia concluded negotiations on the Kasomeno-Mwenda road project, which is expected to open an important new regional trade corridor. With a view to streamlining border-crossing procedures and boosting trade in the region, 12 out of 15 planned “one-stop border posts” were completed by 1 December, through collaboration between the East African Community and the African Development Bank. A total of 10 of these border posts are currently operational.

48. Signatory countries to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework also cooperated on cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity, through the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, which was operationalized with support from the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region.

C. Commitments of the international community

49. Special envoys and special representatives in the Great Lakes region engaged in regular consultations to support peaceful and inclusive political processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. On 27 September, Germany, then chair of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region, and the Office of my Special Envoy convened consultations on the Great Lakes region in New York. Participants comprised senior officials representing countries in the region, as well as representatives of the international community. The International Contact Group met again on 15 and 16 November in Berlin, where consultations were held with representatives of countries in the region and regional organizations. Discussions focused on options to enhance regional and international cooperation to support electoral and dialogue processes, address the threat posed by armed groups, enhance partnership with the private sector and tackle the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources.

50. Furthermore, in a statement at the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, the International Contact Group encouraged dialogue and the full use of existing mechanisms to pursue the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

51. The implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, which is aimed at aligning United Nations development and political mandates in the region, registered progress through continuing collaboration between the Office of my Special Envoy and United Nations country teams, agencies, funds and programmes. On 12 December, a peace and security project in support of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region worth 10 million euros, funded by the European Union, was launched in Bujumbura. On 19 February, the management board of the Regional Strategic Framework met and reviewed the implementation of ongoing projects.

IV. Implementation of the road map of my Special Envoy

A. Support to the governing mechanisms of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

52. Heads of State and Government of the signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and representatives of the guarantor institutions attended the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism on 8 October in Kampala. The meeting, chaired by President Museveni in his capacity as incoming Chair of the Mechanism, was preceded by a meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs, held on 6 October in Kampala, and the twenty-second meeting of the Technical Support Committee, held on 6 and 7 September in Nairobi.

53. At the initiative of my Special Envoy, the ninth high-level meeting included a closed-door session to discuss ways to build trust among the leaders of the region. This was in line with the outcome of the seminar organized jointly with the African Union to mark the fifth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held on 26 and 27 February 2018 in Addis Ababa, and subsequent consultations with regional actors. Participants in the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism expressed concern about the activities of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and their regional implications, noting that they remained an obstacle to building greater trust and confidence among leaders and peoples in the region.

54. In the final communiqué of the ninth high-level meeting, the Regional Oversight Mechanism called for a new approach to enhance regional cooperation against the threat posed by negative forces, in particular, ADF. The Regional Oversight Mechanism requested President Museveni to consult with the Chairs of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, with regard to future joint actions. It further requested the United Nations to help to mobilize support to operationalize and strengthen the mechanisms of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region intended to enhance regional cooperation to address the threat posed by negative forces.

55. The Regional Oversight Mechanism also requested President Sassou Nguesso, as Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to consider taking initiatives to strengthen friendship and cooperation among leaders in the region, building on previous initiatives he had taken in that regard.

56. Participants called for continued cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to complete the repatriation of disarmed FDLR combatants and their dependants from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and of former M23 combatants and dependants from Rwanda and Uganda.

57. Participants also reviewed political and dialogue processes in Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan and stressed the need for inclusivity within electoral and political processes in the region.

58. On 20 November, my Special Envoy supported the Government of Uganda in bringing together representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, as well as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, to discuss priority actions to implement the decisions of the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. International partners and regional experts also attended.

59. Participants discussed next steps to assess and strengthen existing mechanisms of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, including the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on ADF and the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism. They recommended a meeting of security and intelligence services of the countries affected by armed groups to promote cooperation and improve information-sharing on such groups. They further recommended the establishment of a working group comprising experts and representatives of relevant ministries to identify cross-border economic integration projects, building on previous efforts.

60. Following these consultations, the Technical Support Committee met on 24 and 25 January in Nairobi and agreed to identify concrete initiatives to build confidence and enhance the sharing of information on negative forces among signatory countries. It also discussed the strengthening of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on ADF and called on contributing countries to provide personnel and financial contributions. Furthermore, participants called for a political and strategic approach to economic integration in the region, which should, as a priority, promote natural resources as drivers of shared prosperity.

