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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 [2463 \(2019\)](#), in which the Council requested me 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.¹ It provides an overview of peace and security developments in the Great Lakes region since the issuance of my previous report ([S/2019/229](#)) and covers the period from 1 March to 31 August 2019.

II. Major developments

A. Security situation

2. During the period under review, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained fragile, as illegal armed groups continued to commit atrocities against the civilian population and attack the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). In addition, cross-border security-related incidents, prevailing insecurity in the Central African Republic and sporadic fighting between Government and opposition forces in South Sudan affected peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

3. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) were suspected of perpetrating attacks in the Beni area, including in areas affected by the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease. Furthermore, alleged links between ADF and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) raised grave concern in

¹ In this context, the region refers to 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.



the region. On 18 April, ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack suspected to have been carried out by ADF on an FARDC camp in Bovata, North Kivu, on 16 April, during which two soldiers and one civilian were killed. Since then, ISIL has claimed responsibility for more attacks also attributed to ADF. In a media appearance on 29 June, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, expressed concern over the adoption by ADF of terror tactics linked to ISIL. In its most recent report, however, the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not confirm any direct link between ADF and ISIL.

4. FARDC and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) continued joint military operations against ADF, including an offensive on 30 May that led to the killing of 26 ADF combatants in Ngite, North Kivu.

5. The operational strength of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) continued to diminish during the period under review, following the repatriation of most of its former combatants from camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2018, along with sustained joint FARDC-MONUSCO operations targeting the group. The impact of the death of the FDLR leader, Ignace Murwanashyaka, in Germany on 16 April was not immediately discernible in the operational structure and morale of the rebel group. FDLR remained active and continued to pose a threat in North and South Kivu Provinces through local and regional networks. The number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence reportedly committed by FDLR combatants increased in Nyiragongo territory, where most victims were attacked on their way to collect firewood and charcoal in the Virunga National Park. Conflict-related sexual violence also continues to be reported in Rutshuru territory, in the context of clashes between FDLR and Nyatura elements.

6. In December 2018, the FDLR splinter group Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD) came under significant pressure from the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) militia and was forced to move southward. Abandoning their positions in North Kivu, hundreds of CNRD fighters and thousands of Rwandan Hutu civilians travelling with the group relocated to South Kivu in January 2019. Throughout their southbound movement, which began around 23 December 2018, several clashes occurred, with casualties reported within CNRD ranks and among civilians. FARDC and MONUSCO engaged in pursuit of the rebels in South Kivu. There were allegations of conflict-related sexual violence against minors attributed to CNRD, in the context of clashes with FARDC in Kalehe, South Kivu.

7. The P5 coalition, an armed group composed of Rwandan opposition political organizations, has been weakened by the arrest on 30 April and extradition from the Comoros of Callixte “Sankara” Nsabimana, the leader of the National Liberation Front, the military wing of the Mouvement rwandais pour le changement démocratique. On 23 May, Callixte Nsabimana was charged with 16 crimes, including terrorism, kidnapping, murder and genocide denial. He pleaded guilty to all charges. Despite those setbacks, members of the P5 coalition, supported by the local Ngomino armed group and remaining members of FDLR, were reported to have regrouped and reorganized in North Kivu and South Kivu.

8. Similarly, although the presence of the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi in South Kivu had decreased following FARDC-MONUSCO military operations in early 2019, the group was reported to have been fighting since May alongside Mai-Mai Yakutumba against the Rwanda National Congress.

9. In Burundi, the security situation remained calm in most areas. Nevertheless, security incidents and human rights violations were reported.

10. In the Central African Republic, armed groups that had signed the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019 were reported to have violated provisions of the Agreement and posed a threat to civilians. For instance, on 21 May 2019, combatants of the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group killed 42 persons, mostly civilians, around Paoua. The leadership of the group subsequently handed over to the Central African authorities three combatants linked to the attack, after sustained political engagement by the guarantors and facilitators of the Agreement, notably, the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States, and as a result of military pressure mounted against the group by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. During the first six months of 2019, 102 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported, 54 of which had been committed after the signing of the peace accord, in direct violation of the Agreement.

11. In South Sudan, sporadic fighting between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and opposition forces, as well as fighting among opposition groups, continued in parts of the country. Incidents of intercommunal and intracommunal violence were also reported and resulted in civilian casualties and displacement. Since the beginning of the year, the United Nations has documented 211 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, mainly occurring in Central Equatoria and Western Equatoria Provinces.

