



Together for Peace

The UN Great Lakes Strategy



This document was prepared by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary General for the Great Lakes region (OSESGL). This briefing document reviews the key themes and insights presented in the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region (S/2020/1168), as presented by Secretary-General António Guterres to the Security Council. The strategy aims to guide UN engagement in the region for the next 10 years, with a specific focus on the first three years.

The UN strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region can be accessed here <http://undocs.org/en/S/2020/1168>

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Cover photo Against the backdrop of a serene sunset, five individuals proudly stand atop a hill in the enigmatic landscape of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. United in purpose, they raise their hands in unison. This captivating image, skillfully captured by Bahati Chasinga (David) Gloire, has been chosen as the esteemed winner of the United Nations Great Lakes Photo Contest. The photo resonates with a profound sense of unity and hope, transcending the adversities faced by the subjects. It serves as a compelling embodiment of the aspirations of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework, not only within the Democratic Republic of the Congo but throughout the expansive Great Lakes region. David, a promising Congolese photographer and talented young visual artist, was born in Bukavu in 2004, showcasing a remarkable talent beyond his years.



The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region

Strategic Plan 2020 - 2030



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY
FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

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The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region is intended to take advantage of the ongoing momentum towards dialogue and greater cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes region.

Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I refer to paragraph 68 of my report of 29 September 2020 on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2020/951), in which I discussed the formulation of a strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the Great Lakes region, under the leadership of my **Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Xia Huang**.

The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, which I transmit herewith, is intended to take advantage of the ongoing momentum towards dialogue and greater cooperation among the countries of the Great Lakes region and offers a comprehensive framework for continued United Nations support for the full implementation of the **Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region**.



There are **10 priorities** identified in the Strategy, structured under the following **three pillars**:

- (a) peace, security and justice;
- (b) sustainable development and shared prosperity; and
- (c) resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges.

The priorities will guide United Nations engagement in the region, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the joint United Nations and World Bank study on prevention, Pathways for Peace: **Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict**, while also informing specific and immediate priority actions in the next three years.

The Strategy was informed by extensive consultations with a wide range of interlocutors, including representatives of the signatory countries and co-guarantors of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, regional organizations, United Nations entities, international financial institutions, civil society organizations, women's organizations, former senior officials of the United Nations and the African Union, and experts from various fields.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and the Strategy to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) **António Guterres**

This Strategy places strong emphasis on cross-border cooperation, inclusive political processes and the meaningful participation of women and youth.

It also underscores the importance of partnerships, complementarity with regionally led initiatives, and coherence across the peace, development and humanitarian pillars.

Foreword : A Strategy in Support of the people and the countries of the Great Lakes region

The Great Lakes region possesses immense potential, characterized by its rich cultural diversity, shared history, interconnected economies and abundant natural resources. Yet, it remains burdened by recurrent cycles of conflict, forced displacement and persistent human rights challenges. The root causes of instability, including weak governance, illicit exploitation and unequal access to natural resources, political and economic exclusion of marginalized groups, hate speech, and the politicization of identity, continue to fuel tensions. These structural issues are further exacerbated by a range of aggravating factors, including the presence of non-state armed groups, foreign interference, cross-border insecurity, the illegal proliferation of weapons and ongoing humanitarian crises affecting millions across the region. **These root causes and drivers of conflict require collective action.**

The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region provides a coherent framework to help countries in the region address these complex and interrelated challenges. Grounded in the conviction that **regional cooperation is essential for lasting peace and inclusive development**, the Strategy builds on the shared vision of stability and prosperity for all. Developed through broad consultations and aligned with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region signed in 2013, it offers a forward-looking approach to realizing the region's full potential. The Strategy seeks to leverage the entire spectrum of UN capacities - political, operational and programmatic - to address the root causes of instability, strengthen governance and promote sustainable peace and development across the Great Lakes region.

Under **The Pact for the Future** adopted in September 2024, Member States unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to prevention, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the primacy of dialogue. Through Action 16 in particular, the Pact emphasizes the importance of strengthening United Nations support to regional and subregional organizations in diplomacy, mediation and conflict resolution. Aligned with this vision, the regional Strategy aims to reinforce ownership and leadership in advancing peace, stability and sustainable development across the Great Lakes region.

As the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, **my Office's mandate is to promote regional dialogue, build trust among stakeholders and mobilize international support for lasting peace.**



This Strategy is a critical instrument to achieve this mission. It places strong emphasis on cross-border cooperation, inclusive political processes and the meaningful participation of women and youth. It also underscores the importance of partnerships, complementarity with regionally led initiatives, and coherence across the peace, development and humanitarian pillars.

Effective implementation will require sustained engagement, regional ownership and coordinated action by all stakeholders - governments, civil society, regional organizations, the United Nations and international partners. I call upon all actors to embrace the regional Strategy not only as a roadmap, but as a shared call to action. My Office remains fully committed to providing political leadership for its implementation, using its convening, facilitation and coordination roles to maximize collective impact.

Together, we can help the Great Lakes region realize its full promise of peace, prosperity and dignity for all.

Huang Xia Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region

(Signed) **Huang Xia**



Photo: Warrior Tsingya

SUMMARY

Anchored in the UN's peace, security, and development pillars, the strategy promotes inclusive governance, sustainable development, and resilience to challenges such as extremism and displacement.

Over the past few years, the Great Lakes region of Africa has made progress towards peace, security and development. The overall peaceful transfers of power in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the signing and implementation of peace agreements in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Sudan, illustrate the positive momentum. Many countries in the region have also made strides in furthering regional integration by signing agreements for joint infrastructure projects such as the extension of the standard gauge railway from the United Republic of Tanzania to Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Other positive trends include dialogue and diplomatic initiatives to defuse tensions between countries, such as the quadripartite process between Rwanda and Uganda, facilitated by Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the mediated resolution of the border dispute between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. The emerging consensus on the need for comprehensive joint action against local and foreign armed groups, which operate mostly in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also suggests new opportunities to advance the peace, security and development agenda.

Despite these positive trends, pockets of instability and violence remain, and cross-border incidents, as well as persistent tensions and mistrust between some countries, still stand in the way of durable peace in the region. The recent momentum observed in the region is fragile and will require sustained and coordinated support from national, regional and international actors. The commitments of key stakeholders, including on political dialogue, human rights, reconciliation, the women and peace and security agenda and the neutralization of armed groups, need to be translated into concrete actions that have tangible results for the region's population.

Furthermore, the gains made so far will need to be preserved and consolidated, especially in the context of major uncertainties, such as those associated with the evolution and implications of the coronavirus

disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Given the track record of election-related violence in some countries of the region and in the light of ongoing efforts to consolidate democracy in the region, the upcoming elections in the Central African Republic, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, if conducted in a credible, transparent and inclusive manner, could provide additional opportunities to strengthen stability at the national level and, by extension, within the region.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region is aimed at supporting the region in seizing opportunities for change. Anchored in a vision of a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous and resilient Great Lakes region, the Strategy strives to leverage the comparative advantages of the United Nations across different pillars – from peace and security to human rights and development – in furtherance of the aspirations of the countries and people of the region.

Building on strengthened partnerships with Governments, regional organizations, civil society (including women and young people) and the private sector, the Strategy contains proposals for ways to foster trust and confidence among countries and communities, to further efforts towards socioeconomic development and shared prosperity and to promote inclusive, equitable, just and resilient societies and institutions. By doing so, its goal is to help to address the root causes and drivers of instability at the national and regional levels, paving the way for unlocking the region's potential.

The Strategy comes on the heels of far-reaching reforms recently undertaken by the Secretary-General. These reforms include the restructuring of the peace and security pillar and the reform of the United Nations development system. The former prioritizes preventing conflicts and sustaining peace, calling for closer alignment with the United Nations development and human rights pillars to achieve greater coherence and coordination.

The latter repositions the United Nations development system with a view to making it more integrated and impactful in its delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably the Sustainable Development Goals. The changes introduced by the reforms underpin both the Strategy and the recent dynamics in the Great Lakes region.

The Strategy puts forth an integrated, forward-leaning approach aimed at better integrating the United Nations political, operational and programmatic presences and expertise and thus better supporting the peace-security-development nexus. To do so, it is focused on political solutions anchored in an enhanced understanding of the interplay between local, national, regional and international factors in the Great Lakes region. It also advocates a shift in narrative beyond the traditional focus on conflict-related challenges, embracing a forward-leaning view that identifies opportunities for peace, security and people-centred development.

The Strategy is based on 10 priorities structured around the three pillars listed below. The priorities are aimed at providing an overarching 10-year horizon for United Nations action in the region, but will also guide specific and immediate United Nations priority actions in the next three years.

Pillar I: peace, security and justice

1. Dialogue and inclusive political processes
2. Sustained cooperation on cross-border security issues
3. Good governance, rule of law and human rights
4. Women/youth and peace and security

Pillar II: sustainable development and shared prosperity

5. Equitable and inclusive socioeconomic development
6. Regional economic cooperation, trade and investment
7. Sustainable and transparent management of natural resources

Pillar III: resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges

8. Prevention of violent extremism
9. Durable solutions to protracted forced displacement
10. Preparedness and resilience to internal and external shocks

The priorities were identified through an analysis of the root causes and drivers of instability in the region, opportunities for engagement on the basis of the most recent developments in the region and the comparative advantage of the United Nations, as well as extensive consultations with national, regional and international stakeholders and United Nations entities. The priorities are intended to respond to regional

aspirations and internationally agreed goals, notably those reflected in the 2030 Agenda, while duly considering United Nations mandates and resources.