61. My Special Envoy held additional consultations with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC. On 6 February, representatives of the guarantor organizations met at the ministerial level in Addis Ababa. Participants welcomed renewed regional efforts to neutralize armed groups, including a planned confidence-building initiative on security and intelligence. They also noted the need to explore political and strategic approaches to economic integration in the region.

B. Good offices of the Secretary-General

62. As part of my good offices, my Special Envoy engaged with leaders in the region, highlighting the need for frank dialogue to address issues that could jeopardize good relations and cooperation. He further encouraged them to enhance collaboration to improve security, combat impunity, promote judicial cooperation, advance economic integration and promote natural resources for shared prosperity.

Promoting cooperation and confidence-building

63. Addressing mistrust between some signatories and building confidence remained a priority for my Special Envoy during the reporting period. In that regard, he engaged senior officials of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, as well as senior government representatives of the Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Zambia, in their capacities as current chairs of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, respectively.

64. On 31 January, my Special Envoy met President Sassou Nguesso in Brazzaville to, inter alia, follow up on the request, made to the latter during the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, to take initiatives to strengthen friendship and cooperation among leaders in the region. President Sassou Nguesso agreed to intensify his efforts in that regard, while noting the reluctance by some leaders to discuss the issues fuelling mistrust among them.

Neutralization of negative forces

65. My Special Envoy promoted renewed attention and collaboration to address the threat posed by armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pursuant to the decisions adopted during the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional

Oversight Mechanism, he discussed with senior government representatives, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda, the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and African Union officials, how best to promote cooperation among signatories to strengthen regional mechanisms.

66. From 10 to 14 September, my Special Envoy facilitated a sensitization and screening mission by the dedicated follow-up mechanism to camps hosting disarmed former M23 combatants in Rwanda. On 25 October, the Office of my Special Envoy convened the third meeting of the follow-up mechanism in Nairobi to review and accelerate repatriation efforts. On 30 October, the Office of my Special Envoy visited the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to discuss the reintegration of former FDLR elements repatriated through the follow-up mechanism, as well as the imminent closure by Congolese authorities of three FDLR transit camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

67. During its fourth meeting, held on 24 January in Nairobi, the follow-up mechanism adopted a timetable for screening and sensitization missions to Uganda and Rwanda, to advance the repatriation of former M23 members, as well as a mission to Rwanda to monitor the reintegration of former FDLR combatants and their dependants. From 15 to 22 February, representatives of my Special Envoy, together with representatives of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, the Expanded Joint Verification Mission and MONUSCO, visited camps hosting former M23 members in Rwanda and Uganda. Previously, from 11 to 13 February, the Office of my Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region had conducted an assessment visit to the headquarters of the follow-up mechanism on ADF, located in Kasese, Uganda. While the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deployed a representative to serve on the mechanism, the delayed contribution of personnel by participating States and logistical challenges continue to hamper the operations of the follow-up mechanism.

68. These activities generated goodwill and improved cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda on the protracted issue of the repatriation of former combatants. This helped to create an environment conducive to the repatriation, in November, of all disarmed FDLR combatants previously in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the basis of bilateral arrangements between Congolese and Rwandan authorities.

Support to dialogue and political processes

Democratic Republic of the Congo

69. Recognizing the importance of peaceful and credible elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my Special Envoy engaged with regional and international actors to promote a peaceful outcome of the electoral process. He remained in close contact with senior government officials of Angola, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Zambia, as well as senior representatives of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, to help to ensure that coherent and coordinated messages were delivered to Congolese stakeholders. He also held a series of consultations with representatives of the European Union and other partners on how to support the process.

Burundi

70. My Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region extended support to my Special Envoy for Burundi to encourage dialogue between the Government and the opposition. In a meeting with Minister for Foreign Affairs Ezéchiel Nibigira on 25 September, my Special Envoy urged the parties to address all outstanding issues through dialogue to pave the way for credible and inclusive elections in 2020 and

advised Burundi to take steps to overcome its diplomatic isolation. Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda on 4 December, my Special Envoy welcomed the ongoing mediation by President Museveni and looked forward to the next East African Community summit, which, he hoped, would provide opportunities for discussions among the leaders of the region on the way forward. He also discussed the situation in Burundi and Burundi's relationship with Rwanda with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region on 12 December.

Advancing women and peace and security

71. On 8 October, former President Catherine Samba Panza of the Central African Republic addressed the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, on behalf of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. She advocated for the meaningful participation of women in political and peace processes in the region. Participants subsequently endorsed the recommendations of the women's solidarity missions to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, undertaken by representatives of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations and facilitated by the Office of my Special Envoy, which highlighted women and peace and security issues in the region.

