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Provisional

President: Mr. Nebenzia/Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation)

Members:

Albania	Mr. Spasse
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Ecuador	Mr. Pérez Loose
France	Mr. Olmedo
Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
Japan	Mr. Ishikane
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Almazrouei
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2023/237)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2023/237)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region; and His Excellency Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2023/237, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I now give the floor to Mr. Huang Xia.

Mr. Huang Xia (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to brief it on developments in the Great Lakes region since the submission of the most recent report (S/2023/237) of the Secretary-General. As I speak here today, a slight improvement can be noted.

On the military front, a fragile calm has taken root in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There have been no major clashes in recent days between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), while a fragile ceasefire also seems to be holding. The deployment of troops from the regional force of the East African Community is continuing. Undiplomatic exchanges between Kigali and Kinshasa has decreased.

Nevertheless, regardless of some progress, serious risks continue to exist. The retreat by the M-23 from occupied areas remains incomplete. The disarmament and cantonment of combatants, provided for under the Luanda road map, is yet to be achieved. The negotiated political solution they themselves are increasingly calling for is lagging behind. The risk of a resumption of hostilities remains a genuine possibility. Local and external armed groups continue to sow terror and fuel insecurity. They include the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi.

The social and humanitarian consequences of this state of affairs are disastrous. They fuel the endless cycle of tensions between communities and favour the proliferation of hate speech. Approximately 600,000 people have been displaced in North Kivu province alone. More than 38,000 Congolese became refugees between October 2022 and February of this year. Tensions continue between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and trust between the two countries appears to be at an ebb.

There is a stark contrast in the panorama across the Great Lakes region — in some cases encouraging while, in others, revealing a security and humanitarian situation that continues to be quite troubling. That disparity requires that the Security Council and all of the region's partners renew and strengthen our efforts. We must take advantage of the current small window of opportunity. We must prioritize a real decrease in tensions. We must support the efforts by the region to put an end to the crisis. Lastly, we must encourage the comprehensive implementation of all the commitments undertaken in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which is more relevant than ever so long as it is fully realized through concrete actions guided by robust and ever-stronger political will.

Nevertheless, the urgent thing is to put an end to the crisis. We must avoid an escalation to war. Let us say it again: the Great Lakes region does not need a new war. In that context, we should welcome and support regional peace efforts, including the Luanda process, led by President Lourenço of Angola, which aims to re-establish peaceful relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda; and the Nairobi process, led by the East African Community under the leadership of President Ndayishimiye and former President Uhuru Kenyatta, focused on convening

political consultations and on military efforts. Those two crucial initiatives require stronger unanimous support from us. They make up the two complementary tracks towards a resolution of the current crisis, which together should lead to a resolution. Once that phase is completed, the countries of the Great Lakes regions should, in the medium and long-term, focus on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework. The ongoing discussions on revitalizing it mark an important stage. On behalf of the United Nations, my Office will provide the necessary support and contribution, alongside other guarantor institutions.

Allow me to emphasize the point that, 10 years after the signing of the Addis Ababa Framework, consensus exists as to the fact that it remains relevant and important for the region's stability. But there is also an emerging consensus today that there is a need to revitalize it, as embraced by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 17 February. Following that, on 29 March, the African Union Commission brought together, among others, representatives of the guarantor institutions to the Framework. That meeting drew up recommendations. On 12 and 13 April at Nairobi, the signatory countries held a first exchange on the subject during a meeting of the technical support committee for the implementation of the Framework, which I co-chaired with my colleague from the African Union. Lastly, the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework will take place in Bujumbura on 6 May, where Heads of State from the region will provide their respective views. I hope that it will be an opportunity to strengthen the coordination and harmonization of regional processes to put an end to the current crisis.

In the current circumstances, we must not spare any effort and must entrench the achievements to date. To that end, allow me to conclude by sharing some views on the way forward for the coming months.

As mandated by the Security Council and on the instructions of the Secretary-General, I will continue my good offices and to underscore the imperative of pursuing dialogue and a political solution. My Office will continue to support the holding of the next high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism planned for Burundi, a summit that, as I mentioned, will be an important event, especially when it comes to continuing dialogue among the Heads of State of the region and for speeding up the implementation of decisions emerging from the ongoing political effort,

namely, the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Moreover, my Office will continue its support to the operational cell on non-military measures. That regional initiative works to disarm and repatriate foreign armed combatants present in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also aims to strengthen the hosting and reintegration capacities in countries of origin. Lastly, we will step up our efforts to implement the United Nations strategy for the Great Lakes region and the flagship initiatives. We will do all that in close cooperation with all the United Nations agencies involved, as well as with international partners. The latter have supported us tirelessly, as demonstrated by the success of the meeting of aid agencies co-organized with Belgium on 28 March. In that connection, I would like to take this opportunity to once again express my deep gratitude to all partner countries.

All of those efforts also aim to ensure greater participation by women and young people in dialogue and peace processes, as well as to advocate for more transparent management of natural resources.

The Great Lakes region needs the Security Council more than ever before — to foster an immediate de-escalation of tensions in the region, encourage a political solution to the current crisis and support more serious implementation of the Addis Ababa Framework. That support from the Council will be decisive, crucial and urgent.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Šimonović.

Mr. Šimonović: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council in my capacity as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Building on its previous advice to the Council in October 2022 (see S/PV.9165), as well as its continuing engagement in the Great Lakes region, the Commission encourages the Security Council to consider the following.

Reiterating its demand for all armed groups to immediately lay down their weapons and cease hostilities.

Continuing to firmly support regional peace initiatives, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region-led Luanda process and the East African Community-led Nairobi process, as well as its inter-Congolese dialogue.

Calling for the implementation by all States of the commitments within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the strengthening of confidence-building measures and to help build an atmosphere conducive to constructive dialogue and debate.

Calling for strengthened international support to alleviate the extreme humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Emphasizing inclusivity as key to advancing local, national and regional peacebuilding objectives to ensure long-term sustainable peace and encouraging the continuation of efforts under way in strengthening the role of women in political and peace processes and structures at local, national and regional levels.

Stressing the importance of youth inclusion and noting the need to increase national and regional efforts to include young people in political processes and socioeconomic development.

Expressing support for efforts towards a sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, in line with the recommendations of the 2021 Khartoum workshop aimed at ensuring the effective implementation of the Great Lakes regional initiative to fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources and calling for strengthening the capacity of the Great Lakes region's mineral certification framework.

Expressing support for existing accords that promote regional economic and financial integration and contribute to sustainable development.

Continuing to promote good offices and support to address the root causes of conflict in the region with a view to achieving sustainable peace, security and development based on national ownership.

Calling for increased efforts to promote reconciliation, accountability, transitional justice and the fight against impunity in the region, including through support to national institutions and the Great Lakes Regional Judicial Cooperation Network.

Expressing its support for partnerships with regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community.

Expressing its support for adequate funding for peacebuilding activities in the region, including through the involvement of the private sector, as appropriate, and requesting international and regional financial institutions to expedite their support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Continuing to reiterate the importance of a strategic and coherent approach by the United Nations and stakeholders in the region, to sustain peacebuilding gains, in particular in the context of the transition of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to further support the Council's engagements in the Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Šimonović for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Olmedo (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for their briefings.

I would like to return to three points: first, the role of regional mechanisms; secondly, the humanitarian situation; and thirdly, the role of the European Union.

The regional peace instruments, including the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary, must be implemented and supported.

Armed groups continue their attacks in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While the situation around Goma remains volatile, it is showing signs of improvement. We encourage all parties to pursue the path of de-escalation and peace.