The implementation of the priorities will be informed by the following five principles:

- (a) early warning and rapid response;**
- (b) subsidiarity and regional ownership;**
- (c) people-centred inclusiveness and human rights;**
- (d) partnerships; and**
- (e) complementarity and coherence of United Nations action.**

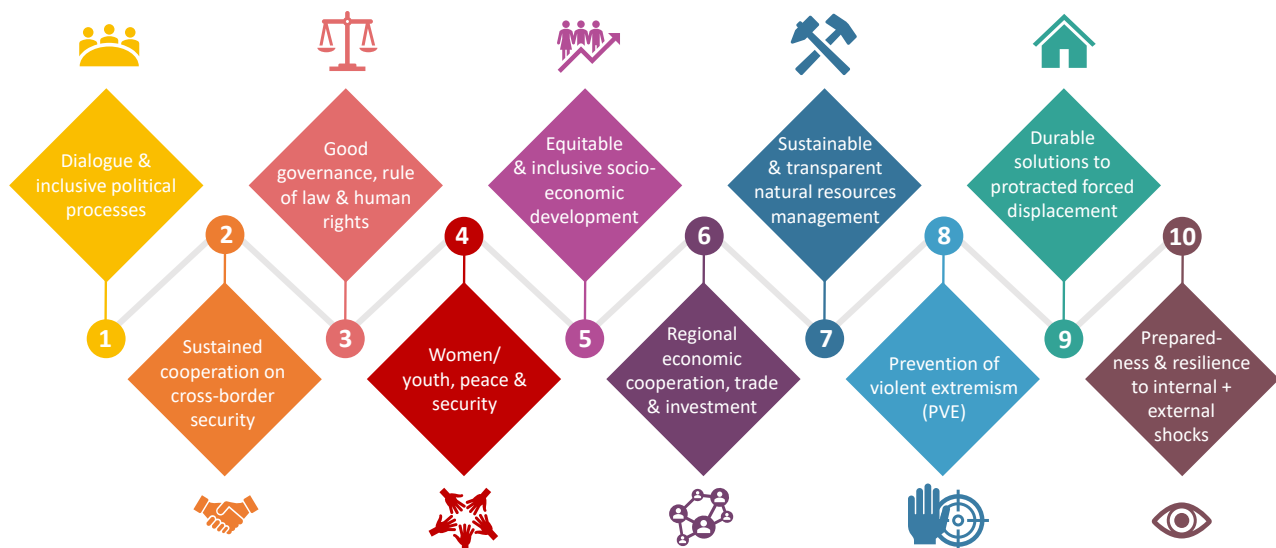
The principles are geared towards promoting more agile, aligned and responsive United Nations engagement that is based on shared political analyses and risk assessments and supports Governments, regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders while strengthening the impact of the United Nations on peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the region. Once the Strategy has been approved by the Secretary-General, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region will develop an action plan through an inclusive and participatory process informed by internal and external consultations. The action plan will be guided, first and foremost, by the priorities of the countries and organizations of the Great Lakes region and existing United Nations partnerships with them.

In implementing the action plan, the United Nations will build on its large and varied presence in the region and its capacity to link high-level engagements with bottom-up approaches. The United Nations entities at the heart of the action plan will be called upon to rethink ways of working together to innovate and invest together in lean, agile and efficient coordination and decision mechanisms that place impact above process.

The successful implementation of the strategy will depend on cohesive and coordinated action by the United Nations entities in the region and their ability to engage key stakeholders and mobilize the required technical and financial resources. Civil society (including women, young people and marginalized sections of communities) and the private sector will have an important role in this regard.

More importantly, successful implementation of the Strategy will require countries' ownership and political will to translate commitments contained in international and regional agreements, including the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, into transformative results that are beneficial to the people of the Great Lakes region.

RECAP: TEN PRIORITIES GUIDING UNITED NATIONS EFFORTS IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION



For ease of reference, each of the ten priorities identified in the Strategy has been colour-coded and associated with one icon, as shown above.

Introduction

1. **The Great Lakes region of Africa has made important progress towards peace, security and development.** The signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region in 2006 and of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (PSC Framework) in 2013 were key steps towards enhancing political dialogue, addressing the threat of armed groups and strengthening regional cooperation. More recently, the peaceful transfers of power in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the establishment of a transitional Government in the Sudan and the signing of peace agreements in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, together with increased diplomatic efforts aimed at rapprochement between some countries and advances in security, economic and judicial cooperation, have created a positive dynamic.

2. **Efforts by Governments, civil society groups, regional and international organizations and international partners,** if sustained, have the potential to contribute to the region's progress towards sustainable peace. By working hand in hand with Governments and regional and subregional organizations, the United Nations, thanks to its substantial presence in the region through special political missions, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and other peacekeeping operations, as well as the United Nations Office at Nairobi and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, has played its role in supporting the region in working towards greater stability and development. Its political and programmatic interventions have been guided by several Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and policy documents, including the road maps developed in 2013 and 2014 by previous Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, as well as the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, which has provided strategic orientation to United Nations entities for their development work in support of the implementation of the PSC Framework.

3. **Despite these collective efforts and recent positive trends, several challenges continue to present risks to the long-term stability and economic development of the Great Lakes region.** Activities of foreign armed groups, in particular in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and allegations of support for these rebel groups continue to fuel tensions between countries in the region. Furthermore, local armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo contribute to perpetuating insecurity in the country. The illicit exploitation of and trade in natural resources provide funding for the armed groups and limit the region's capacity to maximize the benefits of its natural resources in terms of revenues and shared prosperity. In addition, the humanitarian consequences of violence, including forced displacement, are severe. Grave human rights violations and abuses continue to be reported.

4. **In order to consolidate the gains made by the region over the past few years and with a view to enhancing the complementarity** of United Nations political and programmatic action, the Secretary-General requested his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to develop a United Nations strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution. The proposed strategy is not meant to replace existing programmatic frameworks and mechanisms at the regional and national levels, such as the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, but rather to provide an overarching political umbrella for United Nations interventions in the region while creating synergies for a stronger impact on the ground.

5. **Building on the current positive momentum, the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution** in the Great Lakes Region is driven by a vision of a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous and resilient Great Lakes region, where countries and people work together to achieve common objectives, including the neutralization of armed groups, peaceful relations between countries of the region, sustainable development and regional

economic integration. Guided by the Secretary-General's reform agenda for the peace and security pillar and the United Nations development system, which, among other things, seeks to prioritize prevention, ensure the primacy of politics and yield a United Nations system that is more integrated and focused on delivery on the ground, the Strategy promotes a forward-leaning, integrated approach to effectively support the countries and people of the region in working towards durable peace, security and sustainable development. The approach combines the United Nations focus on conflict resolution and conflict prevention with actions centred around opportunities for enhanced development and shared prosperity, while promoting harmony, good relations and cooperation among Governments and among people in the region. The proposed approach will require a more agile, aligned and responsive United Nations that mobilizes timely and coordinated interventions focused on advancing stability, regional cooperation and strong partnerships with national, regional and international stakeholders, including women's and youth organizations and the private sector.

6. In pursuit of that vision, 10 thematic priorities structured around three pillars – peace, security and justice; sustainable development and shared prosperity; and resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges – have been identified. The priorities will guide United Nations engagement, through the presence of its various special political missions, peacekeeping operations, country teams and regional entities, over the next 10 years. As a first step, an initial three-year time period, up to 2023, will be focused on the implementation of prioritized and well-sequenced political and programmatic interventions, which will be further identified during the elaboration of an action plan after approval of the Strategy. While the 10-year time frame is aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the year 2023 corresponds to the tenth anniversary of the PSC Framework, which will provide an opportunity to review progress and challenges in its implementation.

7. Under each of the thematic priorities, a set of actions has also been proposed to guide United Nations intervention in the areas of preventive diplomacy; political and security cooperation and rule of law; human rights; women and peace and security; regional economic integration; management of natural resources; and resilience. These actions were proposed on the basis of guiding

principles and criteria, including: mandate and ability to deliver; comparative advantage and subsidiarity; and effective partnerships with national, regional and international stakeholders, including non-State actors, civil society organizations, victims of forced displacement and affected communities.

8. A word of caution is in order. In a highly complex and volatile region, with ever-shifting alliances, recurring tensions and many subregional organizations with overlapping mandates, the United Nations will need to remain modest in its ambitions for the region. The Organization will not succeed in its objectives to further peace, stability and development without the following requirements: sustained political will and commitment from Governments and leaders in the region to take bold and coordinated initiatives to address root causes and drivers of instability in the region; consensus among international partners, including among Security Council members, on ways to address major challenges that continue to hamper peace and security; a clear division of labour and close coordination between United Nations entities; and the provision of adequate resources and adjustments critical to mandate implementation.

9. The present document is organized in four parts. Chapter I sets the stage by providing an overview of the main root causes and drivers of instability in the Great Lakes region, the repercussions of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic identified so far, recent dynamics and trends, and brief descriptions of the regional peace and security architecture and the United Nations presences in the region. Chapter II presents the priorities for United Nations engagement and the strategic objectives that will guide its efforts on peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution over the next 10 years. Chapter III outlines how the United Nations plans to operationalize the Strategy with a view to strengthening its collective impact in the region. Finally, Chapter IV describes the role of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in implementing the Strategy.

Ten thematic priorities structured around three pillars – peace, security and justice; sustainable development and shared prosperity; and resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges – have been identified.”



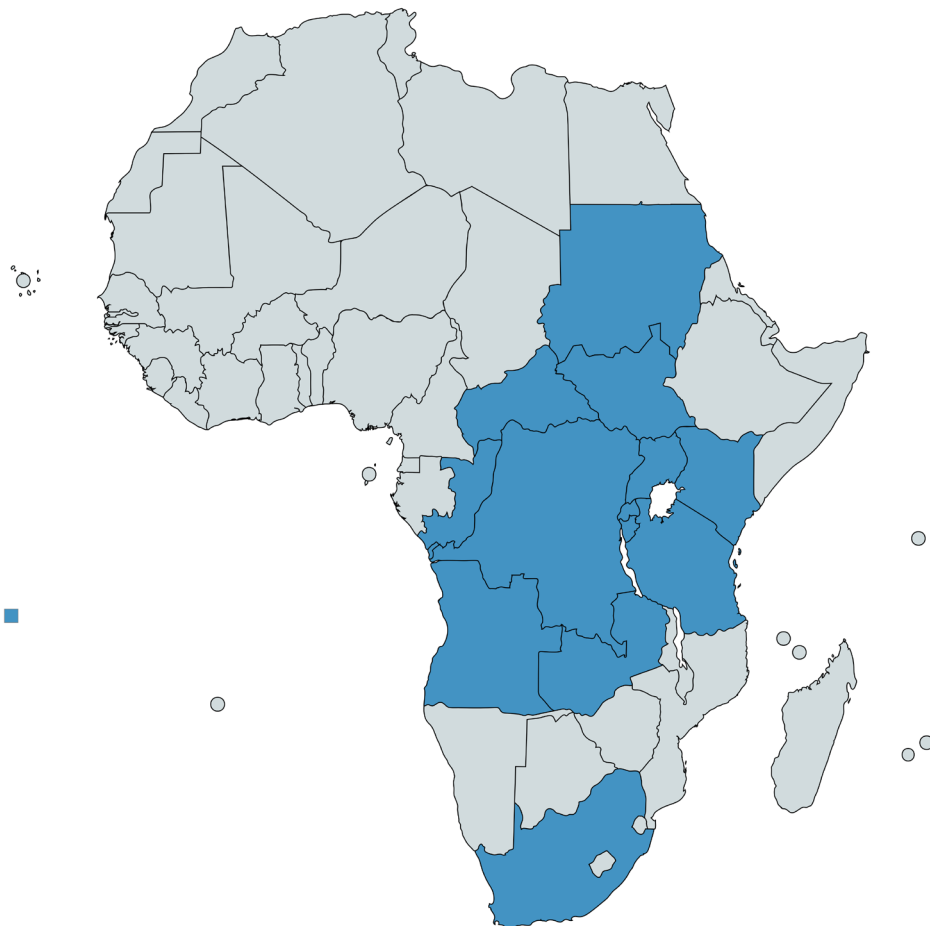
1. Background and Context Analysis

A. Defining the Great Lakes region

10. While there is no consensus on a definition of the Great Lakes region, it is commonly understood in several ways. From a geographical perspective, the region encompasses seven riparian countries connected to its 10 vast lakes: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. From a geopolitical perspective, the scope is frequently narrowed to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, with their intertwined history, culture, people and economies that continue to shape the region's peace, security and development dynamics. From an institutional perspective, the Great Lakes region is further defined as the neighbouring countries

of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which together with the latter became members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region upon signing the Pact on Security, Stability and Development of 2006 and its protocols. In the context of the PSC Framework, signed in 2013, the region comprises the 12 signatory countries of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development, namely Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, the Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, plus South Africa.