12. In other parts of the Great Lakes region, cross-border security incidents raised tensions between some countries during the reporting period. On 24 May, two persons of Rwandan and Ugandan nationality, respectively, were killed by Rwandan military forces. On 25 May, Ugandan and Rwandan police delegations discussed the incident, and, on 27 May, the body of the deceased Rwandan was handed over at the Gatuna border post.

B. Political developments

13. The peaceful transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the outreach by Mr. Tshisekedi towards his peers and a renewed commitment to regional cooperation and integration, notably by Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, brought about new dynamics in regional relations and generated significant momentum towards enhanced cooperation. Tensions, including among neighbouring countries and in relation to dialogue and political processes, persisted nonetheless.

14. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba was appointed Prime Minister on 20 May. On 26 August, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a Government, following negotiations between the Cap pour le changement (CACH), the political platform of Mr. Tshisekedi, and the Front commun pour le Congo (FCC), the platform of the former President, Joseph Kabila. The new Government comprises 67 members, including the Prime Minister, 5 Vice-Prime Ministers, 10 State Ministers, 31 *ministres aux fonctions*, 3 *ministres délégués* and 17 Vice-Ministers. A total of 23 cabinet positions were secured by CACH, whereas FCC secured 42 positions. First-time ministers make up over 70 per cent of the Government. Women comprise 17 per cent but hold key ministerial positions, such as for foreign affairs and planning. On 3 September, Mr. Ilunga Ilunkamba presented the programme of the Government to the National Assembly.

15. On 24 April, the National Assembly elected its Bureau, headed for the first time by a woman, Jeanine Mabunda, an FCC coalition member. On 11 June, the Constitutional Court announced the invalidation of the election of two senators, both

from the Lamuka coalition, and 33 members of the National Assembly, 21 of whom were affiliated with Lamuka and 12 of whom belonged to parties affiliated with FCC. A total of 32 members of FCC and 1 member of CACH were elected in their place. The decision triggered protests in Kinshasa and several other cities. The ruling was partially overturned on 3 and 4 July, following further examination by the Court. On 27 July, the Senate, in which FCC holds a majority of seats, elected as its President the former Minister of Justice of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, of FCC.

16. Positive developments regarding the participation of opposition politicians in Congolese politics were recorded, with the return to the Democratic Republic of the Congo of Moïse Katumbi on 20 May, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi on 31 May and Jean-Pierre Bemba on 23 June. Their return was widely viewed in the context of an improving political climate, following the first-ever peaceful transfer of power through elections.

17. In Burundi, preparations for elections began. On 17 April, the National Assembly passed the new electoral code, and, on 28 June, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that presidential, legislative and local elections would be held on 20 May 2020. In his address to the nation on 1 July, the President of Burundi, Pierre Nkurunziza, reaffirmed that the elections would be financed without external support. Consultations within the East African Community on the way forward for the inter-Burundian dialogue continue.

18. Despite the aforementioned momentum towards greater regional cooperation, relations between Burundi and Rwanda remained strained. Furthermore, following a significant deterioration in bilateral relations, Rwanda and Uganda signed a memorandum of understanding intended to ease tensions and restore friendly relations between the two countries on 21 August in Luanda (see para. 40 below). The appearance on 23 May of Callixte Nsabimana in a court in Kigali (see para. 7 above); the cross-border incident of 24 May (see para. 12 above); the closure by Rwanda of the Gatuna/Katuna border crossing for renovation; and the advisory issued by Rwanda warning its citizens against travelling to Uganda fuelled significant tensions between the two countries during the reporting period.

19. In the Central African Republic, the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation continued. On 7 March, the National Assembly elected its Bureau, comprising only 3 women out of 14 members, despite the law on gender inclusion, which requires a minimum representation of 35 per cent women in State institutions. On 22 March, a 39-member Government was formed, which included members representing the presidential majority, armed groups and the political opposition. On 5 June, the Constitutional Court requested a revision of the electoral code adopted by the National Assembly on 23 April, citing insufficient compliance with the Constitution, including with regard to the representation of women.

20. In South Sudan, the leaders of the parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan met in Addis Ababa on 2 and 3 May. The parties observed that pre-transitional tasks critical to the formation of a Government of national unity had not been concluded. Consequently, they agreed to extend the pre-transitional period by six months beginning on 12 May.