France recalls three cardinal principles of the Framework Agreement for the region: not to support armed groups, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring States, and not to harbour or provide protection to persons accused of international crimes. These principles and all commitments set forth in the Framework Agreement must be respected by all parties. The next summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism should give new impetus in this regard, in addition to the efforts undertaken in the framework of the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

France welcomes the support provided by the United Nations to regional peace processes. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Special Envoy must support the verification mechanisms, in particular the one deployed by Angola. The needs of these mechanisms must also be clarified. The establishment of a joint verification mechanism office will promote synergies and coherence in the work of the mechanisms.

United Nations support must continue in preparation for the fourth round of inter-Congolese consultations under the Nairobi process. The Special Envoy spoke of his support for the contact group on non-military measures for the repatriation of former combatants of non-Congolese armed groups. This is important.

Secondly, we must address the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the root causes of conflict. Millions of people, especially women and children, need humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian access must be ensured, and the safety of humanitarian personnel guaranteed.

France has supported the European Union's airlift to Goma since last March, which has brought in 140 tons of medical and nutritional supplies. In accordance with the commitments made by President Emmanuel Macron, France is providing €34 million in humanitarian aid in 2023.

France welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the Kinshasa Declaration on Enhancing Judicial Cooperation in the Great Lakes Region. The protection of human rights and the fight against impunity are necessary. Efforts must be redoubled to prevent hate speech and incitement to violence.

France condemns the looting of natural resources in the region, which fuels the activities of armed groups. The Great Lakes States and their partners must fight trafficking and work together to improve value chains.

Thirdly, the European Union will remain a committed partner in the Great Lakes region. Last February, it adopted a renewed strategy for the region. This strategy has three objectives: peace, sustainable management of natural resources and regional integration. The European Union will also act through sanctions if necessary.

Among the other aspects of the European commitment, I would also like to mention the "Global Gateway" strategy, which aims to strengthen interconnections between electricity networks and efforts to increase the supply of renewable energy. As a sign of their commitment, President Emmanuel Macron and Commissioners Urpilainen and Breton participated in the Euro-Congolese economic forum in Kinshasa on 4 March. The European strategy is aligned with that of the United Nations for the Great Lakes region, which France supports.

Mr. Ishikane (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing and to the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), Mr. Šimonović, for his advice. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of States of the region in today's meeting.

The recurrent violence by armed groups, aggravating human security crises, and the increasing tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda are of serious concern. This grave situation continues to prevent the region from harnessing its enormous potential, which the population has long deserved. Our efforts must come together to guarantee the integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The signatory countries to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, together with the guarantors, must renew their commitment, at national, regional and international levels, to its full implementation.

As was highlighted by the PBC Chair, the ongoing regional peace initiatives, including the Nairobi process and the Luanda process, have a vital role to play. An immediate cessation of hostilities is the very first step to achieving the common goal of sustainable peace. All armed groups must fully engage in those processes, and any attempts to support armed groups incompatible with the regional initiatives cannot be tolerated. Military and non-military measures should be well coordinated in a synergetic manner aligned with the ongoing efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

International assistance must continue to focus on creating an environment conducive to successful regional initiatives and cooperation. Confidence-building measures and constructive dialogues need to expand further among stakeholders.

It is also imperative to ensure uninterrupted support to address the extreme humanitarian situations, which are affecting women and children most, and which are exacerbated by the use of armed force. We expect Special Envoy Huang Xia and his Office to continue to help advancing women, youth, peace, and security in the region.

The complexity of the challenges the region faces requires us to take a comprehensive, cross-border approach based on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region rightly reflects this in its flagship initiatives.

One of the main pillars of the Strategy involves action to prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources, which remains one of the drivers of conflict. Enhanced border control and judicial cooperation are essential to effectively addressing this long-standing challenge, and United Nations entities should further assist in these efforts. The Peacebuilding Fund is well-suited to help cross-border projects and should play a catalytic role in promoting further regional initiatives.

Our bilateral support should also be a well-integrated component of larger international efforts and complement and amplify the effects of regional initiatives. With this in mind, Japan, in partnership with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, has been working to help improve the lives and well-being of people, which includes supporting the strengthening of social resilience; helping disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; and providing emergency humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees.

Japan continues to be fully engaged with all partners, including MONUSCO, for a peaceful and prosperous Great Lakes region.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): The Brazilian delegation is grateful to Special Envoy Huang Xia and Ambassador Ivan Šimonović for their informative briefings. I welcome the delegations of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's meeting.

We have followed the latest developments in the Great Lakes region closely, and the security situation remains a matter of great concern to us. The threat posed by armed groups to the countries of the Great

Lakes region is still palpable, as a series of events in the recent report (S/2023/237) of the Secretary-General have demonstrated. The increase in the activities of armed groups that we have witnessed in the region in recent months has had a devastating impact on local communities and millions of refugees and internally displaced persons from various perspectives, ranging from human rights to economic development, and also represents a threat to the lives of the peacekeepers who are on the ground. The activities of those groups often lead to sexual violence, a lack of access to humanitarian aid, the recruitment of children in armed conflict and the illicit exploitation of natural resources, jeopardizing the current efforts to reach a sustainable peace.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, we would like to praise all the advancements made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the signatory countries on the implementation of its commitments, as well as the work of guarantor institutions. We are hopeful that the next meeting of the Framework's Regional Oversight Mechanism, which will take place in May in Bujumbura, will shed some light on the best path ahead to address the serious security and humanitarian crisis facing the region. We would also like to commend all the regional efforts in that regard. Such efforts deserve our encouragement and full support. In that sense, we wish to commend the leading and constructive role played by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community. We would like to praise the mediation efforts carried out by Angola and Kenya in the Luanda and Nairobi processes. It is crucial that all the parties take concrete steps to implement the recommendations agreed under the auspices of those processes. In such a challenging regional scene, we can never overemphasize the importance of adopting confidence-building measures to restore trust and bring the peace process back on the right track.

In the aim of protecting the achievements of the ongoing peace process, it is imperative to expedite the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the reintegration pillar and to ensure that former combatants, women and youth have access to economic opportunities that provide them with the tools to improve their livelihoods. In that vein, we would like to voice support for the work of the Special

Envoy and highlight the contribution of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region in bringing coherence and comprehensiveness to the peacebuilding initiatives. We also wish to underscore the importance of national ownership in order to attain lasting peace and prosperity in the region and, in that sense, we want to welcome and echo the Peacebuilding Commission's advice in favour of support to the countries of the Great Lakes in the promotion of regional economic and financial integration, as well as its contribution to sustainable development. That is a fundamental step to build peace.

Finally, we call on all the States in the region to persevere on the path of an inclusive political dialogue. No durable solution can be found without the meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including women and youth.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his informative briefing. I also welcome the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and appreciate the advice to the Security Council he outlined this morning.

Today's meeting comes at a critical moment for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the broader Great Lakes region. Just last month, the Council travelled to Kinshasa and Goma. Two weeks ago (see S/PV.9298), Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita provided an update on the critical contributions to, and sacrifices for, peace made by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region is another important means of bringing peace to the region. The United States appreciates the Special Envoy's use of his good offices to generate international support for the East African Community (EAC)-led Nairobi and Luanda processes. We welcome the initiative and commitment of regional partners and welcome the recent decrease in fighting.