72. The Office of my Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region co-organized a meeting of gender ministers from the Great Lakes region, which was held in Entebbe, Uganda, on 23 November. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). The ministers reiterated, inter alia, the commitment of their Governments to achieve a minimum 30 per cent quota for political participation of women by 2020.

73. On 13 February, my Special Envoy convened the tenth meeting of the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform in Nairobi. Participants recommended increased regional capacity to advance the women and peace and security agenda. They welcomed the willingness of Rwanda to share best practices in the participation and agreed to deploy additional solidarity missions to the Sudan and the Republic of the Congo, as well as a follow-up mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Displacement

74. Further to the decisions adopted at the eighth and ninth high-level meetings of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, and in consultation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, my Special Envoy continued to advocate for the implementation of solutions to protracted refugee situations. He also continued to engage with regional and international partners, in preparation for a ministerial meeting on displacement scheduled for 7 March 2019, to be convened by his office and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in close cooperation with other relevant United Nations entities.

Judicial cooperation

75. On 12 and 13 November, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, convened the third meeting of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, in Kampala. Public prosecutors from the region agreed, inter alia, on measures to strengthen judicial capacities at the national level and discussed transborder judicial cases with the potential to impact cooperation and stability in the region.

Natural resources

76. The Office of my Special Envoy continued to support regional efforts to curb the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources, with a view to eliminating financial incentives for armed groups and criminal networks.

77. On 26 November, the Office of my Special Envoy and the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration convened a coalition-building conference in Kigali to promote peace and security and shared natural resource management in the Greater Virunga Landscape. The conference brought together representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the diplomatic corps, civil society and United Nations officials. Participants recognized the importance of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration as a mechanism for conservation, peace and development and pledged support for its operations.

Economic cooperation

78. The Office of my Special Envoy, in close collaboration with the Rwanda Development Board and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, advanced preparations for the second Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, to be held in Rwanda in November 2019.

C. Partnerships with regional organizations, international partners and other United Nations entities

79. My Special Envoy continued to work in close partnership with regional organizations, international partners and other United Nations entities in the region, to advance the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

Regional organizations

80. On 14 and 15 September, my Special Envoy met with senior African Union officials, including the Commissioner for Peace and Security, in Addis Ababa. They reviewed developments in the region and discussed preparations for the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism. My Special Envoy also met President Edgar Lungu of Zambia on 2 October, in his capacity as Chair of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, and discussed peace and security challenges in the region, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 11 and 12 October, he participated in a high-level workshop on “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020”, organized by the African Union, and shared lessons and experiences in peacemaking in Africa, notably in the Great Lakes region.

81. Strengthening partnership with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region was a priority for my Special Envoy during the reporting period. As detailed above, his Office organized a series of meetings and field visits with the International Conference on the repatriation of disarmed combatants, the neutralization of negative forces, women and peace and security, judicial cooperation, economic integration, natural resource management and population displacement. On 3 October, my Special Envoy visited the Levy Mwanawasa Regional Centre for Democracy and Good Governance based in Lusaka to discuss a range of issues, such as youth employment and forced population displacement. On 12 December, my Special Envoy and the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region met in Bujumbura and agreed on joint priority activities for 2019.

International partners

82. In addition to engaging with the International Contact Group on the Great Lakes Region, my Special Envoy held bilateral meetings with Belgian government officials and European Union representatives in Brussels from 19 to 20 September. On 17 December, he convened donors to the Trust Fund for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in Nairobi to brief them on the activities of his Office and promote support for upcoming initiatives.

83. On 19 and 20 February, my Special Envoy and the European Union Special Coordinator for the Great Lakes region convened a regional coordination and policy discussion in Nairobi, with a view to identifying joint actions to advance durable peace and shared prosperity in the region.

Cooperation with other United Nations entities

84. My Special Envoy engaged with senior United Nations officials in the region, including my Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO, my Special Envoy for Burundi, my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to ensure effective coordination, in particular during the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the inter-Burundian dialogue and in the context of relations between Burundi and Rwanda.

85. On 5 and 6 November, the Office of my Special Envoy attended a coordination meeting of political units and peace and development advisers in Central Africa, convened by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and held in Libreville. The meeting was aimed at improving information-sharing and the coordination of United Nations actions in that region.

