UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the region

Annual Progress Report for 2018

Introduction

1. This report provides an update on developments and initiatives undertaken through the Women's Platform of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (WP-PSCF) during 2018. The progress during the year has been encouraging, with several key activities that have elevated the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the Great Lakes Region and increased its prominence at the highest level of Governments.

2. Following the direction given by the Heads of State and Governments at the 8th Regional Oversight Mechanism (ROM) Summit held in Brazzaville in 2017, and the subsequent meeting of the expanded Advisory Board in February 2018, which included African women leaders and civil society representatives, progress was achieved in several areas. These included, solidarity missions to three member states, a briefing by women leaders to Heads of Sates at the 9th ROM, the issuing of a Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 (2000) within the Great Lakes Region, and agreement that there will be increased women's political advancement and socio-economic empowerment leading up to 2020.

Activities Undertaken

3. The following provides details of the activities carried during the year.

4. At the 8th ROM held on 19 October 2017 in Brazzaville, the Heads of State and Government directed the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region (O/SESG-GL), in consultation with the African Union (AU), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) Secretariat, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to review progress in the implementation of the Goma Declaration (2016).

5. On 22 February 2018, the Advisory Board of the WP-PSCF held its 9th meeting in Nairobi. Senior women leaders attending included the two Co-Chairs of AU FemWise-Africa, former Interim President of the Central African Republic (CAR), H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, former Vice President of Uganda, H.E Speciosa Wandira Kazibwe, the AU Special Envoy on WPS, Binta Diop, and the former Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, Liberata Mulamula. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Isabelle Durant, also addressed the meeting via video. A common strategic framework and roadmap to

support the WPS agenda in the region was agreed. It was further proposed to include representative of youth organizations, women business leaders, and the private sector as members of the Advisory Board.

6. Members acknowledged the importance of bringing together women's representatives with Heads of State and Government to discuss and agree on ways to promote the WPS agenda. Participants supported the initiative by the Special Envoy to dispatch representatives of the Women's Platform and the ICGLR Women's Forum to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR) and South Sudan, to promote the role of women in peace and political processes. The plan to convene a Gender Ministers meeting to increase advocacy to address the shrinking space of women in political processes in the region, as well as promote the endorsement of the RAP in support of UNSCR 1325 (2000) were welcome.

7. In pursuit, thereof, and at the initiative of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (SESG-GL), Said Djinnit, the expanded Advisory Board of the WP-PSCF, comprising high-level women representatives from AU FemWise-Africa, ICGLR and the UN undertook solidarity missions to Burundi, CAR and DRC during August 2018. The missions included the senior members of the Advisory Board listed above, as well as the Chair of the ICGLR Regional Women's Forum, Dr. Attiat Mustafa Abdelhalim Ahmed, and ICGLR Executive Secretariat Gender, Women and Children Programme Director, Amb. Eliane Mokodopo. In addition, a mission to South Sudan on 3-4 July 2018 was co-led by UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohamed and Madam Bineta Diop, AU Special Envoy on WPS, with the participation of Special Envoy Said Djinnit, among others.

8. The objectives of the missions were to: (i) express solidarity with women in the Great Lakes region; (ii) strengthen women's coalitions and support their meaningful participation in all aspects of conflict resolution, peacebuilding and humanitarian interventions; (iii) raise awareness among political leaders of the need for women's participation in democratic processes and socio-economic development, and; (iv) bring attention to the issues of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and abuse against women, and the need for accountability and measures to address human rights violations.

9. Dr. Speciosa Kazibwe Wandira, former Vice-President of Uganda, led the solidarity missions to Burundi (9-11 August) and CAR (12-15 August), accompanied and supported by Amb. Liberata Mula-Mula and Dr. Attiat Halleem, and representatives of ICGLR Executive Secretariat, UNWOMEN, the Office of the UN SESG for Burundi, and the O/SESG-GL.

Commented [APR1]: As far as I know the title of Kafando is SESG for Conflict Prevention…

Burundi

10. In Bujumbura, consultations were held with the President of the Republic, the First Lady, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers (Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender, Minister for Justice and, Minister for Education, as well as the Permanent Secretary, Ministry for Youth, and political parties. The mission also held working sessions with representatives of women groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), the diplomatic community, the media, as well as representatives of youth and marginalized groups, including people with disabilities.