Yet despite those efforts, the situation in the Great Lakes region continues to deteriorate and tensions remain between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The United States calls on all the parties to act expeditiously to meet their commitments under the Luanda communiqué in full, including the full withdrawal of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) to the

Sabyinyo line, followed by cantonment and disarmament. Rwanda must also withdraw its troops and end support to the United Nations-sanctioned M-23. I also reiterate our call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government to immediately end cooperation with armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, and to pursue security sector reform, continue denouncing hate speech and hold individuals accountable for inciting violence. Unfortunately, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham-Democratic Republic of the Congo, also known as the Allied Democratic Forces, has taken advantage of the situation and will continue to pose a threat. We must not lose sight of that pressing security challenge.

We must also increase our focus on the grave humanitarian crisis. In 2023 alone, conflict has displaced more than half a million people, many of whom are being forced to live without access to adequate food, water or medical care in camps filled far beyond capacity. Thousands of women and children are being exploited by organized sex trafficking operations. The United States is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, contributing more than \$140 million since 1 October. As we speak, our partners are working in perilous conditions to provide life-saving assistance to hundreds of thousands of people in North Kivu. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must do considerably more to protect its citizens, including by providing land for sites where displaced people can receive services and by enforcing its own laws against trafficking and the exploitation of women and girls.

The last time Special Envoy Huang Xia briefed the Security Council (see S/PV.9165), regional troop deployments under the aegis of the regional force of the EAC were in the initial planning stages. In recent weeks, Burundi, Uganda and South Sudan deployed troops to North Kivu province. Angola has also committed to deploying troops to help restore peace. It is imperative for additional security forces not to aggravate an already tense situation. As such, I repeat my call on regional leaders to ensure their forces respect human rights, prioritize the safety of civilians and refrain from illicit activities, such as the extraction of natural resources. It is equally critical that they coordinate with, and complement the important work of, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), MONUSCO and United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations.

This year marks 10 years since the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, but the region remains marked by instability. Through the Nairobi and Luanda processes, we have the political structures necessary to pursue dialogue. Through the FARDC, MONUSCO and the regional force of the EAC, we have the capacity to protect civilians. And through the United Nations, the Office of the Special Envoy and our own bilateral efforts, we have the necessary platforms to coordinate and engage diplomatically. What we are missing is the commitment and political will to use those tools for their intended purposes — bringing about peace. We cannot wait another 10 years for peace in the Great Lakes. The region's people deserve it now.

Mr. Zhang Jun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Ambassador Šimonović, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi at today's meeting.

Recently, the increasing challenges in the Great Lakes region and the worsening security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have had an impact on regional peace and stability. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The international community should support the countries of the region in summarizing their experiences and revitalizing that important process to build a common future.

I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, we must insist on peaceful coexistence. Ten years ago, the countries of the region signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and jointly made solemn commitments to respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for each other's legitimate security concerns and non-support to armed groups. Those commitments set an example for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

In the face of ongoing trouble caused by armed groups and increased tensions in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the countries of the region should draw lessons from history, fulfil their common commitments and resolve their differences through diplomacy and dialogue. The pressing issue now is to

urge armed groups to cease the fighting and put an end to the violence. China supports the African Union (AU) and the countries of the region in revitalizing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and looks forward to a successful outcome to the summit to be held in Burundi in May.

Special Envoy Huang Xia has done a lot of work in promoting the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, and we hope that he will continue to play a leading role, strengthen his diplomacy and good offices and create conditions for dialogue and mutual trust among the parties.

Secondly, we must insist on regional cooperation. The AU, the East African Community (EAC), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community have recently held summits, one after another, in an effort to use their good offices with regard to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo issue and to promote regional initiatives such as the Nairobi and Luanda processes. The EAC and Angola are carrying out peacekeeping and security operations in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community should support efforts made to find African solutions to African problems and bring the two processes into effective play.

At the same time, non-military means should be promoted in parallel. China supports the regional Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures as it continues to engage with armed groups, promote disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and help the countries of the region to deepen exchanges on defence and border security.

The new strategy for the Great Lakes region is an important framework for the Organization to bolster regional cooperation. China appreciates the efforts made by the Office of the Special Envoy in establishing an integrated secretariat to implement flagship initiatives, the new strategy and action plan. China is ready to provide assistance within the framework of the United Nations peace and development trust fund. We expect our key partners to actively contribute to the fund and support the implementation of the new strategy.

Thirdly, we should insist on common development, which will help to bind the interests of the countries of the region together and solidify the material foundations for their common security. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Republic of Tanzania, Burundi,

Zambia, Rwanda, Uganda and other countries in the region are actively establishing bilateral cooperation committees, signing economic and trade agreements and carrying out cross-country and cross-regional infrastructure projects, making tremendous efforts to enhance the development momentum from within the region and promoting regional cooperation — all of which is to be commended. United Nations agencies such as the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes should broker such efforts and assist with regional cooperation.

The illicit extraction of natural resources is an important factor affecting regional stability and constraining regional development. The international community should support the countries of the region in curbing illicit trade by armed groups and actively support legitimate trade to make natural resources a highlight of regional cooperation.

China has always firmly supported the sustainable development of the Great Lakes region and has implemented a large number of cooperation projects with the countries of the region in the fields of infrastructure, energy, mining resources, climate change response and the improvement of livelihoods and job creation. China's Global Development Initiative is aimed mainly at developing countries, such as those in Africa. This afternoon, the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China, together with China International Development Cooperation Agency and the United Nations agencies in China will jointly hold a high-level event presenting the most recent progress on implementing the Global Development Initiative. We look forward to deepening cooperation with the countries of the region within the framework of the Global Development Initiative and injecting new momentum for achieving peace and development in the region.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing and Ambassador Šimonović for his presentation on behalf of the Peacebuilding Commission. I welcome the participation of the countries of the region in this meeting.

I will focus on the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and regional processes to end the conflict.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the intensifying violence and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region, particularly in

eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We strongly condemn the continuing violence by all armed groups, including the United Nations-sanctioned Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) armed group. In the limited areas from which it has withdrawn, the horrors perpetrated by M-23 are gradually being exposed, with allegations of mass rapes and summary killings.

The redeployment of resources to tackle M-23 has also undermined the protection of civilians elsewhere. There have recently been horrifying accounts of executions and attacks on civilians by the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo. We call for comprehensive investigations into allegations of human rights and international humanitarian law abuses by armed groups and for those responsible to be held accountable. All support to those non-State armed actors must stop.

We reiterate our full support for regional diplomatic efforts, including the Nairobi and Luanda processes, which promote de-escalation and are aimed at creating the conditions for lasting peace in the region. We are making a financial contribution to the Nairobi process to that end. We urge all parties to respect the commitments made under those processes, including the withdrawal of M-23, to end all support to armed groups and to stop the use of incendiary hate speech. We welcome Special Envoy Huang Xia's support to those processes and encourage increased engagement as the conflict worsens.

We welcome M-23's handing over of some locations to the East African Community regional force, but any withdrawal must be complete and in line with the agreed processes through the Luanda road map. We hope that the forthcoming Angolan troop deployment will help reinforce that withdrawal.

There is only one way out of the conflict. The violence must stop to give dialogue and peace a chance to succeed. The United Kingdom calls upon the countries of the region, the members of the Council and Special Envoy Huang Xia to intensify efforts to de-escalate the situation, improve regional cooperation, address security challenges, improve humanitarian access and bring peace to the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the representatives of the States in the region.

Ten years ago, the countries of the region signed the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Today the facts on the ground stand in stark contrast to the hope for a lasting peace that prevailed at the time of the signing.