11. Building on the letter and spirit of the PSC Framework, the Strategy will primarily be focused on the root causes and drivers of instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and along the country's border areas. Beyond that geographic scope, the Strategy will also examine other challenges that have the potential to perpetuate or generate instability in the region.



■ Countries of the Great Lakes

B. Root Causes and Drivers of Instability

12. Since gaining independence, several countries of the Great Lakes region have experienced periods of conflict of a differing nature and scope – including civil wars in the early 1960s in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; ethnic violence in Rwanda and Burundi in the 1960s and 1970s; the Ugandan-Tanzanian war in the late 1970s; the Angolan civil war from 1975 to 2002; the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda; and the subsequent Congo Wars of 1996–1998 and 1998–2003, involving the Democratic Republic of the Congo and eight other African countries. Many of the conflicts had their root causes in power struggles, socioeconomic exclusion, the instrumentalization of ethnicity and geopolitical dynamics, among other things. Conflicts and crises in the region have also been characterized by their interconnectedness, adding to their complex and protracted nature.

13. The Great Lakes region has nonetheless come a long way since the 1990s and the early years of the 2000s. Conflicts have substantially decreased in intensity and scope, thanks to the combined efforts of national, regional and international stakeholders. The current state of instability persists, however, owing to unaddressed root causes and several drivers of instability, including those mentioned below.

Root causes of instability

14. The main root causes of instability are often linked to grievances over historical legacies dating back to the post-independence period and the colonial era, including borders, which in many instances have separated ethnic communities. Linked thereto is the instrumentalization of ethnicity by some actors for political gains.

15. Another root cause pertains to grievances over exclusion from access to land, power and resources. Compounded by weak governance systems, these causes have perpetuated structural violence and inequalities, including marginalization of and discrimination against vulnerable groups or minorities, and have given rise to cross-border skirmishes.

16. Weaknesses in governance, as well as limited or absent State authority in some areas, especially border areas, are further root causes of instability in the region. In some instances, electoral processes have

been disputed owing to mechanisms and systems that are insufficiently inclusive and transparent to instil trust among all segments of society in the process and the published results, leading to political tensions at the national level that have the potential to further fuel regional instability. Despite efforts by various stakeholders to curb corruption and its negative impact, this phenomenon continues to pose an obstacle to the region's trajectory towards stable economies and transparent governance. Difficulties in extending State authority in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere have also enabled, inter alia, the proliferation of armed groups, the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources and persistent cycles of intercommunal violence, including across borders

17. Instability is also rooted in limited access to justice or a lack of access to justice in some areas, which has had an impact on the protection of human rights, hampered efforts to strengthen the rule of law, fuelled corruption and contributed to impunity for the perpetrators of serious crimes, including crimes against humanity. Indeed, serious human rights violations and abuses continue to be reported, including in a few cross-border situations, despite some progress in furthering cooperation among the countries in the region to fight impunity.

Drivers of instability

18. Although the number of inter-State conflicts in the Great Lakes region has decreased over the past few years, tensions and mistrust persist among some countries, fuelled by, among other things, the legacies of past conflicts. Inter-State tensions also continue to arise over unresolved border demarcation issues. The lack of trust among countries in the region thus remains an important driver of instability in the region.

19. The continued activities of armed groups (also referred to as “negative forces”) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are key drivers of regional instability. Armed groups, in particular those of foreign origin, constitute both the problem and the manifestation of persistent mistrust and interference in the region. Armed groups have been known to serve as proxies for some countries, thus fuelling suspicions at the regional level over allegations of external support or the launching of attacks on their countries of origin using the Democratic Republic of the Congo or another country in the region as a rear base. They continue to cause human suffering, including as a result of grave human rights violations and abuses, as well as forced displacement. The persistence of insecurity caused by these groups and criminal networks also hampers prospects for socioeconomic development, affects regional economic cooperation and integration and

A close-up photograph of a soldier's hands and torso. The soldier is wearing a camouflage uniform with green, brown, and black patterns. They are holding a black assault rifle vertically. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a public gathering or a conflict zone. The lighting is natural, and the focus is sharp on the soldier's hands and the rifle.

“The main root causes of instability are often linked to grievances over historical legacies dating back to the post-independence period and the colonial era, including borders, which in many instances have separated ethnic communities.”

increases the vulnerability of populations to natural hazards and disasters owing to the State's limited access and capacity to adequately respond in a timely manner.

20. The illegal exploitation of and trade in minerals and other natural resources is another key driver of instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region. Revenues generated through such activities have enabled armed groups to finance their operations, recruit combatants, including young people, and procure weapons. In addition, disputes over access to and control over natural resources have fuelled hostilities between armed groups, criminal networks, local communities and members of the defence and security forces of some countries, with national and external actors both within and beyond the Democratic Republic of the Congo frequently facilitating and benefiting from illegal exploitation and trade, as reported by United Nations panels and groups of experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, illegal resource-related activities have a multiplier effect on other causes and drivers of instability, including socioeconomic grievances, land disputes, large-scale smuggling, weak institutions and impunity.

21. As a result of conflicts, situations of violence and human rights violations, there continue to be high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region. Uganda hosts the largest refugee caseload in Africa and one of the largest in the world, with 1.4 million refugees, including 882,000 from South Sudan and 418,000 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As at August 2020, over 927,000 Congolese refugees were being hosted in African countries, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself hosted over 525,000 refugees from Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan¹ and had an estimated 5.2 million internally displaced persons.

Refugees and internally displaced persons often find themselves in vulnerable situations owing to insufficient livelihoods, limited access to basic services such as health and education, and decreasing humanitarian assistance given the protracted nature of most situations of forced displacement. They also face significant risks to their life and liberty owing to incursions by armed groups. Continued efforts are necessary to enhance the physical protection of such communities. The generous granting of asylum to hundreds of thousands of refugees by all countries in the region could form the basis for a regional initiative towards durable solutions, in particular local integration and voluntary repatriation in the context of the present Strategy.

22. While the exact figure is unknown, many people in the Great Lakes region are stateless or at risk of statelessness, which limits their enjoyment of the full range of human rights. Among the causes of statelessness in the Great Lakes region are gaps in nationality laws and policies that leave some people without recognition of the nationality of any State. Access to legal identity documentation, in particular birth registration, is critical to prevent and reduce statelessness.

23. Beyond limiting people's opportunities for employment, deprivation caused by extreme poverty is known to create and exacerbate marginalization and grievances. These socioeconomic inequalities can, in turn, lay the groundwork for the contestation of State authority and drive cross-border migration, with national and regional ramifications. Insufficient opportunities for the region's bulging youth population also contribute to the increased likelihood of young people joining armed groups or engaging in illegal cross-border activities. According to the World Bank, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda were among the 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 with the largest poor population.

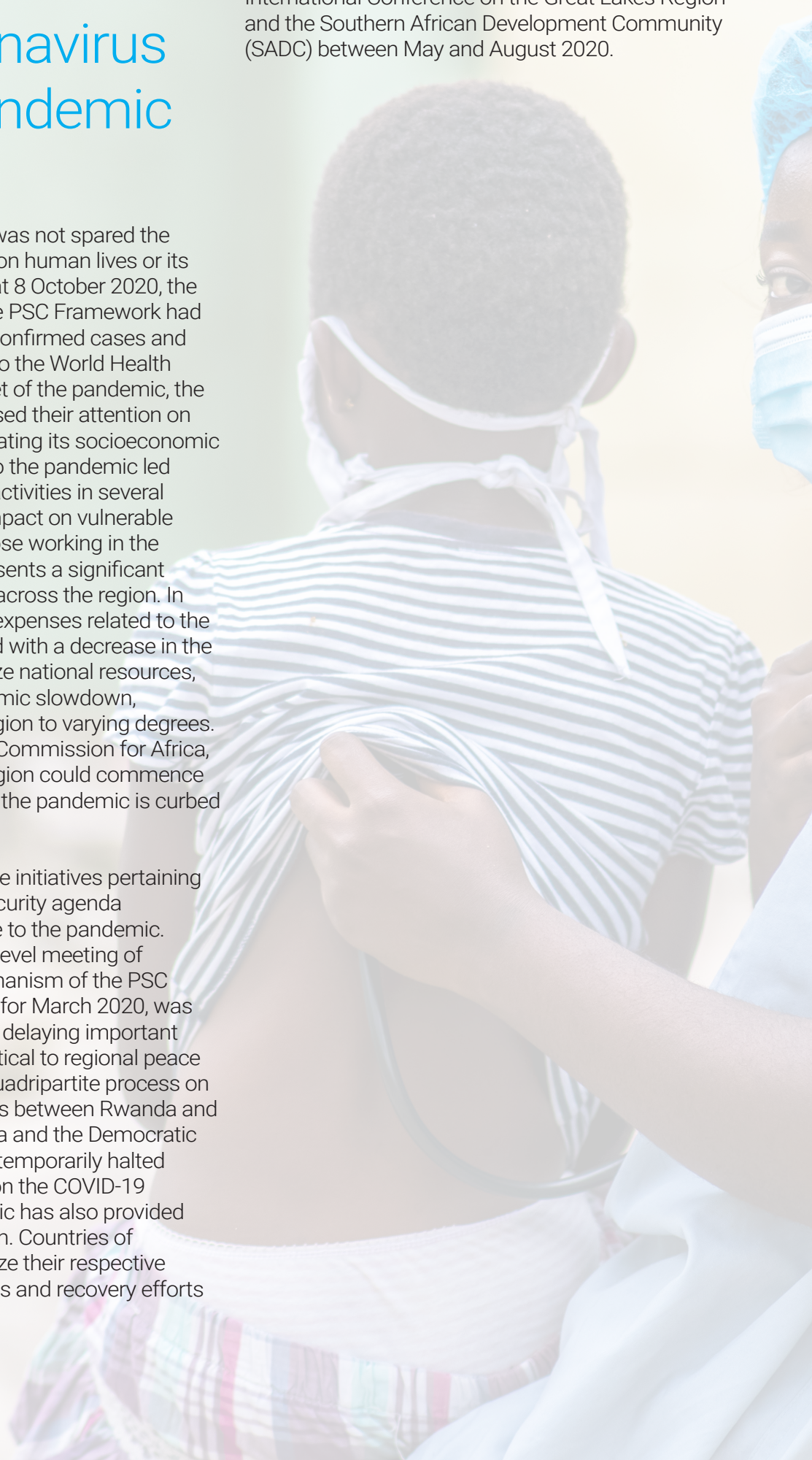
The illegal exploitation of and trade in minerals and other natural resources is another key driver of instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region.