11. The mission acknowledged the positive developments in the country in relation to the security situation and the return of refugees through the tripartite arrangement involving the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania, and UNHCR. The mission also noted the adoption of a National Gender Policy and a 5-year National Action Plan to support its implementation, as well as the adoption of a law in 2016 on the prevention and repression of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and the protection of victims.

12. On the upcoming elections in 2020, the women leaders agreed to jointly focus on working towards increased women's participation in the upcoming elections at both local and national levels. The delegation also welcomed the agreement reached with women's associations and CSOs to establish a network to prepare a strategy to increase women's political participation, including through the revision of the electoral code, review targets and strategies to ensure the mobilization of women at the grassroots level, and develop partnerships with the youth and political parties to improve synergy and build coalitions. The mission noted the commitment by the Burundian Government to raise the current 26 percent parliamentary representation to 30 percent in-line with the Constitution.

13. On the nexus for strengthening peace infrastructure in the country, it was noted that the President and the First Lady are already engaged in mobilizing young women and had agreed to put in-place mechanisms to start the process as soon as possible. The objective being to ensure the Burundi women take a leading role in the process themselves, with the UN, AU, and ICGLR, through the Advisory Board, there to support them.

14. <u>Central African Republic</u>

15. In Bangui, the delegation met the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Promotion of Women, Family Affairs and Children, the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court, the First Vice President of the National Assembly, women leaders and parliamentarians, the former transitional President, representatives of political parties, religious leaders, as well as representatives of the international community, including the AU Representative to the CAR, the senior leadership team for MINUSCA, and the UN Country Team.

16. The dire situation of women, with high levels of poverty, limited access to basic services and insecurity, was recognized. In this regard women's groups called for a CAR women's conference to contribute to the stabilization of the country and a support program to strengthen women's leadership. Despite provisions for gender parity, including legislation promoting 35 percent of female representation, and the current revision of the electoral code in favour of gender parity, women remain under-represented in elected and public offices. In addition, the absence of women's representation in the ongoing African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation was also noted with regret. It was agreed that a new narrative and a strategy that brings together women's organizations, the government, and partners that focuses on human security and on promoting the central role of women in all fields and sectors of socio-economic and political life across the country is urgently required.

17. The mission highlighted the importance of supporting women's leadership and capacities to engage in the political and peace processes from the grassroots' level. It further called for programmes to enhance women's educational and socio-economic opportunities, including through the creation of a dedicated Women's Fund. It noted the commitment of the country's leadership to promulgate the law on gender parity, and to promote increased participation of women in the peace process and at different levels of the administration. It also welcomed the ongoing work to review the electoral code and the willingness of some of the political parties to revise their statutes to guarantee equal opportunities to women to run for elected offices.

18. The most urgent problem in CAR is the lack of food, with the shortage killing more people than the armed groups, which in-turn is affecting the social fabric across the country, while CAR also has the highest maternal mortality in the world. It was therefore agreed with the religious and women leaders that tackling food production should be recognized as a top priority, and used as a starting point in increasing stability.

19. In both countries, the delegation committed the leadership to support policies and programs that will enhance women's effective participation in decision making and at the peace table. The two countries are very different with respect to democratic transition, and the support women need for effective participation is therefore different in terms of organization and programming. What was common to both countries is that support at the highest political level has been secured and women leaders have agreed to work together to support joint efforts to ensure women are mobilized.

<u>DRC</u>

20. From 16-19 August 2018, H.E. Catherine Samba-Panza, former Transitional President in CAR, led the solidarity mission to the DRC accompanied and supported by the former Executive Secretary of the ICGLR, and representatives of the ICGLR Executive Secretariat and Women's Regional Forum, UNWOMEN, MONUSCO, and the O/SESG-GL.

21. In Kinshasa, the mission met with several senior representatives, including the President of the National Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior and Security, the Minister of Gender Affairs, and the Minister of Justice. They also had separate engagements with the Vice-Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), women leaders/associations and representatives of civil society and political parties, religious and traditional leaders, as well as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for MONUSCO. Prior to departing the DRC, the Head of Delegation also briefly met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President of CENI, and had a telephone conversation with the President of the Republic, as he was away from the country.