The President of the Swiss Confederation saw that first-hand during his visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo last week. In the Bushagara camp for displaced persons and at the Panzi Hospital, he observed the extent of the violence, which is affecting the entire region. However, above all, he saw the extraordinary resilience of the people, their desire to find peace and the need to do everything possible to protect civilians. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Denis Mukwege said, we cannot limit ourselves to repairing the consequences of violence; we must treat its causes.

Switzerland is committed throughout the Great Lakes region to promoting peace, fostering respect for human rights and supporting humanitarian aid and development cooperation. In that spirit, since 2016, we have been organizing Great Lakes Region retreats with the Office of the Special Envoy. That forum supports the actors involved, including civil society, in developing ways to address the crisis.

I would like to underscore three points that are essential for those efforts to have a genuine chance of success.

First, cooperation among all States in the Great Lakes region is crucial for long-term prosperity and stability. In that context, the deterioration of relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda is a major concern. We welcome the leadership of the States in the region in encouraging a peaceful solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, we support the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Indeed, we are convinced that dialogue, which includes the active participation of women and young people, and genuine regional collaboration remain the only possible way to promote trust and lasting peace.

Secondly, it is imperative that the attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure be brought to an end immediately. Those attacks constitute gross violations of international humanitarian law, as well as violations and abuses of human rights law. We call on all parties to respect their obligations under international law. The intensification of fighting in the eastern Democratic

Republic of the Congo has aggravated an already precarious humanitarian situation and has led to the forced displacement of more than 900,000 people since March 2022, many of them children. As underscored in the Nairobi process, the status of refugees and internally displaced persons is a fundamental issue that requires concerted solutions at the regional level. Switzerland reaffirms its support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and strongly condemns any support to local or foreign armed groups.

Thirdly, in order to strengthen peace, the root causes of conflict in the region must be addressed. That means strengthening the rule of law, extending State authority and public services and ensuring respect for fundamental rights. At the same time, the illegal exploitation and trade in natural resources by armed groups and transnational criminal networks undermine peace in the Great Lakes region. There is an urgent need to institute a more sustainable management of natural resources and to tackle illicit financial flows in order to promote sustainable development. Finally, the negative impacts of climate change contribute to regional instability. I am thinking in that regard of the recent floods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, for example, which have caused large-scale displacement and further impacted an already vulnerable population.

Peace, stability and cooperation are the objectives of the Framework Agreement signed by the States of the Great Lakes region. The ink on that Agreement has long since dried, but the guns have not been silenced. We therefore call for more dialogue and confidence-building measures among the States of the region, civil society and international partners. Switzerland stands ready to support those efforts.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Special Envoy Huang Xia and Peacebuilding Commission Chair Šimonović for their informative briefings. I welcome the representatives of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the meeting.

Since the beginning of this year, the Council has been engaged in addressing the deeply concerning security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which threatens the stability of the Great Lakes region. The Security Council has been united in its messages to actors involved in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo crisis while actively

supporting ongoing regional initiatives. The Nairobi and Luanda processes are key to achieving long-term sustainable peace and security. We reiterate the need for sustained commitment by all parties to their successful implementation.

Malta acknowledges the African Union Peace and Security Council's extensive engagement in the region. The recent endorsement of the final communiqué from last February's summit of the Eastern African Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region represents an important joint endeavour.

The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remains the best structure for achieving peace and stability in the region and needs to be translated into reality. In that regard, we look forward to the holding of the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework next month.

We also acknowledge the work of other subregional organizations, such as the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community, as they are constructively contributing to growth and stability in the region.

As a member State of the European Union (EU), Malta is deeply committed to complementing peace efforts in the region. In line with the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, the respect for democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law all lie at the heart of the recently adopted renewed EU Great Lakes Strategy. That will be translated into the promotion of free and fair elections, transitional justice and the fight against impunity and corruption — all key priorities for Malta. In the same vein, the EU's efforts are complemented by the Global Gateway initiative in the region.

Efforts must be focused on breaking the cycle of violence in the region. It is crucial that we place local populations — women, youth, marginalized groups, civil society and the private sector — at the front and centre of our purpose. As we encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to return to dialogue, we also urge all armed actors to lay down their weapons, de-escalate and engage in the disarmament process.

In order to successfully tackle the root causes of conflict, it is essential that proper management of natural resources be part of our collective efforts. We applaud the role played by Special Envoy Huang Xia in the region in that regard.

Malta remains deeply concerned with the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. As Special Envoy Huang Xia said earlier in his briefing, it is devastating. Conflict and climate-induced food insecurity, among other issues, continue to cause suffering for some of the region's most vulnerable population groups. Women and children, as well as refugees and internally displaced persons, remain as disproportionately impacted as ever.

As armed groups continue to control and ravage local communities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, we condemn their actions in the strongest terms and call for them to lay down their arms. Malta also deplores the reported instances of movement restrictions and access denials for medical and humanitarian organizations seeking to deliver life-saving aid to those most in need often in the face of grave danger.

In conclusion, we must prevent history from repeating itself and work tirelessly to heal the collective trauma of generations of people who have grown accustomed only to conflict and insecurity and strive to bring them back to peace and stability.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Mozambique and my own country, Ghana.

I take this opportunity to commend the dynamism of Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, who is actively working for the consolidation of peace in that region. His exhaustive presentation provides us with additional elements which allow for a better understanding of the situation in the Great Lakes region. We also extend our appreciation to Ambassador Ivan Šimonović, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for his equally useful insights in that regard. The A3 welcomes the presence of our brothers, the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, whose perspectives we look forward to hearing, as they represent the countries concerned in the region.

Our intervention will be limited to four points on the security, political, economic and humanitarian situations.

The A3 remains deeply concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the region, including the serious daily abuses experienced by civilian populations who are subjected to the cycles of terror imposed by armed and terrorist groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate in the strongest terms our condemnation of such acts of violence, perpetrated mainly by the armed groups — the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, Mayi-Mayi Zaire and others — which has led to the massive displacement of populations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also in neighbouring countries. The A3 takes note of the withdrawal of the M-23 from several previously occupied territories and calls for their complete withdrawal from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our demand for the withdrawal of all foreign armed groups from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the immediate cessation of all external support to armed groups, adherence to the Nairobi process by local armed groups, their participation in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and the full implementation of the outcome of the mini-summit held in Luanda on 23 November 2022, which was reaffirmed in the communiqué by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 17 February.

We look forward to the upcoming fourth round of consultations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese armed groups as an opportunity for all local armed groups to recommit themselves to silencing the guns in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and adhering to the ongoing political processes. The gravity of the situation risks taking us back to the darkest hours in the history of the region of the Great Lakes, more than 25 years ago. We must not wait for the security situation to worsen further and the region to flare up once again. The escalation in tensions in the region is already at a climax, and the combination of terrorist attacks, daily massacres of civilians perpetrated by armed groups and the approach of the important electoral deadline in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must now lead us to mobilize all diplomatic, political and security channels to stem the wave of violence.

At the political level, the dynamism of the subregional organizations to restore peace in the region is to be commended. The African Union — the Peace and Security Council of which just carried out a field visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 20 to 23 March — and the Luanda and Nairobi processes reflect the continued commitment of Africa to the stabilization of the Great Lakes. Ghana, Mozambique and Gabon commend the continued involvement of Presidents João Lourenço, William Ruto and Evariste Ndayishimiye and former President Uhuru Kenyatta, facilitator of the East African Community (EAC), who has worked tirelessly to restore confidence among the leaders of the countries of the region. The A3 commends the East African Community regional force and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) troop-contributing countries for their commitment to promoting regional peace and security and welcomes the recent deployment of Ugandan, Kenyan and South Sudanese troops to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to augment the regional force.