21. In the Sudan, the President, Omer Al-Bashir, was ousted on 11 April, after several months of protests in Khartoum. Protests continued, however, as civilians refused to recognize the Transitional Military Council as the sole transitional authority. On 6 June, after a violent repression of the protests caused over 100 deaths, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union suspended the Sudan from all African Union activities until the effective establishment of a civilian-led transitional authority. On 17 August, following sustained mediation by the African Union and

Ethiopia, the Transitional Military Council and the opposition coalition, Forces for Freedom and Change, reached an agreement to form a civilian-led transitional Government. Abdalla Hamdok was sworn in as Prime Minister of the transitional Government on 21 August.

C. Humanitarian situation

22. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, population displacement remains a major concern and a continuing source of instability. As at 30 June 2019, the country was host to 548,153 refugees and asylum seekers and 4.8 million internally displaced persons. Following a resurgence of intercommunal violence in Ituri Province, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported the presence of tens of thousands of people living within host communities and in sites for internally displaced persons. Accordingly, UNHCR registered 94,612 displaced persons (15,991 households) in Nobili and in nine surrounding localities in North Kivu, while over 8,600 of the newly displaced were reported to have crossed into Uganda. Humanitarian organizations began emergency response operations to meet the needs of newly displaced persons living within host communities and in sites for internally displaced persons.

23. The humanitarian situation deteriorated significantly in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the reporting period, mostly owing to conflicts among communities, activities of armed groups and related violence, causing displacements and raising protection-related concerns. In Masisi territory in North Kivu, over 67,000 people were newly displaced in June and July alone. Meanwhile, in Ituri, tens of thousands of people fled violence, bringing the number of people displaced in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu territories close to 400,000. In the Hauts Plateaux area of South Kivu, some 180,000 people were also displaced in May and June.

24. The outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo raised concern and required an urgent international humanitarian response. While efforts were ongoing in the country, neighbouring countries were on high alert, following the first cases of the Ebola virus disease reported in Uganda on 11 June, marking the first reported instance of cross-border infection. Following four reported Ebola cases in Goma, Rwandan authorities temporarily closed the border crossing between Goma and the nearest Rwandan city of Gisenyi on 1 August, in a bid to contain the outbreak. The border was reopened later the same day, and Rwandan officials noted that measures had been implemented to screen travellers from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 16 August, the Democratic Republic of the Congo confirmed that the Ebola outbreak had spread to a third province, with new cases confirmed in the Mwenga area in South Kivu. Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda continue to step up preventive action, including through enhanced screening at border checkpoints and by vaccinating health workers in border areas.

25. An estimated 75,000 Burundians have returned to their country since September 2017, mainly from the United Republic of Tanzania. As at August 2019, the number of Burundian refugees in the region exceeded 400,000.

26. Cases of malaria and cholera sharply increased in the region, notably in Burundi and Uganda, during the period under review. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ministry of Health declared a measles epidemic on 10 June. A resurgence of suspected cases since the beginning of 2019 was recorded, with 87,000 suspected cases as at 19 May. This is an increase of over 700 per cent compared with the same period over the previous year. A total of 23 out of the 26 provinces of the country are affected. Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing a cholera

epidemic affecting more than two thirds of its provinces, with a large majority of cases reported in Haut-Lomami, Haut-Katanga, South Kivu, Tanganyika and North Kivu Provinces.

27. In South Sudan, the humanitarian situation did not improve. A total of 1.9 million internally displaced persons and 2.3 million refugees were recorded during the reporting period. On 14 June, the World Food Programme warned that some 7 million people were affected by acute food shortages, while more than 20,000 were facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity.

28. In the Central African Republic, displacement caused by attacks on civilians continued. Some 2.9 million people were reported to be in need of assistance and protection. As at June 2019, one in five Central Africans had been forced to leave home, with 605,000 seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and 594,000 internally displaced, while an estimated 1.8 million people suffered from a severe lack of food.

D. Human rights

29. Despite some positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the human rights situation in the region remained concerning and included reports of serious human rights violations, sexual and gender-based violence, restrictions on political space, impunity, limited access to justice and violations of basic rights and freedoms. Numerous cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported in conflict-affected provinces. From April to June 2019, 170 cases were recorded, representing a total of 298 victims, 56 of whom were minors. Of the total incidents, 59 per cent were attributed to armed groups and 41 per cent to State actors.

30. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, early measures taken by Mr. Tshisekedi to open political space resulted in the release of political detainees and prisoners of conscience, the return of opposition political actors and progress in the upholding of fundamental liberties, including freedom of speech. However, the human rights situation did not improve in the provinces affected by armed conflict, where most human rights violations were documented. According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, a significant number of violations were attributable to State agents, in particular FARDC, and armed groups, notably NDC-R, ADF and FDLR.

31. On 7 June, the military prosecutor of North Kivu issued an arrest warrant for the leader of the NDC-R militia, Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, on charges of crimes against humanity, including rape, and the war crime of recruiting child soldiers. Guidon Shimiray Mwissa and his group had been fighting other armed groups for control of territory in North Kivu.

32. On 8 July, the International Criminal Court found Bosco Ntaganda, former chief of staff and commander of operations of Union des patriotes congolais/Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo, guilty on 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ituri Province in 2002 and 2003, including murder, rape, sexual slavery and using child soldiers. He was the first person to be convicted of sexual slavery by the International Criminal Court.

33. In Burundi, human rights violations and restrictions on political space were reported. Members of the opposition political party, the National Congress for Liberty, alleged restrictions on their activities and harassment. In May, the Chief Justice and the Attorney General ordered the confiscation of properties belonging to 32 exiled opposition leaders, civil society activists and media representatives, all accused of involvement in a 2015 coup attempt. On 18 June, the Ministry of the Interior suspended the national non-governmental organization, Parole et actions pour

le réveil des consciences et l'évolution des mentalités, on grounds that its work threatened peace and stability and tarnished the image of the country.

34. In the Central African Republic, serious human rights violations against the civilian population were reported, including by parties to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. Furthermore, in parts of the country controlled by the Government, restrictions on fundamental freedoms were reported. The Special Criminal Court continued its work on over 20 priority cases related to serious crimes under international law.

III. Implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework

A. Commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

35. Following the peaceful political transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi embarked on an outreach campaign within and beyond the region to, inter alia, improve relations with neighbours and vigorously promote regional cooperation and integration. In this regard, Mr. Tshisekedi made notable efforts to revive diplomatic ties and forge alliances within the region.

36. On 8 March, Mr. Tshisekedi appointed Claude Ibalanky as coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism, responsible for supervising the country's implementation of its national commitments. The appointment was followed by an affirmation by Mr. Tshisekedi of the strong commitment of his Government to working towards stability and development in the country's eastern provinces, in line with the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

B. Commitments of the region

37. Mr. Tshisekedi's regional outreach efforts and the favourable response of his peers generated significant goodwill and contributed to creating an environment conducive to initiatives to strengthen dialogue and cooperation among the signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

38. On 31 May, the Presidents of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met in Kinshasa. The leaders agreed to reinforce security cooperation among their countries and to eventually involve other regional leaders in their joint effort to eradicate Congolese and foreign armed groups present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They also agreed to revitalize the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

39. During the meeting, the leaders also agreed to rehabilitate the Kolwezi-Dilolo railway line to connect the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the western Angolan region of Benguela, a move likely to contribute to economic integration and development.

40. At the invitation of the President of Angola, João Lourenço, a quadripartite meeting was held on 12 July in Luanda, bringing together the Presidents of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. The leaders agreed to: (a) continue to strengthen cooperation among their countries, notably in the political and economic areas; (b) seek to resolve differences among their countries through existing mechanisms and in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity; (c) support the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and (d) contribute to the fight against the Ebola virus disease. They also welcomed the political will of

Rwanda and Uganda to continue dialogue to resolve their differences. Following the meeting, Mr. Lourenço dispatched emissaries to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. On 26 July, an emissary of Mr. Lourenço also met with the President of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, in his capacity as Chairperson of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. A follow-up quadripartite summit was held on 21 August in Luanda, during which the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, and the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, signed a memorandum of understanding intended to ease tensions and restore friendly relations between the two countries. Importantly, the memorandum calls upon each country to refrain from engaging in any action likely to destabilize the other.

41. On 16 and 17 July, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region chaired, jointly with a representative of the African Union, the twenty-fourth session of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, held in Nairobi. Members of the Committee reviewed developments in the region and progress in strengthening security and economic cooperation, among other matters. The Technical Support Committee also initiated preparations for the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, notably by agreeing on priorities for the meeting. The meeting will be hosted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa in October 2019.