C. Repercussions of the coronavirus disease pandemic

and proposed joint initiatives, as illustrated by the decisions taken during high-level meetings convened by the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) between May and August 2020.

24. The Great Lakes region was not spared the COVID-19 pandemic, its toll on human lives or its socioeconomic impact. As at 8 October 2020, the 13 signatory countries of the PSC Framework had reported a total of 801,588 confirmed cases and 20,031 fatalities, according to the World Health Organization. From the onset of the pandemic, the countries of the region focused their attention on curbing its spread and mitigating its socioeconomic impact. Efforts to respond to the pandemic led to a reduction in economic activities in several countries, with a negative impact on vulnerable populations, in particular those working in the informal sector, which represents a significant percentage of employment across the region. In addition, unforeseen public expenses related to the COVID-19 response, coupled with a decrease in the ability of countries to mobilize national resources, further deepened the economic slowdown, affecting countries of the region to varying degrees. According to the Economic Commission for Africa, economic recovery in the region could commence as early as 2021, however, if the pandemic is curbed effectively.

25. At the political level, some initiatives pertaining to the region's peace and security agenda experienced slowdowns due to the pandemic. For instance, the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the PSC Framework, initially planned for March 2020, was postponed to October 2020, delaying important decision-making in areas critical to regional peace and security. Similarly, the quadripartite process on the normalization of relations between Rwanda and Uganda, facilitated by Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was temporarily halted owing to the need to focus on the COVID-19 crisis. However, the pandemic has also provided opportunities for cooperation. Countries of the region rallied to harmonize their respective national COVID-19 responses and recovery efforts



D. Recent momentum towards cooperation

26. Over the past few years, positive dynamics have emerged, notably with the peaceful transfers of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2019 and in Burundi in 2020 and the renewed commitment and diplomatic engagement by countries of the region to improve regional relations and foster regional economic cooperation. Sustained engagement by the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC has also contributed to these positive developments. A recent illustration is the diplomatic resolution, in August 2020, of a border dispute between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, facilitated by the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the Chair of the International Conference.

27. On the security front, progress has been encouraging, including thanks to regional diplomatic efforts by countries of the region, notably Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to tackle security challenges that continue to perpetuate mistrust and tension. These challenges include the continued presence of armed groups of foreign origin in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara), as well as the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of former combatants. Consensus is emerging among the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its eastern neighbours on the need to complement ongoing military efforts against armed groups with joint action on comprehensive non-military measures to effectively reduce the threats posed by such groups. There have also been renewed efforts to complete the repatriation of former combatants.

28. Cooperation has also advanced in the fight against impunity. The Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, created in 2016, has provided a forum for cooperation among judicial bodies on cross-border cases of individuals accused of serious transnational crimes. In May 2019, a ministerial-level meeting supported by the United Nations and regional partners led to an agreement on a regional framework – the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance – with concrete commitments to combat impunity and uphold human rights in the region.

29. Economically, the Great Lakes region has been one of the fastest growing regions in Africa over the past few years. Many countries of the region have registered significant economic performance. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the economy of Uganda grew at 5.6 per cent in 2019, while the economies

of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda grew at 5.8 per cent and 8.6 per cent in 2018, respectively, as outlined in the African Economic Outlook 2020 issued by the African Development Bank. In the light of the pandemic, economic growth in Uganda is expected to shrink to between 0.4 and 1.7 per cent, according to the World Bank, with the corresponding adjustments to social spending at risk of exacerbating poverty in the country. The Rwandan economy, which has experienced significant growth over the past decade, is set to contract to 2 per cent growth in 2020, as stated in the country report on Rwanda issued by the International Monetary Fund in June 2020. In addition, the region has a young, fast-growing and increasingly educated population and a rising middle class. Uganda, for example, ranks as the world's second youngest nation. Regional economic communities have made progress in facilitating cross-border trade and freedom of movement in the region. All countries of the region have also signed the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, which has the potential to boost intra-African trade and accelerate structural transformation in the region.

The Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, created in 2016, has provided a forum for cooperation among judicial bodies on cross-border cases of individuals accused of serious transnational crimes.

30. The women and peace and security agenda has also gained momentum. The majority of the signatory countries of the PSC Framework have put in place national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and have made progress in the implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, also known as the Maputo Protocol, with several countries currently outpacing global averages for the representation of women in national institutions. Some countries are also listed among the top 50 countries globally with the highest levels of parliamentary representation of women, including Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda. Furthermore, women currently hold executive and legislative positions in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Countries have also reviewed their legal frameworks to ensure that they are gender-sensitive. In this regard, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and South Sudan have introduced mandatory quotas for executive branch positions, while Uganda has rolled out a mandatory gender certification for all government ministries, departments and agencies as part of the national budgeting process. Quotas do not innately lead to transformative gender parity, however. Several challenges remain, including discriminatory practices in political parties, discriminatory laws and policies, a lack of affirmative action measures for women, gender-based violence, including election-related violence, and gender equality within electoral management bodies.

Some countries are also listed among the top 50 countries globally with the highest levels of parliamentary representation of women, including Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, South Africa and Uganda.





E. Peace and security architecture of the region

31. While national authorities bear the main responsibility for consolidating peace and resolving conflicts, both within and across borders, regional organizations and regional economic communities have become increasingly important in promoting peace and security in the Great Lakes region. These include the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC, the Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community and the Economic Community of Central African States. Many of them facilitate political dialogue, observe elections, address security challenges and promote cooperation in areas critical for peace and security.

32. On the basis of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development and its protocols, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region has created policy documents and legal frameworks to promote inclusive political processes, governance, dialogue and other issues vital for addressing the legacy of recurrent conflicts in the region. It has also established mechanisms to address specific peace and security issues, such as the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism, the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre and ad hoc mechanisms aimed at supporting regional collaboration. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism has successfully contributed to addressing potential tensions caused by cross-border incidents. The International Conference has further spearheaded regional efforts to address the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources through the designation of six tools under its Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, including the establishment of a certification and tracing mechanism. The International Conference has grappled with challenges in resource mobilization, however, as well as the uneven commitment of its member States to contribute to and support the work of its structures, including the secretariat.

33. Regional economic communities, notably the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and SADC, have put in place peace and security-related programmes or agendas that partially cover the Great Lakes region. Recent efforts undertaken by these communities include support for the resolution of political tensions in Burundi and the backing of SADC for stabilization efforts in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the resolution of border disputes.

34. The PSC Framework complements and further bolsters such efforts by subregional organizations and regional economic communities. It provides a set of commitments for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, with the support of the international community, aimed at ending cycles of violence in the region. The implementation of these commitments is supported by the guarantors of the Framework, namely the African Union, the United Nations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC. The governance structures of the Framework, notably the Regional Oversight Mechanism, which meets at the level of Heads of State, and its Technical Support Committee, remain important platforms for promoting and enabling regular direct exchanges on regional peace and security priorities and identifying common action to advance the commitments of the Framework. In furtherance of Regional Oversight Mechanism decisions, the signatory countries, supported by the guarantors, have taken initiatives that have contributed to considerable progress in enhancing cooperation and coordination in order, among other things, to neutralize foreign armed groups, repatriate foreign disarmed combatants and advance the fight against impunity.

F. United Nations presence in the region

35. The United Nations has an extensive footprint in the region. In addition to the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the resident coordinator system and United Nations country teams, the United Nations has deployed three special political missions, namely the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi, and three peacekeeping operations, namely the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), MONUSCO and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), as well as regional offices or centres of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (the only Secretariat office away from Headquarters located in the global South) also has a political mandate in the region. These United Nations entities carry out a wide range of activities, from peace and security, conflict prevention, good offices, mediation and facilitation to development and humanitarian affairs and the promotion and

protection of human rights, in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including national authorities, regional organizations and civil society actors. Thanks to its extensive and diverse presence as well as its partnerships, the potential of the United Nations to contribute, alongside other regional and international players, to the transformation of the region is high if mandates are sufficiently delineated and the peace-humanitarian-development nexus is adequately strengthened.

36. Systematic exchanges at different levels within the United Nations system are common practice and have contributed to enhancing the exchange of information, shared analysis and, to varying degrees, more coordinated action. In addition to almost daily bilateral exchanges among senior officials, political coordination meetings are convened by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region on a biannual basis, bringing together the United Nations leadership in key countries of the region. Furthermore, ad hoc coordination mechanisms have been created to promote a shared understanding and concerted action in response to specific situations, as was the case during the development of the joint engagement strategy ahead of, during and after the elections in Burundi between May and August 2020.

37. United Nations coordination efforts in the Great Lakes region also include the alignment of political engagements and regional programmatic priorities through the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, which was endorsed by the Security Council in March 2016. Under the leadership of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Chair of the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group, an integrated regional approach was pursued, with the aim of leveraging the peace-security-humanitarian-development nexus to promote stability in the region.

Political coordination meetings are convened by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region on a biannual basis, bringing together the United Nations leadership in key countries of the region.