The A3 also welcomes the decision made by the Angolan Government to deploy troops to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo for one year to ensure stability and protect ceasefire monitors. We believe that the work of the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the ad hoc verification mechanism is necessary to strengthen confidence-building measures. We recall that, for the regional mediation processes to be effective, it is crucial that the massacres against civilians cease, dialogue be re-established and confidence be restored among all relevant stakeholders of the region. We welcome the African Union's decision to support the deployment of the East African Community regional force through an allocation of resources from the crisis reserve facility of the African Union Peace Fund and invite international partners to provide financial, logistical, material and technical expertise to the force and the ongoing regional initiatives in Luanda and Nairobi.

Cognizant of the number of troops deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the A3 calls for the establishment of a real coordination and cooperation mechanism between the Congolese defence and security forces, MONUSCO and regional and bilateral forces for optimal protection of civilians. As we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the signing in Addis Ababa of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for

the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, Ghana, Mozambique and Gabon underscore the strategic importance of its effective implementation by all. The Agreement remains a compass on which the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the signatory countries can continue to rely to succeed in pulling the region out of the recurrent upheavals of violence and instability. To that end, it is essential to proceed with its urgent revitalization, with the genuine political will of all the signatory countries to respect their commitments. It is clear that, in the face of the uncertainties that cloud the future of the Great Lakes region, the mobilization of the international community is essential, but that must be concerted and coordinated in support of the regional initiatives of Nairobi and Luanda, which are currently the credible ways out of the crisis.

As is widely known, there can be no development without peace, and the nexus between peace and development is a major challenge to extracting the Great Lakes region from endemic crises. In that regard, we cannot address the security situation in the Great Lakes region without examining the issue of the plundering of natural resources to the detriment of the populations. We are pleased to note that the region's growth rate in 2022 was 4.5 per cent, driven in particular by the recovery in global demand in the mining, industrial and services sectors. That performance would have been even better had the region's economies not been strained by the combined effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic, the Ebola crisis, fuel shortages, soaring food prices and other factors. We must remember that, in view of the economic potential of the region, it could become the economic lung of Africa. The dynamism of the economy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo plays a great role to that effect, given the wealth of its natural resources and the potential of taking advantage of the internal market of the Great Lakes region. The fight against the illicit trafficking of natural resources should lead to the development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region.

The development of natural-resource wealth offers the countries of the Great Lakes region the opportunity to build a region of shared prosperity. In that regard, efforts to integrate the economies of the region by strengthening economic cooperation and trade must continue. That is bolstered by the effectiveness of regional mechanisms such as the Regional Mineral Certification Mechanism, established by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

In that connection, we welcome the meeting of the Regional Committee on the Fight against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, held from 15 to 18 November 2022.

The A3 recalls that drying up the sources of financing of armed and terrorist groups undoubtedly requires the strengthening of judicial institutions in the countries of the region. It is essential to punish all individuals and entities involved in the massacre of populations and the destabilization of the countries of the region. Ending impunity is no longer an option, and, in that regard, we welcome the support provided by the Office of the Special Envoy to strengthen the judicial capacities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region. We note with concern that in conflict zones, human rights abuses are steadily increasing, with 82 per cent of violations committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in conflict-affected areas, 74 per cent of which were committed by armed and terrorist groups. Respect for human rights is inherent in the restoration of peace, and we welcome the support provided by the International Organization of La Francophonie to strengthen the capacities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that area.

The humanitarian emergency in the Great Lakes region is symptomatic of the security crisis. There are approximately 9.4 million internally displaced persons in the region, including 6.2 million in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in millions of children out of school, whose future is being jeopardized. We urge the international community to continue its efforts in financing the humanitarian response plans of the countries of the region in order to alleviate the suffering of refugees and displaced persons. It is crucial that humanitarian workers be able to carry out their mandates safely and in an unhindered manner.

(spoke in French)

Finally, the A3 commends the commitment of Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Huang Xia. Gabon, Mozambique and Ghana reiterate their solidarity with the peoples of the Great Lakes region, and we reaffirm our firm commitment to respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of the countries of the region.

Mr. Almazrouei (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I thank the Special Envoy for his thorough briefing and efforts, and thank his Office for the efforts made to support peace and stability in the Great Lakes

region. We also thank the Chair of the Peace Building Commission for his valuable briefing and appreciate the contributions of the Commission to the Council's discussions today. We welcome the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in today's meeting.

Despite the persistent efforts of the countries of the region to confront internal and regional challenges, the road ahead remains long. As the Special Envoy said today, more efforts must be made to restore good-neighbourliness, address disputes through peaceful means and strengthen cooperation among countries of the region to promote regional peace and security. In my statement today I will focus on three aspects related to the developments in the Great Lakes region.

First, the interconnected nature of the challenges facing the region requires continued focus on regional dialogue and good-neighbourliness, as they are key pillars to address those challenges. In that regard, we commend the ongoing regional initiatives, including the Luanda and Nairobi processes, to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation and relations among the countries of the region. We hope that the decision adopted by the joint mini-summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the East African Community will contribute to enhancing consistency and integration of those regional efforts. In the context of acknowledging the importance of urgently promoting the work related to establishing peace and security, we stress that political will is key to that end. We also emphasize the importance of ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation of women throughout dialogue and various regional peace efforts as a prerequisite for achieving sustained agreements.

Secondly, we must continue to address the security challenges in the region, foremost of which acts of violence, to achieve sustainable peace and security. That includes addressing the ongoing attacks by armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially attacks against civilians. As we all know, armed groups represent serious threats to the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and across the Great Lakes region. We mentioned previously that all armed groups must immediately cease hostilities, refrain from targeting civilians or civilian institutions and unconditionally lay down their weapons, while also committing to all relevant ceasefires in the region.

As armed groups continue to finance their criminal activities through the illegal exploitation of natural resources, it is critical to maintain our focus on cutting off those funding sources. In that context, we are pleased that the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region participated in the tenth Dubai Precious Metals Conference, held in November 2022, which provided an opportunity to hold important and urgent discussions about the impacts of that illegal trade and ways to address it, including by strengthening regional cooperation and capacity-building for States, at their request, to sustainably manage and protect their natural resources.

Thirdly, the humanitarian crisis in the region should not be overlooked. It is exacerbated by armed conflicts and climate change and is further complicated by the increase in the number of people who have been forced to leave their homes in search of safety and security. There are approximately 5 million refugees and more than 9 million displaced people in the region, of whom 5.8 million are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, we appreciate the humanitarian efforts of the Governments of the Sudan and Uganda in dealing with that crisis by hosting the largest number of refugees in the region. In order to prevent further displacement and ensure an effective response to humanitarian needs, we call on all arms bearers to adhere to international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers.

We also stress that we will continue to pay close attention to the health situation in the region, especially given its vulnerability to outbreaks of diseases such as Ebola. In that regard, we commend Uganda's tireless efforts to combat the virus and its success in halting its spread within the country.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its commitment to supporting regional efforts, the United Nations and all other partners in establishing peace in the Great Lakes region. The people of the region deserve no less.

Mr. Pérez Loose (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for his briefing. I take this opportunity to highlight his work, which fosters dialogue and supports regional peace efforts.