42. The signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework also made progress in cross-border cooperation to eliminate illegal armed groups. On 30 April, Burundian authorities handed over seven Rwandan rebels and their equipment to Rwandan authorities, in accordance with the regional commitment of signatory States to not harbour rebels or provide support to rebel activities conducted against each other. The rebels had been arrested in Burundi on 8 April 2019.

43. Regional security cooperation was boosted during the reporting period through efforts facilitated by the Office of my Special Envoy and the secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to strengthen regional security mechanisms, notably the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre, as well as through confidence-building initiatives detailed in paragraph 51 below, which were aimed at bringing together the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

C. Commitments of the international community

44. My Special Envoy held regular bilateral and multilateral meetings with international partners to keep them informed of developments in the region and ensure coherent and sustained support for the implementation of the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. On 6 June, my Special Envoy was represented at a meeting of the International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region, held in Brussels. Participants welcomed his engagement with leaders in the region and ongoing initiatives on security cooperation and economic integration. They reviewed developments in the region and discussed how best to coordinate messages and actions.

45. In the context of the implementation of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, which is aimed at aligning United Nations development assistance with the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, a Burundi-United Republic of Tanzania cross-border project to support refugees and host communities, financed through the Peacebuilding Fund and implemented by UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme, was completed at the end of March. Discussions were initiated with the

European Union, with the assistance of the Peacebuilding Support Office, to scale up this resilience and conflict mitigation project in other border areas.

46. On 8 May, in Bujumbura, Burundi, my Special Envoy attended, alongside the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Head of Delegation of the European Union, the first meeting of the steering committee on regional projects supported by the European Union, totalling €10 million and implemented by the German Agency for International Cooperation and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

47. The Office of my Special Envoy continued resource mobilization efforts to secure adequate funding for projects deemed to have a catalytic role in strengthening cooperation among the signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and tackling the root causes of violence and conflict in the region.

IV. Implementation of the road map of my Special Envoy

A. Good offices of the Secretary-General

48. During the period under review, my Special Envoy engaged with signatory countries, co-guarantors and other stakeholders to provide support and coordination for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, including by holding meetings with Heads of State and senior government officials in Angola, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda. In addition to listening to his interlocutors in order to understand how best to support the region in its commitment to achieving the objectives of the Framework, my Special Envoy carried out my good offices and encouraged the leaders to sustain the ongoing trend towards improving bilateral relations and deepening regional cooperation and integration.

49. During his engagement, my Special Envoy welcomed the renewed political will demonstrated by the leaders of the region to strengthen ties among their countries, address differences through trust and dialogue, constructively manage cross-border incidents and advance regional cooperation and integration through a combination of approaches. He encouraged his interlocutors to strengthen cooperation on a common agenda centred on sustainable development and economic growth, which are critical to achieving lasting peace, and pledged the continued support of the United Nations, working in close collaboration with the other guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. During meetings with the Presidents of the Congo and Angola, on 18 April and 23 May, respectively, my Special Envoy stressed the importance of building trust among the signatories and underscored my readiness to provide my good offices whenever needed.

Neutralization of illegal armed groups

50. Pursuant to the decision made at the ninth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, in which participants called for renewed efforts to neutralize armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, my Special Envoy and his Office continued to assist the signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in strengthening regional cooperation against armed groups.

51. Accordingly, the Office of my Special Envoy and the co-guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, in conjunction with the National Oversight Mechanism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, organized the first in a series of confidence-building meetings with the aim of bringing together the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda,

Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, on 5 and 6 June in Kinshasa. The meeting provided an opportunity to develop a shared assessment of the activities of foreign armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to build confidence among the intelligence services, with a view to fostering cross-border cooperation and collaboration.

52. Participants highlighted the need for sustained political will and concrete actions to address the mistrust among the countries affected by the activities of illegal armed groups. They agreed to establish a working group to develop proposals for enhanced cooperation and support to ongoing operations against armed groups. While the Government of Burundi did not attend the meeting, it affirmed its support for the process and committed to attending future meetings. My Special Envoy, together with the other guarantors, will pursue this effort as an important initiative to build confidence and enhance cooperation among high-level intelligence and security officials in the region. Consultations with experts from the countries concerned are ongoing.

