

## A CLOSER LOOK: THE SPECIAL ENVOY ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION



*Visit of UN Special Envoy Said Djinnit to Walungu transit camp in eastern DRC, 10 September 2017. MONUSCO Photo/Trésor Pendeki*

Said Djinnit, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, briefed the Security Council on 10 April 2018 on his work. The Special Envoy presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in the region, in which he highlighted continuing challenges relating to peace and security, including stalled political processes, ongoing activities by armed groups, human rights violations and a worsening humanitarian crisis.

### A Unique Mandate

The report focused on the critical situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the lack of progress in efforts to promote an inclusive political process in Burundi. The United Nations have been involved in peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts in the two countries, and the broader region, for years.

A milestone in the search for peace in the region was the signing, on 24 February 2013, of a United Nations/African Union-led agreement aimed at stabilizing the DRC and the region. Known as the Peace, Security and Cooperation (PSC) Framework agreement, or Framework agreement, the peace deal was initially signed by the leaders of 11 countries of the region, namely Angola, Burundi, Central

African Republic, the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Kenya and Sudan also signed the agreement on 31 January 2014.



*Peace Framework for DRC and Region Signed in Addis Ababa, 24 February 2013. UN Photo/Evan Schneider*

The Framework agreement outlines commitments at the national, regional and international levels to consolidate peace and security in eastern DRC and promote cooperation between the countries of the region. In line with the agreement, the Secretary-General appointed Mary Robinson as his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region in March 2013 to support regional efforts to reach durable solutions for peace, security and stability. Mr Djinnit succeeded Mrs. Robinson as Special Envoy in July 2014.



*A policeman patrols the area around a camp for internally displaced residents (IDPs) in Mugunga, near Goma, DRC, during a visit from the Technical Support Committee (TSC) of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Region. UN Photo/Sylvain Liechti*

The Special Envoy's regional mandate offers unique opportunities -- and presents great challenges -- to overcome what could be termed as chronic insecurity and instability in eastern DRC, an area that borders seven countries. A majority of the people of the region, which is endowed with vast natural resources, live below the poverty line.



Maps courtesy of the Department of Field Support Geospatial Information Section

## “Framework of Hope”

In his mandate, the Special Envoy focuses on high-level political, diplomatic, and strategic engagements on major peace and security issues in the region. But the Framework agreement, under which he works, once referred to as a “Framework of Hope” by Ms. Robinson, is not only for governments; it is predicated on an inclusive approach, giving voice to women, youth, civil society and partners.

On this premise, the Office of the Special Envoy has made concrete steps towards the realization of the potential that the Framework agreement offers.

Special Envoy Djinnit has pursued continued high-level political engagement with the leaders of the region and regional organizations to build trust and cooperation, in particular to address the complex political and security situation in the DRC and the political crisis in Burundi, but also to defuse tension among other core countries in the region.

In addition, action is being taken to deal with the persisting threats posed by armed groups in eastern DRC. To complement MONUSCO’s response, the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, the Office of the Special Envoy is working to support key regional stakeholders with planning for the repatriation of former combatants and work toward the neutralization of remaining groups.

Another notable initiative is the launch in November 2016 of the Great Lakes Judicial Cooperation Network to fight impunity and uphold the respect of human rights, under the leadership of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy.



*Meeting on strengthening Judicial Cooperation in The Great Lakes Region, Nairobi, Kenya, 10 – 11 November 2016. UN Photo/Penangnini Toure*

### **Full Participation of Women and Youth Essential**

With the understanding that peace will not be achieved in the region without full participation of women in political and peace processes, the Office of the Special Envoy launched the Women's Platform for the Framework agreement, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2014. The Platform aims at ensuring that women play a significant role at community, local, national and regional levels in achieving successful peace building in the region. Efforts are also on-going to promote a greater attention to the issue of youth participation and employment, including by supporting the establishment of a Youth Forum dedicated to providing a platform for interactive and meaningful engagement on matters concerning youth.



*9th Advisory Board meeting of the Women's Platform for the Peace and Security Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, Nairobi, Kenya, 22 February 2018. UN Photo/Penangini Toure*

Other initiatives include efforts to promote economic cooperation and development. The Office of the Special Envoy organized a Private Sector Investment Conference in Kinshasa, DRC, on 24-25 February 2016, bringing together several leaders of the region and private sector experts from around the world to discuss investment opportunities in the Great Lakes. A second private sector conference is planned for late this year in Rwanda.