We appreciate the information provided by Ambassador Šimonović, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, and welcome the presence of the

Permanent Representatives of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We highlight the role of regional and subregional organizations in Africa, as it provides a collaborative and comprehensive approach to supporting its members in peacebuilding efforts, in accordance with their priorities and consistent with the motto “African solutions for African problems”.

Ecuador views with concern the deterioration in the security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, due to the resurgence of the activities of armed groups that have created tensions in bilateral relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We therefore highlight the statements of Mr. Huang Xia who, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Peace and Security Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, referred to the persistent challenges to peace and security in the region and called on the signatory countries to renew their commitment to working to restore regional peace and stability.

We are confident that the decisions taken at the twentieth extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the East African Community, held in Burundi, will provide new opportunities and alternatives, such as the creation of a verification mechanism. We support the efforts made in the context of the Nairobi process in preparation for a fourth round of dialogue between the Congolese Government and the armed groups.

We consider the coordination between the Luanda and Nairobi processes, agreed upon during the mini-summit convened by the East African Community, and specifically the adoption of a timetable for the implementation of priority actions related to armed groups, particularly the Mouvement du 23 Mars, and the bilateral relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, to be fundamental. The cooperation provided by Angola for the protection of the members of the ad hoc verification mechanism under the Luanda process in the North Kivu region has been crucial to that process. The deteriorating humanitarian situation requires the immediate attention of the international community, whose response must be accompanied by actions that are conducive to peacebuilding by addressing the root causes of conflict, paving the way for sustainable development. In that context, Ecuador supports the Chair of the

Peacebuilding Commission’s briefing, in which he highlighted elements such as the promotion of dialogue that contribute to building more inclusive societies. In that regard, Ecuador would like to highlight the importance of women’s participation in peace processes, as well as in national and local political structures.

The United Nations programmes and actions in the Great Lakes region are key elements in reducing threats to peace and security, precisely because they address the root causes of conflicts and deal with issues such as the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, human rights and the implementation of the agendas on women and peace and security, children in armed conflict and youth and peace and security, thereby paving the way for the implementation of the action plan of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region.

Finally, we reiterate our belief that regional organizations — the guarantors of peace processes in the Great Lakes region — are the cornerstone of preventive diplomacy and the search for solutions through peaceful means, equipped with the tools to de-escalate armed conflicts and with rapidly deployable, highly effective forces on the ground.

Mr. Spasse (Albania): We thank Special Envoy Huang Xia and Ambassador Šimonović for their informative briefings. We also welcome the participation of the representatives of Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in today’s meeting.

Ten years after the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, a crucial instrument for achieving peace and stability in the region, Albania is profoundly concerned about the deterioration of the security situation, despite the relative calm in recent days. It has seriously eroded progress on regional cooperation and economic integration. The heightened tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda can trigger a spiral with irreversible consequences. Albania urges both parties to refrain from blaming each other and to come to a reasonable settlement of disputes within the existing regional mechanisms. No military strategy can resolve the long-standing grievances.

Regrettably, armed groups that had already chosen to disarm have taken up arms again, forming new alliances and creating new enemies. The sovereignty

and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected and any support for the Mouvement du 23 mars must stop. We take note of that group's partial withdrawal from some areas in North Kivu and call for its complete retreat from all controlled territories. We also repeat our call for all Congolese groups to participate in the disarmament process and for foreign armed groups to leave the country immediately. In particular, groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and Zaire have used the vacuum left by the Congolese security forces to gain a stronghold in those areas by attacking civilians fleeing their homes. The number of refugees and displaced persons all over the region is alarmingly high. The States of the region should make comprehensive and sustainable efforts to enable their return and improve their living conditions.

Albania sees the Luanda and Nairobi processes as complementary and crucial to the political efforts to defuse regional tensions and bring armed groups to the negotiating table. As such, both processes should be supported, while the States of the region should renew their commitment to fully implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In that vein, the eleventh summit of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, postponed to May, is an opportunity that should not be squandered. The missions conducted by the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures in South Kivu and Ituri provinces are critical steps in building a pathway towards the disarmament and repatriation of more members of foreign armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We have repeatedly emphasized that the region will not be able to find peace without dealing with the underlying sources of the conflict. The illicit exploitation of natural resources is a fundamental one, allowing armed groups to finance their horrors. We have followed the outcomes of the meeting held in November of the Regional Committee on the Fight against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources, and we encourage countries of the region and those of transit and destination to reinforce their cooperation in curbing that illicit trade by improving transparency and the monitoring of the entire supply chain.

Lastly, we affirm our support for the Special Envoy and commend him for his leading efforts in implementing the United Nations Strategy for Peace

Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region, as well as its action plan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Special Envoy Huang Xia and Mr. Ivan Šimonović, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations and Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. We welcome the participation of the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in today's meeting.

The situation in the Great Lakes region mainly hinges on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are particularly concerned about the continuing clashes between the Congolese Government forces and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) group in North Kivu province, as well as the tensions between Kinshasa and Kigali. We note that by virtue of the fact that the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and the regional force of the East African Community (EAC) have been forced to focus their efforts on dealing with the M-23 problem, other illegal armed groups have been taking advantage of the situation by expanding their illegal activities, attacking civilians, exploiting natural resources with impunity and strengthening their positions in the east of the country.

In general, as has already been said today, natural resources are one of the most important factors in the instability in the Great Lakes region. The worsening security situation significantly complicates matters in the region, increasing ordinary people's suffering. Members of the Security Council visited Kinshasa and Goma on a field mission from 9 to 12 March, where they saw first-hand how difficult the humanitarian situation is in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We believe it is important to continue to seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict, including within the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi negotiation formats. We believe that the priority should be to achieve a cessation of hostilities and a comprehensive and inclusive dialogue. In that regard, we hope that the regional leaders will succeed in taking further steps to create the conditions for advancing

the inter-Congolese negotiation process and restoring good-neighbourly relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

Speaking more generally, we believe it is important to continue to integrate synergistic efforts and initiatives for regional cooperation in order to achieve meaningful results. We hope that the understandings reached at the twentieth extraordinary summit of Heads of State and Government of the EAC in early February in Bujumbura, as well as at the meeting between members of the EAC and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, held on the margins of the thirty-sixth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa in mid-February, will help implement the Luanda road map and facilitate the withdrawal of the M-23 from the occupied areas. We expect the Angolan contingent to play a constructive role in that by supporting the ad hoc verification mechanism.

We support the efforts of MONUSCO and its leadership. We consider the presence of Blue Helmets in the conflict zone to be an important stabilizing factor. The recent protests against the Mission's presence are cause for concern. Attacks on peacekeepers are unacceptable. It is important that to ensure not only that MONUSCO carries out informational outreach activities with the local population regarding the objectives of its presence and the content of its mandate but also that it listens to the views of the public and the authorities, which will enable it to do its work more effectively. We believe firmly that MONUSCO's withdrawal plan must be implemented based on the reality on the ground and without the imposition of artificial timelines. In accordance with resolution 2666 (2022), we await the Secretary-General's proposals on the reconfiguration of the Mission by July, in the light of the ongoing consultations with Kinshasa.

In order to increase the effectiveness of efforts to protect the civilian population, we look forward to greater coordination between the Congolese armed forces and MONUSCO, as well as the regional and national bodies involved in resolving the conflict. We note the significant role played by United Nations agencies in alleviating the humanitarian consequences of the crisis.