53. Mindful of the importance of strong regional mechanisms for the neutralization of illegal armed groups, my Special Envoy and his Office continued to help to build the capacity of existing regional mechanisms, with a view to rendering them fully operational. Following a mission to Uganda in February 2019 to assess the capacity of the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on the Allied Democratic Forces, my Special Envoy discussed the findings of the mission with the members of the Mechanism during the twenty-fourth session of the Technical Support Committee of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework.

54. My Special Envoy also supported a capacity-building workshop for the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held from 7 to 9 May in Rwanda. During the workshop, measures to strengthen the Mechanism were recommended, including through greater involvement in resource mobilization and good offices by the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, to bolster the relevance and effectiveness of this confidence-building instrument.

Repatriation of disarmed foreign combatants

55. The Office of my Special Envoy continued to support the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants, which was established by decision of the Regional Oversight Mechanism and brings together the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, with the backing of the guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. Building on the positive dynamic created by the repatriation to Rwanda of all former FDLR members and dependants from transit camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2018, the two Governments discussed ways to complete the repatriation of all disarmed former members of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) present in Rwanda.

56. In view of the importance of the successful reintegration of former FDLR and M23 combatants for lasting peace in the region, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with MONUSCO and other United Nations entities, has remained committed to reinforcing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and programmes in the signatory States. In this context, the Office of my Special Envoy will pursue ongoing efforts, alongside MONUSCO, to encourage the repatriation of more FDLR combatants and dependants from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It will also continue to support the Rwanda Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme.

Support for dialogue and political processes

57. During a visit to Kinshasa from 14 to 18 April, my Special Envoy and my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo met with Mr. Tshisekedi and senior government officials. My Special Envoy welcomed and encouraged the commitment of Mr. Tshisekedi to give priority to the stabilization of the eastern provinces, notably by strengthening ties with neighbouring countries to jointly tackle security challenges. Mr. Tshisekedi confirmed his intention to promote regional integration as a means to lasting peace and development. My Special Envoy took note of the installation of legislative bodies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following the general election of December 2018, and ongoing coalition talks over the composition of the cabinet. He called for the swift formation of an inclusive and gender-balanced Government, capable of meeting the expectations of the Congolese people and overcoming the political and security challenges confronting the country.

58. My Special Envoy continued this advocacy during a visit to Goma, North Kivu, on 16 and 17 May, during which exchanges with provincial and local authorities and civil society organizations highlighted the urgent need for decisive governmental action to restore State authority and protect civilians.

59. In close coordination with my Special Envoy for Burundi, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region visited Bujumbura from 6 to 9 May, during which time he engaged with senior government officials and regional and international actors on the political and security situation in Burundi. In view of the general elections planned for May 2020, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region emphasized to his interlocutors the importance of a credible and inclusive electoral process. During a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burundi, Ezéchiel Nibigira, the Minister highlighted the need to capitalize on the peaceful transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make progress in the neutralization of negative forces operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which threaten regional stability and undermine trust among the countries of the region.

60. During consultations with senior government officials from the region and senior representatives of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the European Union, held in Bujumbura, my Special Envoy called for concerted support for the ongoing dialogue process in Burundi.

Advancing women and peace and security

61. Following the “solidarity missions” undertaken in 2018 by the Advisory Board of the Women’s Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, the Office of my Special Envoy, in partnership with the African Union Commission, the Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation of the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), facilitated follow-up advocacy visits by the Advisory Board to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from 5 to 7 June and 9 to 12 June, respectively.

62. In Burundi, the delegation met with senior government officials and, during a meeting with the First Lady, Denise Nkurunziza, requested Mrs. Nkurunziza to continue her effort to unite Burundian women from all segments of society. The Advisory Board further stressed the importance of peace and national cohesion and the need to ensure inclusive participation, in particular that of women, in the elections scheduled for 2020.

63. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the delegation met with, among others, Mr. Tshisekedi, the National Assembly Speaker, Jeanine Mabunda, and

Mr. Ilunga Ilunkamba. All interlocutors committed to addressing discriminatory provisions in national legislation, in particular as they relate to women. Mr. Tshisekedi informed the delegation of his exchanges with the President of Rwanda and noted their shared determination to strengthen the role of women in political and economic decision-making. Meetings were also held with women political leaders and representatives of political parties and civil society organizations from North Kivu and South Kivu, who requested support for national institutions to promote the rule of law and justice, with particular attention to the needs of women.