22. The joint mission was seen as long overdue and received strong support by all actors as it provided an excellent opportunity to advocate for the status of women in the DRC and for their full participation in the electoral process. While the mission noted progress in the electoral process in relation to compliance with the Constitution, it identified sociological, cultural, legal and financial barriers to women's political participation in the ongoing political process. To this end, the

mission appealed to the legislature to consider legal reforms and address discriminatory measures against women and minorities. Concerns about the electronic voting system were also brought to the attention of the mission. The delegation encouraged the CENI and political actors to engage in a constructive conversation on this critical issue and to continue promoting awareness and intensifying civic education. The mission also noted the vital role of the media in advancing women's causes and called on the media to redouble their efforts to ensure that women's voices are heard. The mission noted the security and humanitarian challenges across the country and the impact of conflict on women, particularly in rural areas, and emphasized the need to build the capacity of grassroots women and youth at the local level to improve their socio-economic conditions and enable them to better realize their role as transformers of society.

Regional Oversight Mechanism, ROM

23. On 8 October H.E. Samba Panza, also Co-chair AU FemWise-Africa addressed Heads of State and Government at the 9th ROM on behalf of the Advisory Board of the WB-PSCF and the Regional Women's Forum, and made a strong appeal for the promotion of women's meaningful participation in the political and peace processes in the Great Lakes Region. This was the first time that a women senior leader had been afforded the opportunity to address a high-level summit of the ROM and reflects the increasing recognition of the importance of the WPS agenda in the Great Lakes Region. In her address to the ROM, H.E Catherine Samba Panza encouraged the countries of the region to continue to expend every effort to achieve full gender parity. Regional leaders reiterated their support for women's advancement, welcomed and endorsed the recommendations of the UN-AU-ICGLR solidarity missions to South Sudan, Burundi, CAR and DRC.

Gender Ministers Meeting

24. On 23 November, the O/SESG-GL and the Executive Secretariat of ICGLR co-organised a meeting of the Gender Ministers from the Great Lakes Region in collaboration with the Government of Uganda, as the current Chair of the ROM. The Gender Ministers meeting was a follow-up to the 8th ROM, which had encouraged the O/SESG-GL, in consultation with the Guarantors of the Framework agreement, to convene regular meetings to review the progress in implementing relevant decisions pertaining to WPS. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the RAP for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000), which provides a framework to advance the WPS Agenda in the region with a focus on women's protection, by the use of prosecution as a deterrent to SGBV, and the involvement of ministers of justice; economic empowerment, and most importantly; women's meaningful participation in decision-making and peace processes. There was a strong commitment by member states to achieve the minimum quota of 30 percent women participation by 2020 and ensure effective monitoring and reporting mechanism.

Recommendations:

- Encourage UNWOMEN and ICGLR to assess and provide a report, in consultation with relevant Government institutions, on progress in WPS in Burundi, CAR and DRC as part of the follow up to the solidarity missions conducted in 2018.

- Organize experience sharing mission of the Advisory Board Members to Rwanda and solidarity missions to other signatory countries of the PSC Framework.

- Undertake continuous advocacy for accountability of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in the Great Lakes region and using evidence based data, call on member states to accelerate implementation of the Kampala Declaration for addressing impunity for SGBV in the region.

- The Guarantors, including UN, AU, ICGLR, SADC, to pursue joint advocacy efforts for women's issues and will continue to send strong messages to member states. This will include, among others, to improve situational awareness in relation to violence against women and impunity.

- Encourage member states who have not done it yet to take necessary measures for the domestication of the Kampala Declaration.

- Mobilize resources to support the needs of women affected by conflict through the Women's Platform and through joint resource mobilization with other Agencies to address needs of the most vulnerable groups especially in areas of active conflict and long-term displaced settlements with attention to building resilience of affected communities.

- Assess and support the effective operationalization of the ICGLR Regional Women Forum Secretariat.

- Develop practical strategies and incentives to empower women to allow them to join politics at all levels, create a special fund to support their socio-economic and political empowerment as well as strengthening the capacity of women, youth and grass root communities.