It is clear that it will not be possible to achieve a lasting normalization of the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region by military means alone. Dialogue and effective confidence-building measures are essential, along with

the consolidation of the efforts of the States in the region, as well as their awareness of their common responsibility, and their practical interest, where stabilizing the situation in the Great Lakes region is concerned, an area where various interests are closely intertwined. Peaceful and sustainable development, mutually beneficial cooperation and a focus on the collective resolution of long-standing problems — including those related to the illegal exploitation of natural resources as one of the key factors fuelling armed conflict — will benefit all the countries of the Great Lakes basin.

We call for intensifying the efforts to achieve the full implementation of the fundamental Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region of 2013, and we welcome the commitment of the African Union to revitalizing it. For our part, we reaffirm our readiness to support the stabilization of the Great Lakes area by encouraging dialogue and constructive cooperation among the States of the region. We look forward to working together with the relevant United Nations bodies and their representatives.

In conclusion, we want to emphasize that Russia fully supports the activities of Special Envoy Huang Xia to promote an inter-State dialogue with a view to reducing tensions in that part of Africa.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Gatete (Rwanda): Thank you for allowing me to contribute to today's Security Council briefing on the Great Lakes region. I thank the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission for their briefings. Rwanda commends the Special Envoy for his dedication to the peace and development of our subregion. We also welcome the convening of the eleventh high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region to be held in Bujumbura, which Rwanda looks forward to attending.

Today's briefing presents an opportunity to look back 10 years, to the moment when the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region was signed on 24 February 2013. The Agreement presented

a valuable opportunity for all parties to build on the work started by the region and the wider continent and to focus seriously on addressing the real problems, as clearly identified. It was crucial that the signing of the Agreement not be seen as the end result of a peace process but as a big step in the right direction. The Framework Agreement signed 10 years ago recognized a holistic approach that addressed the multifaceted root causes as the only way to end instability. Any meaningful contribution to lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region had to abandon the self-defeating practice of selectivity in both memory and responsibility regarding the known, long-standing causes of recurring conflict.

Rwanda expected that the Framework would lead to peace, security, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region as a whole. Ten years later, the scorecard indicates that the situation is no better. An evaluation of the Framework is long overdue to assess its effectiveness and the challenges emanating from its lack of implementation. There is a need to genuinely address the real problems of rights, justice and development and to commit to finding sustainable solutions for the peoples who look to us for leadership.

As the preparations continue for a fourth round of the Nairobi peace talks aimed at containing Congolese armed groups, the facilitator has recommended including the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), in the light of its compliance with the Luanda recommendations. Its withdrawal from previously captured areas, which are now occupied by the East African Community regional force, is evidence of a productive regional effort, as well as the M-23's resolve to respect the regional leaders' road map reached through the Luanda and Nairobi processes. Despite the facilitator's satisfaction with the M-23's compliance, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo stated at a joint press conference in Kinshasa on 13 April with the President of Switzerland that he would not negotiate, saying "There is no way that there will be political dialogue with the M-23."

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's stance is disturbing, as it clearly hinders all regional and continental efforts aimed at achieving peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The region and the international community are expecting Kinshasa's cooperation in order to achieve lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

following the M-23's withdrawal. If negotiations are off the table, once the M-23 completes its withdrawal the peace mechanisms may hit a dead end yet again and the consequence would be a recurrence of the atrocities.

At a time when Rwandans and the world are commemorating the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, I would like to remind the Council that the United Nations-sanctioned terrorist group that carried out the genocide — the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) — is still at large in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, the FDLR enjoys the support and political shield that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo provides while it is actively violating United Nations sanctions. Since fleeing to the Democratic Republic of the Congo 29 years ago, the group has persistently spread its genocidal ideology there, resulting in the killings of hundreds of thousands of Congolese Tutsi. That is in addition to multiple cross-border attacks on Rwanda. President Tshisekedi's attitude to the FDLR and his recent statement are therefore problematic. In the press briefing with the President of Switzerland, he went so far as to sanitize the FDLR terrorist group, claiming that it poses no threat to Rwanda and saying,

"The pretext that the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo support the FDLR is a fallacy. The FDLR is a residual force; it no longer attacks Rwanda and has no political vindictiveness towards Rwanda."

Members may also recall that the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Ms. Alice Nderitu, has twice issued statements clearly indicating that the FDLR is very active and spreading genocidal ideology. As a result, she has called for the international community to attend to the warning signs of a possible genocide in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is complex. But while it would not be difficult to resolve, the statements from the country's leaders regarding the situation and the FDLR in particular are counterproductive where the regional efforts and peace processes, as envisioned in the Framework Agreement, are concerned. Instead, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to make no effort to implement any of the signed agreements, which, to say the least, contradicts the Agreement in word and in spirit.

We must acknowledge progress in some areas, and I would like to commend the ongoing deployment of contingents of the East African Community regional force to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the M-23's continued withdrawal.

In conclusion, all the parties involved are implementing the regional agreements — except for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, Rwanda urges all parties to the conflict to strictly respect the ceasefire agreements and build on them to implement the regional agreements' road maps in the hope of peaceful negotiations and ultimately a peaceful resolution.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Russian Federation, which is presiding over the Security Council during the month of April, for having organized this meeting and, at the same time, to reaffirm our full support for its mandate.

I welcome the detailed briefing by Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and note with great appreciation the rich contributions made by Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and the statements made today by the members of the Security Council. I am also pleased at the participation of my colleagues from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2023/237) and commend the efforts of the United Nations undertaken by its Special Envoy to bring peace to the Great Lakes region.

At a time when the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo continues to face a security and humanitarian crisis affecting the stability of the country and the region, as well as children, women and the elderly who are living in conditions of indescribable suffering, as Council members noted during their visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in early March, Burundi reaffirms the relevance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, signed in Addis Ababa on 14 February 2013.

Now more than ever, the international community should play an effective role as a guarantor in the search for peace in the region by taking concrete

action to support the tireless efforts of the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in the form of a regional force, meetings of the Chiefs of General Staff of the EAC for improved coordination and summits of Heads of State and Government.

The insecurity situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo has led to the perpetuation of conflicts in the Great Lakes region, with the corollary of an increase in the number of local and foreign rebel groups whose goal is essentially to control and exploit many mineral resources. That has created a kind of permanent insecurity and tends to spread the conflict throughout the region, which in itself constitutes a genuine threat to international peace and security and should draw special attention from Security Council members in the light of the risks of a spillover into the region.

With less than three weeks to go before the eleventh Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Regional Mechanism for the Implementation of the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Region, which will be held on 6 May, it is important to use all the means at the disposal of the international community to stop the war, neutralize the terrorist forces in the region, begin a dialogue and launch a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration mechanism, as recommended by the Nairobi process, but that requires a great deal of resources that the region itself does not have. The financial and logistical contribution of the United Nations and the African Union to the costs borne by the EAC regional forces at this time is therefore crucial.

In view of that context and the threats of a regional spillover, a constant striving for peace explains the firm, constant and continuous commitment of His Excellency Mr. Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, current Chairperson of the EAC and African Union Champion for Youth, Peace and Security. He has tirelessly deployed all means of diplomacy through the holding of the summits of Nairobi, Luanda and Bujumbura and is striving to bring all regional and multilateral partners together in support of his vision of building a regional peace architecture that addresses the constant and increasingly complex security threats in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region.

The 6 May summit in Bujumbura seems to be well on its way to revitalizing the Framework Agreement in order to further operationalize the various mechanisms established to secure peace in the region, but which are not sufficiently tailored to the new challenges posed by the international and regional situation 11 years after the Framework Agreement was reached.