Financial support for the Framework is channelled through the cross-border multi-partner trust fund, building on catalytic investments such as those from the Peacebuilding Fund and the European Union. Despite some initial success, such as the implementation of a cross-border project between Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania,

in addressing drivers of conflict and instability associated with forced displacement, the Framework has faced challenges related to streamlining coordination, funding for its secretariat and joint resource mobilization. Efforts are ongoing to review the effectiveness of the governance and project implementation mechanisms set up under the Framework and to recommend adjustments in line with the new structures and modalities of the reform of the United Nations development system. On the basis of an initial assessment of the effectiveness of the Framework and its governing structures, as well as the Strategy, which will provide the overall guiding framework, the Management Board of the Framework will be convened before the end of 2020 with a view to defining the way forward.

38. Overall, there is scope for further strengthening links between United Nations analyses undertaken at the national and regional levels to inform more tailored and harmonized approaches, as well as cross-border and multi-country programmatic engagement. Furthermore, the United Nations does not possess a streamlined early warning or early action and crisis response capacity for conflict prevention at the regional level.

G. Challenge of multiplicity

39. The multiplicity of institutions – not only regional organizations, but also United Nations political presences – with overlapping mandates and geographic scopes has at times impeded efforts to address some of the major peace and security issues affecting the region. This multiplicity has also nurtured a perception of duplicated efforts among regional organizations, among United Nations entities and between regional organizations and United Nations entities.

40. To improve its impact in the region as well as the quality of its partnerships with regional organizations, United Nations Headquarters will need to clearly delineate the responsibilities and geographical scopes of its political presences in the region and address existing overlaps. Pending such clarification, the concerned entities will need to strengthen their coordination efforts to ensure coherent political engagements with countries and organizations of the region. In that regard, some recommendations are made in chapter III on the implementation of the Strategy.

II. Building on the Momentum: Proposed Priorities and Actions for the United Nations in the Great Lakes region

41. As noted in the previous chapter, the region has made some significant progress despite continuing challenges. From now on, it will be vital for the region to continue its positive trajectory towards greater stability and inclusive development. To that end, sustained commitment and engagement by all stakeholders will be required. The United Nations will support existing initiatives and emerging opportunities for greater regional stability, cooperation and prosperity, while helping the region to address remaining pockets of instability. Guided by the main objectives of the Secretary-General's reform agenda, including a greater prioritization of prevention, the primacy of politics and increased alignment of the peace and security pillar with the development and human rights pillars, the Strategy promotes a more coherent and integrated approach for United Nations intervention in the region.

Guiding principles

42. The following five principles will also guide United Nations action in the region:

(a) Early warning and rapid response. With a view to taking a more proactive approach to preventive measures, the United Nations

will seek to better leverage the expertise and analytical capacities of its national and regional presences and beyond. Regular shared analyses and risk assessments will be instituted, especially when cross-border risks are identified, and the exchange of information and analyses with the African Union and subregional organizations will be stepped up;

(b) Subsidiarity and regional ownership. In line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Organization's efforts will be centred around accompaniment and support for national and regional priorities by promoting and strengthening regionally led and owned initiatives, including existing national and regional mechanisms, wherever possible. Joint initiatives with regional and subregional organizations will be pursued, as appropriate. The strategic partnership with the African Union will be further deepened, including in the context of the ongoing African Union reform. Similarly, collaboration with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will be pursued, including through the development of a partnership framework aimed at maximizing complementarity and synergies of action;

(c) People-centred inclusiveness and human rights. Engagement with civil society beyond political elites and greater efforts to harness the full potential of women, young people, refugees and internally displaced persons, among others, as agents of change will be prioritized across the different strategic priorities. Moreover, United Nations efforts will be anchored in a rights-based approach that places the promotion and protection of human rights at the centre of the Organization's political and programmatic action in the region. Due consideration will be given to the full spectrum of human rights, including civil-political, socioeconomic and collective-developmental rights, as envisaged in international and regional instruments, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981, and in line with the Sustainable Development Goal framework and the 2030 Agenda. Efforts will be made to ensure that human rights assessments consistently inform and feed into United Nations good offices and political engagement. In peace negotiations and mediation processes, compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law standards will be prioritized to fight impunity for serious violations, abuses and crimes;

(d) Partnerships. Recognizing that impact is dependent on joint, concerted action, the United Nations will deepen and expand its partnerships with all stakeholders that have a share in the region's political, security and socioeconomic dynamics. Civil society (including women and young people) and the private sector will have an important role in that regard, as will regional and subregional organizations and international partners, with whom existing partnership will be enhanced. Collaboration with international financial institutions, in particular the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa and the European Investment Bank, as well as other bilateral and multilateral donors, will be aimed at promoting concerted support for regional efforts to advance peace, stability and equitable development. Maximizing synergies will entail ensuring the best possible alignment of resources, capacities and common interests in pursuit of each priority - on the basis of clear roles and responsibilities - while avoiding the duplication of efforts.

(e) Complementarity and coherence of United Nations action. A clearer division of labour among United Nations presences in

the region and their respective thematic and regional portfolios should be pursued, under the guidance of United Nations Headquarters. The United Nations will prioritize joint analyses and complementary approaches that tap into each entity's mandate and comparative advantage and, in line with the Secretary-General's reform agenda, will contribute to a better defined collective identity as a trusted, reliable, cohesive, accountable and effective partner to countries under the 2030 Agenda.

Proposed Thematic Priorities

43. The Strategy contains proposals for 10 thematic priorities clustered around three pillars:

Pillar I: peace, security and justice

1. Dialogue and inclusive political processes
2. Sustained cooperation on cross-border security issues
3. Good governance, rule of law and human rights
4. Women/youth and peace and security

Pillar II: sustainable development and shared prosperity

5. Equitable and inclusive socioeconomic development
6. Regional economic cooperation, trade and investment
7. Sustainable and transparent management of natural resources

Pillar III: resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges

8. Prevention of violent extremism
9. Durable solutions to protracted forced displacement
10. Preparedness and resilience to internal and external shocks

44. As further elaborated in chapter III, implementation of the identified priorities will rely on the collective leverage and weight of all United Nations presence in the region, including the political and peacekeeping presences and the United Nations country teams. For example, focused political leadership and engagement

under pillar I – peace, security and justice – will need to be buttressed by tailored programmatic interventions with both a medium- and a long-term perspective, while programmes designed by United Nations country teams, under the leadership of resident coordinators, to achieve the priorities of pillars II and III – sustainable development and shared prosperity, and resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges – would be reinforced and supported by the access and convening power of the political presences, notably of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, whose engagement would seek to foster sustained regional political ownership and consensus and international commitment in support of identified programmatic interventions. That approach would thus enable a balance between short-, medium- and long-term perspectives and harness the mutually reinforcing nature of political, humanitarian and development approaches.

45. While the actions of United Nations entities in the region will be described in the action plan, which will be elaborated following approval of the Strategy, an overview of the identified priorities under each of the three pillars is provided below.

A. Pillar I: peace, security and justice

1. Dialogue and inclusive political processes

46. Effective and sustained dialogue among countries, communities and citizens is key to fostering trust, addressing underlying grievances and facilitating collective action towards the common objectives of peace, stability and prosperity. Similarly, inclusive, credible and transparent political processes at the national and local levels, including elections, contribute to remedying structural inequalities and ensuring the accountability of political and economic structures to their respective constituencies. Building on lessons learned from across its presences in the region and from regional political efforts already under way, the United Nations will strengthen its support for sustained dialogue and inclusive political processes, including regionally led initiatives, with a view to promoting national and regional commitment and ownership and the systematic use of formal and informal mechanisms of communication to address tensions where they exist or emerge.

47. In the context of the Strategy, and considering the comparative advantage of the United Nations, efforts will be focused on fostering dialogue and trust-building initiatives at all levels and among concerned national authorities, institutions and civil society by further stepping up good offices efforts through quiet and shuttle diplomacy. This will include providing platforms for regular exchanges, such as through support for the governance mechanisms of the PSC

implementation of the identified priorities will rely on the collective leverage and weight of all United Nations presence in the region, including the political and peacekeeping presences and the United Nations country teams

Framework, as well as for the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region to advance the meaningful participation of women in peacebuilding, among other things. This will be complemented by support for reconciliation initiatives among communities and populations, including across borders.

2. Sustained cooperation on cross-border security issues

48. Considering the persistent threats to regional stability posed by negative forces, the unbearable toll paid by innocent civilians and the negative impact of cross-border incidents on relations between countries in the region, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, collaborating with the other guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework, will support regional efforts to ensure that military operations in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and trust-building efforts among countries are effectively complemented by a regionally led approach involving joint actions on comprehensive non-military measures. This will include support for strengthened programmes on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement at the national and regional levels and engagement aimed at undercutting negative forces' recruitment and supply networks. Support for regional security mechanisms, including the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and other mechanisms established to advance cross-border security cooperation, will be another key element of United Nations engagement in the context of the Strategy, with a view to supporting the peaceful settlement of cross-border security incidents.

3. Good governance, rule of law and human rights

49. The United Nations will also enhance its support for cross-border judicial cooperation, the promotion and protection of human rights and strengthening of the rule of law and good governance as further pathways to addressing and preventing tensions and building trust and peace. Capacity-building initiatives already under way in this area will be reinforced and framed in the context of regional efforts and supported by advocacy and good offices to ensure sustained political attention and commitment, including the requisite budgetary allocations.



Photo : Alexander Bee



4. Women/youth and peace and security

50. The meaningful participation of women and young people remains crucial for the region's stability. To further strengthen the visibility and role of women and young people in peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution, the United Nations will step up its partnerships with women's and youth organizations and support regional bodies, as well as countries in the region, in advancing Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security. Moreover, the United Nations will promote and, where possible, initiate interventions to bolster the economic empowerment of women and young people, who play a critical yet often understated role in national economies and cross-border trade.

B. Pillar II: sustainable development and shared prosperity

5. Equitable and inclusive socioeconomic development

51. Socioeconomic development is critical to addressing deprivation-induced grievances arising from the persistent scourge of poverty and inequalities that contribute to instability in the region. The United Nations will therefore support, through its Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, national and regional efforts on poverty reduction and equitable socioeconomic development, including with a view to supporting economic diversification and job creation for the region's bulging youth population and mitigating the negative impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Recognition of and support for Agenda 2063 of the African Union will be critical in this regard.