86. In a continuing effort to develop a shared analysis of challenges and opportunities in the Great Lakes region, the Office of my Special Envoy convened, on 15 February, the second meeting of political affairs units and peace and development advisers in the Great Lakes region. On 18 February, the Office convened the sixth biannual coordination meeting of United Nations offices, resident coordinators and regional directors in Nairobi, to strengthen the United Nations response to political, security and development challenges in the region.

87. In collaboration with the Regional United Nations Development Group, my Special Envoy also continued to promote and guide United Nations efforts to implement the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, with a view to ensuring that development responses were effectively aligned with United Nations political engagements in the region.

V. Observations and recommendations

88. I commend the continuing efforts by the signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, with the support of the guarantors, to resolve their differences through dialogue and cooperation. At the same time, I am concerned about persisting tensions between signatories, which are compounded by other factors, notably the threat posed by armed groups and the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources. In addition, the outbreak of Ebola in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo could impact regional stability, if not adequately contained.

89. I welcome the outcome of the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, in which the need for greater cooperation towards the neutralization of negative forces in the region was highlighted. I encourage the

signatories to implement the decisions adopted at the meeting and urge national and regional leaders to remain committed to dialogue and cooperation at all levels.

90. I am concerned by the recent spate of attacks attributed to ADF, as well as the increasing number of cross-border incidents, which, if unchecked, could escalate tensions and worsen instability in the region. I welcome the decision by the Regional Oversight Mechanism to strengthen existing regional mechanisms and commend the steps already taken in that regard. I call on all signatories to meet their obligations and fulfil their commitments under those mechanisms, in particular the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on ADF and the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, so that they may discharge their mandates effectively. My Special Envoy will continue to mobilize support to those efforts.

91. With regard to the repatriation of foreign former combatants, I commend the cooperation among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, as well as the support provided by the guarantors, through the follow-up mechanism established to that effect. The recent repatriation of large numbers of disarmed FDLR combatants and dependants by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda offers an example of how the region can act together to advance common peace and security objectives. I call on Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the effective reintegration of the disarmed combatants, in line with international law. I further encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to complete the repatriation of former M23 combatants through the follow-up mechanism, in accordance with human rights principles and international humanitarian and refugee law.

92. I welcome the call by the Regional Oversight Mechanism for inclusive electoral and political processes. I regret that, despite our best efforts, challenges persist in ensuring basic political freedom and human rights for all in the Great Lakes region. I call on Governments to uphold their commitments, notably those under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and to create the space necessary for the voices of all stakeholders to be heard in decision-making processes.

93. I commend the Congolese people for the peaceful conduct of the elections and the first orderly transfer of power in the post-independence history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I encourage the Government and all political actors to work towards consensus and national unity, to lay the foundation for peace and development throughout the country.

94. With regard to Burundi, I commend the efforts undertaken by the Mediator for the East African Community, President Yoweri Museveni, the Facilitator, Benjamin Mkapa, the African Union and my Special Envoy. I call on all concerned parties to meet their obligations in putting an end to the political crisis. I appeal to the East African Community and all the leaders of the region to redouble their efforts towards ensuring that stability is restored, while preserving the gains of the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi.

95. I am pleased with the progress achieved in raising the profile of the women and peace and security agenda in the region and welcome the adoption by the gender ministers of the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#). I call on all national leaders to implement the 30 per cent quota for the representation of women in peace and political processes and to continue efforts to achieve gender parity.

96. I regret to note persistent instances of sexual and gender-based violence in the region. I urge the signatories to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to take all actions necessary to stop such heinous acts and to ensure that the perpetrators of such crimes are swiftly brought to justice.

97. Fighting impunity remains key to delivering peace, security and development. In that regard, I welcome the work of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network. I am encouraged to see the collaboration between signatory countries to address cases of serious human rights violations and encourage the Office of my Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to provide sustained support to those efforts.

98. I welcome the progress made towards greater economic cooperation and integration. Such cooperation should encompass the management of natural resources. In that regard, I encourage the signatory countries, with the support of the guarantors, to initiate a political dialogue on options to promote shared prosperity, through enhanced governance of natural resources.

99. Recognizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of conflict in the region, my Special Envoy and the Chair of the Regional United Nations Development Group will continue to rally support for the implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

100. I would like to pay tribute to my outgoing Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Said Djinnit, and to thank his team for their tireless efforts to advance the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. During his distinguished service in the Great Lakes region, my Special Envoy worked closely with Member States and the African Union, as well as regional organizations and mechanisms, to address complex peace and security challenges in the region.