64. The Office of my Special Envoy also continued to collaborate with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners to implement the decisions made at the meeting of ministers in charge of gender issues held on 23 November 2018 in Kampala, notably those related to the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

Addressing population displacement

65. My Special Envoy's advocacy of concerted action to address the situation of refugees in the region contributed to the holding of a high-level regional meeting of ministers in charge of refugee issues, from 5 to 7 March in Kampala. The ministers agreed on the urgent need to tackle the causes of forced displacement, mobilize funds to respond to the humanitarian needs of displaced populations and implement durable solutions, with priority given to protracted refugee cases. They called upon the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to develop a strategy and action plan to promote durable solutions for refugees in the region. The Office of my Special Envoy is collaborating with UNHCR, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other partners to support the implementation of the outcome of this meeting.

66. In a related development, the Office of my Special Envoy contributed to the Ministerial Conference on the Eradication of Statelessness in the Great Lakes Region, jointly organized by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and UNHCR and hosted by the Government of Kenya on 18 April. Participants of the meeting adopted the extended action plan for the period 2017–2024 on the eradication of statelessness.

Judicial cooperation

67. From 13 to 15 May, the Office of my Special Envoy, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region jointly convened a high-level regional consultation on justice, good governance and combating impunity. Participants of the meeting adopted the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, in which Ministers of Justice of the Great Lakes region undertook to strengthen the rule of law, promote justice, uphold human rights and eradicate impunity for serious human rights violations. The Office of my Special Envoy also continued to work with the signatory States to address cross-border cases of serious crimes, with a focus on those related to the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources.

Natural resources

68. My Special Envoy continued to support regional efforts to curb the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources, with the aim of removing financial incentives for armed groups and criminal networks. On 26 April in Paris, in the margins of the thirteenth Forum on Responsible Mineral Supply Chains, organized by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Office of my Special Envoy facilitated

consultations among senior representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda on how best to strengthen political commitment and agree on joint actions to enhance cooperation to combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Participants stressed the importance of promoting a common agenda centred on greater economic integration. As a way forward, they requested the Office of my Special Envoy to develop an options paper that will form the basis for further discussions among the countries concerned.

Economic cooperation

69. My Special Envoy and his Office continued to assist with preparations for the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, scheduled to be held in Rwanda from 18 to 20 November 2019. On 3 and 4 May, the Office of my Special Envoy, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Rwanda Development Board convened a regional consultation in Kigali, involving representatives of the private sector, investment promotion agencies, regional women's business groups and development partners. Participants reviewed progress in the implementation of projects considered during the first Private Sector Investment Conference for the Great Lakes Region, held in 2016 in Kinshasa, and agreed to focus at the Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference on cross-border trade and investment as critical enablers of economic integration. Subsequently, the organizing committee convened the first planning meeting on 28 and 29 May in Nairobi.

70. My Special Envoy subsequently attended the twelfth United States-Africa Business Summit, held in Maputo from 18 to 21 June, during which he participated, alongside the Prime Minister of Uganda and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, in a panel discussion to promote greater engagement by the private sector in the Great Lakes region.

71. In view of the plan to highlight cross-border projects during the forthcoming Great Lakes Investment and Trade Conference, and as part of his familiarization visits in the region, my Special Envoy met with the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries in Gisenyi, Rwanda, on 17 May. They discussed, among other topics, opportunities to revitalize the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and considered its benefits to its member States, notably in terms of cross-border infrastructure development. My Special Envoy committed to raising the topic during his future engagement with the leaders of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

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

Regional organizations and mechanisms

72. My Special Envoy continued to give priority to collaborating and coordinating with regional organizations during the reporting period. On 6 May, he met with the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Zachary Muburi-Muita, in Bujumbura, and, on 24 May, he met with the Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, Smail Chergui, in Addis Ababa. During both meetings, he sought to coordinate initiatives to better tackle peace and security challenges in the region, including stabilizing the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, defusing tensions among some neighbouring countries and supporting ongoing political and dialogue processes. The meetings were complemented by regular working-level consultations with regional organizations and mechanisms. The Office of my Special Envoy also remained in close contact with the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community.

73. Throughout the period under review, the Office of my Special Envoy maintained a strategic partnership with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for the implementation of programmes and activities related to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. This included joint efforts to strengthen existing security mechanisms, empower women, enhance judicial cooperation, advocate human rights and promote economic cooperation and cross-border investment.

