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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL  
1005<sup>TH</sup> MEETING

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ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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BRIEFING NOTE ON THE SITUATION IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. This Briefing Note is submitted pursuant to Communiqué [PSC/PR/COMM.(CMLXXIV)], adopted by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU) at its 974<sup>th</sup> meeting, held on 22 January 2021, in which the PSC requested the AU Commission to provide quarterly briefings to the PSC on the situation in the Great Lakes Region.

2. The scope of the Briefing Note covers the current political, security and humanitarian situations in the Region, as well as the initiatives taken by the Guarantors of the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Region to support the ongoing peace processes and development. The Briefing Note concludes with some observations and recommendations on the way forward.

## **II. PREVAILING SITUATION IN THE REGION**

3. In general, and despite the natural disasters, the prevalence of armed groups and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is relative peace and stability in the Great Lakes Region.

### **a. Political situation**

4. Several countries in the region held elections since the last reporting to the PSC on 22 January 2021. It is important to emphasize that the elections were held in relatively peaceful conditions. However, as stressed by the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Guarantors of the Framework Agreement on 3 March 2021, and the UNOCA meeting on 28 May 2021, there is need to further strengthen the relevant national frameworks, in order to ensure "peaceful, transparent, inclusive and credible elections" in the region, in accordance with the relevant AU instruments, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.

5. In addressing the issues of eliminating negative forces and armed groups in the region, the implementation of the initiative launched by President Félix Tshisekedi about the "Sacred Union" has significantly enhanced measures in the fight against the armed groups operating in the eastern part of the DRC, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri.

6. On a positive note, Burundi was removed from the Agenda of the Peace and Security Council on 27 April 2021 and the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General was officially closed on 31 May 2021.

7. With regard to the CAR, the authorities have continued operations to recover the territory that is currently occupied by armed groups and to ensure State authority throughout the entire territory of the country, with the support of the country's bilateral partners, against the backdrop of some tension with both, MINUSCA and France. In fact, France has frozen its budgetary support to, and military cooperation with the CAR.

8. At a time when the country is preparing for the Inclusive Political Dialogue, encouraged by the international community, a new Prime Minister has just been appointed, namely, H.E. Henri Marie DONDRA, who was previously the Minister of Finance. The

appointment of the new Prime Minister comes in the wake of the recent joint AU-UN-EU mission to the CAR.

9. Furthermore, the diplomatic relations between the CAR and Chad are currently tense. Chad is accusing the CAR Army of killing six Chadian soldiers at an outpost in Sourou, near the border between the two countries on 30 May 2021. To help improve the diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Government of the CAR sent a delegation to N'Djamena, comprising three Ministers.

**b. General Security situation in the Region**

10. The region also continues to face insecurity perpetrated by armed groups and the negative forces, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) which continue their criminal activities, particularly, in eastern DRC. According to the UNHCR, since January 2021, the ADF has killed nearly 200 people and wounded several dozens, displacing 40,000 people in Beni territory and Ituri. It is in this context that President Tshisekedi declared a state of emergency in North Kivu and Ituri on 3 May 2021, which he visited on 11 June 2021. This firm policy of the Government of the DRC is supported by the MONUSCO Rapid Intervention Brigade, which has just received Kenyan reinforcement that was deployed on 8 June 2021. In this context, it is important to welcome the impact of two ongoing initiatives launched within the Addis Ababa Peace and Security Cooperation Framework (PSCF):

- At the bilateral level, the contacts at a high level between the military Chiefs of the DRC and Rwanda, on the one hand, and the DRC and Uganda, on the other.
- At the regional level, the continued implementation of the initiatives bringing together the Heads of Intelligence and Security Services of five countries in the field namely, the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania.
- The Launching of the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) mandated by the TSC to explore on non-military means to complement the actual military actions to streamline efforts of neutralizing the negative forces and armed groups in the region, in accordance with the decision of the Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) of 8 October 2018, in Kampala, Uganda.

**c. Humanitarian situation**

11. The region is also facing humanitarian challenges imposed by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has negatively affected the socio-economies of all countries in the region. In addition, the criminal activities of the various armed groups in the region has contributed to the displacement of the populations, thus increasing the number of internally displaced persons (IPDs) and refugees in the region. The region is also facing flooding from Lake Tanganyika, particularly in Burundi and the DRC. This tragedy was compounded in May 2021 following the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano in Goma, which displaced nearly 450,000 people and left about 5,000 homeless.

### **III. INITIATIVES OF THE GUARANTORS OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT**

12. Due to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Guarantors of the Framework Agreement held virtually meetings that were co-chaired by the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Great Lakes and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for the Great Lakes Region. The 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Guarantors of the Framework Agreement, was held on 3 March 2021 on the occasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Framework Agreement, and the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Technical Support Committee (TSC) of the Framework Agreement, held on 28 March 2021. This meeting identified priority areas for the year 2021, namely: security cooperation, economic and judicial cooperation, all against the backdrop of the programme of the AU to Silence the Guns on the Continent.

13. The AU Liaison Office in Bujumbura and the AU Liaison Office in Kinshasa, attended the TSC meeting. The AU Liaison Office in Kinshasa participated at the meeting due to the security situation in the DRC and its consequences on the Region. In the future, it would be advisable to formalize such a practice.

14. With regard to periodical evaluation of the situation in the Great lakes region as recommended by the PSC, it is advisable in the future to associate other Liaison Offices located in the region namely: Bangui, Kinshasa, Juba and Khartoum in order to have a comprehensive report on the Great Lakes region.

15. On the other hand, discussions continued on the United Nations Strategy for the Great Lakes Region and the Plan of Action that must accompany its implementation.

16. Within the framework of the confidence-building measures aimed at strengthening the fight against armed groups, in addition to the bilateral contacts, mentioned above, between the DRC and Rwanda and Uganda. A Workshop was also organized from 3 to 7 May 2021, in Goma, DRC, to launch the Contact and Coordination Group, at the end of which a Plan of Action was adopted for submission to the Heads of the Intelligence and Security Services of the five countries in the Region, which are scheduled to meet in Bujumbura in late June 2021.

17. On 28 May 2021, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission attended the meeting of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Security issues in Central Africa, held in Bujumbura, Burundi. The SRCC for GLR analyzed the security situation in the Central Africa Region, six of whose Member States are also members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR).

### **IV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- i. Encourage countries of the Region and the PAPS Commission to continue to enhance their cooperation in the fight against armed groups, including through the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG);

- ii. Also encourage them to continue the vigilance in observing necessary measures in their fight against the COVID-19 pandemic;
- iii. Express the solidarity of the AU with the people affected by natural disasters, in particular those affected by the floods in Lake Tanganyika (in Bujumbura, Burundi and in Uvira South-Kivu, DRC) and the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano in the DRC;
- iv. Urge the countries of the Region to take full advantage of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and any other relevant Regional instruments to further strengthen and improve their national electoral processes;
- v. Request the Chairperson of the Commission to take necessary steps to expeditiously implement the AU support measures following the closure of the Mission of the Human Rights Observers and Military Experts deployed in Burundi, on 31 May 2021, in conformity with the PSC decision of 22 January 2021;
- vi. Urge all AU Member States and the international community to continue support the Great Lakes region, in particular to those areas which need humanitarian support;
- vii. Reiterate the PSC decision for the AU Commission to strengthen the human and financial resources of the AU Liaison Office for the Great Lakes Region to ensure that the Office discharges its mandate more effectively.

**African Union Commission (AUC)**

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PSC Outcomes

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2021-06-21

# Communiqué of the 1005th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council Held on 21 June 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Peace and Security Council

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