6. Regional economic cooperation, trade and investment

52. Economic cooperation and integration are key to peace and stability, especially in a region where communities transcend national borders and where areas of continued conflict and instability are often characterized by underdevelopment and a dependency on long overland transport routes for commodities other than agricultural products. United Nations support in the context of this priority will include political engagement to help to address tensions between neighbouring countries that affect cross-border trade, regional investment and economic cooperation and to mobilize international partners in support of the region. Cognizant of the imbalance between the region's wealth in natural resources and its current manufacturing and transformation capacities, the United Nations will further seek to promote economic diversification and the extension of regional value chains through greater investments in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

7. Sustainable and transparent management of natural resources

53. Stability and long-term development are also contingent on collective efforts to address the illicit exploitation of and trafficking in natural resources as a source of funding for armed groups and criminal networks. However, it is widely recognized that natural resources can be transformed from drivers of instability into drivers of shared prosperity: they can contribute not only to generating licit jobs, revenues, tax income, infrastructure and basic services, but also to advancing cooperation between countries in the region. Thus, fostering a political consensus and supporting mechanisms for transforming natural resources into drivers of shared prosperity are key priorities for the United Nations. With a view to supporting the implementation of the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, engagement in the context of the Strategy will be focused on consulting countries of the region, subregional organizations, development partners and resource-importing countries in support of a holistic approach aimed at strengthening transparency and formal cooperation mechanisms on natural resources across the value chain, involving all relevant stakeholders.

C. Pillar III: resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges

8. Prevention of violent extremism

54. Over the past few years, violent extremism has affected some countries in the region. The risks associated with this phenomenon, including those identified from lessons learned in other regions in Africa, warrant a proactive, prevention-based United Nations approach. In the context of the Strategy, efforts will be centred around strengthening early warning among United Nations presences in the region, including in cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, in addition to ensuring that the ongoing United Nations political and programmatic interventions appropriately reflect the primacy of prevention so as to tackle the underlying conditions that drive individuals, especially young people, to join violent extremist groups.

9. Durable solutions to protracted forced displacement

55. Finding safe, sustainable and durable solutions for the vast number of forcibly displaced persons in the region is critical to

achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, for social cohesion, stability and development in the region. First, the Strategy will mainstream the concerns of displaced communities into the other thematic priorities. Second, in line with the conclusions of the high-level ministerial meeting held in March 2019, the United Nations will support the development and implementation of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for forcibly displaced persons under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and with the guidance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Third, working closely with countries of the region and regional organizations, the United Nations will redouble efforts, not least by strengthening peaceful coexistence programmes, to ensure that displaced communities are protected against armed groups and further displacement, that the most vulnerable are protected against marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination, and that they all have access to basic services, including health, education and livelihood opportunities. In that regard, efforts will be made to leverage the complementarity

of United Nations development, humanitarian and political efforts, especially in the context of the ongoing work of the tripartite commissions made up of the concerned countries and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

10. Preparedness and resilience to internal and external shocks

56. Beyond the long-standing political, security and socioeconomic challenges that drive instability in the region, a range of potential shocks, including public health crises and climate change-induced natural disasters, present risks to durable stability and people-centred development. The countries of the region are therefore faced with the task of enhancing their preparedness and resilience to such shocks and crises. In the context of this priority, United Nations efforts will be focused on supporting the countries in the region in strengthening their anticipation and shock absorption capacities, including through targeted programmes at the national and regional levels and coordinated resource mobilization efforts.



Photo: Tope Asokere



Photo : Alexander Bee

III. Implementation of the Strategy

57. The implementation of the Strategy will be the responsibility of the United Nations system, shared among its political, humanitarian and development presences in the region. The United Nations will strive to maximize its capacities and resources in support of the countries and their priorities and of regional organizations and regional economic communities, building on existing cooperation processes and mechanisms.

58. Following approval of the Strategy by the Secretary-General, the action plan for its implementation will be developed by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including special political missions, peacekeeping operations, resident coordinators, United Nations country teams, United Nations offices and departments at the regional and Headquarters levels, signatory countries of the PSC Framework, regional and subregional organizations, civil society organizations, development partners, businesses and international financial institutions. The action plan will contain priority actions, including those proposed in annex I, with timelines, division of labour, expected results, resource requirements and a monitoring and evaluation plan. Building on best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of other strategies, including the ongoing review of the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, the action plan will develop practical modalities for ensuring the effective operationalization of the Strategy in areas such as strategic and technical coordination, resource mobilization and communication, as described in the following paragraphs.

A. Coordination and implementation mechanisms

59. To deliver on the priorities of the Strategy and respond to the expectations of the region and its evolving dynamics, the United Nations will need to be responsive and flexible. In this regard, the action plan will include a review of existing coordination mechanisms involving United Nations entities in the region and propose innovative approaches to ensure alignment with the peace, security and development agenda. It should also explore concrete options for the creation of flexible and agile coordination and implementation mechanisms that leverage the mandates and respective unique vantage points, in terms of perspectives and access, of national and regional United Nations entities.

60. Leveraging his convening and facilitating role and using mechanisms under current frameworks, notably the PSC Framework and the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region will provide the political leadership for the implementation of the Strategy, in close collaboration with United Nations entities in the region and with due consideration for their respective mandates. In line with the reform of the United Nations development system, resident coordinators will also play a significant role in coordinating the Strategy. In that regard, a senior policy group, bringing together the Special Envoy and the resident coordinators, as well as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General operating in the region when needed, could be established to provide leadership and strategic guidance for the implementation of the Strategy.

The main objectives of the proposed senior policy group, or any other coordination mechanism that may be established during the elaboration of the action plan, will be to:

- (a) Simplify decision-making processes and systematize United Nations internal consultations;
- (b) Formalize the systematic sharing of information and analyses;
- (c) Agree on priorities for United Nations programmatic activities at the regional level;
- (d) Promote a common understanding of the regional repercussions of national developments, and vice versa;
- (e) Leverage the role of resident coordinators as a link to common regional approaches and actions.

B. Monitoring and evaluation

61. The implementation of the Strategy will be monitored. For that purpose, the proposed senior policy group could establish a dedicated monitoring and evaluation mechanism to identify challenges, risks and gaps on the basis of regular updates from all parts of the United Nations system at the country, regional and Headquarters levels. Furthermore, to assist with the review process and complement the internal analysis with an external perspective, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, in close consultation with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Development Coordination Office, UNOCA, MONUSCO, the regional coordinator offices, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi and other relevant United Nations entities as needed, could organize annual meetings with external experts and scholars to review progress in the implementation.

C. Communication

62. A critical aspect of the Strategy will be the communication by all concerned United Nations entities on its implementation. In addition to providing information on United Nations actions in support of the region, strategic communication will be aimed at promoting a positive narrative of peace and equitable development for the region's populations, shifting away from an all too common conflict-driven narrative.

63. In that regard, the United Nations will need to ensure that its actions are understood by countries and organizations of the region as supporting efforts that contribute effectively to peace consolidation and conflict prevention. In developing its communication strategy, the United Nations will therefore consult signatory countries and guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework and develop tailored joint communication plans with national actors, as required.

This process will include reflections on the use of shared Internet and social media presences, periodic newsletters and joint media monitoring mechanisms. The implementation of the communication strategy will be coordinated by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and closely monitored by all concerned United Nations entities in the region.

D. Resources to implement the Strategy

64. The action plan will include a dedicated reflection on resource mobilization, including joint fundraising where possible, to ensure the implementation of the Strategy.

E. Underlying assumptions

65. The Strategy is underpinned by several assumptions. At the regional level, it anticipates that regional cooperation towards enhanced peace and stability will be driven primarily by national actors and regional organizations, provided there is sustained political will and trust among concerned stakeholders. The Strategy assumes that actors who continue to have an interest in instability, including armed groups and criminal networks, can be marginalized if decisive action is taken to alter their incentives. The inclusiveness and representativeness of major regional and national political and economic processes, such as national elections, intergovernmental and intercommunal dialogue and cross-border trade and investment agreements, will also remain important enablers of regional cooperation.

66. The Strategy further assumes that the United Nations will face high expectations regarding its mandate delivery, from both the region and beyond, which will need to be carefully managed, including in the context of the proposed communication plan. The United Nations may also continue to see a strong attachment to national sovereignty by some actors in the region, which could limit entry points for engagement, including in the areas of conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Similarly, diverging views among regional actors and among international actors on how best to address threats to peace and security in the region may persist and could thus curtail the impact of United Nations action.

67. Regarding external factors, it is anticipated that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to influence dynamics in the Great Lakes region and beyond for some time. While the trajectory of the pandemic and the scope of its impact, including on peace and security in the region, are yet to be fully ascertained, some processes central to the implementation of the Strategy may be slowed or deprioritized and others enhanced in the context of response measures. Furthermore, international solidarity may be affected

owing to socioeconomic setbacks in donor countries, leading to reduced funding for initiatives identified as key in ensuring the achievement of the Strategy's priorities.

68. Taking into consideration these assumptions and the highly dynamic overall context in the region, the United Nations will need to manage expectations and secure stakeholder support to ensure the success of the Strategy. Without the commitment of all, United Nations efforts will prove ineffective.

F. Defining success

69. The United Nations will have achieved the objectives of the Strategy if it succeeds in helping the countries of the region to attain their common aspirations for greater stability, peaceful relations, sustainable development and resilience, as spelled out in the Pact on Security, Stability and Development and the PSC Framework. Successful implementation will thus be measured against the ability of the United Nations to contribute to enhanced trust, the weakening of armed groups, more inclusive political and economic processes and gradually strengthened capacities at the national and regional levels, across the Strategy's three pillars.

If the Strategy is effectively implemented, more frequent and constructive interactions between key actors are expected to take place and be sustained, including in the context of trust-building initiatives, cross-border projects and systematic recourse to established mechanisms for resolving differences diplomatically. More inclusive national political processes and peaceful transfers of power could generate additional opportunities for regional cooperation, while political consensus among key actors, including those supported by the United Nations, could yield tangible results in some areas, such as joint action by concerned countries against negative forces and prosecution for cross-border crimes.

G. Timeline

70. The priorities presented above provide overarching strategic guidance for United Nations engagement in the Great Lakes region for the next 10 years, corresponding to the timeline of the 2030 Agenda. Given the complexity of the issues at hand, it is not claimed that all of the objectives of the Strategy will be attained within the proposed time frame. Instead, the Strategy contains proposals for an incremental and sequenced approach. As a first step, an initial three-year time frame will

be focused on the implementation of prioritized and well-sequenced political and programmatic interventions, which will be identified after approval of the Strategy. In some instances, this may translate into setting in motion measures such as community-based programmes on disarmament, demobilization and repatriation or regional initiatives on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement, while in other instances the United Nations will focus on strengthening existing efforts and preventing a reversal of the gains already made. That would include efforts to support the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic recovery.



Photo: Kevin Ochieng Onyango



IV. Role of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

71. The current Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region was created in 2013 in connection with the implementation of the commitments under the PSC Framework, to support the Secretary-General's good offices in the region through his Special Envoy. Its current mandate is spelled out in Security Council resolution 2389 (2017) on the situation in the Great Lakes region, complemented by succeeding resolutions on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, most recently resolution 2502 (2019).