It also seems to be on track to better understand various implications of the transnationalization of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region before submitting to the region potential sustainable solutions that should take into consideration the porous nature of the borders, arms trafficking and natural resources, which seem to be the main factors of instability in the Great Lakes region. The summit also seems on track to enable the region to revisit the mechanism of the Framework Agreement and the system it has established to prevent and manage conflict for sustainable peace and development in the subregion; to assess and reinvent itself and adapt to the regional circumstances, which involve complex threats now and in the future.

In addition to the efforts under way under the leadership of the Presidents of Burundi and Angola through the Nairobi and Luanda processes, respectively, the 6 May summit in Bujumbura will seek to rally the entire region to arrive at tangible solutions and positive measures to promote peace and stability in the region.

Burundi, which maintains excellent relations with all its neighbouring countries, is pleased with the participation in the highest summit at the level of Heads of State and Government and international organizations, such as the United Nations and the African Union, guarantors of the Framework Agreement, and will spare no effort to ensure that this meeting marks a new starting point for greater unity and solidarity in the region in coordinating efforts for peace in order to limit the impact of that instability on the economies of the region.

In that regard, the upcoming summit of the Framework Agreement will provide clear signals indicating the conditions conducive to an environment of peace and will require the support all partners in the region and the guarantors of the Framework Agreement to bury the hatchet and enter a new era that will involve education, peace and respect for human rights and will culminate in the establishment of a culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Nzongola-Ntalaja (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting on the situation in the Great Lakes region. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his commitment to my country's cause. I extend my thanks to all Security Council members without forgetting to mention the three representatives of the African continent within this body. I also welcome the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, His Excellency Ambassador Ivan Šimonović, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia. I had a good talk with him on Monday, and he is doing excellent work in our region.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2023/237), dated 30 March, which Ambassador Huang Xia presented to us. Let me make a few comments on the issues raised in the report.

Rwanda, which operates with the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), as if it were necessary to remind anyone, is one of the signatory countries to the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. On 6 May in Bujumbura, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is reaching the end of its term as Chair of the regional mechanism since February 2013, will hand over the chairmanship to Burundi. We hope that under Burundi's chairmanship it will be able to do its work effectively. The Special Envoy announced a workshop in Durban that will provide a framework for charting the future. My delegation appreciates the initiative, but like my colleague from Burundi, we would like to remind those interested in taking part that the mechanism was conceived more than 10 years ago and that much has changed since. We therefore need to revisit it.

My Government's immediate major concern is focused on stabilizing the security situation by disarming the M-23 and other major foreign and foreign-influenced local terrorist groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces-Medina wa Tawhid wal Muwahdeen,

the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* and the *Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi*. We urge for the preliminary cantonment of M-23 elements in the group's camp in Kiwanja before its relocation to Maniema, which accords with the joint Luanda-Nairobi road map adopted at the mini-summit held in Luanda on 23 November 2022, as well as with the views of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Security Council. The plan to canton the M-23 members on Congolese territory far from Rwanda is crucial if we are to genuinely disarm those terrorists so as to prevent massacres such as those that took place in Kishishe from 22 November to 1 December 2022. Kishishe was fully under the occupation of the M-23 terrorists, supported by troops of the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF).

My delegation calls on the members of the Council to join the Democratic Republic of the Congo in holding accountable the perpetrators of those atrocities. As President Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo underscored pursuant to our Parliament's decision, my delegation reiterates that the elements of the armed groups will never be integrated into the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)*. We will not negotiate with the M-23. There is no country that we know of today that negotiates with terrorists. Rwanda has never negotiated with the *Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR)*. Why then are we asked to negotiate with the M-23?

Let me clarify a point raised concerning the FDLR in the report before us. Contrary to the false accusations that the army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is collaborating with and supporting the FDLR, I would like to cite five major robust unilateral and joint operations that the FARDC and the Rwandan Defence Forces conducted against the FDLR between January 2009 and February 2022. They are, first, Operation *Umoja Wetu*, from 20 January to 25 February 2009; secondly, Operation *Kimia II* and subsequently *Amani Leo*, from March 2009 to 2012; thirdly, the voluntary disarmament programme; fourthly, an operation that was conducted from January 2015 to December 2018; and, fifthly, the joint FARDC-RDF operations.

I want to point out that the remaining FDLR elements, whose leadership was eliminated by the army of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the operations I just mentioned, no longer constitute a military threat capable of attacking Rwanda. They have not made the smallest incursion into Rwanda for

years. That was not the case in 1994 and 1995, but, to date, we have seen nothing of the sort. The remnants of the FDLR no longer pose a military threat to Rwanda. They are rather a source of socioeconomic insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that benefits Rwanda. Rwanda has the most to gain by the presence of the remaining FDLR elements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because it gives them a pretext for justifying incursions into our country. They carry out aggressions against the Democratic Republic of the Congo and take a well-organized approach to cheerfully plundering our natural resources, which is one of the major causes of the crisis that we are going through in our country today.

We often hear from Rwandans loyal to Paul Kagame's dictatorial regime that the Congolese threaten the lives of Rwandans through their collaboration with the FDLR and ethnic hatred for Kinyarwanda speakers. So far, we have seen no credible examples of xenophobic violence comparable to that of other countries. We have not seen that. Even Ms. Alice Nderitu, who was cited here today, made her statement before her visit to the Congo. She then went to the Congo, and, when she came back, she doubled down on what she said. But so far there has been no proof. Another accusation made by Rwandans is that the Congolese complain only when they are responsible for their problems. We are apparently incapable of analysing the reasons for the underlying causes of our shortcomings. But the reasons for the root causes of the Congolese crisis emanate from Rwanda, not the Congo. Let me conclude by commenting on four root causes that are entirely Rwandan-made. They are the plundering of the Congo's resources, as the representative of Albania rightly underscored earlier, militarism, ethnic hatred and expansionism.

With regard to the militarism, ethnic hatred and expansionism of President Kagame, during his recent press conference in Cotonou, in Benin, Mr. Kagame revealed his expansionist tendencies by saying that parts of Congo and Uganda belonged to Rwanda before colonization. That is not the first time that Rwandan leaders have propagated those lies. Pasteur Bizimungu was the third President of Rwanda, but he wielded no power because he was a member of the marginalized Hutu ethnic group, thousands of whom were massacred in our country in 1994. The 2010 mapping report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights states that what happened in the Congo can legally be considered a genocide. That is not my

opinion. That is what is in the mapping report in the archives of the United Nations, something that no one really wants to publicize. After Mr. Kagame and Mr. Bizimungu came the strongman James Kabarebe, whom Kagame had appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Congolese army from May 1997 to July 1998. Mr. Kabarebe recently said that they will continue to fight until they get their land, which is in the Congo, back.

All of that is contrary to history and jurisprudence. Historians of Rwanda, among them my former professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Mr. Jan Vansina, a Belgian, and the Congolese historian, Mr. Isidore Ndaywel, have shown in the scholarship that no king of pre-colonial Rwanda had succeeded in conquering even a small piece of the present Congo. But Mr. Kagame, who comes from a royal family, would like to do what his ancestors had failed to accomplish.

We also want to draw the attention of Council members to recent dangerous statements calling for the redrawing of borders in the Great Lakes. These statements, which the Council must condemn and proscribe, reveal expansionist impulses that exacerbate tensions in the region. As a reminder, the inviolability of borders was a key principle affirmed by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union, on 21 July 1964, at the second OAU summit, in Cairo, Egypt. The Democratic Republic of the Congo will defend every inch of its territory. We will not negotiate with terrorists.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.