Cooperation with other United Nations entities

74. In order to ensure coherence in the delivery of United Nations support to political processes in the region, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region regularly consulted and coordinated his actions with my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, my Special Envoy for Burundi and my Special Representative for Central Africa.

75. In that context, on 12 and 13 April, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region attended a meeting of Heads of United Nations offices in Central Africa, convened by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and held in Sao Tome and Principe. Furthermore, the Office of my Special Envoy participated in the forty-eighth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, facilitated by UNOCA, on 28 May in Kinshasa.

76. On 10 and 11 July, my Special Envoy attended the African Regional High-level Conference on Counter-Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism in Nairobi. On 12 and 13 July, my Special Envoy participated in a meeting on the implementation of the comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa, organized by the Office of my Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa in Nairobi.

V. Observations and recommendations

77. The Great Lakes region witnessed positive developments and initiatives during the reporting period. I am encouraged by the steps taken by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Félix Tshisekedi, to strengthen relations with neighbouring countries, as well as the efforts undertaken by him and other leaders, notably the President of Angola, João Lourenço, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, and the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, to advance regional cooperation. I encourage all the leaders in the region to continue supporting these efforts.

78. Differences among the signatory States of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, compounded by the threat posed by foreign armed groups and the illicit exploitation and trade of natural resources, are best addressed through dialogue and cooperation. I welcome, therefore, the confidence-building meeting held on 5 and 6 June in Kinshasa, which brought together the intelligence and security services of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and provided an important forum for information-sharing and collaboration towards neutralizing foreign armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also welcome the commitment by the Government of Burundi to participate in future such meetings. My Special Envoy and his Office will continue to support this initiative.

79. The region and the international community must seize the current momentum to make progress in overcoming challenges to peace and sustainable development. Advancing economic cooperation and integration, including through the improved

governance of natural resources, will boost social and economic development throughout the region.

80. I welcome and encourage the ongoing efforts to strengthen regional security cooperation mechanisms, notably the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Follow-up Mechanism on the Allied Democratic Forces. I call upon all signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to meet their obligations and fulfil their commitments under these mechanisms to better equip them to discharge their mandates. My Special Envoy will continue to mobilize support in this regard.

81. I commend the cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda in the context of the follow-up mechanism on the repatriation of disarmed combatants. I urge regional and international partners to back the efforts undertaken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in this regard. I encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to expedite the repatriation of former M23 combatants.

82. I am concerned about the persistent challenges to the exercise of basic political freedoms and human rights in parts of the Great Lakes region. I call upon Governments to uphold their related commitments, notably those under the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and to create the conditions necessary for the voices of all stakeholders to be heard in local and national decision-making.

83. I welcome the formation of a new Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also welcome the steps taken by Mr. Tshisekedi to implement the confidence-building measures stipulated in the 31 December 2016 political agreement, including the release of political prisoners and the return of exiled political actors. I encourage all Congolese stakeholders to continue to work towards national unity and the consolidation of the country's democratic institutions.

84. I take note of the preparations for the elections to be held in May 2020 in Burundi. I urge the Government and all stakeholders to create the conditions for peaceful and inclusive elections that contribute to durable peace, stability and development, in full respect of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi of 2000.

85. I commend the continuing efforts to advance the women and peace and security agenda in the region. In this context, I welcome the role played by the Advisory Board of the Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. I call upon all national and regional stakeholders to implement the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), notably by achieving the agreed quota for the representation of women in peace and political processes by 2020.

86. Combating impunity remains key to delivering peace, security and development. I am strongly encouraged by the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance in May 2019. I am also heartened by the collaboration among signatories of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to address cases of serious human rights violations, including in the context of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network. The Office of my Special Envoy will continue to support these efforts, in cooperation with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

87. I deplore the continuing forced displacement in the Great Lakes region. I urge Governments to take all actions necessary to address this cause of suffering and instability in the region, notably by implementing the recommendations of the high-

level regional meeting of ministers in charge of refugee issues, held in March 2019. I call upon regional and international partners to support these efforts.

88. I welcome the consultation facilitated by the Office of my Special Envoy with a view to initiating a political dialogue towards improving governance in the exploitation of natural resources, curbing illegal exploitation and trade and transforming natural resources into drivers of shared prosperity. I urge the leaders of the region to pursue this dialogue and request the international community to support it.

89. I wish to thank my Special Envoy and his team for their tireless support for the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.