72. Since its establishment, the Office has played a critical secretariat role in supporting the meetings and activities of the governing mechanisms of the PSC Framework. In addition, it has increasingly been involved in programmatic activities in support of the various forums of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (on women, young people, civil society and the private sector) or in collaboration with the Peacebuilding Support Office, as well as United Nations agencies, funds and programmes united under the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework.

73. While the Office continues to play an important role in steering the implementation of commitments under the PSC Framework, there is a need to streamline, further prioritize and sequence the Office's engagements and initiatives in the areas of peace, security, development and human rights and to make minor adjustments to its focus and areas of intervention, including its support for regional mechanisms.

A. Prioritizing and sequencing

74. The Office will better prioritize and sequence its interventions and activities. It will do so on the basis of specific criteria, including: due respect for the primacy of the political nature of the Office and its overarching preventive diplomacy approach; the impact of interventions and initiatives proposed to achieve immediate or medium-term goals of peace, stability and development, as enshrined in the PSC Framework and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development; the added value of the Office and its comparative advantage relative to other United Nations entities and non-United Nations actors, including with respect to the ability to follow up on the implementation of the proposed interventions and initiatives.

B. Investing more in high-level shuttle diplomacy

75. Given its political mandate, the Office will dedicate appropriate time and resources to political engagements to fully leverage the high-level access and convening power of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, with a focus on restoring trust between leaders of the region, as needed; nurturing stronger cooperation between Governments, institutions and people of the region, including through preventive diplomacy efforts; supporting dialogue or mediation efforts between countries of the region and between local community actors, when necessary; and encouraging the concerned countries' sustained commitment to cooperation to effectively address the threats posed by armed groups. The Special Envoy's shuttle diplomacy will also seek to encourage and promote stronger economic cooperation and investment in sustainable development in the region to complement and reinforce the Strategy's political objectives.

C. Strengthening the Office's convening, facilitation and coordination role

76. While being mindful of existing reporting lines and the comparative advantage of each United Nations entity, the convening, good offices, facilitation and coordination role of the Office should be strengthened with a view to enhancing the collective impact and effectiveness of the United Nations family in the region, in line with the proposals set out in section III.A on coordination and implementation mechanisms.

D. Reporting

77. It is proposed that future reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the PSC Framework should contain sections dedicated to the execution of the Strategy, which will include inputs from concerned entities and reflect the interconnectedness of United Nations interventions in the Great Lakes region in the areas of peace, security and development.



Photo: Boniface Kimani Muthoni

Annex 1

Priorities and actions for United Nations engagement in the Great Lakes region

The present annex provides an overview of the thematic priorities and actions for United Nations engagement in the Great Lakes region proposed during the extensive consultations carried out by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region that informed the development of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region. The proposed actions will be the subject of further reflections during the elaboration of the action plan. The list below is not exhaustive or in any particular order of priority and does not cover the division of labour for the implementation of the actions.



Pillar I: Peace, Security and Justice

Dialogue and inclusive political processes

1. Step up preventive diplomacy initiatives, including, when necessary, joint action between the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and special representatives of the Secretary-General to the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the African Union, and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi.
2. Support the leaders of the region and regional organizations with regard to ongoing and future dialogue processes intended to build or restore trust, good neighbourliness and cooperation among signatory countries of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (PSC Framework).
3. Support inclusive political processes, including by strengthening the capacities of national actors and regional organizations with regard to good offices, dialogue facilitation and mediation.
4. Facilitate and support more frequent direct exchanges among the stakeholders in the region, including through the meetings of the PSC Framework governance structures and the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, as well as other regional mechanisms and initiatives on specific peace and security issues.
5. Improve United Nations internal coordination of information-sharing, analysis and prevention initiatives in support of credible and transparent elections, with due respect for people's rights and freedoms, in line with regional and international human rights standards.
6. Support initiatives to enhance the role of civil society, especially women and young people, in political processes and trust-building initiatives.

7. Encourage cross-border cooperation among State services and populations living in border areas to foster good neighbourliness, trust and collaboration in line with existing good practices such as bilateral commissions and joint border committees.

Sustained cooperation on cross-border security issues

8. Support existing regional security mechanisms, including the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in carrying out their mandates effectively, including through prevention of the cross-border movement of negative forces, trust-building initiatives such as high-level meetings of security officials of countries of the region, joint verification missions and joint monitoring of borders.
9. Together with the co-guarantors of the PSC Framework, facilitate trust-building activities and information-sharing among security stakeholders and, building on progress made to date and existing mechanisms, support the development and implementation by countries of the region of a comprehensive plan of action to neutralize negative forces that includes non-military measures to complement ongoing military operations.
10. Mobilize technical and financial support for concerned signatory countries of the PSC Framework to implement non-military measures, such as cross-border reintegration projects, intercommunal dialogue and community violence reduction programmes, as a complement to ongoing military operations, with the aim of promoting the voluntary disarmament of combatants and undercutting recruitment and supply networks of negative forces. United Nations action should include support for the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish a national community-based programme on disarmament, demobilization and repatriation.
11. Establish a community-based working group on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement in the region, bringing together representatives

from regional organizations, national commissions on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement from the region and international experts to identify lessons learned, best practices and opportunities for cooperation, in support of the contact and coordination group proposed by the heads of intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania and endorsed by the PSC Framework Technical Support Committee in February 2020.

12. Mobilize technical and financial support for the implementation of regional border demarcation efforts, in close collaboration with the African Union and subregional organizations.

Good governance, rule of law and human rights

13. Support national and regional efforts to strengthen governance and the rule of law, including through the effective implementation of commitments made by Member States at the continental and regional levels, such as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance of 2019.

14. Support the strengthening of institutions critical to promoting and protecting human rights, addressing impunity and ensuring justice and accountability, and advance the prosecution of perpetrators of cross-border crimes through the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network, including cases involving leaders and key members of negative forces.

15. In line with the African Union Transitional Justice Policy Framework and the Nairobi Declaration on Justice and Good Governance, encourage Governments in the region to put in place effective transitional justice mechanisms, including prosecution for crimes committed by armed groups and reparations for victims, in order to prevent a return to violence, ensure accountability for human rights violations, abuses and crimes and support reconciliation.

16. Support the setting up of a regional mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in the Great Lakes region, in particular Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

17. Support national and regional efforts and initiatives to combat illicit financial flows, including alignment with the Africa Mining Vision adopted at the African Union summit in February 2009, to promote good governance for national resource mobilization and management.

Women/youth and peace and security

18. Promote the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding-related

efforts, including by encouraging the region's leaders to open political spaces for women; strengthening leadership skills; supporting the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Women Forum; and establishing a network of women community leaders and mediators to promote peace and democracy.

19. Further the participation of women in electoral and political processes through continued advocacy by the Advisory Board for Women, Peace and Security in the Great Lakes Region to strengthen mechanisms for the design and reform of electoral systems and legislation and the development of gender-responsive budgets to ensure compliance with gender quotas for political and leadership roles for women. Efforts will also include cooperation with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and regional civil society organizations to strengthen multi-stakeholder electoral initiatives at the grass-roots level in relation to electoral capacity-building.

20. Prevent and address conflict-related and domestic sexual violence through advocacy with national, regional and international players to increase support provided to civil society for community (mass) awareness of sexual and gender-based violence, capacity-building and strategic communication, including through the enhanced role of media and training on early warning indicators, and to increase support for judicial mechanisms in their response to sexual and gender-based violence.

21. Promote the advancement of women and girl entrepreneurs through the strengthening of a network and build business leadership skills in cooperation with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, international financial institutions and regional non-governmental organizations.

22. Promote the participation of young people in electoral processes and in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding-related efforts, including through advocacy efforts for inclusive electoral systems, legislation and budgets; strengthening of youth leadership skills; and support for national and regional youth organizations;

23. Support programmes, mechanisms and existing regional forums, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Youth Forum, to increase and improve the representation of young people in decision-making structures and conflict prevention and peacebuilding-related efforts at the national and regional levels.

24. Support capacity-building programmes and vocational training for young people in the region, as well as initiatives that cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance.



Pillar II: Sustainable development and shared prosperity

Equitable and inclusive socioeconomic development

25. Facilitate the establishment of ad hoc coordination platforms between Governments of the region, the private sector, regional coordinator offices and international partners, with a view to furthering concerted resource mobilization and bolstering regional economic integration.

26. Support programmatic activities and initiatives, including advocacy and resource mobilization, to combat inequalities and discrimination and promote equitable socioeconomic development.

27. Support the economic empowerment of women and young people by strengthening their capacity to act as agents of change and contribute to economic integration; promoting policy frameworks that support job creation, entrepreneurship and innovation; and encouraging the formalization and growth of enterprises, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. Provide regional political analysis during the elaboration of programmatic proposals for cross-border or multi-country initiatives and for United Nations policy documents, at the national and regional levels, including common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Such analysis should include the human rights dimension.

Regional economic cooperation, trade and investment

29. Support the bankability and implementation of cross-border projects that are aimed at transforming border areas into catalysts for growth and shared prosperity and have the potential to address root causes of tension in the region. In this regard, engage in consultations with the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community, which have already identified a number of relevant structuring projects, and support them as appropriate in mobilizing resources for effective implementation.

30. Facilitate and mobilize high-level political engagements between countries and regional organizations on the effective and timely implementation of continental instruments (including the Agreement Establishing the African Continental

Free Trade Area) and develop targeted advocacy efforts to help to overcome challenges in the implementation of national commitments on regional integration.

31. Mobilize support to address specific issues related to landlocked countries in the region confronted with economic and human development challenges in relation to their landlocked nature and high transportation and energy costs.

32. Promote cooperation and consensus between countries of the region on measures to address challenges related to regional economic integration. In this regard, among other actions, the United Nations will mobilize support and resources for specific economic, trade or investment initiatives with the potential to address root causes of tension, prevent conflicts and promote reconciliation, between both communities and countries, and empower vulnerable groups.

Sustainable and transparent management of natural resources

33. Support dialogue and cooperation to develop a holistic approach to raising awareness among stakeholders involved in the whole value chain of natural resources in the region and beyond, with a view to promoting the accountable, sustainable and transparent management of such resources.

34. Support regional efforts to regulate exploitation and trade and disincentivize the smuggling of high-value minerals, including through support for reforms to the regional trade in minerals, the harmonization of national tax systems, the strengthening of anti-smuggling legal mechanisms and the implementation of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources by signatory countries.



Pillar III: Resilience to long-standing and emerging challenges

Prevention of violent extremism

38. Support countries of the region in their efforts to tackle the underlying conditions that drive individuals to join violent extremist groups through complementary programmatic and political efforts. This will require better coordination among United Nations political presences and peacekeeping missions in the region, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, national and international partners, regional organizations and the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

39. Strengthen information-sharing and cross-border risk assessments between guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework and other subregional organizations, to facilitate early preventive action.

40. Build a common early warning mechanism among United Nations entities in the region to ensure continuous situational awareness and timely threat analysis, with a view to informing United Nations political engagements in the region.

41. Promote the role of women and young people in countering violent extremism.

Durable solutions to protracted forced displacement

42. Mainstream refugee and internally displaced populations, including the needs of women, children, disabled persons and other vulnerable groups, through the programmatic areas of the 10 priority areas of the three pillars of the Strategy.

43. Support the development and implementation of a comprehensive durable solutions strategy for forcibly displaced persons under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees providing support and guidance in this regard.

44. Strengthen development and coexistence programmes in countries to ensure that displaced communities are protected against armed groups and further displacement, that the most vulnerable are protected against marginalization, stigmatization and discrimination, and that they all have access to basic services, including health, education and livelihood opportunities.

45. Ensure the complementarity and alignment of United Nations development, political and humanitarian efforts, especially in the context of the tripartite commissions or tripartite agreements promoting the voluntary repatriation of refugees to their countries of origin.

Preparedness and resilience to internal and external shocks

46. Promote initiatives aimed at mitigating the negative socioeconomic impact of recurrent health crises in the region, including in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the Ebola virus disease. In supporting mitigating measures, the United Nations will pay attention to vulnerable and marginalized groups, including refugees, the internally displaced and stateless persons, and promote creative initiatives aimed at ensuring the continuity of education and supporting the informal sector and small and medium-sized enterprises during periods of crisis.

47. Promote and, if required, facilitate the development or implementation of common regional approaches and standards in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other public health crises, in order to coordinate health, political and social responses. In this regard, the United Nations will explore and propose flexible funding management for regional inter-agency planning for major public health crises.

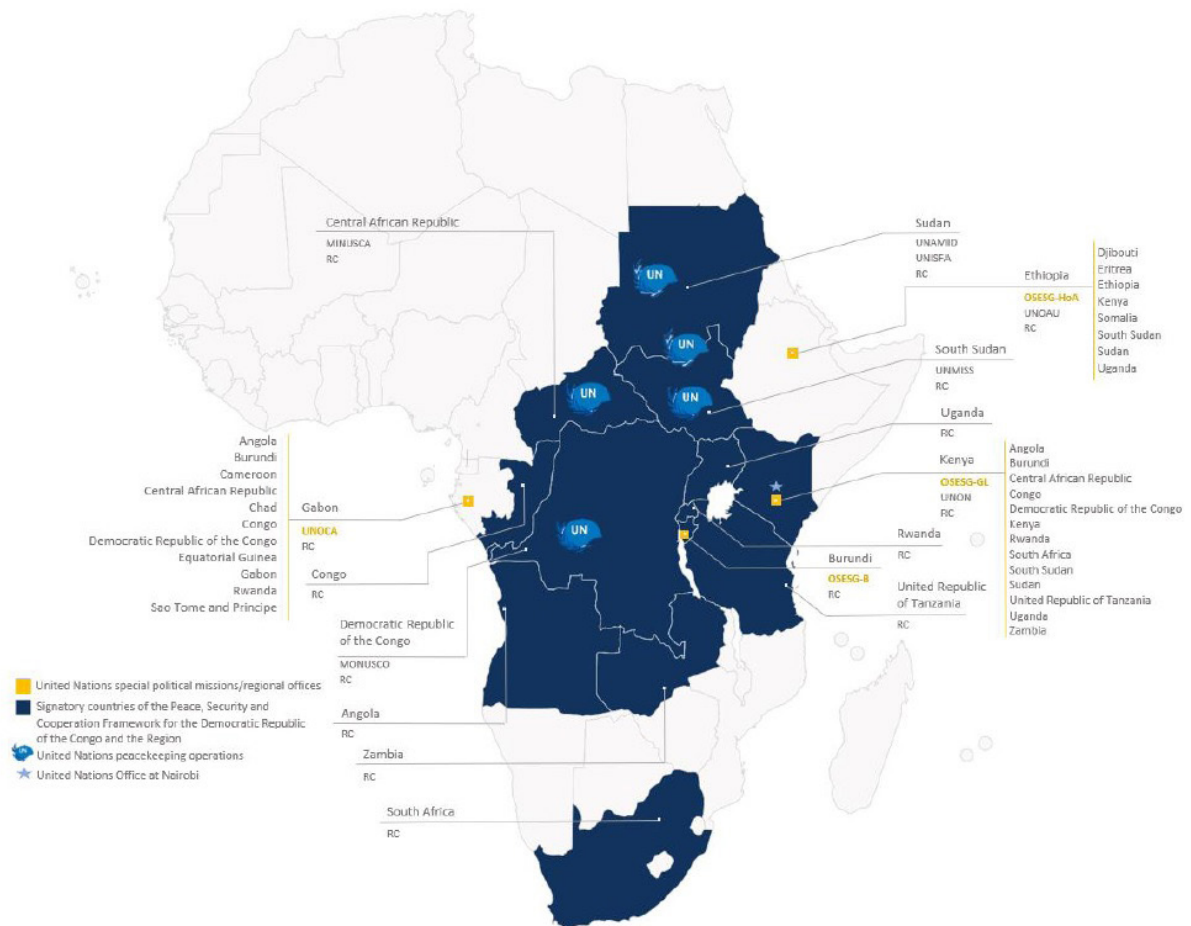
48. Promote initiatives aimed at mitigating the negative effects of climate change on peace and security, including on natural resource management and livelihoods and on conflict drivers, focusing on land-related conflicts.

49. Provide tailored support for national and regional resource mobilization efforts to strengthen financial shock absorption capacity in the region, including through improved access to international financial instruments and mechanisms.

50. Encourage and support efforts aimed at protecting biodiversity and environmental conservation and strengthening forest governance and bioenergy management in the Congo Basin, the Greater Virunga Landscape and other regional and national parks.

Annex II

Overview of United Nations presences, special political missions, peacekeeping operations and regional coordinator offices in the Great Lakes region



Methodology

The development of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region was informed by a desk review and analysis of existing policy frameworks and documents as well as academic sources. The Strategy was informed by the Secretary-General's reform agenda for the United Nations peace and security pillar and development system, pertinent Security Council resolutions, including resolution 2389 (2017), and other relevant international and regional policy frameworks, such as the Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework; the women and peace and security policy of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region; Agenda 2063; the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for an Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security of 2017; and the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Strategy also benefited from extensive consultations carried out by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and his Office with a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives of signatory countries and guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, subregional organizations, United Nations entities, international financial institutions, former and current senior United Nations and African Union officials, civil society organizations, including women's organizations, think tanks and scholars. Several participants also provided written contributions through questionnaires. In addition, the Special Envoy conducted a series of in-person high-level consultations in countries of the region, in order to both present the initial findings of the consultations and gather additional contributions from leaders and senior government officials.

The Strategy was developed while the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi was undertaking its own review process and while the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was in the process of articulating, jointly with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a strategy that would allow for a progressive transfer of the Mission's tasks to Congolese authorities, the United Nations country team and other stakeholders. The elaboration of the action plan for the implementation of the Strategy will consider relevant aspects of the review processes of the Mission and of the Office of the Special Envoy to ensure unity of purpose and alignment of action by the United Nations family in the region.

Participants in the stakeholder consultations

From May to October 2020, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and his Office conducted consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and experts, including the following:

1. Heads of State and/or Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the signatory countries to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (PSC Framework)

- Angola
- Burundi
- Congo
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Kenya
- Rwanda
- Uganda
- United Republic of Tanzania
- Zambia

2. Members of the PSC Framework Technical Support Committee

3. Guarantor institutions of the PSC Framework

- African Union
- International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, including the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism
- Southern African Development Community

4. Security Council experts

5. International partners

- International Contact Group for the Great Lakes Region (ambassadors and experts)
- Members of the diplomatic corps (ambassadors) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda
- Norway (ambassadors and experts)

6. Regional and international financial institutions

- Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa
- East Africa Chamber of Commerce
- Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries
- European Investment Bank

7. Think tanks

- International Crisis Group
- Experts round table facilitated by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum and the Social Science Research Council. Participants included Nick Elebe, Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa; Michael Kavanagh, independent researcher; Gilbert Khadiagala, University of Witwatersrand; Louis-Marie Nindorera, African Centre for Justice Project; Jason Stearns, Simon Fraser University; and Katharina Vögeli, independent researcher

8. Civil society organizations in the region, including women's and youth organizations

9. United Nations entities

- Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
 - Central and Southern Africa Division
 - Peacebuilding Support Office
- Department of Peace Operations
 - United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, integrated operational team
- Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions
- Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi
- Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa
- United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Africa
- Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, pillar leads
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Regional Office for Central Africa
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes
- Development Coordination Office
- United Nations Environment Programme
- United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- United Nations Office at Nairobi
- United Nations Office to the African Union
- United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
- United Nations resident coordinators and/or their offices (Burundi, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania)

10. Senior officials, eminent persons and scholars

- Tatiana Carayannis, Director of the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum, Social Science Research Council
- Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, Secretary-General of the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and former Minister for Foreign Affairs of Angola
- Said Djinnit, former Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
- Ahunna Eziakonwa, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa, United Nations Development Programme
- François Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
- Ibrahima Fall, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, former African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region and Head of the African Union Liaison Office in Burundi
- Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support
- Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations
- Basile Ikouébé, African Union Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region and Head of the African Union Liaison Office in Burundi
- Robert Malley, President and Chief Executive Officer of International Crisis Group
- Benjamin William Mkapu, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania
- Zachary Muburi-Muita, Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
- Denis Mukwege, Director of Panzi Hospital, Nobel laureate
- Liberata Mulamula, former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
- Mwanasali Musifiki, former Special Adviser to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission
- Jean-Jacques Muyembe, General Director of the Institut National pour la Recherche Biomédicale, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem, historian
- Alphonse Ntumba Luaba, former Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
- Alain-Aimé Nyamitwe, former Minister for External Relations and International Cooperation of Burundi
- Modibo Toure, Special Envoy for Shareholder Relations, African Development Bank, and former Special Adviser to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
- Raymond Tshibanda, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- El Ghassim Wane, former Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations

